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Grandson of jazz great served in Iraq, now wants to serve at home

When you grow up as the grandson of one of the great jazz pianists of all time, you want to carve out your own niche.

Jason Parson is trying to do just that. Parson is a Democratic candidate for Missouri state representative in the 49th district. His opponent in the Aug 5 primary is **Tom McDonald**.

Parson is the grandson of the late jazz pianist **Jay McShann**.

He graduated from Blue Springs High School and from the University of Missouri-Kansas City with a degree in sociology. A member of the U.S. Air Force Reserves, he served as a traffic management coordinator during Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was deployed to Iraq in May 2003 and returned home in May 2004.

His Web site, www.jasonparson.com, says that as the grandson of the internationally renowned jazz pianist, bandleader and songwriter, "Jason has always been guided by greatness and inspired to continually reach for excellence."

I saw Parson at the Rhythm and Ribs Jazz Festival passing out campaign literature. Here's what he had to say.

"If I get elected I want to take some of the experiences that I learned in Iraq as far as building a community, building infrastructure, and bring some of those same types of experiences back here to Kansas City, Raytown and Independence. I served in Iraq to protect our freedoms, our families and our children. Now I'm ready to answer the call of duty right here at home."

His grandfather was one of a kind. And he cast a tremendous shadow.

But by running a credible campaign, Parson can start to emerge from under his grandfather's tremendous aura. His candidacy will also show us whether there's a bounce at the polls for a veteran who served in Iraq.

Travelers treat them like heroes every day when they walk through the airport. But whether voters will treat former soldiers in the Iraq war as heroes when Election Day comes is the operative question?

Submitted by Steve Penn on June 20, 2008 - 5:30am.

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