

Remembrance by Nancy Packer

Remarks on JERRY LIEBERMAN

by Nancy H. Packer,

Professor Emerita

Department of English

We all know what a great University man Jerry was, and what a wonderful teacher and scholar. I'd like to talk a little about the other Jerry, as a neighbor and a friend.

A long time ago, when the Pine Hill development of faculty housing on the campus was just beginning, my husband and I came to the campus to check on the progress of our half-finished house.

In front of the only completed house on the cul-de-sac, a great big guy was extricating himself from a little bitty red convertible. When he saw us he threw up his hands and shouted, "Don't do it. You'll be sorry. It's not too late. Don't do it."

Laughing, he walked over to us, held out his hand, and introduced himself, and said, "If there's anything we can do for you, just let us know."

Over the next 55 years, I often let him know what he could do for us, and that was plenty. He always came through: evenings, workdays, weekends, at two in the morning, at five. Jerry always came through.

When I became a widow, the Lieberman family never went to a movie or out to dinner without inviting me and my two children. He lent me his Oldsmobile when I needed a car that held six passengers. I'm afraid it came back puffing smoke and sighing with pain. Jerry must have wanted to strangle me, but all he said was, "I hope you had a good time." He even lent me his car again.

Jerry was one of the best-hearted people I've ever known, but he was also smart, not just in academics and professional matters, but in practical stuff that makes life so much easier and pleasanter. He knew how things worked and what to buy from whom and how to repair what was broken. Everyone who knew him counted on his advice.

When I was buying a new car, he told me to be sure that brand had a turbo. I was reluctant to pay the extra cost, but I did because he told me to, and that turbo saved my life a couple of times on the freeway.

But he didn't just give advice---he'd actually do the work for you. When I tried to set up some new fangled machine, I telephoned and asked him, "Should I put this or that plug in this or that socket.?" I could hear the football game in the background at the Liebermans', and Jerry dearly loved football, but he was at my door in two minutes and set up the machine and even tried to teach me how to use it. He repaired a sprinkler valve for

me and put in an outside light control. Once he almost got stuck under my sink repairing a leak. After that he gave me a big plumber's wrench.

I thought of him as the superdaddy of our neighborhood, completely benevolent and completely responsible, with wonderful judgment about just about everything: practical matters, people, and university politics. His judgment was at its absolute best when he married Helen. For those who don't know Helen, let me say a little about her. She is a Stanford graduate and the mother of four, and for years she was a teacher in the Special Education program in the Santa Clara school system.

Helen is warm and loving and loyal and patient and without malice. Imagine such a thing---no malice. Many times when Jerry and I were lambasting someone who very clearly deserved it, Helen in her sweet voice pointed out the person wasn't really such a bad sort. Jerry and I broke into laughter because it was so typical of Helen to say something good, even about someone about whom there was clearly nothing good to say.

Jerry was proud of Helen and of their children, all four of whom have Stanford degrees. Janet is an engineer working for SLAC. She and her husband have two boys, one of whom is a Stanford graduate. Joanne is also an engineer with a PhD in Education. She teaches at Cal State University at Monterey. She is married to a Stanford graduate, and they have a daughter. Michael majored in electrical engineering and human bio. He is an MD and works at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland, specializing in patient care and medical informatics. He's married and the father of three children.

Diana broke loose from the engineering tradition and majored in economics and is now a financial analyst. She and her husband have one daughter.

Through Jerry's long illness, these four were a lesson in fortitude, loyalty, and love. That's no surprise. They had great models.

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