



Landess Leon Mills

May 13, 1927 - February 16, 2025

IN MEMORY OF:

Landess Leon Mills

Serving Location:

CRAIN PLEASANT GROVE-MURDALE FUNERAL HOME

31 Memorial Drive, Murphysboro, Illinois

Landess Leon Mills, 97, passed away Sunday, February 16, 2025. Mills was born May 13, 1927, in Malden, Missouri.

He was the first of five children born to Faye and Leon Mills. His siblings are Robert Mills (d. 2003), Jeanette Hudgins (d. 2012), Mike Mills (d. 2020), and Mary Pat Mills.

He left high school to enlist in the Merchant Marines. He was stationed in Japan in World War II, and transferred into the Army while there. After the war, he returned to Murphysboro, where he married Julia Rose (Judy) Wright, in 1945.

Never without his trademark cigar, Mills was a sharp entrepreneur and an

integral fixture in the Murphysboro business community and beyond. A wheeler and dealer all of his life (his brother, Mike, joked that he was a loan shark), he returned from the military with enough money to fund his first business.

Leveraging his family's knowledge of the wholesale business, he bought a station wagon from his uncle, Jody Mills, who operated Dunklin Wholesale, in Kennett, Missouri, soon expanding with the purchase of a panel truck. He traveled throughout Southeast Missouri, Southern Illinois, and Western Kentucky selling novelties and health and beauty aids to local grocery stores. Eventually, he had six trucks on the road, servicing the region. Melody's Toy Shop followed, along with the purchase of a wholesale candy and paper business. During this time, he invested in college bookstores in Carbondale and Cape Girardeau, was a primary investor in the development of Lake Chautauqua, and part owner of the Logan House hotel and restaurant. He was relieved to break even in oil well investments.

In December 1970, he opened the highly successful Mills Distributing Company at 214 N. 17th Street in Murphysboro. People came from miles around to shop for small appliances, gifts, jewelry, and more at this well-stocked catalog showroom. In the late 1970s, he expanded the company with locations in Sikeston, Missouri, and Mount Vernon. The store closed in 1991 as the arrival of the University Place Mall and Wal-Mart effectively destroyed independent family store businesses throughout Southern Illinois.

Mills served as a long-time alderman for the City of Murphysboro and was an active member of the United Methodist Church, Elks, American Legion, and VFW. He was an avid outdoorsman, hunting and fishing well into his 90s.

A long-time member and golfer at Jackson County Country Club, he was known for his wildly colorful golf pants, purchased from Weber's Clothing. He

and Judy traveled the Midwest and South, playing in couples' tournaments, and he cheerfully acknowledged that Judy carried the team. He owned a cabin at Carbon Lake, where the family enjoyed fishing and cook outs.

He was preceded in death by Julie Rose (Judy) Mills, his wife of 64 years, and his grandson, Devin Mills. Mills is survived by his children, Melody Corso, Gary Mills (Brenda), and Mike Mills (Nina), eight grandchildren – Jason Zastrow, Carrie Cookston (Jay), Elizabeth Stiegman (Steve), Casey Satterfield (Jason), Sarah Hammelman, Sean Mills (Macy), and Spencer Mills, and seven great-grandchildren – Ryker Stiegman, Victoria Stiegman, Cecelia Faye Satterfield, Alexander Satterfield, Whitley Mills, Greyson Mills, and Charlotte Hammelman – as well as his sister, Mary Pat Mills, brother-in-law John Hudgins, and many much-loved nieces and nephews.

Funeral Services will be held Friday, February 21, 2025 at Crain Pleasant Grove - Murdale Funeral home with Rev. Marty McMichael officiating and military honors by the Jackson County area veterans. Visitation will be held the day of the service at the funeral home from 10:00 AM until 11:00 AM.

Interment will follow the funeral service at Pleasant Grove Memorial Park.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the United Methodist Church of Murphysboro.

Crain Pleasant Grove-Murdale Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

Cemetery Details

Pleasant Grove Memorial Park

31 Memorial Dr.
Murphysboro, IL 62966
(618) 687-1145
crain@crainsonline.com

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB 21. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Crain Pleasant Grove-Murdale Funeral Home - Old 13
31 Memorial Dr.
Murphysboro, IL 62966
(618) 687-2500
crain@crainsonline.com

Funeral Service

FEB 21. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Crain Pleasant Grove-Murdale Funeral Home - Old 13
31 Memorial Dr.
Murphysboro, IL 62966
(618) 687-2500
crain@crainsonline.com

Interment

FEB **21**. 12:15 PM - 12:45 PM (CT)

Pleasant Grove Memorial Park
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