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# In Memory of Ernest Oliver Hill

JUNE 23RD 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

## In Memory of Ernest Oliver Hill

On June 20, 2024, at the age of 88, Ernest Oliver Hill departed from our lives, surrounded by loved ones, leaving behind a legacy of love, laughter, and wonderful memories. Born on November 5, 1935, in Essex, MO, Ernie lived a life characterized by his youthful spirit and deep connection to family and friends. He was the son of the late James “Jim” L. Hill and Irma Naomi (Alsup) Hill.

Ernie grew up on a farm just outside of Idalia, Missouri where he and his first cousins, Jim and Joe Mayo, created many adventures out of everyday rural life. Ernie attended Bluff School through 8th grade, where his grandmother, Ada Bolin Alsup, was one of his teachers. His freshman year, he began attending Bloomfield High School and was a graduate of the class of 1954. While in high school, Ernie enjoyed playing basketball and baseball which cultivated his never-ending passion for sports and camaraderie.

Ernie married his high school sweetheart, Sylvia Yvonne Bess on April 21, 1954. Although they were already good friends, one of their high school teachers liked to take credit for getting them together their junior year by pairing them as the bride and groom in the school play, “A Hillbilly Wedding.” However, we all know it was a match designed by God as they enjoyed 70 wonderful years of marriage filled with love and laughter.

Ernie and Sylvia moved to Malden shortly after they married, where he worked for a lumber company and then a gas company. He applied for a lineman position with Southwestern Bell through the Cape Girardeau office, but was told he was too short to be a lineman. However, a friend told him that they would hire him in the Kansas City office, so they moved to Independence where Ernie started his 43-year career with Southwestern Bell. Through the years, he worked as a stockman, lineman, installer, repairman, and a cable splicer. He was a dedicated employee with a strong work ethic and made lasting friendships with his coworkers (who were known to enjoy a little arm wrestling and other competitive games of male prowess).

Ernie was a life-long member of St. Joe General Baptist Church in Idalia where he served faithfully as a Sunday school teacher and a trustee for many years. Ernie loved his Lord and was always humbled that

Jesus died for him and he never took the Lord's sacrifice for granted. Ernie's genuine love for his church family and his ability to make people feel special further underscore the impact he had on those around him.

Ernie had a playful nature and was especially well known for his firm handshake. What would start out as a simple handshake would often turn into a friendly scuffle.

In a moment's notice, the living room at Ernie and Sylvia's home could transform into a miniature gym filled with wrestling matches, acrobatics, exercises, and "horse rides" on Pawpaw's back, all with lots of fun and laughter.

Ernie was a kid at heart, always joking around and making people smile. Sylvia often told how when they first got married, the young children in the neighborhood would come and knock on the door asking if Ernie could come out and play. Ernie enjoyed playing softball, basketball and racquetball, but for years refused to play golf because it was an "old man's game." When someone finally convinced him to try golf, he was hooked and never put down his clubs (except to bowl on days when there was snow on the golf course!)

Ernie was loved by everyone, but especially his family. He and Sylvia have four children, Bruce (Sharon) Hill, Chris (Curt) Hillis, Bryce (Cara) Hill, and Beth (Bill) Poyner; ten grandchildren, Alana (Josh) Dowdy, Josh Hill, Kristen (Salvatore) Gazzia, Shane (Jaime) Hillis, Chelsie (Ben) Eaton, Drew (Chelsea) Hill, Bradley Poyner, Brittany (Blake) Brown, Christopher (Hunter) Poyner, and Seth (Baylee) Hill; seventeen great grandchildren Wesley, Isaac, Alesia, Ellie, Rylie, Ben, Carter, Layla, Halle, Maggie, Renner, Emmett, Lily, Ember, Everett, Oliver, and Evelyn; and two great-great grandchildren Ray and Theo. Ernie also leaves behind a dear brother John (Susan) Hill and sister-in-law Lin (Wayne) Baker; cousins Jim (Sue) Mayo, and Brenda (Bob) Noyes, as well as many other cousins, nieces and nephews. In addition to his parents, Ernie was preceded in death by a sister Patricia Elaine Hill, and two special cousins Joe G. Mayo and Barbara Bounds. Ernie leaves behind many beloved friends including his church family and his bowling and golfing buddies.

Please join us in celebrating the life of Ernie on Monday, June 24, 2024, at Mathis Funeral Home in Dexter, visitation is from 9:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. with the funeral service will be at 11:00 a.m. Burial will follow in the Bloomfield Cemetery.

The family requests that donations may be made to St. Joe General Baptist Church, Building Fund, 17537 State Hwy FF, Bloomfield, Missouri 63825 or Stoddard County Children's Home, PO Box 164, Dexter, Missouri 63841.

Mathis Funeral Home in Dexter is assisting with arrangements.

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