

Donald Jack Myers, 1918 – 2004

Distinguished career included a dozen years on Wisconsin Pharmacy Examining Board and a period as acting executive director of the Wisconsin Pharmacists Association

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How do we say goodbye? Funerals are not for the departed. They are for the rest of us—those family and friends who are left behind. We grieve; we feel loss; we have to adjust to a new reality.

I hope this service will help us all say goodbye to a very special man that we loved and respected.

Who was Jack Myers? He was my friend. And he was a friend to many like me.

I was honored by the Myers family to be asked to speak today. Although there are others with longer association with Jack, there are none with greater respect.

I met Jack for the first time fifteen years ago. I remember the day well (and my memory is not that good). He was the acting executive director of the Wisconsin Pharmacists Association, WPhA—the state association he had belonged to his entire pharmacy career. I didn't know of him then. I had just met him. But upon meeting Jack, I immediately knew that he was a man filled with kindness. He treated me with respect. I was only 25 but he treated me like a professional on that very first visit. Shortly thereafter he befriended me as I moved to Madison and took on the role he had generously performed the prior year.

In the ensuing years I learned a lot about Jack and I learned a lot from him too. I visited with him often. He was a man of good spirit, good humor, and until the last year or two, abundant good health. He was a simple man whose Madison roots and traditional values never left him.

He was, first and foremost, a husband. For 60 years, almost 61, Jack was married to his beloved Doris—whom he often

affectionately referred to as “Becky.” Doris, I never thought to ask why Jack called you that.

Jack and Doris did almost everything together. They ate together and they volunteered together. They visited others together and they shopped together. They even shared the same birthday.

A few years ago my youngest son, Johnny, who was three or four at the time, made a comment about Jack and



Doris. He let their names run together when he said them. Sort of like, Jack'nDoris. It was not clear to my wife, Cathy, and me what Johnny was saying. Upon questioning him about what he meant, we learned that Johnny thought that Jack and Doris were one person. He thought Jack's name was Jack'nDoris. We had so rarely said one name without the other, to Johnny, it seemed like it was one person's name. That's how they lived—Jack-and-Doris, together, as one,

through the good times and the challenging ones too.

Jack was a gracious son and generous father as well. Some of you know that Jack's mom lived with Doris and him for 40 years, until her passing just a few years ago at the age of 103. Jack cared about his mom and Doris cared for her. Together they did what seems uncommon these days. When Jack's mom needed a home and help with daily living, Jack and Doris brought her home. Together they made her care a priority in their lives. That decision meant limiting other things. It wasn't a hard decision for Jack to make. It was the right thing to do. It was done.

Jack and Doris have four children they both deeply love and cherish. David, Jill, Todd and Lisa—Jack spoke to me, and all of his friends, about each of you. He was proud of you all. He appreciated the little things that you did for him. He cherished the special things you did for your mother. And he told me about your lives. About growing up and about growing old.

Jack and Doris were also foster parents to three children—Sandy, Maureen and Jeff. Each of these children benefited from the love and care provided by the entire Myers family for years. Jack and Doris shared what they had with others. The stability of their home was something they could offer to children without one.

Jack and Doris lived in the same home for over 50 years—on Owen Drive here in Madison. The house was immaculate. The yard manicured. Sometimes Jack would mow the lawn twice in a day just so it would look perfect. And it did look perfect. It was fertilized, watered, mowed, trimmed and pruned. The yard belonged on the Home and Garden channel. I always felt sorry for the persons living on either side of Jack. Their lawns didn't

stand a chance compared to his.

Jack was a Navy man. He was a member of what Tom Brokaw called our greatest generation. He was part of a generation that brought us through the great depression and then gave everything it had in World War II. The sacrifice made by that generation, both at home and at the war's front, is hard to imagine—even while our nation is at war today. Things are different now. Jack was an ordinary man who enlisted in the U.S. Navy over a half century ago with the sole intention of serving our country. He and his fellow servicemen did nothing less than save the world.

I think Jack probably learned much of his discipline from his military service. However, from what I know of Jack, it's possible the military learned discipline from him. Jack had a certain way of doing things. His way. Only Doris could influence his approach. Otherwise it was Jack's way, military style. If you know Jack, you know how he liked to use military time. If you were to do something with him at one o'clock, he would say "I'll see you at thirteen hundred." It took me awhile to figure that out. Even after a dozen years I would have to slow down and mentally convert Jack's military time into regular time.

Jack paid attention to detail too. He was trained as a pharmacist and he served in the military. Both professions require error free work. Exactness. Both require execution of an order. Jack was good at it. He relied on rules. He followed them and expected others to follow them equally.

Jack also helped craft rules for pharmacies and pharmacy operators to follow. He was appointed by three different Wisconsin Governors and served a dozen years as a member of the Wisconsin Pharmacy Examining Board. As a member of the PEB he joined a handful of others committed to improving pharmacy service to the public and at times he advocated for rules that others didn't like. But Jack always worked to raise pharmacy's professional bar. I think it's noteworthy that his signature is on over 1,000 Wisconsin pharmacist licenses—licenses that now hang in virtually every Wisconsin community and likely every state in the nation.

Yes, some people disagreed with Jack, but few disliked him. Jack could disagree with a person strongly but he was able to separate subject from person. He didn't make disagreements personal. When people took issue with a position he had taken, Jack never thought of them as an enemy. He simply thought, "Well, they don't agree with me...and they're wrong." And in time, Jack was usually proven right.

Through his many years of volunteer service Jack became an expert in the state of Wisconsin's pharmacy regulations. Even after his years of service on the PEB, Jack and his good friend Doc Hammel would attend the monthly PEB meetings, briefcases in tow.

I once attended a PEB meeting with Jack, years after his time on the board. He, Doc Hammel and I were listening to



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a Board discussion. At one point the PEB was requesting the board's staff to search the archives for a copy of a memo that related to the particular subject at hand. The staff didn't believe they could locate the document because several years had passed since its drafting. To everyone's surprise, including mine, Jack opened his briefcase, searched for a moment and found a copy of the memo—in his own set of traveling archives. That was quintessential Jack. He saved everything and he had the uncanny ability to find things amongst the mass of papers, memos, newsletters, magazines and reports that he kept.

Jack was also known to have a sweet tooth. He loved desserts and pastries, although you would never guess it from his

tall, slender build. I don't know if he had a favorite but he loved going to Clausens bakery and he would make me cringe when he'd put butter on a powdered sugar doughnut.

Sweets were another example of how Jack would combine a personal interest with his propensity for sharing. When attending morning meetings or events he would almost always bring pastries for the entire group. He was renowned for it. I've heard that some state employees would purposefully schedule morning meetings with Jack, knowing that they would benefit from one of his favorite bakeries. And when he went out for lunch or dinner, Jack would almost always order at least one desert and enough forks or spoons for everyone in attendance.

There are so many stories and unique characteristics about Jack that I could talk about. His 85 years provided a lot of material. From the navy blue (as in U.S. Navy blue) ball cap that he always wore, to how he provided a "good morning" greeting, even if it was in the afternoon; from the first name basis he held with dozens of merchants and professionals throughout Madison, to his long standing shortcoming of being a Democrat; Jack was a real person. No question about it.

He was a gentleman too. He would always be the first to offer a lady his chair and he would always offer to buy lunch. Sometimes he'd even argue about it. Jack, argue?

Imagine that.

He always had a story to tell; yet, he made others feel important and good about themselves. Jack never sought attention. Instead he liked to heap it upon somebody else. Someone he felt who was more deserving.

Jack was a generous man. He gave of himself, time and time again.

He was my friend. He was our friend. We are all better for knowing him.

In communicating Jack's passing with the state's pharmacists earlier this week, I ended with a short four-line poem. I'd like to end with it again this morning.

It's just a little, but means a lot,

To say dear friend, we haven't forgot.

So long Jack. See you in heaven. 0900.

Thanks. ●