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On December 16, the Quad Cities lost a fine and loving mother when Laverne Williams passed away while sitting in a chair in her Spencer Tower apartment in Rock Island. She celebrated her 91st birthday on October 15.

Mrs. Williams' only son, Lourdine "Pat" Patrick, was born in East Moline while she was married to her first husband (also named Lourdine). By the time Pat was nine, he was studying trumpet under his father and the legendary trumpet player Clark Terry, who was living at the Patricks' home.

When Pat was 12, his parents split up and his father moved to California. Soon after, Pat injured his hip playing football. Williams decided to take Pat to Boston for treatment – local doctors had done little to ease his pain – but not before he graduated from John Deere Junior High School in East Moline. Pat had two operations, which required hospitalization for a total of 14 months. He spent close to a year with a cast that reached from the top of his chest to his ankle.

After Pat's recuperation, he and Mrs. Williams moved to the Chicago suburbs, and Pat decided he wanted to play saxophone. Mrs. Williams went out and bought him one. Pat soon learned about the music opportunities at Chicago's DuSable High School, where the famed Captain Walter Dyett taught music, so Mrs. Williams moved the small family inside the city to allow Pat to attend. He played baritone sax in Dyett's dance orchestra along with some soon-to-be-great jazz musicians such as tenor saxophonist John Gilmore (who played clarinet in the orchestra), alto saxophonist John Jenkins, trombonist Julian Priester, and bassist Ronny Brykins.

Pat is most noted for the 35 years off and on he spent as the baritone saxophonist with Sun Ra's Myth Science Arkestra. According to Sun Ra's biography, in the early years the Arkestra used to rehearse in Mrs. Williams' home. Pat also played and recorded with James Moody, Thelonious Monk, Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, Johnny Griffin, Jimmy Heath, Clifford Jordan, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Cannonball Adderten, Nat King Cole, Nancy Wilson, Sammy Davis Jr., Marvin Gaye, Dinah Washington, Muddy Waters, Memphis Slim, and Willie Dixon.

Laverne Williams, 1910-2001

Written by Jimmie Jones

Tuesday, 29 January 2002 18:00

In 1991, Pat died of a leukemia-related illness in Moline.

Mrs. Williams initiated a memorial for Pat at East Moline's Gaines Chapel AME Church in early 1992, and the Mississippi Valley Blues Society featured a memorial for Pat at its 1992 blues festival. Chicago jazz-musician friends performed at both memorials, which were attended by relatives and friends from across the country.

The family legacy remains in good hands. In 1994, Deval Patrick – Mrs. Williams' grandson and Pat's son – was named assistant attorney general and civil-rights enforcer in President Clinton's administration.

I first met Pat Patrick in the early 1980s at a clinic at Augustana College. After the clinic, I chatted with Pat while we waited outside in the rain for Mrs. Williams. I was reminded of this meeting by the rain that was falling at Mrs. Williams' funeral.