

A Tribute to Jack Ware Jr.

Jack was one of the first people I met when I moved to Cleveland and happened to stop into the Coast Guard Club on East 9th Street downtown. It didn't take long to realize that Jack practically owned the place. He knew everyone, and everyone knew Jack.

Jack Ware Jr. was larger than life. His charisma, charm, booming laugh, and genuine love for people filled every room he entered. He had a way of lifting everyone's spirits without even trying. If Jack was around, you just felt better. Sometimes you didn't even realize why. That was simply the effect he had on people.

Black Jack's love for his family and friends was as big as his heart. If you were fortunate enough to be counted among his friends, his generosity seemed to know no limits. Rarely did Jack buy anything for himself without purchasing several more to give away. He delighted in surprising people with gifts and absolutely insisted they take them.

If you went shopping with Jack at Costco, Sam's Club, or any military exchange we happened to be visiting, you had to be careful about showing interest in something. The moment Jack **thought** you liked an item; he was ready to buy it for you.

I remember one trip to Solomons, Maryland, when we visited the Navy Exchange. Jack bought a dozen pairs of shoes that were on sale, and I commented that I liked two of the styles he picked – Jack promptly bought me two pair. If you visited his house and stepped into his garage, you'd find shelves stocked with ten of everything, and before you left, Jack would be urging you to take something home.

His generosity extended far beyond material things. As a Master Electrician, Jack freely shared his skills with friends whenever they needed help. The more difficult the project, the more determined he became. He simply refused to quit until the problem was solved. And if you tried to pay him, chances are you'd have to force the money into his hands.

Not long after arriving in Cleveland, I joined the ***Friends of Distinction*** and quickly discovered that Jack was the heart and soul of that great military family as well. At our reunions, Jack never waited to be asked. He volunteered for the biggest jobs, whether it was cleaning, preparing food, seasoning meat, or standing over a hot grill cooking for a crowd.

Whenever Jack missed a reunion, we all felt it. We knew it just wouldn't be quite the same.

For 37 years, the Friends of Distinction have traveled to 16 states and visited over 30 cities, gathering with more than a hundred attendees at most of our reunions.

Yet for me, the best reunions were always the ones Jack attended. No matter where we went, Jack brought energy, laughter, friendship, and, of course, plenty of ***Richard's Wild Irish Rose*** wine to keep the good times flowing.

Beyond our reunions, we shared countless road trips and weekends together. Our weekend jaunts to Niagara Falls and the Air Reserve Base, our trips south to the Navy Recreation Center in Solomons, Maryland, Wacky Wednesdays at the VFW near Andrews AFB, and so many other unofficial gatherings became treasured memories. Often fifteen or twenty members would show up, and the laughter and fellowship were unforgettable.

Back home in Cleveland, we gathered frequently, especially on Browns Football Sundays, and Jack always did more than his share. His parties became legendary, not only for their size, but for the incredible amount of food, ice-cold beer, unlimited spirits, and gracious hospitality he and 'Em' provided. Jack and Emilee always wanted everyone to have a good time, and they made sure we did.

Jack was the best friend I had in Cleveland.

Like all of you, I loved him, and I will miss him deeply.

The memories are endless. The Coast Guard Club. The Yacht Club. The Room. Colombo's. Tucker's Casino. The cookouts, celebrations, road trips, reunions, and countless gatherings with friends. There are simply too many stories to tell.

But beyond all the fun and laughter was a man deeply devoted to his family. Providing for them was one of Jack's greatest sources of pride. He traveled far and wide for his work, from projects in Las Vegas to local jobs at Ford, Lordstown and countless locations throughout Ohio and beyond. As a Master Electrician, he earned the freedom to choose his own path, and he enjoyed working on his own terms.

Yet no matter how busy he was or how far he traveled, Jack always stayed connected. During times when I was sick or facing difficulties, I could count on receiving one of Jack's texts. They were often simple messages, but they carried warmth, encouragement, and friendship. Those words meant more to me than he probably ever knew.

Looking around today at this tremendous gathering, I think it says everything that needs to be said about the kind of man **Jack Ware Jr.** was. This crowd is a testament to a life well lived, to friendships well earned, and to the countless people whose lives were made better simply because Jack was part of them. There will never be another Jack Ware Jr. He was one of a kind. He was loved.

And he will never be forgotten.

Fair Winds and Following Seas my friend, until we meet again