

Eulogy for Jack Newhouse (June 19, 1910 – February 11, 2010) written and read by his daughter Judy Miller.

Dad called each of us two months ago. He had decided that he was to die that night. When I spoke to him he assured me that all of his affairs were in order, that he had been blessed with a wonderful and full life, and that it was time. He made me promise to look after myself and my family and he did not want a bunch of tears - he had no regrets and asked that we think about the wonderful times we all had together. I thanked him for his thoughtful words that I would heed. I did want to ask him one question so I said, "How are you feeling Dad?" and he replied cheerfully "Never felt better in my life - not an ache, not a pain".

He defied ill health. When Dad was 87, he had surgery to replace his aortic valve. His surgeon assured us all that it had a 10-year warranty. Of course Dad was concerned about what would happen after the warranty was over and the surgeon assured him that he'd get another. Well, 10 years later the warranty ran out - but not our Dad - the energizer bunny just kept going.

I remember so clearly as a teenager how important the weekends with friends were to me. What was so different was that my friends loved to come over and spend time in our home. The usual question would be, "Newhouse, are your parents going to be home Sat night?" (In most cases that would mean - if parents were out, it meant party time - but not in my case.) My friends loved to spend time with Mom and Dad - that made me proud.

Everyone who knew Dad knew what a terrific golfer he was. And he defied the old saying "What you see is what you get" when playing competition. The less capable they thought he'd be because of his stature and age, the higher their scores and the more money they lost to him. Oh, did he love those games!

To those of us who golf, we know how important one's set-up routine is as we address the ball. Our cousin Glory Wortzman tells the story of the last game she and Dad played together in Palm Springs when he was 93. She'd watch him get up to the ball, take time with his set-up, bring the club back and forth, wiggle that famous wiggle and then drive that ball out there. She wanted to learn from the master so she asked him what he was thinking during his set-up each time. Dad replied "Thinking? I'm just trying to stay awake!"

On Dad's 97th birthday (which was also Father's Day) my Seattle sister Jeanie and I took him golfing in Seattle. Dad jumped behind the wheel of the golf cart (unbeknownst to me he hadn't driven one in 10 years!) with a big grin on his face and off we went to play 9 holes. Being the consummate competitor, after his first drive, he turned to me with disgust and said: "I just can't drive the distance that I used to"but then he softened and with that twinkle in his eyes he continued .."but I can't see as far anymore either so it all evens out" - and back in the golf cart he got! It's a day I will never forget.

David Margolus, a dear family friend could not be with us today, but we wanted to read part of his e-mail:

My memories of him are personal ones. The way he took personal interest in me. He taught me how to grip and swing a golf club on our front lawn when I was about 11 and then again showed me how to chip in your backyard. I remember how he and your mom would have Pam and me over for dinner after my parents passed away. Just the 4 of us. They welcomed Pam into the family as my parents would have, had they been alive when we married. I remember how he doted over Reina and then Cali after they were born. I think he sensed how difficult it was for me not have a grandfather for Reina and Cali on my side of the family and of course he had a thing for girls. I remember how special important it was to us all when he came to Reina's bat mitzvah.

*Please give Esther-Rose and Miriam my hugs and love.
Love David and Pam.*

Sometimes the humour in our family is considered quite irreverent. When Dad moved down to Seattle he realized that it was still cheaper to get his drugs in Canada. So, I was his dealer and happily sent them down to him every 3 months. At one point I remember him saying to me that I should really send him enough meds for 1 year at a time. I told him, "you're 84 years old and there's no way I'm going to get stuck with a year's supply of your meds"! Can you imagine the amount of money we could have saved buying in bulk over the past 15 years?!

As a family we get great glee in poking fun at each other. For example, one afternoon when Mom was leaving to play bridge she remembered that dinner needed to be put in the oven by 5:00 and she knew she wouldn't be home in time (the timer on the stove was broken). So, she left a note for Dad, which read: "Jack please turn on the oven at 5:00 tonight. By the way, the stove is in the kitchen!"

It's legendary that Dad's strengths were not domestic, but when he met his Rosie, he sure wasn't going to let her know that! He soon learned that to be successful in the courting arena he must be able to complete any task with enthusiasm and confidence. This is one of our favorite stories: Rosie was busy in the kitchen one day, washing spinach for a Sephardic dish that she regularly made. She asked Dad if he would mind finishing washing the spinach for her as she had to go out for the afternoon. Of course, Dad agreed enthusiastically to lend a hand. Rosie demonstrated the process. Take one piece of spinach from the bunch, wash each side carefully. Take 1 piece of paper towel, pat each side of the leaf and lay the leaf on the paper towel. Well, this was no challenge for Dad so he happily took over the task. Three hours later, as Rosie entered the house, she heard a whirring sound. When she looked in the kitchen, every surface was covered with paper towel and spinach leaves. She then went into the dining room, where she saw spinach leaves gracefully draped over each chair, and all over the table. As she made her way into the living room, the whirring sound got louder. And lo and behold, Jack Newhouse was using her hair dryer to dry the remainder of the spinach leaves over the couches, chairs and TV. He certainly left an impression on her!

Dad's life with Rosie and her family gave him 24 fabulous years. We'll always be grateful to our Seattle family for welcoming Dad and the rest of us into their lives. Jeanie said he showed them how laughter can change your outlook – how family is the most important thing in the world - and most importantly, from Dad's point of view, he had a brand new audience with whom he could share all his old stories!! For us, although he was far away, we knew he was loved, respected, cared for, and at the end, comforted when we couldn't be by his side.

We all witnessed Dad's impact when he walked into a room. It was like bees to honey. Over the past few days, we have heard so many people describe Dad in the same way we do– fun, funny, generous, kind, charming, loyal. He brought joy to the world. We miss him already.