



Jay Allen Hickerson

November 25, 1934 - August 3, 2022

Jay Allen Hickerson, 87, of Leesburg, FL, formerly of New Haven and Hamden, Connecticut, died peacefully at home on Wednesday, August 3, 2022.

Jay was born on November 25, 1934, in Highland Park, IL to his parents, Dr. Jay Allen and Elizabeth (Hogg) Hickerson. He was a graduate of Wilbur Cross High School, Class of '52. Jay was captain of the Wilbur Cross tennis team and won the State Tennis Singles Crown in May 1952. Jay served as the tennis pro at the old Woodbridge Country Club in 1957.

While still in high school, Jay was a soloist with the Johnson Junior Symphony Orchestra in 1952.

Jay received his Bachelor's Degree in Music Theory from the Hartt College of Music (1956) and a Master's Degree (Education) from Southern Connecticut State University (1967). He was a founding member of the New Haven Chapter of the Connecticut State Music Teachers' Association and served as its first president.

Jay served in the Army National Guard and in 1958, won accolades as a table tennis master. As a participant in the First United States Army Table Tennis Championship, he was declared both a singles and doubles champion.

After several years as a teacher in Bethany, CT, Jay devoted his life to music. He was an incredibly talented pianist and entertainer. He served as music conductor, piano teacher and pianist with various orchestras and bands throughout Connecticut and other northeastern states for more than 45 years.

Jay was a radio historian, and, as Chairman of FOTR, Inc. (Friends of Old-Time Radio, Inc.) a non-profit corporation, for 36 years ending in 2011, he organized an annual convention which was heavily attended by collectors and fans of the radio medium, as well as actors, actresses, writers, directors, and others who had been and still were active in the entertainment industry. In connection with his radio-related activities, Jay published a national newsletter for collectors. He authored several books on the subject and served as a consultant for Ken Burns' 1991 documentary Empire of the Air.

In the words of one of Jay's radio hobbyists,

Jay is a uniquely American hero in that he devoted so much time to creating something so special without much return economically. At the end of your life being able to say you did something unique, special, uplifting that a generation will remember, is the best legacy anyone can have.

Jay touched so many people's lives through his teaching, his organizational skills and his music. In his retirement, Jay entertained at many assisted living and nursing homes in Connecticut and in Florida. Jay accompanied the Legacy of Leesburg Chorale for nine years, and most recently the community's Theater Legacy.

Jay is survived by his wife, Karen (a professional singer whom he worked with often), his two children, Robin Baumann (Neil), of Montana, and Craig Hickerson (Kim), of Florida, two stepchildren, Dr. Elisa M. Katz, (Don), of Illinois, and Evan S. Katz, CFA (Shari), of Illinois, four grandchildren, two step-grandchildren, and four great grandchildren. Jay is also survived by his brother, Joe Hickerson, of Oregon. Jay was predeceased by his son, Jeffrey Hickerson.

Beyers Funeral Home and Crematory, Leesburg, FL, are overseeing the arrangements. In lieu of a funeral, a Memorial Celebration of Life will take place in Legacy, at a future date to be determined.

Tribute Wall

JW

“ While Jay was a force in the world of old time radio for which I am glad, he also was an excellent piano player often hitting the keys at the conventions. He brought a number of musical guests from the musical theater world. I was a long time subscriber to his newsletter, a frequent visitor to his convention and a purchaser and fan of his *Ultimate Guide to Radio Programs*. My prayers are with his family.

Jim Widner - August 09, 2022 at 08:52 PM

AC

“ Jay was an inspiration and a mentor to Bob Bowers and me when we created *Radio Classics Live!* at Massasoit Community College, Brockton, MA in 1990. He put us in contact with many of the radio performers, made phone calls on our behalf, provided wise counsel on the logistics of running such an event. When we needed advice, we knew who to call -- Jay! We hoped that we might be able to keep our show going for 10 years; with Jay's continued help we made it 21 years. -- Alan Chapman, cocreator/coproducer, *Radio Classics Live!*

Alan Chapman - August 09, 2022 at 08:44 PM

BH

“ Jay Hickerson opened up a new doorway for me into the world of Old Time Radio. Through the *Friends Of Old Time Radio Convention* that he began, I learned that there were many others interested in this hobby and I discovered new ways by which to collect by being introduced to new dealers who sold recordings of these fascinating shows. Also got to meet some lifelong friends in the process. Thanks Jay. You will not be forgotten.

Brian Hochberg - August 09, 2022 at 10:59 AM

CW

“ I (as many of us) owe Jay a very great deal, for his work with the Friends of Old Time Radio. Through that, this actor was blessed to work with many other veteran players, and to make friendships that still last. Bernadette and I hold Jay in our prayers for where he is now, and for comfort for Karen here.

Craig Wichman - August 09, 2022 at 07:49 AM

JW

“ Anne and I offer our prayers for Jay, and heartfelt condolences to Karen. Jay was an important part of my life as a friend and mentor in the early days of the radio conventions, but also as a friend to all who shared his love of the golden age of radio. Jay's importance to the classic radio hobby began in 1970 when he decided to create a newsletter for his fellow travelers in "old time radio." He named it "Hello Again," after the weekly greeting that Jack Benny made on his broadcasts to his listeners. Before there was social media, the classic radio hobby had his newsletter. The enthusiasm of our hobby from its earliest times was captured in every typewriter keystroke Jay made in preparing his monthly news. When the conventions finally came, everyone finally had a chance to meet the people who were just names in the newsletters. His efforts brought people together from all over North America as well as many international visitors. Many of us have had the people as friends and acquaintances for decades... because of Jay's devotion to the hobby, and to all of us. Thank you so much, Jay, for keeping the flame of classic radio alive for so very long. Now it's up us to do the very same.

Joe Webb - August 08, 2022 at 08:28 AM

MG

“ Jay Hickerson was the first person beyond a mail order catalog (Metacom/Adventures in Cassettes) that I talked to in the hobby and he opened Pandora’s box for me. From there I discovered conventions, fan clubs, books, other vendors and companies, etc. It was Jay and his Yoda-like influence that turned me over to the darkside and become obsessed with Old-Time Radio beyond fascination and curiosity. He asked how young I was when we first talked on the phone and he never judged... only influenced and encouraged. No one was more influential or a large spear-header in the hobby than Jay and the hobby is smaller as a result of his death. I later discovered through comments on Facebook that I am not the only person whose life was enlightened thanks to Jay. He will never be forgotten.

Martin Grams - August 08, 2022 at 07:50 AM

AZ

“ I remember Jay would bring his car to Leesburg Auto Service for repairs. He always was smiling with a great story to tell. He was a good man RIP Jay

Andy Zalick - August 07, 2022 at 09:59 PM

CN

Jay was an amazing man. Always willing to help. I looked forward each to go the Old Time Radio Convention in Newark as it was the best of any in the Country and gave me the opportunity to converse with Jay.

Jay's Ultimate History of Radio Programming is a bible for any serious collector. Jay will be missed dearly.

Charles P. Niren - August 09, 2022 at 08:50 PM

AB

Jay was a selfless and generous individual and his rationale for keeping radio alive through his books, newsletter and conventions was the satisfaction it provided to those of us that were involved. I never realized how many people Jay connected with until Les Paul came to one of the Friends of Old-time Radio conventions. Jay was a treasure, and he was humble enough that most of us were not aware how unique he was.

Andy Blatt - August 26, 2025 at 10:39 PM