



Philip Johnston Ballard

April 1, 1947 - March 24, 2023

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Phil Ballard, age 75 of Prattville, Alabama, swept through the Pearly Gates on Friday March 24, with a quick joke to St. Peter about being late for a tee time. He caught his brother Fred on the turn. They probably managed to get in another 18, possibly 36. We’ve seen them do it.

Phil was born in Calvary, Kentucky to Joseph Viella “Doodle” & Mary Elizabeth (Mary Belle) Spalding Ballard. He was the youngest of our beloved Great Eight; Bobby (Doris), Betty (Joe), Charlotte (Jerry), Sally (Pat), Freddy (Joan), Aggie (Jim), and Brenda (Dick).

As a young boy, Phil and his family lived in a stately old home on several acres in Calvary where they fished, played ball and, of course, worked hard from a very young age. Their homestead was owned by his grandfather (Papa), John Ballard. His Papa was an amazing and selfless man. Many of his children raised their families at his homestead. Papa had a profound impact on his children and grandchildren, and especially young Phil. Theirs was an extremely humble upbringing which laid the foundation for Phil’s great character, determination, resourcefulness, compassion for others, and ability to see the humor in most everything.

A 1965 graduate of St. Charles, “Fast Ball” Phil posted a 6-2 record including shut out wins over Adair County and Lebanon. Some folks in Lebanon are still upset about that shut out. He also led the team in home runs. According to his Army buddy, in a letter from October of 68, the only reason Gibson was the best pitcher in the major leagues was because Phil wasn’t there. We think he might be right, but that wasn’t his destiny.

In 1966, Phil enlisted in the United States Army. He was selected by his contemporaries for the highly esteemed position of Colonel’s Orderly on 9 September 66 at a formal guard mount held in the 3d Training Brigade. The Colonel’s Orderly is an old and time-honored position steeped in the military tradition of the United States Army. He was chosen on the basis of possessing the smartest military appearance and having the greatest knowledge of his General and Special guard orders. Phil was deployed to the Republic of Vietnam in 1967 as a member of Company D, 4th Medical Battalion, 3d Brigade Task Force, 4th Infantry Division. His constant and diligent devotion to duty earned him the respect and confidence of his unit. Phil devoted long and arduous hours under adverse weather and combat conditions in his contributions to the success of the 4th Infantry Division Mission in Vietnam. He was proud to serve his Country.

Returning Stateside in 1968, Phil got busy living. He immediately asked for Ann Carol’s hand, and with the blessing of his much respected and loved in-laws, Wallace & Mauritia Ballard, they were married in the fall of 68. They embarked on a great adventure together that lasted nearly 55 years.

In 1970 Phil was hired by L&N Railroad which eventually took he and Carol and their young family to Birmingham, Alabama. In 1977 he was transferred once again to Montgomery, and they made Prattville their home. As a Claims Agent for the Railroad, and as a Combat Medic, tragedy was not unfamiliar to Phil, which is probably why he truly didn’t sweat the small stuff. He lived his

life with integrity and inspired and encouraged those around him to do the same.

Phil had a wonderful singing voice, turning down many an invitation to join the St. Joseph's choir. He did play on the church softball team at the insistence of his friend Abner who knew they'd win a lot more games with Phil on the team. He was a master gardener and planted the most wonderful summer gardens, tomatoes were his specialty. Many a neighbor in Camellia Estates enjoyed a basket of tomatoes and vegetables from Phil's Garden. Throughout the late 70's and into the early 90's Phil spent a great deal of time monitoring the condition of his tires. This was at the request of his Mother-in-Law, Mauritia. His flat tire record travelling back and forth from Alabama to Kentucky was better than his pitching record at 54-1. As he pointed out, it wasn't really a "flat tire" because the wheel flew off the van. So, we're going to permanently amend his record to 55-0.

Speaking of records, Phil was an "amateur" sportsman. He took up bowling at the age of 17 at a local bowling alley managed by his brother Bobby. He had a long and prolific bowling career. Phil was named the Senior All-Star Southeast Bowler of the Year in 2000, inducted into the SASBA Hall of Fame in 2006, USBC Senior Bowler of the Year 2007-2008, USBC Senior All Star team in 2008 and 2010 and inducted into the USBC Alabama Hall of Fame in 2013. Phil had over a dozen 300 games but rolling an 807 series on his 62nd birthday may have been his highlight. He is definitely a bowling legend in the Alabama River Region.

As competitive as he was, he was not above throwing a match. In the early 80's he was in the final frame of a tournament at Montgomery Lanes. Phil had an easy spare to pick up for the win. He had picked that spare up a hundred times. He blew it. Walking out, I grabbed his hand and asked him, "Hey Dad,

what happened? Why'd you miss that spare?" He quietly said, "They have a newborn at home and need the money more than we do." That was Phil.

In addition to his bowling exploits, Phil took up golf after returning from the service, and was a fixture at Prattville Country Club from the mid 80's on. At one time he carried a four handicap, and he had three holes-in-one that we know about. He was well liked and respected by his golf buddies. Some of the best times of his life were spent with his brothers Bobby and Freddy on the golf course. He taught his children to play and passed on his love for the game to them.

As a lifelong Kentucky basketball fan, he could often be heard yelling about bad calls during the game and then having an in-depth discussion of UK's performance with his brother Bobby, after the game. Proximity to Atlanta made him a Braves fan from the late 70's onward, and Skip Caray provided the background music for many a summer evening.

All that aside, if you asked Phil what he was most proud of, he would tell you his greatest accomplishment was convincing the love of his life, Carol, to be his wife. He was also very proud of his children and grandchildren. Although he gave all the child rearing credit to Carol, he made profound and lasting impacts on his kids.

He was preceded in death by his parents, J.V. and Mary Belle Spalding Ballard; three sisters, Betty Mudd, Sally Thomas, Brenda Davenport, and his brother Fred Ballard.

He is survived by his loving wife Carol. Through thick and thin, in good times and bad, for 54 years she never left his side. She was right about most things, but, for the record, Phil was right about the age of the Lanham twins.

Phil is also survived by his son Jude, daughter-in-law Inger, grandson William Philip, daughter Jennifer, son-in-law Ryan, and granddaughter Elizabeth Ryan. Siblings Bobby, Charlotte, and Aggie (Jim). Brother and Sister in-laws, Joan Ballard, Brenda Salyers, Steve and Linda Ballard, and Gerard and Judi Ballard. As well as over a hundred nieces, nephews, great and great-great, nieces and nephews, many of whom called Uncle Phil their favorite. He loved them all.

Befitting an April Fool's Day baby, Phil was a real jokester and a rascal until the end. Having the quickest of wits, laughter was always his best medicine. Everyone has their favorite story about Phil, please feel free to share yours with the family to jennifer_brown54849@yahoo.com

The family plans to host a party celebrating the amazing life of Phil Ballard in Kentucky this summer. Details forthcoming.