

T/4 John W. Miner

Location - West-A: R5, C26



Miner



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John W. Miner, jazz historian, veteran of World War II, and former Post-Crescent staff writer and Entertainment Editor, died Saturday, May 24, 1997, of cancer at his home in Oshkosh. He was 77.

He is survived by his wife of 47 years, Gloria Rowlands Miner; a daughter, Barbara G. Miller, and her husband Thomas, of Wausau; a granddaughter, Erin L. Miller; two sisters-in-law, Frances Sontag of Manitowoc and Alice Rowlands, Appleton; five nephews, Douglas, Dallas and Charles Sontag, John Rowlands and William Minch; a niece, Ruth Ann Rowlands; several grand nieces and nephews, and many close friends. He was preceded in death by a son, Kevin W. Miner.

Miner was born August 27, 1919, in Oshkosh, the son of the late Henry D. Miner of Charleston, W.V., and Beulah G. (Murray) Miner of Oshkosh.

He was a 1937 graduate of Oshkosh High School and attended Oshkosh Business College briefly before enrolling at Oshkosh state teachers college (now the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh). He served in the U.S. Army from May 1942 to January 1946 and was stationed in England and France during World War II. After his discharge from service, Miner enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in August 1948. In November of the following year he was married to former Miss Gloria Rowlands of Oshkosh.

His newspaper career spanned 36 years. He was a reporter, assistant city editor and wire editor at the Oshkosh Daily Northwestern from 1948 - 1967; a reporter with the Paper (Oshkosh) from 1967 until its demise in 1971, and a staff writer and entertainment editor with The Post-Crescent from 1971 until his retirement at the end of 1983.

Miner's lifelong passion for "classic" jazz and his devotion to recording and sharing its history began at the beginning of the "Swing Era" in the mid-Thirties when he first heard a broadcast of the Benny Goodman band. He started his present record collection, which he describes as modest, with 78-rpm recordings of Goodman, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Jimmie Lunceford, Bob Crosby, Count Basie, Django Reinhardt, and soon discovered the music of Bix Beiderbecke and other jazz legends of that time. First obtaining information largely from jazz magazines and newspaper entertainment columns, Miner began typing data on jazz band musicians on index cards. He also started collecting what ultimately was to become a virtual data base of information on jazz history and musicians: books,

news clippings, magazine articles, photographs and correspondence.

Miner was not, however, merely a jazz collector. Over the years he wrote countless newspaper reviews of jazz concerts and records, was a contributor to many books and periodicals, and maintained extensive correspondence with jazz researchers in the U.S. and abroad. With Frank J. Gillis of Indiana University, Miner was co-editor of "Oh, Didn't He Ramble," the 1974 autobiography of the late Lee Collins, a gifted New Orleans-born trumpeter.

Having taken up photography after World War II primarily to photograph jazz musicians as the opportunity arose, Miner's photographs have appeared on covers and in liner notes of records albums, and in numerous books, including "Black Beauty, White Jazz" (1982); "The New Groove Dictionary of Jazz" (1988); and "New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album" (1967). He also was recognized for information he contributed to scores of other books on jazz subjects, most recently "West Coast Jazz" by Ted Gioia (1991); "Pee Wee Speaks," the discography of clarinetist Pee Wee Russell by Robert Hilbert (1991); Hilbert's "Pee Wee Russell: The Life of a Jazzman" (Oxford University Press, 1993), and Phillip R. Evans and Warren Vache's forthcoming biography of legendary saxophonist/bandleader Frank Trumbauer. One anecdote serves to illustrate Miner's knowledge of jazz and his journalistic standards. When Random House published "Good Morning Blues: The Autobiography of Count Basie" in 1985, Miner caught numerous misspellings of musicians' names while reading the book. He wasted little time in writing to the publisher to point out the errors, and the correct spellings appeared in the second edition.

Miner was member of the International Association of Jazz Record Collectors and contributed articles to its quarterly journal. He also was a member of the Republican party and the National Rifle Association.

Arrangements have been made for part of Miner's extensive jazz collection to be preserved at Ripon College where items will be available to teachers, students and researchers.

There will be no funeral service. A memorial service will be held at a later date at which some of Miner's favorite jazz recordings will be played. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the American Cancer Society or the Republican Party. Seefeld Family of Funeral Chapels (236-7750) is assisting the family with arrangements.



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T/4 John W. Miner, 69 East Irving street, was with the 3091st quartermaster refrigeration company and won the victory medal, American theater service ribbon, ETO service ribbon with two bronze stars, good conduct medal, two overseas service bars and one service stripe. He entered service May 28, 1942.