



Albert "Al" Block

January 5, 2013

Albert (Al) Block, PhD, 88, passed away peacefully on January 4th at his home in Gainesville, Florida. He was born on September 28, 1924 in Brooklyn, New York to Maurice and Jean Block.

Al graduated from Brooklyn's Samuel J. Tilden High School in 1941 and immediately left his childhood home to join the US Army's 14th Armored Division. He served on the front lines in

Europe until the end of WWII and helped to liberate several prisoner of war camps. He remained

in the US Army Reserve and was recalled to serve during the Korean war. He retired with the rank of Major after 25 years.

A naturally gifted musician, Al used the GI Bill to pursue his passion after the war. He received his

BA and MA in Music from NYU while minoring in education. A teacher encouraged him to apply

to the prestigious Juilliard School. Al reconsidered, though, choosing to leave his New York City

home once again. He made his way to Miami where he began teaching elementary school,

working as a reading specialist in the Dade County school system, and

playing piano in several popular local venues.

Al was as passionate about learning and education as he was for music. He quickly found additional work teaching English to immigrants at Miami Dade Community College at night. It was there that Al met the love of his life, another young instructor named Judy. Al and Judy Block were married in 1964.

Al soon began work on his PhD in Education at the University of Miami where he helped launch the first Head Start program. He became the director of the JFK Early Childhood Program, a cooperative effort between the Dade county school system and Miami Dade CC. He was hired as a Professor of Education at the University of Florida, and he and Judy moved to Gainesville in 1966. In 1968, Al became Chairman of Early Childhood Education at UF. In 1971 Al and Judy founded Brentwood School in Gainesville, which is still thriving today.

Brentwood remains an integral part of his legacy. Two of his sons Ken and Jeffrey, graduated from Brentwood School in the late 1970's, while his grandson Chance graduated just last year.

His Granddaughters Marley and Alaina currently attend Brentwood as well. Al served as Director of the school for over a decade before accepting a position as Director of Student Support Services at Santa Fe College in Gainesville, where he served for 15 years before retiring.

Throughout those 15 years he also taught Early Childhood Education classes

for the Nova

University graduate program.

The center of his universe was without question his family. His deep love for his wife Judy

was apparent to everyone who knew him and he loved her endlessly. Words are inadequate.

The love, loyalty, unconditional support, and pride that he displayed for his 3 sons Mark, Ken, and

the late Jeffrey Block was a shining example to the world of what fatherhood should truly be. His

face would light up with joy at the mere mention of his grandchildren. The simple sound of their

voices and easy laughter brought him so much happiness. He deeply cherished their endless hugs.

His hearing was damaged by rapid rifle fire in WWII, but Al's ear for music and love of words

never left him. In 2000 he co-wrote the song "Out There" with his son, Ken, that appeared on the

Sister Hazel gold record, Fortress. Throughout his life he played piano whenever he could.

Al possessed a quick wit and a subtle and clever sense of humor. One of his favorite house rules

was that "a bad joke is better than no joke at all". And he whispered bad puns to the end, with a

knowing smile you'd almost miss, if you didn't know better.

Al is survived by his wife Judy of Gainesville, Florida; his son Mark (Debbie) of Fort Lauderdale,

Florida; his son Ken (Tracy) of Gainesville, Florida; his grandchildren Chanson, Marley and

Alaina; his sister Toby Larsson of Thompson Falls, Montana; and his nieces and nephews and other relatives.

Al was preceded in death by his parents Maurice and Jean; his brother Lee; and his dearly loved son Jeffrey.

A celebration of life service will be held at 7PM Monday evening January 7th at the Santa Fe

College Fine Arts Center, 3000 N.W. 83rd Street, Gainesville, Florida.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that contributions be made to the "Jeff Block Memorial

Scholarship" fund at the above address, Santa Fe College.