

Jackie Jean Mitchell, 88, was born in Cairo, Ill., on June 4, 1923. He died on Thursday, Oct. 20, 2011.

He was a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, brother and drummer.

He served in the military during World War II in the Air Force band. His career included 30 years as an exporter and many years in sales. He was also an inventor and author. He invented numerous board games for children and adults that were produced and sold around the country such as the popular “Know Your America” and “I Believe in Santa Claus.” He loved to use his children and grandchildren as his game “testers.”

After retirement, he moved to Arkansas where he joined and later led the Bella Vista Big Band. It ultimately became the Jack Mitchell Big Band. He led the band for almost 20 years, leading it to perform at both of President Bill Clinton’s inaugural balls in Washington, D.C. He was recognized for his lifetime of musical achievement when he was inducted into the Arkansas Entertainers Hall of Fame in 2007.

After moving to Cleveland, he continued to use his artistic skills – playing drums on a regular basis in the Broad Street United Methodist Church contemporary service as well as with the Greater Cleveland jazz band, and by taking courses at Lee University.

He had a deep and abiding faith. He was active in church throughout his life serving in many leadership and musical roles. He was currently an active member of Broad Street United Methodist Church. It is a faith he has shared and passed on to his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

He was larger than life, quick with a joke, and a friend to everyone. He could often be found with a drumstick in his hand or tapping on any surface he could find. He never saw a problem, only an opportunity to try something new.

He had a quiet generosity and he loved Christmas. Many children had a wonderful Christmas morning who would have done without because of him. He will be greatly missed, but fondly remembered by everyone who knew and loved him.

He is survived by Bettye, the great love of his life and his wife of 66 years; six children: Jackie and husband, Jim, of Cleveland, Libby and husband, Tom, of Forsyth, Ga., Troy and wife, Mary, of Austin, Texas, Curt of Cleveland, Dan and wife, Barbara, and Tom and wife, Jeanette, all of Overland Park, Kan.; he also left behind 11 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren; grandchildren: Mary Hambleton (Evan) of West Chester, Pa., Sara Christi (Chris) of Nashville, Rebecca Lay (Andy) of Cleveland, Matthew Perry (Anna Ryan) of Forsyth, Ga., Mitchell Perry (Tarver), of Macon, Ga., Bryan Mitchell currently serving in Afghanistan, Marilyn Mitchell of Park Forest, Ill., Tim Harte, Mike Harte, and Brandon Mitchell, all of Overland Park and Drew Mitchell of Austin, Texas; great-grandchildren: Knox and Ella Hambleton, A.J. Lay, Jillian Harte, Jack and McGahran Perry, Will Perry and one great-grandchild who is soon to arrive; his grandchildren thought he was the very best granddaddy ever; brother, Randall and his wife, Carol, of Oceanside, Calif.; his little sister, Alice Fisher, of Franklin; and several nieces and nephews.

The funeral will be held at noon Tuesday, Oct, 25, 2011, in the chapel of Ralph Buckner Funeral Home with the Rev. Reed Shell and the Rev. Debbie Stokes officiating.

There will be a private interment at Chattanooga National Cemetery with a white dove release ceremony concluding the service. Grandsons will serve as pallbearers.

The family will receive friends from 5 to 7 p.m. Monday, Oct. 24, 2011, at the funeral home.