

Dad Biography for Funeral

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By Valerie Marott

If my father could speak here today he would want to tell you all at least three things: 1. Buy low and sell high! 2. Never stint on healthcare, that's not the place to economize. 3. A car is not an investment. The answer to most questions we asked him was; "a blond, a brunette, and a red head." What would you like for your birthday? Is there anything I can get for you?

The best way to tell you about Dad's childhood is to tell you about his mother, Gurtrude Goldfarb, Gerry for short. She was a character and a persistent one at that. She once tried to get me to wear some pearls with jeans by telling me (Knowing that I was an avowed Francophile) they were from France--that great pearl diving mecca of France, though they were clearly marked "Cultured pearls from Japan." And if she wanted me to eat a donut I was bravely trying to resist, she would insist it was a special diet donut. I began to notice that my father often scheduled her visits during times he had to leave town on business, and when I called him on it, he didn't bother denying it. He just laughed sheepishly and said, "I grew up with her—it's your turn." She had grown up in a very poor Jewish family with ten siblings, and if you believe the family lore, each of them had just one pair of underwear that they had to wash out each night... and that was *before* the depression! So if my Dad was a little...frugal ... there was a reason. Since his Dad Burt, was Italian Catholic, he made a first communion, but after his father died when he was about 11, his mother started to prepare him for his bar mitzvah. On his special day, he was so in demand that he hadn't had a chance to eat all day. When he finally went to partake, he found his mother scooping the last of the Kugle and brisket into a bowl for the dog, but as she lowered it to the floor, he neatly intercepted it, much to the dismay of Fido. Anyone who knows my dad knows he loved to eat, an inherited trait I suppose.

After graduating from high school, he attended Rensaleer Polytechnic, one of the oldest engineering colleges in the country and graduated with a bachelor of science in electrical engineering. Throughout his life, people commented on his deep, rich, mellifluous voice, but few know that he put it to good use as a D.J. at the college radio station. During the summers he was a camp counselor at a Jewish Boys camp and while there roomed with one Sandy Koufax, who would later become the famous baseball player.

After graduating from Rensaeleer Polytechnic, he moved out west and started working for Leer. He met my mother, Patricia, also a transplant from

New York, here in Southern California when he was in his early 20's. He proposed after one month, and married her after four months. They decided they'd like to have 5 boys—a basketball team. They had my sister Pam in 19#\$, and me a couple of years after that. With a baby and a toddler running loose my Dad decided it was high time to pursue his Masters in the relatively new field of Aerospace engineering. He loved real estate even then, but ever a man of duty, he decided that engineering provided a more stable career to provide for his growing family. He worked on many top secret projects connected with putting the first man on the moon, shooting down stuff other people were shooting at us, and later equipping the space shuttle to carry a commercial pay load. When I was 3 we moved to Palos Verdes, which he chose for the already great school system. Now, try not to wince, but he bought our first house for \$36,000. Then, Melissa came along, and the boys basketball team became less and less likely. Mom and Dad played bridge and tennis as a team, and I remember using several of their bridge trophies in imaginary play with my barbies. I also remember them going off to play in their matching tennis whites. On his own he invested in stocks and bonds, and was very good at it, good enough to know to get out of it in the 70's and switch to real estate. Each summer we would pile into the blue Plymouth Valiant station wagon at 5:00 A.M. and take a month long car and camping trip across the country, with my mom as navigator, a thermos of luke warm kool aid at her feet. I dread driving long distances to this day. When the heat was tormenting us for hours, and our thighs were developing rashes from sweating on the vinyl seats and the sisters were fighting and scratching over the limited space in the back seat, especially after Jennifer came along, and Mom was begging him to slow down, he would turn around and say, “Well kids, we're off on our vacation!” Once as we crossed over the border to Montana and he chimed out “We just crossed in to Montana.” And one of us replied, “Is there a bathroom in Montana?”

The marriage went south in the 70's and dad and his best buddy Bob, went to Club Med, Nudist colonies, and did EST training. Dianna Ross was in his EST class, and I had just seen Mahogany, and drawn a picture of her in the yellow sheath with the multicolored sheer sleeves only I added a Chinese dragon to the front. So Dad took it to class and got me her autograph. She gave him tickets to one of her concerts and as we drove around looking for parking he chanted, I am creating a parking space, I am creating a parking space. Finally we found one in the parking lot equivalent of Mongolia, and he proudly said “See, what I have created?” and I snorted, “Couldn't you have created it a little closer?”

When I was 16, Pam was off at college, and Mom and Melissa , and Jen were in Chicago, and I moved in with my Dad. He always used to jog in place, in his underwear while watching the news. One night while I was reading the bible and he was jogging, I heard a crash. My father had had his first heart attack. His only sister, Barbara, an off Broadway actress, died a short while later, around the age of 40. His mother didn't tell him it had happened till a year after it happened because he had just had his first heart attack and was facing surgery and recovery at the time.

The 70's passed in to the 80's and my dad continued to invest in income properties, while maintaining his engineering career. Now he specialized in launch systems and was often called to Cape Canaveral in Florida. My father began attending the Church of Religious Science attracted by its lack of emphasis on traditional religion and its positive message. He also hoped to meet women there. One Sunday while suffering from a hangover after a particularly hard night of partying from which he was recovering uncharacteristically quietly behind dark glasses, he met Dianne. Who was this quiet, shy man standing off to the side. He intrigued her and before she had discovered his true gregarious nature, they fell in love. But before moving in together there was the issue of the animals. We weren't allowed to have indoor pets growing up, but Dianne had two dogs and three cats. The deal was that as they died they would not be replaced. I think we all know what happened to that little compromise. Over the years they took cruises, vacationed in Hawaii, and dealt with Dad's various heart and knee problems. He sure was lucky to have married a nurse!

When Dad retired from Aerospace, they moved back up on the hill and for a brief period, Dad had time to instruct Dianne on how to load the dishwasher just right. It was decided that for the sake of the marriage, he would become a full time realtor. They also joined various volunteer organizations for the arts, such as Bravo which supports the Norris Theater and they regularly ushered for the Civic Light Opera productions. Dianne became very active in cat rescue, and Dad perfected the art of the deal. But he and Dianne always ate dinner together to share their days. In fact I think several of the waitstaff from Marie Callendar's and Mimi's are mentioned in the will. During the ten weeks he was in the hospital, Dianne remarked how with both their busy schedules they hadn't had a chance to make as many memories as she would have liked, and that was something she was hoping to change when he got out. As busy as he was though, he still had time to call the daughters almost every weekend, not just to find out about how we were doing but to gather intelligence on the other sisters. Things that perhaps we weren't sharing with him. In this way he gathered both the

information we chose to tell him and that which we might have preferred remain secret from him.

During the last year he talked of writing a book about real estate to share his knowledge with others. Such as how to find underperforming investment properties, get good deals on them because they were underperforming, and then fixing the things that were causing them to perform poorly to turn them in to winning investments.

He spent most of his life making sure his children and his wife would never want for anything, sacrificing things for himself along the way. Even though Dad was extremely patriotic and would only buy American cars, he secretly longed to own a Mercedes, but since a car is not an investment, he just couldn't bring himself to buy one, though he easily could have. I tried many times to replace the tattered briefcase my sisters and I gave him years ago, but he would have none of it, even though it began to look like something a refugee would be embarrassed to carry. Our mistake? Telling him how much we'd spent on the first one. If he couldn't decide between two pairs of slippers and we said "Just take both!" He looked at us as if we had just asked him to eat a live grub like on Survivor.

In his last weeks at the hospital, I had the privilege of performing small services for him to try to repay the insurmountable debt I owe him. I got to give him foot rubs which the medication made him call car washes, and I got to adjust his pillows, read him the news and feed him his dinner. And at this time I would like to say thank-you to Dianne for taking care of him through all his past medical crises, from knee surgery to angioplasties, to Melissa for doing any and all research asked of her on any disease any doctor even mentioned to us, and to Pam most of all, who came every day to visit him no matter how busy she was or how long it had been since she had seen her boyfriend. She lay in wait to pounce on unsuspecting doctors as they made their rounds. She cajoled nurses into letting her read their notes, and cornered the dieticians regarding his protein intake and the like. Team Marott as my dad called us when he first went into the hospital was always in high gear and it is my fervent hope that he knows we made the best decisions we could regarding his care, and that we made the ones he would have wanted.