

Sherwin "Sonny" Jack Leibold

December 11, 1924- May 17, 2006

Eulogized by Lee Leibold

On May 19, 2006

At Mount Sinai Cemetery Los Angeles, California

For those of you who don't know me, I'm Lee and we are here today to remember my Father, a Husband, a Brother, a Grandfather, an Uncle, a Friend, & Neighbor, Sherwin Jack Leibold, who most of you called Sonny.

So, what I really want to know is: why were we calling an 81 year old man, Sonny? I'm sure it had to be his "sunny sunny" disposition.

My Dad was born on December 11, 1924, in Chicago, Illinois. He and I revisited his boyhood home via the wonders of the Internet and Google Earth a few months ago, he was really excited to see familiar streets and houses in his old neighborhood.

I received an e-mail from Herb Maxer, he was a Gregory Elementary School buddy since the 6th grade, another from Sol Africk, who was friends with my Dad from the 1st grade. It was friendships that lasted over 70 years. My Dad was a friend for life. He would do just about anything for somebody if he could.

Dad's parents were: Lewis & Erma Leibovitz. He was the oldest of four children. He always remained close to his Sisters and Brother. Even during the years when miles separated them. Sadly, he lost his youngest Sister - the baby of the family - Sandra, a few years ago, but his dear Sister- my Aunt Deannie with her husband, Uncle Stanley, and his Brother - my Uncle Joe with his wife, Aunt Shirley, are here with us today.

During the Great War, World War II, Dad proudly joined the US Army, like most of the young men of his day, to protect and serve this great nation. I got an e-mail from Jim Doletsky an army buddy of my father who was with him the whole way, while he was in the service. He said when they first went to boot camp at Camp Bowie, Texas that he was jealous of Dad's black wavy hair. He was one of the few guys in basic training without a brush cut.

He was with the 658th Amphibious Landing Division. They were shipped to Fort Ord, California and then on to the "War in the Pacific." They were the guys who got the troops from the ships to the assault shores and up the rivers. My Dad rarely talked much about his exploits, but we do know that he was part of the major invasion to liberate the Philippines from the Japanese. They would have been part of the assault on Japan, if the war had not ended so quickly.

Mr. Doletsky had said that he met Sherwin's family in 1946. He said our grandfather— Lewis owned a tavern and dealt in commodities. Upon hearing this, I became excited.

I thought, maybe "Gold! Or Silver!" Well, no. His commodity was four boxcars of watermelons. The gold and silver would have to wait, until my Uncle Joe got into those. Mr. Doletsky said he had met Sherwin's sister and the twin redheads, referring to Joe & Sandra, who definitely had red hair but were several years apart in age.

In 1951 My Dad married my Mother, Florence Heller.

And in 1953 a Great Gift was sent their way . . . You guessed it . . . Me.

However, one month before I was born, tragedy would hit my dad's family when his father was killed in his tavern.

Time heals and by 1956, Joy came into my Dad & Mom's life: Lynne Joy, my sister.

My father worked in only one industry his entire life, that was the Hobby Industry, and for only 3 companies. He was loyal in many respects and not one to jump around.

He also treated all people with equal respect, no matter who you were, or what you did. It was a trait that I try to follow to this day.

My Dad was then asked by his company to transfer from his home in Chicago to a foreign country called Detroit and open a new branch of the company. So, in 1959, we packed up and moved to the Motor City. By 1961, we had found a new house in the suburbs, in Livonia. As my parents enjoyed entertaining, it soon became a place filled with many friends.

Growing up in the late 50's and early 60's, I didn't know that my father had a secret identity. When I was about 10, a call came to the house asking for Mr. Leibold. I informed the caller that no one lived at our house by that name. Later, my Dad found out that someone had called asking for him, and explained to me that for several years he had used Leibold instead of Leibowitz for business. I guess it was the times. Soon afterwards, my Dad, Mom, Lynne, and I officially became Leibolds, when our name was legally changed.

In 1966, I was Bar Mitzvahed, On June 11 of each year, for the last 39 years I would jokingly call my Dad and ask him if he knew what day it was and if it was now paid off. Their must have been something in the drinks at the Bar Mitzvah...because

In 1967, Baby Scott was born. Immediately we found out that he had health problems, which he has dealt with throughout his entire life. Scott sits here with all of us today as a living miracle, a tribute to my Mother and Father's love and care.

I moved out in 1971 and went away to college, leaving Lynne & Scott at home.

We added another new member to the family in 1977, Beth, my bride of 29 years, and, in 1979, another bouncing boy came into the family, when Lynne married George Custer.

In 1979, I was looking for a new job and ended up working for the same company, United Model, as my Dad. He worked in Michigan. I worked in Arizona, but was supervised through the California office. One month into the job, I got a call from my Dad letting me know that he was my new boss, and that they were moving to California. My parents were happy that they would now be near where his brother and sisters were living. Frankly, if I had known earlier that Dad was going to be my boss, I would not have taken the job, but it was too late -- I needed the income. Prior to this, my Dad and I had always gotten along, but were not big on conversation. However, it was a best thing that ever happened to our relationship. We now had common ground and spoke almost daily to one another.

As I began to travel for United Model, calling on customers and going to trade shows, I learned that my Dad was one of the most well liked and respected people in the industry. At trade shows, strangers would come up to me praising my father. It gave me great pride, and taught me the importance of a good reputation in business.

Beth and I...and Lynne and George were busy. After a while, our families grew. Sonny and Florence were thrilled to become grandparents to Beth's and my sons, Benjamin, born in 1983, and Nathan in July 1985, and to Lynne's and George's sweet baby girl, Rachel, who was born in December 1985. While my mother was called "Bubbum" instead of "Bubbi" because of our oldest son's mispronunciation, Dad was not merely "Grandpa", he was "Papa."

All seemed terrific until September of 1987, when my Mother became ill and passed away on her 60th birthday on January 4, 1988. She is now up the hill from here, where my Dad will be shortly. My Mom had always wanted a room with a view.

Again, time heals. Dad was united with Sonya Kalfen, an old friend of the family. In September of 1988, they were married, and Sonya moved to California. Thanks to Sonya's children, Roberta and David and their spouses Jeff & Suzie, Dad gained a second set of grandchildren in Chicago.

My Dad retired in 1992. He and Sonya did some traveling. They even got to go to Russia, from where my Dad's family originally came. In addition, over the years, they have volunteered many hours of charity work, at hospitals and nursing homes.

They were like Ying & Yang... but more like Bing & Bang, as some would attest.

He and she have enjoyed family milestones, like bar mitzvahs and graduations. One of these milestones was my Brother Scott's marriage to Maritoni in 2003. She is a tremendous addition to our family.

In 2004, we were able to take a 3 generations Boy's trip back east to West Point, Gettysburg and New York City. Nathan and I dragged my Dad all over and almost killed him, not realizing he was 4 pints low in blood, running on a half a tank. It will be a trip Nathan and I will always cherish.

The millennium brought in aches and pains to both my Dad and Sonya, as we all grew older. We are thankful that until the last year or two, Dad enjoyed good health. I want to thank Sonya for going through the last 18 years with my Dad. I know the last several months have been tough.

I always wear around my neck a ring of my Mother's and now it will be joined by a ring of my father's. When I feel blue I will stick my finger in the ring, and know that they will both be with me. I'm sure Scott will do the same with the ring my father left him.

And so, we are all gathered here to bid farewell To Husband, Dad, Papa, Brother, Uncle, Friend, & Neighbor, Sonny Leibold.

Dad, we thank G-d for sending you to us. May G-d bless You. We love you and will always remember you.