



Dr. Billy Joe Fairless

September 27, 1939 - November 3, 2019

Billy Fairless, age 80, passed away on November 3, 2019. Billy was born in Johnson County, IL on Sept. 27, 1939. He was the son of Shelby Remember Fairless and Mabel Jane (Harner) Fairless. He was a brother to Margaret Evelyn, Peggy Sue, Shelby Gene and Bobby Laverne Fairless. He and his wife, Elizabeth Ann Raley had two daughters, Liza Ann and Lena Ann. He had four grandchildren, Shelby & Derrick Linaweaver and Amelia & Benjamin Rylak. Billy attended Veach Grade School for three years and then Vienna Grade & High Schools through graduation. Billy's father passed away while he was in the 7th grade. He lived with his grandmother, Lena Fairless through his freshman year in high school. After that, he earned his own living. Billy was fortunate to be able to play both baseball and basketball for VHS. He was selected as the most valuable athlete for the first two years, 1956 & 1957, that award was presented by VHS. Billy was converted & baptized at the First Baptist Church in Vienna in 1957. He graduated from high school the same year and started attending Southern Illinois University in the fall, majoring in chemistry with a math minor. Billy worked at many different jobs to pay his way through high school & college including jobs with Cates Grocery in Vienna, the Veach Service station in Vienna & the Truck Stop in West Vienna, Mount's funeral Home & for many area farmers. Billy attempted for several years, along with Ronald Harner, Lowell Ross & Eddy Shoemaker, to average hauling 1000 bales of hay/day during one week while being paid 1 cents/bale and never quite succeeded. While working for the Mount Funeral Home, Billy

participated in several autopsies seeing what the lungs of a smoker and the liver of an alcoholic look like at the time of death. He picked up from the side of U.S. Hwy-37 the body of a man beaten to death in a mob fight over control of prostitution in Southern Illinois, including that at Curve Inn near Buncombe, IL. While working as an ambulance driver/assistant, he participated in collecting body parts and in trying to reassemble them after highway accidents. These experiences at a young age may have been partly cause for Billy's giving priority to hard work, facts and truths and his impatience with lazy & dishonest people.

At the beginning of his senior year at SIU, Billy realized he would be unable to graduate because required classes were being taught at the same time so he left SIU and attended mortuary school, first in Chicago, IL and then in Louisville, KY. While attending the Kentucky School of Mortuary Science, working at Girdler Catalyst in Louisville & attending the University of Louisville, Billy met Elizabeth Ann Raley, a secretary at Girdler Catalysts, and they were married on Dec. 20, 1962 in Louisville, KY.

After graduating from mortuary school and working in chemical research for two years, Billy returned to SIU and graduated in 1963. He then attended the University of Louisville for one year as a graduate student studying biological effects of magnetic fields before transferring to the University of Houston where he earned a M.S. in Molecular Biology and a Ph. D. in Chemistry, both from the College of Biophysics. For his MS degree, Billy studied the physical chemistry of a large protein trying to discover why it is a very good antigen. For his Dissertation Research, Dr. Fairless used nuclear magnetic resonance spectra to study changes in the shapes of retinal isomers during vision and he completed quantum mechanical calculations to relate experimental NMR spectra to molecular structures. After teaching organic chemistry for medical students at the University of Louisville for one summer, Dr. Fairless completed his education as a research associate at Princeton University conducting research on chemical reaction mechanisms with Professor Maitland Jones. Dr. Fairless started his career as an Assistant Professor of Chemistry at The

University of Southern Indiana in Evansville, IN. In addition to teaching general, analytical, physical and biochemistry classes, Dr. Fairless served on many faculty committees. In this role, he coordinated the design and construction of the first three buildings constructed on what is now the ISU campus and he recommended salary increases and promotions for faculty members. One of Dr. Fairless' USI chemistry students, Oliver John Logsdon, started a scholarship, still awarded annually, in his and Dr. Howard Dunn's names. Dr. Fairless was promoted to Associate Professor and awarded tenure three years after he was first hired and shortly before he was hired to establish the Central Regional Laboratory in Chicago for the newly created Region V of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. Dr. Fairless purchased the instruments, recruited and hired the staff (Dr. Ronan for metals, Dr. Carter for demand parameters, Dr. Sturino for organics by GC/MS analyses, Dr. Bourne for pesticides by chromatographic methods and John Logsdon for the computers) and wrote many of the original methods to analyze environmental samples. The Central Regional Laboratory in Chicago replaced laboratories in Cleveland, Detroit, Evansville, Chicago, Madison and Minneapolis. Samples from the Great Lakes were also analyzed in the Chicago laboratory. Dr. Fairless managed the Chemistry Branch of the Chicago Laboratory of EPA for approximately three years before transferring to Region VII in Kansas City, KS where he continued until his retirement in 1999. While working for EPA, Dr. Fairless and his employees developed most of the procedures used by EPA to analyze environmental samples for chemical pollutants. These included gas chromatography/mass spectroscopy methods for organic compounds, Inductively Coupled Argon Plasma methods for metals, automated methods for the demand & nutrient parameters, Gas Chromatography Matrix Isolation Infrared Spectroscopy methods for organics and remote FTIR methods to analyze for air pollutants up to 1 mile away from the source. These methods are described in one or more of the 75 scientific publications authored by Dr. Fairless.

While working for EPA Regions V & VII as a scientist, manager and administrator, Dr. Fairless participated in many major (some exceeding \$500 million, asbestos in Lake Superior, Times Beach Dioxin case) court cases, testified as an expert witness many times, and he helped other Regions and foreign countries solve their environmental problems. Some of these involved asbestos fibers in air and drinking water, dioxins in air, soil & food, PCBs in air, fish & soil samples, metals and many other pollutants in all media and in many commercial products. Dr. Fairless was also a participant in efforts to extrapolate large volumes of a variety of experimental data into definitions of environmental quality and in measuring the quality of environmental data. For example, if you believe the earth is getting warmer, where would you put the thermometers to find out if you are right? In addition, Dr. Fairless initiated procedures to advance cost-effective management tools that resulted in the Region VII Environmental Services Division being recognized by peers as the most cost-effective Environmental Services Division in EPA.

Dr. Fairless supervised the destruction of most of the known 2,3,7,8-tetrachloro-dibenzodioxin in the world using high-intensity UV radiation and he then supervised the initial use of mobile incinerators to clean soils & sediments contaminated with organic toxins such as the dioxins and the PCBs.

When Dr. Fairless was working at USI in the early 1970s, the Evansville & Vanderberg County Police requested that he teach a class for them on procedures to analyze samples for illegal drugs. He agreed and after that time he continued to advise the city, county & state police in Indiana, Kansas and Missouri on modern analytical methods to analyze for illegal drugs.

After his retirement from EPA in 1999, Dr. Fairless returned to Southern Illinois University and taught chemistry classes at SIU for another five years. Since Dr. Fairless had taught classes showing law enforcement officers how to analyze samples for illegal drugs starting in 1970 when he was still with USI, he was asked to, and did, prepare and teach classes for a candidate forensic chemistry program for the SIU Department of Chemistry. During retirement,

Dr. Fairless served one term on the VHS Board of Education where he took a leading role in ending unethical and illegal practices that had been occurring at that institution for several years. He also did considerable work obtaining information and completing negotiations required for the purchase of land, part of which is currently being used for the VHS football field. The Board purchased enough land so all VHS activities and buildings can be moved to that location as existing facilities becomes obsolete & must be replaced. He then, along with other board members Morris Mott, Scott Obourn and Steve Colson, prepared the football field for use.

Billy and Elizabeth have made their home on their farm near Parker City since 2000. Billy has been an active member of the Walnut Grove Baptist Church just north of New Burnside on RT-45 and is a very very conservative Republican.

As per his wishes, a private graveside service was held at Graves Cemetery near Tunnel Hill. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Graves cemetery Fund c/o Ethel Odum, 5325 Dutchman Lake Road, Tunnel Hill, IL 62972 for upkeep purposes or may be used to create memories with your loved ones.

Join the family for a Celebration of Life for Billy Fairless at Walnut Grove Baptist Church 16445 US 45, New Burnside, IL 62967 on Saturday, December 14, 2019 at 1PM.

Cemetery Details

Graves-Mt. Olive Cemetery

5700 Dutchman Lake Road
Tunnel Hill, IL

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

DEC **14**. 1:00 PM (CT)

Walnut Grove Baptist Church
16445 US 45
New Burnside, IL 62967

Tribute Wall



“ *Dr. Billy Joe Fairless*

January 30, 2023 at 12:19 AM



“ *Dennis And Pat Harner lit a candle in memory of Dr. Billy Joe Fairless*



Dennis and Pat Harner - November 08, 2019 at 04:13 PM



“ *Rev. Richard & Vickey Swiney lit a candle in memory of Dr. Billy Joe Fairless*



Rev. Richard & Vickey Swiney - November 05, 2019 at 01:55 PM



“ *Janet Hacker lit a candle in memory of Dr. Billy Joe Fairless*



Janet Hacker - November 05, 2019 at 10:46 AM

GH

“ Billy was a good friend. We became friends in grade school at Vienna Grade School. We played ball together on teams at the Grade School and at Vienna High School. He will be missed.

Gary Hacker - November 05, 2019 at 07:45 AM



“ My Condolences to Billy's family. Billy and I were friends, neighbors, schoolmates, and almost relatives. Billy's grandfather (Uncle Bill) was a brother to my step-grandfather, Lance Fairless. So I think that made Billy and me step-2nd-cousins. I remember meeting Billy's wife and two girls at a VHS class reunion held at Ferne Cliffe. Billy was a very special man and will be missed. I'm so sorry for your loss.

Marjorie Cullen - November 04, 2019 at 10:31 PM

DH

“ David And Ellen Hill lit a candle in memory of Dr. Billy Joe Fairless



David and Ellen Hill - November 04, 2019 at 05:09 PM

SC

“ Rest In Peace my good friend! Mrs. Case



Sherryl Case - November 04, 2019 at 01:55 PM

DS

“ We are so sorry to hear of the passing of you dad and husband. Bill was so good to us when we first were married, allowing us to live at the Kearney farm and learn how to live the farm life. Doug learned so much from Bill and always talks about him and how smart of a man he was! We learned how to bottle feed calves and deliver calves from their mamas, take care of fencing and lots and lots of mowing! It was such a blessing to get to know your parents. Hugs to all of you.

Dana and Doug Starzl - November 04, 2019 at 09:34 AM

GH

“ Billy was a good friend. We played ball together on the teams at Vienna Grade and High School. He was an all around good person. He will be missed. Gary Hacker

Gary Hacker - November 04, 2019 at 08:10 AM

DH

“ Dallas & Charlene Harner lit a candle in memory of Dr. Billy Joe Fairless



Dallas & Charlene Harner - November 04, 2019 at 07:46 AM

DH

“ Dennis And Pat Harner lit a candle in memory of Dr. Billy Joe Fairless



Dennis and Pat Harner - November 04, 2019 at 07:35 AM

DF

“ Going 2 miss him ,he helped me a lot, and always loved him stopping by and have our little talks.

Darrell Ford - November 04, 2019 at 07:20 AM

DH

“ David And Ellen Hill lit a candle in memory of Dr. Billy Joe Fairless



David and Ellen Hill - November 04, 2019 at 12:06 AM

BR

“ Bobby Rentfro lit a candle in memory of Dr. Billy Joe Fairless



Bobby Rentfro - November 03, 2019 at 11:37 PM

JW

“ Jane Ross Wright sent a virtual gift in memory of Dr. Billy Joe Fairless



Jane Ross Wright - November 03, 2019 at 10:29 PM