

Friends: Hemingway was a 'gentleman'

Companions say they will miss his humor, support

By Karen Bossick
Special to The Idaho Statesman

KETCHUM — A piece of Ketchum lore will be laid to rest in Ketchum's cemetery when Jack Hemingway is buried there next to his famous father this month.

Gone will be the sandy-haired man who greeted townspeople and tourists alike with a broad smile and a gregarious "Hi, I'm Jack."

"He'd never trade on his famous name," said Jack Hemingway's longtime tennis, fishing and hunting buddy Mark Scribner, of Hailey. "He'd say, 'Oh, so you're a writer. My father was a writer, too — he wrote books.' Then, after 15 minutes, you'd deduce who you were talking to."

Jack Hemingway died early Saturday morning following complications from heart surgery. The 76-year-old son of writer Ernest Hemingway suffered a heart attack in New York en route to Europe, where he had planned to hunt and fish.

As the oldest of Ernest Hemingway's three sons, Jack Hemingway delighted in many of the same things his famous Dad did: writing, hunting, fishing and watching boxing.

"To some degree he searched for that common ground. But he didn't do it to live up to his Dad's legacy. He did it because he genuinely enjoyed it. And he especially enjoyed being out there with friends," said Butch Harper, a retired Forest Service employee who lives in Ketchum.

"Whenever we'd take him over some lettuce from our garden, he'd say, 'If you're going to bring over some lettuce, make sure you come at wine time.' He was fascinating because he was a voracious reader — knowledgeable about any subject

you'd bring up. Mention a certain duck and he'd tell you where it nested. Mention the Yukon Delta and he'd tell you all about the trouble it was in. We all lost a lot when we lost Jack."

Scribner met Hemingway at a tennis tournament at Warm Springs Tennis Club, where Hemingway played tennis four or five times a week, two to five hours at a time.

Hemingway, who had played on the college tennis team at Sonoma State College in California, brought his daughter Mariel's daughters to the club for lessons during the summer. And he helped with the junior tennis program, donating both rackets and moral support.

"Some of the kids he's helped over the years are in their mid-30s now. But he followed them, asking what college they were going to and that kind of stuff," said Scribner, a tennis coach. "He always knew their names. It was never 'Whatever happened to that blond-headed kid?'"

A decorated World War II hero who spent six months in a German prisoner-of-war camp, Hemingway did a little bit of work in the investment field. He wrote a book, "Misadventures of a Fly Fisherman: My Life With and Without Papa."

And he and his two brothers formed a corporation to earn royalties from the family name.

The only other time he used the family name was to save Silver Creek Preserve, a world-class trout preserve near Picabo where his father spent afternoons duck hunting after he'd finished his morning writing ritual.

As an Idaho Fish and Game Commissioner from 1971 to 1977, Hemingway also spearheaded an effort to make many of Idaho's streams catch and release. "When the older guys resisted the idea, he told me, 'You've just got to wait until they die off. Then we'll get the young guys on board,'" Harper recalled.

For many years, Hemingway

lived along the Big Wood River about five miles north of Ketchum — a mountain town where he loved to hike with his Brittanys Bozzle and Partridge and his setter Bosa, whom he had to put down because of a bad heart just before his own death.

"He was the best fisherman I've ever fished with. A great fly-tier, very innovative with his fly patterns and a wonderful fly caster," said Gene Steiner, who owns Chateau Drug Store in Ketchum.

After his first wife, Puck, died, Hemingway married again and built a home a stone's throw from Main Street along Trail Creek.

He also owned a home near prime hunting grounds along the Grand Ronde River in the southeastern corner of Washington.

He always seemed to be on the go, whether on a trip to Iceland or Alaska in search of big salmon and steelhead or a day trip to Gooding, where he'd recall his father hunting with the late Sen. Frank R. Gooding, for whom the town was named.

Always, he'd point out a hill with good chukar hunting, a piece of desert ground that the sage grouse frequented.

"He'd call and say 'Hi, it's me. I'm going to Canada, and on the way home I thought we could stop in Montana and shoot some ducktail.'" Harper recalled.

Even while camping out, Hemingway tried to stay in touch with the wide world of sports — namely boxing and tennis matches, which he analyzed in detail — through a satellite dish the size of a plate-glass window mounted on his van.

Scribner recalled one time when Hemingway knocked the dish off his van when he backed into a power line near White Bird.

"I looked at it, thinking there's \$3,000 or \$4,000 lying in the streets. He was practically lying in the street laughing," he recalled.



Saying goodbye: Friends in Ketchum remember Jack Hemingway, shown on April 11, 1999, as a fun-loving, giving companion. Hemingway, an Idaho outdoorsman, writer and son of author Ernest Hemingway, died early Saturday. He was 76. Members of Hemingway's family decided Friday to remove him from life support systems at New York-Presbyterian Hospital Weill Cornell Medical Center.

The Associated Press file photo

While his father grew dependent and dark in his later years, Hemingway was always laughing, always fun to be around, his friends said.

"The first time he took me hunting, I took a shot before the bird was scarcely eight feet away from me. He teased me, 'You might want to let it get a little farther from you, give the bird a sporting chance.' And then he laughed. He laughed after everything," Scribner said.

Hemingway was as generous as he was fun-loving. When Scribner asked him if he could give one of the young tennis players \$75 for college books, Hemingway showed up at his door that afternoon with "an even hundred so the young man can have some spending money, as well."

"He gave me three or four fly-fishing rods, three or four guns and all sorts of books to read about hunting and fishing. And

when we went fishing out of state, he'd buy me the licenses," Scribner said.

Occasionally, people would hound the son of Ernest Hemingway, accusing him of poaching just to get his goat or telling him the reason he was such a good fly-fisherman was because of his dad. He would smile, never letting them know they were trying his patience.

"He was a genuine gentleman," Steiner said.

Mark Scribner met Ernest Hemingway's son, Jack, in August 1982 in Ketchum, Idaho. Mark and Jack first met while playing singles against each other in a tennis tournament at the local tennis club in Sun Valley. They had so much fun playing, that they decided to go out for a beer after. Ironically, Mark's dad's name is Charles Scribner, which is the same name as the Publisher of Jack's mom's book. They quickly realized they were about to become very good friends.

In 1985, Mark took over the position as the Director of Tennis at the Woodside Racquet Club. Jack called mark and asked for lessons; they started hitting together and soon became very best friends. When Jack found out that Mark liked to fish, they started fishing together as well. Jack was an all-around very positive person, especially when it came to learning more about tennis. He was very respectful and appreciative about what Mark was teaching him on the court, just as Mark was very appreciative of everything Jack was teaching him about fishing and hunting.

At the time, Mark's parents were living in Japan and traveling a lot for work, leaving him financially unsettled as an only child. Jack always made sure Mark had a place to go for Thanksgiving and Christmas – he always had an enormous heart.

In June 1988 Jack's first wife, Puck, passed away, so he decided to move out and sell his house. Mark helped him move for a few days, moving everything from literature to fly rods to televisions. Jack ended up giving Mark several things from his married life that he had no desire to hold onto. Among these items was Jack's 22-Gauge Browning Rifle; Mark remembers Jack saying it was a very good, nice gun.

He also gave Mark a 16-Gauge Winchester Rifle; Jack said this was his father's gun and he wanted Mark to have it. He was very nervous to receive this gun, concerned that it was the gun Ernest used to take his own life, so he took it to Tillie Arnold. She informed Mark that the gun Ernest used to commit suicide had been destroyed, so there was nothing to worry about. She also confirmed that the gun given to Mark was indeed one of Ernest's guns. Mark was very honored to receive this gun, and put it away for safe keeping until this day.

Mark was also very close to Puck, Jack's first wife; she was a very stern, kind woman who reminded Mark of his mother. He knew Muffet and Margaux very well, but wasn't as close with Mariel.

Mark has tons of great memories with Jack. What he misses most about Jack was his laugh, and his amazing ability to turn every bad situation into a positive and humorous one. Jack was always very generous with the kids mark coached...Mark once went to Jack asking if he could donate a couple hundred dollars to a kid that was trying to go to college. Jack wrote a check for \$1,000 and gave it to Mark for the kid, saying "well, the kid needs to be able to eat, and go on a date every now and then".

Jack could have been very overstated and egotistical, coming from the family that he did, but Jack had none of those things. He was always very humble, understanding, kind and gentle. He loved his family and would do anything for them, but he had no desire to be in the public eye.

Jack was a pure hunter and an excellent fisherman – he was the best fisherman Mark has ever seen.

Jack passed away the day before Mark's 40th birthday. He feels very blessed to have had someone like that in his life, a man who was both a father figure and a close friend. The two of them had a very special relationship and Mark misses him every single day.