

# Journey Of Grief

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By Joel D. Silverstein

This document is a compilation thirty-three days of blog postings following the death of my father. It starts on December 16, 2013, and ends on January 17, 2014. It then continues with **a monthly reflection**. It has not been corrected for grammar or punctuation. The purpose of this process was to free associate with the feelings and emotions I was challenged with during this difficult time. The responses to the daily posts on my Facebook page have been overwhelming. Many have used my process of grief as one to help them deal with sorrow of their own. For that, I am grateful that I was able to help them. Some entries are short, others long, some were tough and others a pleasure to write. Journeys are not supposed to be easy; they are to be challenging and filled with opportunities.

## **Day 1 December 16, 2013**

Pop died this afternoon. He was at peace and without pain. The last two months here in Arizona was comfortable and comforting. He spent time with his grandchildren and was at peace always. It is now time for him to rest.

We have to transport him from Arizona to NY and prepare for service. At the moment, we are looking at services this Thursday at Parkside Memorial Chapel in Brooklyn. Details later.

Abraham M. Silverstein October 25, 1920 - December 16, 2013

## **Day 2**

Funeral Service for Dr. Abraham M. Silverstein  
Thursday – December 19th, 2013  
2:00 PM  
Parkside Memorial Chapel  
2576 Flatbush Avenue – Brooklyn  
(off avenue U – Kings Plaza)

**I think it's Day 3** Jona and I are in Brooklyn at the house. Now we wait. Service is tomorrow. I think i have everything arranged down to the car picking up our Rabbi who is finishing finals tomorrow morning in the city. Odd part is being too familiar with the process and making it easy for the funeral director. I have rehearsed this process 974 times since my mother died in 2011. Practice makes perfect.

**Day 4** -- the funeral service is this afternoon.

Plant a Tree, Have a Child, Write a Book.

About a month ago, I had asked my brother, Jeffrey, to put together some notes about Pop so that we could pass them on to the Rabbi when the time we would need them came. Jeff sent these yesterday for me to send on. While it is hard to sum up someone's life in a few sentences, maybe that is all that is ever needed for others to know the highlights of one's life. Fortunately, our Rabbi has known him for more than forty-two years. Between these notes and the Rabbi's own notes, this is sure to be an impressive service. I thought I might share these words about my father with you.

Abraham Moses Silverstein. 1920-2013

Avram Moishe Ben Josayf

Wife: Barbara Silverstein - deceased.

Children: Jeffrey, Victoria, Joel

Mother: Esther Silverstein (Gross) - deceased

Father: Joseph Silverstein - deceased

Sister: Doris Sanders (Silverstein) - deceased

Grandchildren: Charles (29), Jane (16) , and Jonathan (12).

Father in-law to Kathy Silverstein

Abraham Moses Silverstein was a Titan, a Lion, a mensch. He lived 93 rich, creative, generous, and fulfilled years. It is attributed to the Talmud that "(Every man should) plant a tree, have a child, and write a book. These all live on after us, insuring a measure of immortality." Abe did these things many times over, and far more in his long fruitful life.

His parents named him with two very large names to live up to Abraham and Moses.

He was a loving and supportive husband of over 50 years to Barbara. If you were to see their photos in earlier years, you would have thought they were Hollywood Movie Stars.

He enthused his children Jeffrey, Victoria, and Joel about art, music, writing, poetry, photography, museums, books - the entire world of culture - and they have participated in these all their lives.

His grandchildren Charles, Jane, and Jona always knew a loving and fascinating grandfather. He adored his daughter-in-law Kathy and they had a special bond.

He was a Renaissance man, Teacher, painter, writer, musician, - if one were to recount all his accomplishments, it would take hours, perhaps days.

It is said he had the first doctorate of any teacher in a New York City High School. His students were the first to call him Doc, and it stuck.

When asked why he, as a master teacher all his life he did not teach the advanced students he said "anybody can teach them, they don't need me. The students who have difficulty, need motivation, the ones who need special attention - they are the ones who need me."

Over the years Students all over New York, and some around the world, would see him on the street and say "Hey doc! I had you for English at Madison." He was a legend. Of course, if you were a waitress at a diner, you would know him as the customer whose decaf was never hot enough.

His humor and comic timing were that of the most skilled comedian. He always said his acting career consisted of being the back end of a horse - while Abe Vigoda (a friend from college) played the front.

A World War II Army Air Force hero, he supported aerial reconnaissance photography and did classified intelligence work stationed above the Arctic Circle.

He leaves hundreds of paintings - self-portraits, portraits of wife Barbara, children Jeffrey, Victoria and Joel, his parents Esther and Joseph, friends, the famous, the unknown, and could paint the work of Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Titian, Vermeer, and Picasso.

As an Author, he wrote books about poetry and a biography of his good friend artist Harry Zolotow. He also wrote about some of the great women artists of the past.

As a Musician and lover of instruments - he discovered and restored many rare violins and a rare cello from the 1600's.

He corresponded with and knew many artists. Among these, Robert Frost, Harry Zolotow, Juan DePre. As faculty adviser to a Junior High magazine, he even took wide-eyed students for a private lunch with Salvador Dali.

He was a scholar in subjects far and wide - well read in philosophy and Judaism - Torah, Talmud, the great rabbis and literature.

He planted trees, tomatoes, and planted his enthusiasm and expertise in thousands of students.

His life was not without suffering and tremendous courage in the face of many hardships - his own infirmities and those of his parents, wife, and children. Challenges to many, but faced with grace, wisdom, and compassion.

It is said that he never took a sick day in his entire teaching career, and when old age came to him, he survived and fought calamities and conditions that might have shortened his life - but he endured.

# Journey Of Grief

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He traveled all over the world with Barbara, to all the capitals of Europe and Israel and across the United States many times with his children.

He spoke many languages - Italian, French, Yiddish - and knew how to communicate with students in Spanish, Greek, Russian, among others.

Active in his synagogue - a community leader and supporter of Israel.

Plant a tree, Have a child, Write a book. Abraham Moses Silverstein will be missed by all and remembered throughout the annals of all time.

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Day 5

The service yesterday was wonderful. Rabbi Strickman spoke of Abe with honor, respect, and the knowledge of a friend of forty years. He knew things of my father that we did not; Abe's tireless work in the synagogue, his counsel to other members and his commitment to G-d.

The service was late yesterday when New York is in holiday mode the traffic becomes crippling. Having a sunset burial is an interesting process within Jewish law. Shiva starts immediately after the burial, but a day ends at sunset. That fine line between today and tomorrow is when the sun disappears. Then, of course, Shiva is not observed this evening because of Shabbos.

Then the fun of the subterranean condo builders... did you know if you want to carry the casket you have to sign a release for all carrying to the cemetery? I did not. It must be a union thing. We let them carry and we followed.

I could not be prouder of my children, Charles, Jane and Jona, my wife Kathy and my cousins Carol and Marlene. Each helped me, my brother and sister bury my father. With each shovel of earth helping him get closer to he goes now.

However, yesterday was not only about Abe. It seems that on December 15 my mother's oldest friend Pauline Rizzo passed away as well. They had been friends since childhood. She was our Italian Mother. Pauline was buried across the way in Pinelawn. I can only imagine that after Pauline died on Sunday that my mother told my father ... "Abe, it's time, let's get on with it." So now, my father and mother, Pauline and Tony Rizzo can all be together again like they were in years past. It has been too long since they were. G-dspeed to Pauline Rizzo

So what does Day 5 hold in store? I don't know. Some moments are easy, others difficult. We shall see.

Shiva visits will start tomorrow, Saturday from 4-9pm at the house in Brooklyn and will run until Wednesday morning.

With the house empty, I went looking through the books. I was hoping to find some to bring back to Arizona with me and came across a 1948 book, Familiar Quotations compiled by John Bartlett. It's old and dusty with that great book smell. Robert Frost was one of my father's favorite American Poets. But Frost was alive in '48 so would there be anything in here of his? He gets two pages out of 1,800. And with a flip of a few pages I come to an excerpt from Frost's Home Burial

The nearest friends can go  
With anyone to death, comes so far short  
They might as well not try to go at all.  
No, from the time when one is sick to death,  
One is alone, and he dies more alone.  
Friends make pretense of following to the grave,  
But before one is in it, their minds are turned  
And making the best of their way back to life  
And living people, and things they understand.

Robert Frost 1874-1963

Interesting take on the last moment's one is still with us. We understand that for the living that is all we can understand. While this poem is about the death of a child, it's sentiment resonates through. That is what is so powerful about Frost, complex issues in a simple way.

**Day 6** One would think that by the 6<sup>th</sup> day it would get easier. It is not. While Abe died 6 days ago, the service was only 3 days ago. The rollercoaster is an interesting process. Today, my brother and I went synagogue, the synagogue we grew up in. The synagogue our father spent fifty years in. The synagogue where we both had our Bar Mitzvahs. Our father was the oldest living member until the other day. Now, another man, his friend takes the spot. Besides our rabbis all the other men are strangers to us but they welcomed us as if we had never left. "Good Shabbos, our condolences for your father." "He was a wise man." "He helped me with this." "He spoke at my ..." All kind words that were comforting, and held the pain at bay for just a moment.

The Shiva visits will begin sometime in the next two hours. I have no idea who or how many will show up. If it's one or a hundred.

Today is a day of numbness, the magnitude of the loss is settling in.

## Day 7

Kathy and the children left this morning to head back to Arizona. It's been a long week for them all. I will remain in Brooklyn until Wednesday when Shiva ends and then fly back home. I will come back to Brooklyn the end of January. We had some visitors last night, Rabbi Strickman who is always a comfort, my dear friend Doug and his wife Sonny and my dear friend Terry and Steve. A lightweight evening and that's ok. And now the house is quiet with no one here but me and my thoughts and a lifetime of my parents achievements and collections. Even though I have been here so much in the past three years it's all kind of surreal today. I know ever inch of this house, every item, book, painting, and chachka. I know the sounds this house makes as the floors creak, the burner comes on, a radiator clanks, and a truck rolls down the street. But it is too quiet...

## Day 8

I crashed hard last night for a few hours. Much needed sleep. This journey is an interesting one. The hierarchy of the family changes; the roles we each take on are now solidified. While we had assumed those roles during the past two and three-quarter years they now become etched, deeper each day that Pop is gone. His window has closed and now I am to open the book of memories and search to find the sources of his wisdom and resolve. And, there are a lot of books here, each one he learned something from.

Some have asked are there any regrets. I have neither a single regret nor unfinished business with my father. When the call came to take care of him, I went willingly. The experience of caring for him these past years has been a privilege. Now to care for his spirit and memory.

## Day 9

Trying to wake up in the morning is the hardest. The darkness envelops everything here in this old house. Toss, turn, and try again to get up. That took almost two hours. Shiva ends tomorrow morning. It's moved along quickly this time, or maybe it seems so as it is coming to an end. I don't know. There are hours when everything can seem normal, and then not. Moments of clarity and then not. Energy and then not. Nevertheless, it is morning and I have to get moving. I walk to the corner deli to get a coffee. The kid there, (he is my age and I've known him for forty years) says, "Sorry about your father," and with a handshake I say "Yeah, whaddya gonna do, you know what it's like." Thirteen words spoken between two Brooklynites that solidify the clear, simple, yet complex way we know how to communicate with each other. And, at that moment I join the lines of men who no longer have their fathers.

## Day 10

It is now seven days since we buried my father. Shiva has ended and the rest of shloshim will continue another twenty-one days. I do not know where the time has gone. Last Tuesday night Jona and I were flying this way playing wingman to Pop's plane, sharing the airspace with him. It's time to go home to my wife and children. I fly out this afternoon and once again, I will be aloft in the vapor of the sky.

Today is Christmas, and with it I wish all my friends a Merry Christmas. Kathy and the kids pushed it off a day until I got home, while it was not necessary I can appreciate why they did. They would like me to be there for it. Growing up in a Jewish home, we did not celebrate Christmas. We would go to Pauline Rizzo's for Christmas; I remember the silver tree with the blue lights. It is probably why I still marvel at the blue decoration lights. Some things are etched deep. Kathy makes sure we celebrate the holidays of both our faiths in our home. Our children know the importance of traditions.

I'm taking some books home with me from my father's library. There is the two-volume set of *The Odyssey* of Homer, printed in 1871. These are for Jane. For me I have some philosophy books; 1954 *The Speculative Philosophers*, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and the 1959 compilation of *Knowledge of Value*. Each book has Pop's written notes in the margins. Time to go to the airport.

## Day 11

After a very long day of travel yesterday I made it back home to Arizona about 1:30 AM. It's interesting traveling on Christmas Day. Some were stressed, others it was just a normal day. Me, I was oblivious to it all. However, that may have had something to do with the bloody marys on the plane and in the club. I had a few interesting discussions with some friends on instant message and text but for the most part I was alone. I was in that space between one adventure and the next. That space where one just hovers looking for that right spot to seek. I know what to do. Just not ready to.

Las Vegas airport was packed last night. Families traveling together to that stop over place in the desert. All I could see was Clark Griswolds all over the airport.. The schmo who was going to blow his bonus at the tables and visit some awful relative whom if they were anyone other than family they would not be given the time of day. The comedy will ensue in Vegas over the next few days. I hope they all have fun. Our kids pushed off celebrating Christmas till this morning. They had fun, so did Kathy and I. It was lightweight but fun. We will have some friends over for dinner later.

I missed the sunlight of Arizona. Pop liked the sunlight here. James (his aid) would get him dressed with his big sunglasses and take him outside. Often he would just nap in the warmth of the sun as old men should do.

Off to return the rental car.

## Day 12

I had all intentions of getting to the gym this morning but when the alarm went off at 530 am all my body could do was send a text to my trainer and tell him I was not ready to do it today. It's now day 12 and the thoughts keep rolling through my head. Did I do enough, could I have done better, what did I miss, what don't I know, what will I find out next? These are the questions that may never need answers. I decided this morning that my mother knew she had cancer for a year before she told us. And that my father entrusted my brother and I to take care of his every need because he knew we would.

I'm back in Lake Havasu and today while going to work I took the same route I would take each morning to stop by and see Pop, then of course I realized he was not there anymore. The last two months here with him had a routine, it was clear, and it worked. The previous three years had routine too. Now it's time to change that routine and find my own way again.

I read of a tragedy over Christmas. A man and a 15-year-old teen went diving in one of the toughest caves dives in Florida. They were not experienced, did not have training, but were able to dress up for the part. They were trying out their new gear. They did not survive. These deaths were avoidable, these dives served no immediate purpose. During the last 25 years of my diving career, I have spent time teaching people how to explore underwater and how to assess risk. These past three years I have been less than vocal about these topics. It's time to get back on my soap box.

Time to work... well maybe try to.

## Day 13

Waking up at 5 am and not getting out of bed for a few hours seems to be the pattern the past few days. I'm just physically wiped out from this. But I know it will pass soon. The combination of the last few months and the past few weeks put on some weight. So today I feel like a fat-boy. To attempt to work that off right now is kind of silly as we know it just won't happen so I am going to just clean up my diet and start back slowly to the gym after the 1<sup>st</sup> of January. I will then drop it off and get my energy back. Kathy and the kids have been great since I got home. They are giving me the space I need to work through all of this. But I'm not in this alone, I still have things to do with my brother and sister who also cared for Pop all these years. We each had our own jobs to do and while I had the bulk of things the last few months I don't forget the work they did.

On January 1 we do our annual Frozen Fin Dive – I have five days to get my gear together to jump in and start the New Year off right-in the water. Though now I am not into it, I am sure it is something I just need to do. Maybe I can convince Kathy to do the dive with me this year. In the past, we would dive separately. I am in the office today at STT/TDL HQ still catching up. I have a small project on the desk to help my friend Rob



with some things for the NACD (National Association of Cave Divers) that need to be done today. While yesterday was not overly productive today will have to be.

My dear friend Dr. Bill Hamilton left us two years ago. He was influential and important to me and helped me with my career. He too had suffered many losses in his life but he always knew that moving forward was the way to handle things. He would say at the end of a project, or solving a problem, or the loss of a friend that we must "press on." He was a man who took complex subjects and could explain them in simple ways. I always loved that about Bill. My father would always confuse Dr. Bill with Captain Steve (another major influence for me) and refer to Bill as Captain Hamilton; I never corrected him because it was not necessary. I'm glad my father had a chance to meet Bill a few times, they had interesting conversations when they did. As I recollect both men, they had similar qualities that I always admired.

Day 14

This morning I pushed the clock at 3:45 am and only stayed up for a few minutes. Then back up again at 7 for CBS Sunday morning. The last broadcast of the year of this fine news magazine includes who passed away during the previous 51 weeks of this year. Some fine people are no longer with us. While it is tragic to see some of the young ones, they will always die too soon. But it was the older ones that stood out. The ones who were from my father's generation. Men and women of substance, Nelson Mandela, Helen Thomas, Peter O'Toole, and a host of others. All leave an indelible mark on the world. I can only wonder did they accomplish all they wanted to or was what they did all they had and were complete? I believe that is a question that can never be answered. I know I have more to do.

I took Jona to the movies last night. We saw the latest Stallone / DeNiro film Grudge match. For more than forty years I have watched these two men create characters on the screen in ways few can. Yet for this film leaves you flat and wonders how some films get made these days. Are we unable to cast the greats and not draw on their previous work? Is that possible? This was Raging Bull takes on Rocky in what could only be a bad film school attempt. Did someone's uncle bring these two in as a favor? Was Kim Bassinger so out of the loop she took on a role just for the paycheck? Alan Arkin tried to do Mick in his own way and was probably most successful. It's predictable but worth a view, if for nothing else than to file in your library of films by these guys.

Tomorrow will be two weeks since Pop died. I'm still in that floating zone. That moment when I jump in the water with all things clicking along but before finding the balance and purpose. When the uncontrollable remains uncontrollable, yet we struggle to take direction, yet remain calm. Everyone knows that kind of moment, this particular one seems to be lasting longer than a moment.

The girls are coming over for brunch this morning. Jen and Whitney my school buddies who have helped me find direction back in the classroom. Kathy is breaking out the

classic Brennan's Breakfast.... Eggs Housard, Mr. Funk's New Orleans, and I will flame up some Bananas Foster. The kitchen smells great right now with the aroma of the sauce is being made. We will knock back a lot of champagne for no other purpose than we can. We will speak of things that encourage life, and we will laugh.

## Day 15

I dragged my ass out of bed this morning and got to the gym. It took a while to get moving but I got into the groove. My trainer knows how to handle the push. I have a few weeks before school starts so I need to get back into a morning routine. This will do it I am sure.

End of year in the office is an interesting time. Desks get cleared off, paperwork filed, things put on the next year's calendar. Other than prepping for the Frozen Fin dive on Jan 1, it's pretty quiet here. Which is working out just fine as I really don't want to do much. But maybe I should make the list. The past three years while taking care of my father put some things on hold. My last Andrea Doria trip was summer of 2011 only because it was on the schedule. Mom had died a few months earlier. After that last deep trip I had pretty much put aside any off-shore wreck diving or anything that took me away for more than a few days. It may be time I get back in that game, though the caves seem to be calling a bit. I will lay out the 2014 dive calendar in a few weeks.

This evening will mark two weeks since Pop passed. It seems like an eternity and an instant. I'm not sure which. The Talmud tells us that everything that is physical is finite. That once it ends the soul is freed from the physical embodiment, but that it can then behold and derive satisfaction from what it has accomplished. I can be quite confident that my father is enjoying the view. He did ok along the way. Thinking about it the other day I can't think of a single thing he ever did that had poor judgment or was not in the best interests for his family or others. It's a pretty remarkable way to have lived.

## Day 16

It was easier this morning to get out of bed. I have a busy day in front of me. Got to the gym, knocked out a good workout, the blood is flowing again. Got to the dive shop and pulled gear for tomorrow morning's dive. I have to start the next year off with a dive to get back in the groove. Later I will prepare dinner for friends and family for new year's eve. I enjoy cooking, it gives me time to think and maintain order. It's very much like diving, planning, preparation, execution, review, clean up. It has order.

Yesterday afternoon I took Jona to the new skate park we have here so he could ride his bike. What was to be 30 minutes turned into 90. The park is beautiful; it overlooks the lake and is quite a spectacular site. I watched Jona test his abilities. Starting slow, feeling his way, gaining confidence, and then having a stumble, getting back on and doing it again. The instincts a father and son have together are interesting. As he would stumble,

he would look over for acknowledgement that he should keep going. And as he accomplished another skill he would look back with pride. As the sun was setting, I glanced at my watch and saw it was 5:45, just two weeks prior Pop had passed at that time. There was a stream of light that shown down on Jona just at that instance as I am sure there was one on Jane and Charlie as well. He loved those kids.

I received a call from my friend Alex this morning. He was calling his friends to suggest that 2014 be a good year for us all. That we should go through it without difficulties. I appreciated his reaching out. To all of our friends please have a Happy New Year, be careful out there tonight.

Day 17

New Year's Day 2014. I got out to the annual frozen fin dive .... I squeezed myself into the wet suit – not fun. Yesterday's workout left the arms kinda achy so this suit was just a bit snug and inflexible. After about 14 minutes of what I thought was a solo dive, I realized that Jay was shadowing me. I appreciated that. I had left my smb, reel, sonar device, and I think my compass back in the truck. So much for dive planning. Once I realized he was with me everything clicked back in to place and we were diving as a team- signals, looks, timing etc. I pulled something like 38 minutes, he did 45. We had a good, albeit small turn out today but it was fun, I think, if being cold is fun. Dry suit breaks out this week for the next dives.

Jona wanted to go to the skate park. Little did we know there was a big competition going on there. We hung out and watched a few heats-interesting talent some of these kids have. We ran a few errands after and ended up driving up the same street we would have taken to see Pop over at the facility. I could not take Jona in this time to see him. He isn't there anymore.

Day 18

Today did not start in high gear. It took hours to get out of the house and get to the office. It's already noon and not exactly sure what I have gotten done here at work yet. I have a pile of paper to move though and not a lot of motivation to do so. I think I am also supposed to scope out my calendar for the year but that's not overly exciting today either. No gym this morning, the arms got beat up enough the other day. I will go tomorrow. The upside is my good friend Dave Sutton is supposed to be landing his MiG-17 jet here sometime tomorrow and we will get some time together on his stopover to Edwards. Usually the first day back to work on a New Year is filled with planning and cleaning. I have some plans to get in some good diving this year. I need to work on finishing my Advanced Nitrox and Decompression Book. Most of the main manuscript is finished. It now needs to be edited, and add photos and illustration, and layout. It's time for me to put out a new book so maybe I will give that a publish date so I can get it done before the fall. Seeing Jill Heinerth's new book The Basics of Rebreather Diving other day was a good motivator. It's an outstanding book that all divers should read whether or not they intend to dive with rebreathers.

School starts up on the 13<sup>th</sup> between now and then I will get all my books and outlines in place, just not going to look at it till Monday. There are a few classes I have that seem like they will be fun. I just have not given it much thought the last few weeks.

Time to work.

Day 19

3:05 AM I woke up. Not sure why, though I then got to watch all the news hoopla about a little snow on the East Coast. My brother text me the other day ... "who is the kid who shovels the snow at the house in Brooklyn?" (I have that covered.) So for almost 2 hours Kathy and I were watching the news. I remember a snowstorm in 1993 when we first started dating. I lived in Long Beach (Long Island) and she was in Connecticut. The snow had just fallen and no one was on the roads yet, so I spent four or five hours driving over there and got stuck in her driveway. I think I started out at 3 am. The things we remember.

I did get to the gym this morning, rocked out a good workout despite having been up since three am. Pushing the body sometimes is good; I have to get back into prime shape for the next adventures. School and stress put back some poundage I had spent 2 years working off. It will slide off again...

Yesterday was non-motivational and today has been the complete opposite. I've been running hard since 615. I even put out a Frosty the Snow Man Winter Sale today to our customers. I am trying to catch up on end of year paperwork while juggling email and phone calls. Have a small consumer show here in town next week and working on the 2014 calendar ....

Day 20

Once again I got up at 3:05 AM .... Watched some stupid TV, that was annoying, put on Soprano's and was back to sleep in an hour. I took Jona to the dentist this morning and now I'm in the office for a little bit. Dave is landing his plane in about 40 minutes and I will go meet him. Then we will have a day to catch up with each other. It's a busy morning and I'm getting through it. As Bill Hamilton keeps reminding me .... Press On.

Day 21 ... yesterday my good friend Dave Sutton dropped in on his way to Edwards ... Jitka and his daughter Stephanie were with him as well. It was good to see Dave. The last time we saw him and Jitka was in Brooklyn at Thanksgiving 2012 when we all went in to see Pop. It was just after hurricane Sandy washed out Dave's house in NJ and they were living on his boat in a marina. Thanksgiving in a warm home was good for us all then. It's funny how circumstances bring good friends together regardless of where they are in the country.

When Kathy asked me what we would make them for dinner, without missing a beat, I said Scampi. I knew it was Dave's favorite as I had made it on the way back in from the Doria a few years back when we got the bell. We plated it up last nite with some wine and had some good discussions... and in a flash, he will fire up the MiG and take off in a few minutes .... I will see him again soon.

Twenty-one days it has been I am without my father. When we lost my mother, I don't recall thinking of it as a big emptiness; probably because we had to take care of Pop and I had him to talk to. While our conversations were not big ones, they were perhaps the important last ones, as I never really knew how much longer I would have him around. Pop lasted 972 days after mom died. The data shows that being born in 1920 he should have only lived 56 years, he topped that by 37. Another study shows that elderly spouses only survive 6-12 months after their mates pass on, he blew past that one as well. And, even with all the time we had with him I still would like some more. However, that won't come about.

## Day 22

The kids went back to school this morning. Their winter vacation was not what it was supposed to be but they seem to have managed well. We are very proud of our children. The always seem to rise to the occasion.

Jane gets to school at 7 am. Jona just has to walk around the corner. I get to take her most mornings and then get to the gym. Today started out on an upbeat note, getting Jane to school, working out, getting to the office etc ... then it just slowed down. My big plans to get a lot done have moved into smaller plans of getting some done. And, that's just fine. The details of running a business, prepping for school, dealing with Dad's stuff as well as doing things for my bro and sis just keep my plate full.

One of my friends whined yesterday about my postings. I guess it stirred up some of his own issues. It briefly prompted me to look at my process and conclude that will keep it rolling as I have. This method allows me to deal with my grief in my own way. And, as some others indicated he helps them deal with some of their losses as well. If it helps others along the way then my method seems to work. This it not a haphazard approach. I actually have a plan and a process that worked for me when my mother died. It follows along with the 30 days of shiloshim after burial. It allows me to put boundaries around this whole event that will then allow me to move on.

This evening will mark three weeks Pop is gone. I still can't get my head around the whole time thing. And even with actually knowing how long it has been I can't comprehend if it has been a short or long time--I guess it really doesn't matter when it comes to this, the time is what it is.

## Day 23

Dragged myself out of the house this morning and got to the gym. It was a struggle but I did it. I know that may seem like a simple task but some days it is not. I got in about 2 hours there and then got to the office. I have been under the paperwork since I got in. For the last six hours I have been working on a variety of administrative tasks, I'm not entirely sure what I got done but I know it's a lot.

Found some letters my father drafted back in the 1980s when he was submitting his philosophy manuscript potential publishers. I think he could have been more aggressive in seeking out a publisher. Who knows maybe Jeff and I will publish it for him. It's an interesting compilation of all the philosophers (prior to 1980) as a philosophy primer. When I go to NY next month I will assess how much work this might take on top of the other books he wrote that we might want to publish.

Time to go pick up Jona's bike from the shop.

Day 24

Late posting today ... Jane got me up this morning early, I think it was 5:45 am, got her to school by 7 and then to the gym. It was an incredible 90-minute blood pumping workout followed by 30 minutes on the treadmill with Kathy (she joined me today). My energy level was super high and I started to feel a bit more accomplished in the gym again. Feeling fat from the last few months is just not fun. The weight is not coming off fast enough yet but the conversion to solid mass is somewhat interesting.

As predicted, time is becoming the great healer of the pain of losing Pop. The ebb and flow of these feelings and emotions is fascinating. The process has been a constructive force in my life, it is not destructive. While it may have slowed my daily activities I suspect that is exactly what it is supposed to do. The Rabbis interpret the shloshim (thirty day) period as one that permits mourners to acknowledge the cloud of grief still surrounding them. During the last twenty-four days I have been surrounded by my wife and our children and friends all who have been comforting. People have come to visit for holidays and social gatherings yet I still was not engaged. I would sit for a while and then retreat. So of course I go back to look at why and find that a mourner is just beginning to repair the breach of body and soul that death of a close relative has wrenched apart. Forcing the two together by joining in a party is too hard. The pain eases with time.

About four weeks before my father passed, I had an inclination that it was coming soon. I was in the last third of the semester and was nearing finals. It had not been a good semester; in fact, it was miserable in two utterly ridiculous classes. I had drafted notes to all my professors about the situation and that I might have to take an incomplete if Pop passed while class was in session. One prof was great about it, another was a slug, till I reminded her that it was not her choice to allow me to take an incomplete, it was university policy. Nevertheless, I completed the semester and Pop passed on the day final grades posted. Somehow, I suspect he timed things so I could tend to him and then get back to school for spring semester that starts this coming Monday. He took great joy in

knowing that I went back to school after so many years. I had hoped he would see me complete it though I am certain he knew I would. Although I may not be overly excited to get back to class on Monday, I will show up and get excited once there.

## Day 25

I did not get to sleep easily last night. I was up until three. When the alarm went off at 5:45 AM there was no way I was getting up. It was if I was glued into the bed. I know when my body needs to rest and this was its time. Kathy got Jane off to school and I never got to the gym but finally was up at 8:45 .. overall I got in 6 hours sleep, I must have needed it. The gym got passed up on this morning. I will get in there tomorrow morning bright and early. Kathy met me at the shop this morning so we could pull together display materials for a local consumer show tomorrow at the mall. Kathy and I have not done a show together in a long time so this might be fun.

It was a busy day at STT/TDL HQ .. sales are coming in and it seems that getting our site back on line has been helpful. The TDL site was down most of the fall and we got it back online just before Thanksgiving. So far it is working smoothly and people are back ordering. One project we need to work on is the local STT website and FB page. I've focused all our web energy on TDL but its time we devote some time to the Havasu diving scene for the web. Maybe I can get someone to help me with it over the next few months.

I'm cutting through some of the Brooklyn work. I got a maintenance schedule done with my guy in NY to do work on the house. Just some clean-up and some repairs we did not get to earlier. They will get started there next week.

With school starting on Monday I thought it might be beneficial to have the textbooks for it so I got those ordered up last night. They should be here in a few days.

This weekend Kathy's Sea Scouts will christen their new sailboat that was generously donated to them. The kids are excited about it. She has done a wonderful job with these teens teaching them how to be a cooperative team and developing leadership skills.

Jane was doing some volunteer work this evening at the youth center. Driving home we passed by Pop's facility. When he was there I was in and out there 2-3 times a day. It's getting harder to pass that place each time now.

## Day 26

I was up early, got Jane to school and then I went to the gym. Knocked out some shoulder work but had to cut short to get prepped for the little show we had at the mall today. In the meantime, I had to stop at the post office to pick up the death certificates.

I thought that would be easy, and it was up until the part where I opened the packet in the car. When my mother died, the guys at Parkside in Brooklyn just gave me a packet that had them in there and I never thought twice about it. But out here in the boondocks it's a longer process, they had to go from one county, to another and then back again and then they finally got mailed to me. With a detailed eye I made sure they were correct. I was hoping it was a mistake and this was all just a big hoax, it really wasn't. Pop's name was on it, and they were all correct. So it is written, so it shall be. I will order up a stone soon.

## Day 27

It was a little tough getting up this morning. I had wanted to go to spin class but the motivation was not there. Instead, I got to the STT/TDL HQ and worked on some paperwork, took care of some customers, and then went over to the London Bridge Resort where Kathy and her Sea Scouts christened their sailboat the SSS Heatwave. Pop was always so proud of the work Kathy did with the kids. He would always ask me how she was doing with the scouts and her boats. He was quite proud of his daughter-in-law for the work she did with other kids and he marveled at how she raised our children providing them leadership and opportunities. So am I.

Today was easier, that is until I got home and then the loss reared its head again. Kathy and I were talking about my birthday coming up, fifty-five. And at that moment without missing a beat I realized that this would be the first time I have a birthday but no father. I was overwhelmed for a short while. Then it passed. I suspect this will continue. Little things are the trigger.

I went to the movies this evening so see Lone Survivor. It's based on a 2005 Seal mission to assassinate a Taliban leader in Afghanistan. The operation is compromised and many of our soldiers get killed. It's a raw film about hate, survival, compassion, and resolve. I know some of the guys who worked on the film it. It's always amazing how our filmmakers can take a location like New Mexico and turn it into a replica of a war zone in Afghanistan. One will appreciate the restraint used on special effects and the under use of movie blood. Yet there is still a lot of it, just carefully used. The film will disturb ones sense of morality as it paints and image of the complications of counterterrorism and the multiple layers of command our special forces operate under. It was well done and worth a viewing, don't take your kids it's not Battleship.

## Day 28

Sunday, tomorrow marks the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday that Pop is gone. Shloshim will end this coming Friday morning. The process of resumption of everyday life is an interesting journey. Some days are fine, others not. I wake up each day and press on.



Two years ago today our friend Peter Hess passed away from sudden cardiac arrest. I had spoken to him just a few days earlier. Peter was one of the great maritime attorneys of our time who was also an avid shipwreck diver. He was my sponsor to the Explorer's Club when I joined back in the mid 1990s. He was a good guy who was passionate about life and people. He was our friend and we still miss him.

Jona and I spent the morning out in the desert with our friend Dan Earthman. The code word around the house is "bonding" which translates into "we are going shooting." Growing up in Brooklyn the only people who had guns were the cops and the criminals and some other guys who would go up-state deer hunting. Out here, in Arizona shooting is a common activity. Jona is very good at it. He takes the time to understand the tasks as well as the responsibility of handling firearms. Dan is great with him providing opportunity to try different types and shows him how to handle them. The rules are strict, unforgiving, and designed for safety. Very much like the diving, we do. We had a good time. He is a very good shot.

I start back for spring semester at ASU tomorrow. Not sure if I am ready for it, but I am sure come tomorrow I will show up and get into it. I have a decent schedule that I selected before pop passed away. It was designed to give me a little more free time to spend with him. My days are filled Mon, Wed, and Friday with Math class Tues and Thurs morning only. Overall it's not a bad schedule. I can get back to doing some Thursday afternoon dive workshops again. For now, I will just pull the syllabus for each class and put it in my spreadsheet to get an idea of the workload.

Day 29.

Today I started spring semester. This is my third full semester back in college. Today was much different from last January when I walked in to class for my first time. Last year I was like Rodney Dangerfield, today it was business as usual I knew what to expect on first days. These are interesting courses that will be challenging. Exactly what I came back to school for. While I would have liked to have a little bit more of that wonder experience, today my mind was elsewhere.

I had not been on campus since the morning of December 16<sup>th</sup> when last semester ended. I had no classes that day but stopped in to get something that morning. After I had stopped over to see Pop for a little while. What was neat about where we had my father was that I could leave the campus parking lot, roll down the hill three blocks to him. It was the perfect location that made seeing him every day easy and part of day-to-day life for the two months he was here. That was the last morning I had seen him. He was gone in the late afternoon. This evening when I left the campus, I turned left instead of rolling down the hill. It's been four weeks now.

In my environmental ethics class this afternoon our prof asked us to jot down our answer to the the question of, "Why am I concerned about the environment?" I sat there for a few moments and then it appeared smack in my face. In my lifetime, I have seen the effects of

pollution, global warming, and carbon emissions impact within the air and the and the oceans. If I can see these changes in just fifty years how much will change in the next fifty? My father taught me how to look at things first through the eyes of others, then through my own. He exposed me to the great painters, sculptors and photographers; he put a brush in my hands and then a camera to my eye. I have seen things in our world and some of those things are no longer the same as they once were. This will be an interesting class.

I had all the good intentions when I got home to have dinner and hit the books. I tweaked some assignments into my workload spreadsheet and then went in to talk to Kathy. Within a few minutes, I was out like a light. I needed the sleep. I got up a little while ago to reorganize my thoughts and prep for tomorrow and read of the loss of a friend's mother who passed, in Brooklyn on December 24<sup>th</sup>. A fellow underwater explorer whom I have known for a quarter century, he now joins the fellowship of motherless sons. G-dspeed to her soul and strength to him and his family.

Tomorrow is another day.

Day 30

Nope, it was not a jump-out-of -bed day. However, I did get moving about 8 and got to math lab by 1015. (different schedule this sem). Today was not a day of reflection and deep thought. It was pure work. After class, we were out on the lake, diving for a few hours, collecting quagga mussels. The wind was blowing hard, pushing big whitecaps and some nasty swells. It kicked my butt. I blew off dive club meeting; Kathy is taking care of it. She has picked up a lot of slack for the past month. I appreciate it. She knows when I am just not ready to do something or into an event to just let me blow it off. I will pick it back up later.

It's been thirty days and soon it will be forty, then fifty and so on. As much as I had prepared for this intellectually, practically, emotionally one never really can prepare for ones father to die. The death part was not that bad. The ensuing emptiness is most difficult. I don't think that void ever refills.

Having a hard time jump-starting the course work right now, I'm sure by 10:30 pm it will kick in! That seems when I have been able to get work done after everyone is asleep and the strings of the day have loosened. It will take a few days to get back into the swing of it again. I am sure by the weekend I will be hitting it hard again. But as for now, let's skim these pages and prep for tomorrow so I am not looking like Rodney Dangerfield when I open my mouth.

Day 31

I just could not get my act together this morning. I got to the gym, did a decent but not earth moving workout. Then I went to STT/TDL HQ to do some admin with the hopes of jumping back to the math lab for an hour or so before class today. That never happened. I got over in time to work on a paper and get ready for class. One prof asked me why I did not participate today. In my mind just being there today was participation enough. Though I told her I would pitch in at the next class. I just had nothing to say today.

This morning in the gym between sets, I gave it some thought. Other than our immediate family, my father had outlived all of his and my mother's friends. Pauline Rizzo was the last and she passed the day before he did. My mother once told me that the only people you get to choose in your life are your friends and your mate. Everyone else is there because they are. While you can develop meaningful and loving relationships with them they in fact were not who you picked to have relationships with. Is it possible that once your friends and spouse are gone that it is time to go?

During the last 972 days of his life, we took care of him like a king. We made sure that his every need was taken care of without hesitation. Everyday when I saw him here, I would ask if there was anything he needed or wanted. He would pause, think a moment, and they reply, "No, I don't think so, you took care of everything."

Day 32

The first week back in school has been a bit challenging juggling the schedule. I am sure by next week I will be back in the routine. Now in my third full semester I have an idea how long it takes me to do the work, this weekend I will scope out all the big projects and see what's needed for them. Tuesday and Thursday is just math in the morning, but expect I will be in the math lab others days as well.

January in the diving business is traditionally slower than other times of the year. So far we are a little ahead of last year (same period) and just a bit ahead of the end of last month which is surprising. I hope that this is a little trend that is on the upswing for the first quarter. We shall see.

Tomorrow will mark thirty days since we buried my father. The Talmud tells that this will mark the conclusion of the formal mourning period. However, it extends the process for a year when the loss was a parent. My beard has grown in, my hair is long, both will be dealt with shortly. The process is not supposed to be easy, if it was then what would it say about our understanding of meaningful relationships? I suspect that the whole reason for taking an initial month of mourning is to allow for reflection of what is important and to specifically not seek out superficial solutions to the pain experience of the loss. It would be disingenuous to have spent a week at Disneyland to try to push the feelings aside and to find some joy. I find joy with my wife, my children, and with my friends in due time. And, I am sure, with some time, I will again find joy with superficial things. In the meantime, I will continue the process.

## Day 33

Today marks the 33<sup>rd</sup> day since my father Abraham Moses Silverstein died (December 16, 2013). It also marks the end of the Shloshim period of mourning for me, my bother, and sister. This has been a trying and difficult time for us, as it should be. For the past thirty-three days I have posted what is going on in my life not only for my own benefit but for the benefit of my friends. It has allowed them to see "how I am doing," and "how I am holding up." Suffice to say that I appreciate the kind words from friends in a time when it is difficult to approach the subject for one never really knows the answer they may get. I hope that my little postings each day have made it easier for them. I know it has been beneficial to me. Before I wrap this out, I thought I might bring forward what was written in the past. This is part of the notes my brother and I provided to our Rabbi for my father's funeral service. I have not read them since I put them up 33 days ago.

Plant a Tree, Have a Child, Write a Book.

Abraham Moses Silverstein. 1920-2013

Avram Moishe Ben Josayf

Abraham Moses Silverstein was a Titan, a Lion, a mensch. He lived 93 rich, creative, generous, and fulfilled years. It is attributed to the Talmud that "(Every man should) plant a tree, have a child, and write a book. These all live on after us, insuring a measure of immortality." Abe did these things many times over, and far more in his long fruitful life.

His parents named him with two very large names to live up to Abraham and Moses.

He was a loving and supportive husband of over 50 years to Barbara. If you were to see their photos in earlier years, you would have thought they were Hollywood Movie Stars.

He enthused his children Jeffrey, Victoria, and Joel about art, music, writing, poetry, photography, museums, books - the entire world of culture - and they have participated in these all their lives.

His grandchildren Charles, Jane, and Jona always knew a loving and fascinating grandfather. He adored his daughter-in-law Kathy and they had a special bond.

He was a Renaissance man, Teacher, painter, writer, musician, - if one were to recount all his accomplishments, it would take hours, perhaps days.

It is said he had the first doctorate of any teacher in a New York City High School. His students were the first to call him Doc, and it stuck.

When asked why he, as a master teacher all his life, did not teach the advanced students he said "anybody can teach them, they don't need me. The students who have difficulty,

need motivation, the ones who need special attention - they are the ones who need me."

Over the years Students all over New York, and some around the world, would see him on the street and say "Hey doc! I had you for English at Madison." He was a legend. Of course, if you were a waitress at a diner, you would know him as the customer whose decaf was never hot enough.

His humor and comic timing were that of the most skilled comedian. He always said his acting career consisted of being the back end of a horse - while Abe Vigoda (a friend from college) played the front.

A World War II Army Air Force hero, he supported aerial reconnaissance photography and did classified intelligence work stationed above the Arctic Circle.

He leaves hundreds of paintings - self-portraits, portraits of wife Barbara, children Jeffrey, Victoria and Joel, his parents Esther and Joseph, friends, the famous, the unknown, and could paint the work of Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Titian, Vermeer, and Picasso.

As an Author, he wrote books about poetry and a biography of his good friend and artist Harry Zolotow. He also wrote about some of the great women artists of the past.

As a Musician and lover of instruments - he discovered and restored many rare violins and a rare cello from the 1600's.

He corresponded with and knew many artists. Among these, Robert Frost, Harry Zolotow, Juan DePre. As faculty adviser to a Junior High magazine, he even took wide-eyed students for a private lunch with Salvador Dali.

He was a scholar in subjects far and wide - well read in philosophy and Judaism - Torah, Talmud, the great rabbis and literature.

He planted trees, tomatoes, and planted his enthusiasm and expertise in thousands of students.

His life was not without suffering and tremendous courage in the face of many hardships - his own infirmities and those of his parents, wife, and children. Challenges to many, but faced with grace, wisdom, and compassion.

It is said that he never took a sick day in his entire teaching career, and when old age came to him, he survived and fought calamities and conditions that might have shortened his life - but he endured.

He traveled all over the world with Barbara, to all the capitals of Europe and Israel and across the United States many times with his children.

He spoke many languages - Italian, French, Yiddish - and knew how to communicate

with students in Spanish, Greek, Russian, among others.

Active in his synagogue - a community leader and supporter of Israel.

Plant a tree, Have a child, Write a book. Abraham Moses Silverstein will be missed by all and remembered throughout the annals of all time.

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It is now time for me to move back into the mainstream of life. While I do not expect thirty-three days to heal this void, it is a start. My wife, children, brother, and sister need me to get back in the game. There are also my responsibilities to our business, clients, as well as our friends and of course school.

I will take a shave, get a haircut and press on. I do not expect this to be easy, it is not supposed to be, but that is what my father did after he lost his father and mother, he got up and went back to work. That is what he would expect of me now.

Thank you for all your support and patience.

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February 16 2014 -- has been two months since Pop passed away. It feels like much longer and then it feels like it just happened. The first month was intense, handling everything, back and forth to NY, shiva, shloshim, etc. On the 33<sup>rd</sup> day I took woke up, took a shave, and started to move on. The moving on part is another interesting process. At least when my mother died I still had my father. Now with both of them gone it seems like I've been elevated into the spot of overseeing the whole family. While of course I seek out my older brother for his counsel, the decisions made for the family land with me. I have to think how I make the decision but also how my father would have decided, then make the call. I rarely did that while he was alive, at least not consciously, now it's part of the process.

I've been in school the past month as well and while I enjoy going and I am doing well it just does not seem as important as it was when Pop was alive. I'm sure that will kick back in soon. Each semester is different. Maybe I am just getting used to it and getting the overall process down. The assignments seem to get easier, or at least I do not stress over them as much as I did early on. One of my favorite classes my father would have enjoyed—Environmental Philosophy and Policy. The course focuses on ethical concepts and theories applied to environmental issues: biotic community, biodiversity, degradation, ecofeminism, ecology, economics, population, property rights, and wilderness. We are looking at many of the philosophical and ethical challenges we face with the environment, animals, and organisms. He would have liked the philosophy discussions we have.

However, if I had to describe this second month it would compare it to a compass seeking a target. There are a few projects I am playing with that need to be solidified. I hope to get that done soon so I can plan the rest of the year. I have a great support system, starting with Kathy and our children. They have been great, they just pick it up every day and keep it rolling, Never a dull day with them. Some of my professors have been great, as well as some other good friends. While I am never keen on the concept of “support systems”, I think this time around a system is exactly what it is. It is an integrated web of information from valued people that helps me keep the flow each day. The compass will find its targets soon. In the meantime, I will keep doing what I do every day.

March 16, 2014. It has been three months since Pop passed away. Month three was not a whole lot different than month two was. School is a bit unfulfilling. I find days when I wonder what to do with the six hours I used to spend on things for Pop. My weight went up a bit over the past six months, so now (today) I am back on the per-bite plan to drop some weight. I was in Brooklyn a few weeks ago to see my brother and sister and take care of family stuff. I had the house there cleaned and painted. So that we can take care of my father’s paintings and books my brother will move in there for a year or so. Just typical things that have to be done after someone passes.

I had thoughts of getting back to the Andrea Doria or the USS Monitor this year, but I am not ready for the big dives this year. I have some fun diving scheduled, and a lot of local diving just the weenie stuff that lets me rediscover what I love about diving. I am teaching some courses this spring, so that will be fun too.

Kathy heads off to the Red Sea in a few days with our friend Bridget for some diving. I understand the diving there is spectacular, she will have fun. Jane and Jona are on spring break this week. I will make some time for them even though I am back in school this week.

When Kathy gets back, Charlie is coming to town for a week of “spring break” with some of his firehouse buds. Can you think of a better place for a half dozen FDNY guys to hang out? It will be good to see him.

So for the most part things are moving along, albeit slowly. I just take it one day at a time. I am grateful to my wife, children, and friends who have been quite supporting during this heal. It has not been easy for any of us. Nevertheless, we all seem to persevere.

April 16, 2014. Now we come to the forth month since Pop passed away. These past four weeks have been a bit of a whirlwind. People coming and going and all the while I'm doing work, going to school, having a family, and friends. Charlie was in for spring break spring break with some of his firehouse guys. He is doing good work in Brooklyn, and his guys look after him. Kathy had a great trip to the Red Sea her photographs are exciting. I'm glad she had the opportunity to go.

The weather in Lake Havasu finally changed and we are experiencing the great Southwest of early morning sunrises and sunsets close to 7:00 PM. I have about three weeks left to this semester. As I indicated last month, I have been nonplussed by it. While I am accomplishing the goals and my grades are good, I think I checked out before I checked in. Fortunately, I have some great professors who are quite in tune to what I am experiencing and I am grateful for that. I will hit it hard in the fall after I have a little down time.

The days are still a fog sometimes regardless of the speed I am operating at. There is a big emptiness that I never thought I would experience. I talk to my brother and sister a few times a week; at least it is now without the expected stress. I'm hitting the gym hard again, 3-5 days a week, the weight is coming off, nutrition is better and the strength and stamina are increasing big-time. Kathy and the kids have been great through all of this. They put up with a lot of my erraticism. I'm not sure if they realize how big a part of the healing they are for me. I am grateful.

That's it for now. This journey continues.

04/19/14 Barbara

Today marks the three-year anniversary of the death of my mother, Barbara Silverstein. Earlier this week I lit the Yahrzeit candle based on the Jewish calendar. It occurred to me the other day, that while mom has been gone for three years, I don't think I mourned her death much past the shloshim period. Granted I took care of getting the stone, setting up the unveiling and handling all of her things but I did try to jump back into the fray pretty quickly.. One reason I did not get to go through that whole process then is I had to focus my attention on my father. I suspect taking care of him was testament to her, as well. In any event, it is three years now and I do miss her.

4/21/14 Dr. Ed

Our dear friend Dr. Ed Campbell lost his battle with lung cancer two years ago today. I don't think a day goes by where I don't think of him. We had become good friends during the eighteen-years I knew him. We had become great friends during the last year of his life, and that friendship endures. Dr. Ed liked to conserve his words. Instead of long elaborate explanations, he would nod and just say what was on his mind. He was simple, clear, concise and always with conviction. I always admired that about him. Now,



two years later he is still in our thoughts.

During the past two years we have taken Ed with us on most all of our adventures diving, and we will continue to do so. (I still have a bunch of Ed left.) Next stop for him will be Dominica next month for the annual ISAM meeting. This time I will take him free diving with me. We toast Dr. Ed often, as he was our champion of one who lived life on his own terms. Tonight on the anniversary of his passing we will raise a glass to honor him.

I miss Ed just a little more each day.

Edward Dunne Campbell Jr. – Jan 1, 1942 – April 21, 2012

Godspeed  
Joel Silverstein

May 16 2015

Here we are at the fifth month since Pop passed away. They say time heals all grief. I believe that time is just a method we use to measure the distance since the event, it does not heal. As the time has passed and my days are less involved caring for my father (brother and sister) and my life has regained some level of normalcy I still stop each day for Kaddish and know my father is still very much with me. I have noticed many of my reactions and responses to things are now similar to that of how his would have been, some things important, others not worth the time. My brother is settled into the house in Brooklyn now; I talk with him at least twice a week. My sister is finding her way and I am giving her as much space as she needs.

While on my way to finals last Friday, I stopped by the assisted living facility where we had Pop and I had a chat with him. (No, I am not hallucinating, I know it was imagined). He seemed to be pleased with the three A's and the B I was expecting. He said some days a B is all that you can get.

Life here has been busy, I wrapped out another semester of college. Kathy and I worked a film last week and I met some special people, and we just started on another big project. I like working with her. Plus, the kids are wrapping out school as well. I think Pop would be pleased with how we are all doing.

I'm heading off to Dominca today for a week diving with my ISAM friends. I think this is the first non-working dive vaycay I have been on in a very long time. I hope to master the GoPro and when not diving do some yoga.

And life goes on.

Memorial Day 2014 FB Post

This is a photo of Pop from WWII. He was a Master Sergeant in the Army. There he learned reconnaissance photography and ultimately ended up in Greenland doing cryptography deciphering and recoding messages from the Nazis. While this was not front line action (though he did see some) it was critical working in providing the enemy with bogus reports that would fly their planes and steer their ships into the direction of our power.

During the last few years of his life, he spent a lot of time reflecting on his time in service of his country. He would almost exclusively watch the Military Channel on the television. One day I asked why he only would watch that channel, his reply was profound.

“I was called to serve my country and while I escaped it physically unscathed many of my friends did not. Some killed in action, others severely wounded. My life after the war has been a good one, I have a family, children, grandchildren, I was lucky. Many others were not. This reminds me how good it has been.”

Today we honor those who served our great nation yet did not survive that service. We also must honor those who came home and created the great lives we all now have. Moreover, we must honor and pray for the safety of those who serve today and wish them safe passage home.

June 16, 2014

Six months move along quickly. Yesterday was Father's Day and the first one I have had without Pop. This experience is quite surreal each time I reach out to talk to him; I am reminded that he is gone. This week I am off the grid so to speak. Kathy has taken me to Yosemite National Park to become one with the nature and wonder of this place. In preparation for it, I found myself doing many things my father would do before a trip. I had checklists, and I laid out everything, I was even stressed at times. Then I looked at maps, calculated distances, and did some research. The idea of playing Ansel Adams had me pull out the cameras. Too bad I don't shoot film anymore, I would have used the Hasselblad. For now its only to be the Nikon and some GoPros. Everyone knows I don't camp, but I am gonna try and I will come back with some interesting images. I also bought hiking boots!

I remember looking at some images Pop had created when he ran the photography school in Denver during his stint in the Army. One was at a waterfall somewhere in Colorado or maybe even Yosemite, I don't recall, but that image was etched in my mind, I hope to recreate it this week.

The last four weeks have been jammed packed with projects, trips, training, running the

biz, starting school in a few weeks, and of course family. With a busy life sometimes we forget what we no longer have. I was prepping for my summer course the other day and went to check how many more credits I need and noticed that I had made the Dean's List for last semester. I wanted to tell my father about it and then I found myself taking that moment of pause again and I know Pop is gone.

July 16, 2014

The last few hours have been stressful, uncomfortable, and chaotic. I could not fall asleep, and I have things on my mind. And, then, I realized it is now seven months that my father is gone. How did I almost miss this? Life seems to have carried on without him. It's not that I don't think of him all the time. The other day my brother, sister, and I finalized the inscription on his footstone, we also set a date for the unveiling in November. I handled some more paperwork and yet I almost missed the date. Not that the individual date means much in the grand scheme of things, but it is my measure of where I am on the timeline since he passed.

Last month Kathy and the kids had me out camping in Yosemite National Park. It took a few days, but I got it dialed in. I was able to get some interesting photographs, and there is a good possibility I might just do it again next year. I took his approach when I went there and found something good wherever I could. (Just in case you were wondering, no, I did not sleep in a tent, I had a R/V thing.). I hiked, biked, paddled, and walked somewhere each day and was off the grid. It seems so long ago yet it was only a few weeks ago.

Right after that Kathy, Jane and Jona went back east for ten days to visit Shirl, and her sister Lisa, then RubyLips and then my brother and sister. Within days of returning here, Jona was off to ASU for a summer scholars program for a week. In a few days, Jona and I head to Belize for the ISAM Summer Conference and some diving. As we come back, Kathy and Jane will head to Long Beach for a Sea Scout event. When we all are back same time zone again, it will be time for Jane and Jona to be back in school. Jane in 11th grade and Jona in 8th. They are growing up faster than I can keep track of.

With all that is going on I can see how I may have missed the date. Though somehow, I really did not. The other I went to make a call on my cell and by mistake I tapped his number and his photo was on the screen. It would have been nice to talk to him, but that only happens when I am alone. It's been seven months since my father died, and this journey continues.

August 16 2014

Wow, we have reached the eighth month since Pop died. It has been significantly easier this past month dealing with the loss than it has been the previous seven. I'm not sure if it's because of all the travel and activities I have been doing or just because this is how the cycle goes. There are still some incredibly difficult moments, but they pass much more quickly than they had previously.

Jona and I spent a nice week in Belize at the ISAM conference. We dived every day together. Jona is an exceptional diver; I get great joy from doing that with him. While diving with him one day I realized that it was fifty years ago this same week when I did my first scuba dive in Miami. During that summer, Pop surprised me with a trip down to the Keys to the Santini Porpoise Training School. This is where they trained Mitzi, better known as Flipper. There, I swam with the dolphins. It was an opportunity my father provided me that I believe helped set my course in life. While Jona did not swim with dolphins in Belize, he was diving with sharks. Watching him, work his way closer and closer to them was a reminder of the thrill and amazement I experienced with the dolphins.

Jane will turn sixteen this week. I remember holding that little wonder in my arms when she was born. She has been a joy to us and brought such pride to my father. He always wanted to know what she was doing, what she was studying, and how she was growing. During the two months he was with us in Lake Havasu, he saw Jane almost every day and his face would light up when she came in. He would be a little confused at first because Jane looks so much as my mother did when she was young, and then would just call out her name ... "Janey!" During those two months, he and Jane bonded as a grandfather and granddaughter should. She brought him joy.

My brother Jeff is living in the Brooklyn house now and has begun the long arduous process of sorting through Pop's writings. There are a few books he wrote that went unpublished; one on philosophy, another on a Russian//Jewish artist, and a third on a female painter from the 1500's that we are looking at. With today's ease of publishing methods, we may be able to get these out there in a year or so.

I head back to school this Thursday. A few interesting classes, one on Religion in America, another on rhetoric and a third in biology. We should know quickly how these will turn out. While I am not overly excited to go back this sem, I am sure once I am in the thick of it I will be. It's just 10 credits, more would have been too much with the other projects we are working on. My plan is to not drive Kathy and the kids crazy this semester with my schoolwork.

Kathy and the kids have been wonderful as I go through this healing process. It's not easy as it is portrayed in the movies. It is a long and tedious process of balancing the past with the present and the future. Identifying moments in time that were important, discarding things that were not, and, redefining goals and objectives. I miss pop.

September 16, 2014

Month nine since Pop is gone. The past month has been filled with school, work, family, and personal reflection. One of the courses I am in is Religion in America, A history of religion in America with attention to issues of historiography, pluralism, gender, race, ethnicity, politics, and social reform. Imagine the fun I am having as the token Jew in this class. As a Jew, my father taught me that there is one G-d and that while we are Jewish by birth, others worship G-d in their ways and we are to respect that.

Having never studied the efforts Christianity took to put the religion into the new world, I am navigating fresh waters. It is at this moment I wish Pop was here, because as I study, I am constantly contrasting these concepts to that which I know and am familiar. He and I would have an interesting discussion. What I am finding however is that I am more comfortable with whom I am as a Jew than I have ever been. While I may not follow all 613 commandments, (many are not feasible due to time, circumstance, and areas of expertise, for example, I don't farm, have fields or flocks etc.) I believe I am in a good place with the understanding of it all and am content with the ongoing learning process.

This month we celebrate Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the holiest of Jewish holidays. This will be the first time my father will not be seeking forgiveness for any of the sins he may have committed. We completed that for him at his funeral. However, as I look back upon his life, I can say without hesitation he was a righteous man. He lived his life on his own terms and in ways he understood life and G-d. The more I thought I was different from him, the more I find similarities in our philosophical approaches.

I believe I honor my father with the things I do for his memory, my brother and sister, my family, community and friends. It is what he has passed on. It has been nine months the pain is no longer intense; it's now a dull ache of emptiness

October 16, 2014

Last year on this day, my father arrived in Lake Havasu City for a "visit." We had hired a medical transport to take him from Brooklyn to Arizona. His 2500-mile ride across country with my brother was challenging but he had a chance to see many familiar landmarks from his younger days of travel. First he traveled over the Verrazano Bridge, then thorough Philadelphia, and across the Ohio River, past the Archway of St. Louis, crossing the Mississippi. And on to Okalahoma City, Amarillo, Albuquerque and the Painted Walls of Arizona. All in all a 58 hour trip. It was the last time he saw his own home, the trees he planted, the schools he taught in and of course my sister, his precious daughter.

We made sure he was well cared for with a full time staff and anything he needed. The assisted living facility was just down the street from the ASU campus and not more than ten minutes from our house. I would stop in and see him three, four, sometimes five times

a day. Kathy would bring Jane and Jona by to see him a few times a week. As time went on the kids would even take the bus on their own to see him. He was happy, content and had not a worry in the world.

As I look back on that time, I was in perpetual motion, non-stop, 24/7 managing staff, handling doctors, going to school, running a business, caring for my own family and trying to take care of myself at the same time. A formidable task for sure. This would go on until Pop died on December 16<sup>th</sup>, exactly sixty days from when I brought him here.

The past ten months have been a roller coaster of emotions while trying to reassemble a life without being in constant crisis. And while the stinging pain of that loss subsides from time to time, it is always there. **The pain of losing someone you love dearly never really goes away. It is front and center every day. I just learn to navigate around it.**

It's been ten months, next month we go to NY for the ritual unveiling of his headstone. It will be my first time back to the cemetery since I buried him. It will be one of those bittersweet moments when I will be happy his spirit has been moved, but desperately wished to have had more time.

And, we press on.

## November 16, 2014

I am eleven months into this journey. Today Pop is gone eleven months. Yesterday was the last day I said Kaddish (for sons it is eleven months less one day). Does this mean the pain and grief magically disappear? Not likely. The Kabbalah says that if the departed soul's good deeds are outweighed by their sins, then it may take another month of cleansing. However, if their good deeds outweighed their sins then the eleven months of Kaddish were sufficient to ease the judgment and suggests confidence that the soul can now go to its eternal resting place. I am quite confident that my father's good deeds during his lifetime far outweighed any of his transgressions. The Talmud also tells us that sons cease reciting Kaddish on the eleventh month because we are obligated to honor our parents in perpetuity. Heavy stuff.

So what does one learn from this orderly ritual of mourning? The answer is individual. For me, it has shown the wisdom of the sages and that life and death follow a mystical and at times mathematical order. That while time passing does not heal the hurt, pain, disappointment, termination, and death, it does provide an algorithm, similar to a decompression schedule, for reaching the surface. It is a systematic method of getting back to where one was prior to the emotionally devastating event.

The year of Kaddish is applied to parents, spouses, children, and those with whom one has had the longest and deepest relationships. Some personally apply it to deep friendships and people who have been immeasurably significant in their lives. The process begins with the Anuit, a few days of intense fog prior to burial or realization that

the loss has occurred.. It then moves into Shiva, the seven days of intense, and at times excruciating mourning. It follows with 21 days of Shiloshim, the denial of personal comfort, and culminates on 31 days when one re-enters society. That is followed by 10 to 11 months to get us to this point in time.

You have seen my process unfold in a monthly post regarding the journey. Some times the comments were strong and reflective, other times just matter-of-fact. Nevertheless, it is a working process. I believe it can be applied to other losses as well. Moreover, as we reflect on other tragedies in our lives, we can see that it does, and is applicable though many may not know how. Some of my friends have commented to me privately how my journey and the explanation of the process has helped them with their losses. If it has helped them then, I have done my good deed along the way.

Psychologists suggest that if one repeats an action for thirty days it becomes a habit. If you continue to repeat, you reach the asymptote of automaticity, and the action becomes an ingrained response. I believe the lengthy process developed, so we are prepared for the next loss or challenge that we face. What happens with multiple losses? Can we apply the process in parallel to a new loss or challenge while managing the previous loss? I believe it is the only way to manage multiple losses. Each gets its own timeline. I think the Rabbis set it up that way just for the purpose to allow one to have an order and set boundaries- it's a training ground. The process helps, but the pain of losing someone you love dearly never really goes away. It is front and center every day.

Next Sunday we return to the cemetery to unveil my father's footstone. It will be the first time I am back at the cemetery since last December when we interned him. I am not sure what to expect other than I am stronger than I was. I know just a little bit more, and I understand that this is not the final loss I will experience. And while I appreciate all the help and support I have had from my wife, children, family, and special friends, grief and mourning is not shared. It is an individual journey. A journey each of us finds an understanding of on our own terms.

November 23 2014

The Unveiling: NY shined upon us today with fine weather. There was no rain, snow, or sleet to make an unveiling miserable. We just had sunshine and no need for an overcoat. The unveiling is one of those traditions within the Jewish culture that helps culminate the year of mourning. Again it's one of those boundaries that helps keep things in perspective. While some will do the unveiling anytime after the first month we have always had them as close to the 11<sup>th</sup> month as possible.

The unveiling is the formal dedication of the footstone. It is the culmination of the entire mourning process. Jews bury the dead immediately, and the funeral service is at a time of heightened emotion. The unveiling is at a time when we can express emotion without the intensity of the immediacy of the burial.

The service, conducted by the Rabbi consists of the recitation of certain psalms and a eulogy and any comments from those attending. The Rabbi took Psalm 119, the longest and rearranged it so each sentence started with the letters of my father's name, based upon the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 119 is the prayer of one who delights in and lives by the Torah. I can say without hesitation that my father lived his life in this manner. He instilled greatness into his children and grandchildren and entrusted us to do the same for others.

We had our family, children, cousins, and friends with us today. We had the good thoughts of others not able to be with us, and we had good thoughts for others as well. The unveiling is not a sad time, but a time of love, of release, and of commemoration. Now it is time to press on and do more good work.

December 16, 2014

One year. It has been one year since my father, Abraham Silverstein died. He was at peace and without pain. The last two months of his life, he spent on a "visit" here in Arizona. He was comfortable, without a care in the world. He spent time with his grandchildren and was at peace always. We had him transported to NY for the service and placed next to my mother, Barbara in Wellwood Cemetery. He had lived just past his 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday. What a remarkable lifetime to have experienced.

The past year has been one of grieving, sorrow, reflection, challenges, excitement, and change. I know a little bit more today than I did a year ago. What I learned during the process is that the only thing that's constant is our ability to make choices. Sometimes we make good choices, sometimes bad, and other times we make the best choice based on the information we know at the time. It is not supposed to be easy. That is the journey of life... a destination unknown.

Going through my father's writings, papers, paintings, and books, I learn more about what was inside him, the things he did not share aloud. Pop was a great fan of Robert Frost, the great American poet; this quote is most appropriate: "Freedom lies in being bold." Pop stepped out of his comfort zone to achieve the things he wanted for himself and his family. Even when faced with adversity I never knew him to be afraid of anything. He made choices along the way, and his works reflect the freedoms his decisions afforded him. When all is said and done, he did OK. He was content, happy, and free.

Abraham M. Silverstein October 25, 1920 - December 16, 2013