



The life of Mr. Evenson, a former La Grange resident and graduate of Lyons Township High School, was celebrated as his ashes were placed in Arlington National Cemetery May 9 following his death in Yountville, Calif., in November. He was 91.

According to his daughter, one of the last things he said was a quote attributed to Eubie Blake, the ragtime and jazz pianist and composer: “If I’d known I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself.”

He was born in Casper, Wyo., but his family moved a lot because of his father’s job as a traveling railroad auditor, according to Mr. Evenson’s son, Bill Evenson Jr.

He landed one of his first radio roles around age 8 with an appearance on the “Amos ‘n’ Andy” show, according to the Mountain View Voice newspaper of Palo Alto, Calif. He also performed on “The Guiding Light” and “Scattergood Baines.”

He wed Patricia, his sweetheart from Lyons Township High School, and enlisted in the Navy after Pearl Harbor, serving on the USS Mullany, which saw heavy action at Okinawa.

“He watched the kamikaze hitting the gun turret,” his son said.

After the war, his trained voice landed him a job at WCSC-TV in Charleston, S.C.

“He did everything from a stint as Bozo the Clown to reciting ‘The Night before Christmas’ on Christmas Eve,” his son said.

Mr. Evenson also worked at Charleston’s second TV station, WUSN, where, in 1954, station owner Drayton Hastie bought an elephant for a mascot whom he billed as “Suzie Q from Channel 2.” Suzie’s mission was to make public appearances and steal viewers from WCSC, according to a historical commission in Mount Pleasant, S.C .

At WUSN, Mr. Evenson got a call from a source who told him something bad and avoidable had happened at Parris Island, S.C. That led him to be among the first to report on the so-called Ribbon Creek incident, a 1956 Marine Corps training tragedy in which six recruits drowned during a nighttime march in a swamp. For a time, the sensational case threw the Marine Corps into crisis, according to a book about the incident, “CourtMartial at Parris Island.”

He went on to work at WITH-AM in Baltimore, then joined Mutual Broadcasting, the so-called “globegirdling” radio news provider, for which he covered the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations.

In 1963, when Mr. Evenson covered the state funeral of President John F. Kennedy, he took his 14-year-old son, Bill, along so the boy could witness history.

Mr. Evenson and his wife lived for a time near Washington’s Embassy Row. You didn’t have to ask them twice to slip into their cocktail-party finery and head over to the Persian embassy, where the pre-Iranian revolution sumptuousness included tubs — and more tubs — of caviar. The

Evensons also were extras in Otto Preminger's Washington, D.C., film "Advise & Consent," Pamela Evenson said.

In 1979, he broke into a broadcast of Lexington, Ky.'s WTVQ-TV to announce the bulletin about a stampede that killed 11 people at a Cincinnati concert given by The Who.

Mr. Evenson also covered numerous space missions, among them the flight in which Scott Carpenter became the nation's second man in space, a 1962 nail-biter of a journey with glitches some attributed to pilot error and others to equipment shortcomings. But when word came that the rocket had made its re-entry into the earth's atmosphere, Mr. Evenson described the glee he witnessed from his vantage point on a nearby ship, according to the book *Escaping the Bonds of Earth*.

"Believe you me," he said. "This bucket of bolts is really rolling now, and what a happy crew we've got!"

After stops at radio and TV stations in New York, Connecticut and Kentucky, Mr. Evenson retired to Mountain View, Calif. He remained active with a group of announcers and actors who continued to perform old-time radio shows.

His wife died before him after 58 years of marriage, as did a daughter, Rev. Deacon Dana Buchanan. He is also survived by four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.