

A TRIBUTE TO JUG SHANNON

I tried off and on all weekend to write a suitable response to the passing of Jug Shannon, something of my memories of his influence on my life and perhaps on his contribution to the life of Menard. I remember meeting him at football practice in Fall, 1947, when I was a sophomore and bench warmer for the MHS winning football team. He may have been introduced by our new coaches, Guy Wheeler and Ace Amos, but all I remember is that he was welcome among us, and he was there at practices and at all the football games.

It is difficult and somewhat disappointing to be unable to write down how a person has influenced your life. Much happened between those days of football and the last time we talked and laughed in his room at the Menard Manor. But I know he was important in shaping my attitude on the value of being a human and respecting all humans. The church filled with people of Menard and others of all colors and shades at his funeral and celebration of transition is good evidence that he also was important to a lot of other people.

It seems like we have always lived in troubling times. For a young man entering college and the army during the Korean conflict, it was important for me to realize that others have lived through drastically worse experiences. I was in college when there was a Texas law that restricted the serving of African Americans and whites in the same state-supported dining room, a policy that often carried over by tradition to other eating establishments. It was worse in other states, and it had been worse in past generations. Besides death and starvation, there is probably nothing much worse than discrimination. In the army and through many years of teaching, I felt the gentle reminder of what Jug might have said, "Arrange what has been given to you and deal with it the best you can, and make no excuses."

Sometimes we want to elevate the memory of a person to a higher level than all the rest, to sainthood, as in the formal declaration of the Catholic Church. Jug would never have said that he was a saint, and his patient spirit would probably not have driven him to march with Martin Luther King, but he had to deal with it in his own way. All I remember is that he was a special person to me, that he helped shape my feelings toward other human beings, and that it was a good thing.

Jake Landers, 20 Feb 2011