



## Maurice Simon Cahn

February 5, 1924 - May 5, 2015

Maurice Simon Cahn, born on February 5th, 1924, died at age 91 on May 5, 2015 after suffering two strokes. He is survived by five adult children: Barbara Torres, Hilary Barnett, Leslie Sharp, Nancy Cahn, and Gary Cahn; by nine grandchildren: Adam Torres, Daniel Torres, Heather Sandidge, Kael Sharp, Rebecca Balvin, Amanda Kozak, Nathan Cahn and Benjamin Cahn; and by five great-grandchildren: Melody Sandidge, June Sandidge, Hudson Torres, Natalie Arciniega, and Brooke Torres. He was Born in Richmond, VA, and was a veteran of WWII and the Korean War. He joined the Navy as an enlisted man, was sent to Georgia Tech by the navy, earned his BS degree, and became an officer.

There is so much to say about Maurice Simon Cahn, known affectionately, by his friends and associates in his youth, as Mickey. He was outgoing, couldn't have enough variety in his life. His idea of a successful party was to have lots of alcohol, and invite so many people that there was no room for anybody to sit down. Certainly, I don't recall any wallflowers at our parties.

But we got ahead of ourselves. After graduating from Georgia Tech, with his BS in Aeronautical Engineering, he married Natalie Garfinkel, whose family owned a successful clothing store in Virginia. After the birth of 3 of his 5 children, he went on to earn his Master's Degree from the University of Virginia. Then in 1959, after the birth of five children, he was offered a position

at Douglas Aircraft way out on the West Coast, and he decided to accept that. He bought one of the first VW Vans, took along an 8 mm movie camera he was given by his NASA coworkers as a going away present, packed up a tiny snail-shaped trailer, and headed west, with all of us in tow, five kids between ages of 9 and 2. He filmed the entire trip, while driving and navigating. He even went so far as staging some fights and tantrums to make it more interesting. He then edited, spliced and captioned it all with clever titles and transitions, and added music. And remember, these were the days before computers and iMovie. The movie was entitled, "They Said It Couldn't Be Done." It took a full 14 days for us to make it across the country.

Though, I think us kids grumbled a lot, he molded us into a performance family, and he was very proud of our shows. He handled us like a ship's captain handles a crew, and I don't think any Dad would have chosen to perform with his family if he didn't love being around his kids. His own father, Abraham, had him learn by assisting, as he, Grandpa Abraham Jerome Cahn, worked as a photographer, fixed his own cars, and worked his small farm which consisted of roosters and chickens.

Our Dad grew up being capable of doing many practical things, and mastering many tasks in various areas. His father became very proud of him when he grew his own family. Daddy was well-liked by his engineer associates and by the secretaries who thought he was fun, easy going, and good looking. He could never be a one-dimensional engineer, and therefore exposed himself to a constant variety of experiences. I remember him tackling the surf in the cold Pacific Ocean every day after work, to prove himself worthy of living in sunny Southern California. Still not enough, he would pack up a set of drums at night and go join Jimmy Beasley at whatever club he was working that evening, and proudly grooved along with him, playing whatever beat he could come up with. Jimmy loved it, and missed his presence when he wasn't there.

Later on, he picked up the acoustic bass, making a nice silhouette as he accompanied Jimmy Beasley or whoever was playing piano and singing. He couldn't discern pitch, but claimed that the "thump thump" was enough to add immeasurable interest. I couldn't disagree, it was fun to listen to and to watch. Sometimes he would sneak me in and have me play one of my pieces on piano that I could play in my sleep. I thought the drunks were oddly fascinating, not quite realizing they were drunk.

During the day, disguised as an ordinary aerospace engineer, he would focus on problems of airflow, vortices, and stability of aircraft at high speeds. He said that he mostly drew on his third grade education for solutions at work. He complained about the inability for aerospace engineers to speak plain English. Mickey, as he liked to be called in his early years, had an ability to distill a problem down to its essence, making it understandable to a third grader. Then it was manageable and it all came clear to him.

After a few years, he earned the title Aerodynamicist, a fancy title that embarrassed him, but accurately set him apart from the regular aerospace engineers. He received recognition and praise for inventing the first water tunnel at Northrop Aircraft, and he did this in an environment that did not believe such a thing would be beneficial at all. This was an alternative to an expensive and enormous wind tunnel. A water tunnel could fit into an ordinary aquarium for a modest sized living room. As an aerodynamicist, he was high up in R & D, researching things beyond what the regular engineer would do. He was designing the space shuttle when it was still top secret, he helped design the stealth bomber when it was still top secret, and he presented a paper to the NATO scientists in Paris.

Outside of work, he captured the attention of some local writers who insisted on writing a huge, center-page article about him in the Daily Breeze, our local

paper with a huge base of subscribers. It included a complete picture of him standing next to an acoustic bass, which he played at local dives. The article described his unusual and colorful lifestyle.

He was also written up in the well-respected Time Magazine for some of his engineering work in eliminating the sonic boom. When he became poignantly aware of the air pollution problem, he began riding a bicycle to work, of course, not without eating one or two cloves of garlic on the way, so that his sweat would announce his arrival well in advance.

As a father, he wanted his kids to be knowledgeable and aware of the world around them, so he highly encouraged watching PBS, even when it was a new thing, before it had the palatable, even impressive format it has now. In the beginning it was coming to us from a screen speckled with “snow” and an ever-present white noise that no antenna on earth could erase. He took us on excursions to the Museum of Natural History, where we saw dinosaurs of all shapes and sizes, and to the La Brea Tar Pits, where we learned what happened when a Brontosaurus, a massively giant creature with thick muscles, steps into a sticky hole of deep, black tar. He took us to the giant telescope next to the fascinating Griffith Park Observatory, where we learned about how powerful the sun was, and also how to cope with the fact that it might burn out over billions of years. Like the Woody Allen Character who represented himself at age 8 or 9, I stayed up at night worrying about the meaning of life if the sun was going to burn out in billions of years.

All of these excursions made my thoughts very interesting, and the knowledge that I had gained, resulted in a sophisticated vocabulary and an ability to think of humanity as a group, a whole, with choices and repercussions. I thought that the theory of evolution, as explained by Darwin, was exciting and stimulating to the imagination. I couldn't for the life of me, understand how it disputed the existence of God. It all fit together nicely for me.

Daddy valued culture and artistic skills, so he and Mama agreed to music lessons for the kids. Mama wanted to add French, Ballet, Tap, and more, but I guess Daddy's checks could only be stretched so far. I still am able to call on some French vocabulary that I was able to absorb in the few lessons that we got to have, not to mention some basic tap that my feet can still remember. He was very proud of the way he handled his paycheck, which was to just give it over, in full, to Mama, who he entrusted to make the best decisions where children were concerned.

He was a seeker of truth and found delight and satisfaction in little demonstrations of the laws of physics, like why the water in a cup doesn't spill over the sides even after the ice melts; Why a ball bounces and comes back, rather than drifting out into infinite space; Why the planets follow a predictable orbit. His curiosity knew no bounds, and his striving for answers to the physical universe was relentless. He scoffed at religion, astrology, and many social conventions; however, decades later, in his 70s and 80s, he began to give credence to Astrology, based on the idea that all things have a unique vibration. He also came to understand reasons for many social conventions. Perhaps I misstated that. He was able to see physiological reasons, based on human survival, for many social conventions, though others he found worthy of the scoff.

One of his favorite stories was of Galileo and the Catholic Church, which brought to light the power structure inherent in most religions. In this case, Galileo was made a prisoner (similar to house arrest, I believe) for writing that the earth revolved around the sun. Daddy insisted that if there was a God, He must follow the laws of Physics, though Maurice was not an advocate of metaphysics, which he scoffed.

He had a scary and impressive dark side, and though he was very outgoing,

he was at the same time, unforgivably critical of himself. He couldn't release layers and layers of guilt over his transgressions against his wife and children, as well as his shortcomings as a little brother growing up. He was in a cycle of guilt and retribution, followed by destructive behavior. He knew that personal, familial violence was wrong, but he couldn't control it.

Like the Elephant in Kipling's Just So Stories, he naively sought answers from everyone and everywhere. As an adult character of real life, he chased after solutions to his problems that arose from insecurities, fear, and lack of restraint. Unfortunately, the "solutions" took on a tone and character of their own, causing a terrible narcissism, greater violence, and a convenient amnesia that soothed the conscience to an extent. This was the other edge to the sword of indiscriminate experimentation. Naïveté was charming, but it got a little perverse. It was the tragic side, the side that cut into the light to expose a fathomless dark, palpable in some sense, and much like the tragic story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde, which Maurice saw as a profound depiction of himself.

Our mother showed great strength as she responded to a personal code that said she had to stay and see it all through. As she got older, her options became fewer; her sister on the East Coast, became very unsupportive to her desire to move back to that vicinity. She nevertheless was able to develop a sense of humor about it all.

Maurice suffered from terrible guilt after she died, and began abandoning the ideas that kept him interested in life, healthy and active. He gave in to death, finally. He was a unique individual who lived his life in full, supported a family, and contributed ingeniously to the field of aerodynamics, and as well, provided philosophical as well as comedic enrichment for many who knew him. He was an example of a Renaissance man, not only having learned so much from his father as a youth, but in continuing to learn valuable skills, insights, and

lessons throughout his life.

Services for Maurice Cahn will be held over two days. First, on Sunday, June 21, at the home of Hilary Barnett, an informal celebration of his life will be held, beginning at 3:00 pm. Then on Monday, June 22, there will be a more formal funeral service with military honors held at Riverside National Cemetery at Staging Area 1. Contact any family member for any needed details, such as addresses. The family wishes to thank everyone for your prayers and condolences. Everything is very much appreciated. SEE BELOW FOR DRIVING DIRECTIONS.

# Previous Events

## Funeral and Celebration of Life

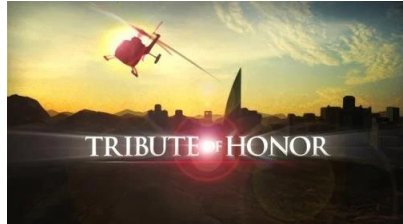
JUN **22**. 10:00 AM - 10:30 AM (PT)

Riverside National Cemetery  
22495 Van Buren Blvd  
Riverside, CA 92518

# Tribute Wall



“ *Reflecting on Memories* created a *Tribute Video* in memory of *Maurice Simon Cahn*



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**Reflecting on Memories** - June 13, 2015 at 09:00 AM

AT

“ Hi Mickey,

*It's Adam, your first grandchild. And a son at that . . . on the first try!*

*In your honor and memory, I will take a page out of your book and talk about me. That statement is meant to be funny. So if it's not, it's the reader's fault.*

*I am predisposed to assuming people will do it wrong. It being everything. I wonder where I get it from. I SAID I WONDER WHERE I GET IT FROM. \*Sigh\*, never mind. I can't believe that even in your present state I still have to shout.*

*I was asked to recall a favorite Mickey story. Instead I've suggested that all the dishes served at today's gathering be finger foods, coupled with a COMPLETE ABSENCE of utensils. That way, when a guest serves himself, said guest can – no MUST – touch each piece of available food before inevitably selecting the very first piece of touched food. This ritual shall symbolize your fried chicken customs.*

*Mickey, thank you for teaching me irony at such a young age. And for boosting my immune system every time we came into contact.*

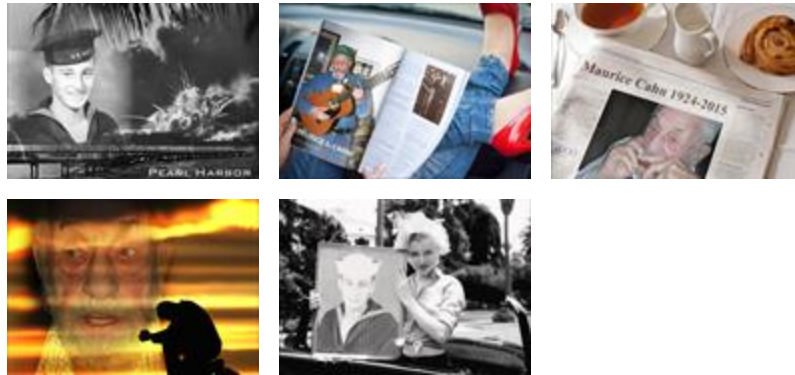
*Adam*

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adam torres - July 01, 2015 at 11:06 AM



“ 15 files added to the album Memories Album



Reflecting on Memories - June 13, 2015 at 09:03 AM



“ 86 files added to the album Maurice Cahn Life



Reflecting on Memories - June 13, 2015 at 07:24 AM



“ *don't wanna make hot love; don't wanna a passionate kiss; it all makes me flip; just want companionship; not too many years ago; I only lived for romance; but not I'm ready to retire; just let the young boys dance*

leslie sharp - June 09, 2015 at 12:09 PM



*I love it! I will try to post the video where he's singing it on his 90th birthday haha.*

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**Hilary Barnett** - June 09, 2015 at 10:18 PM

HB

*I've tried to upload that video but can't. When you come on father's day I will play for you. It's at his 90th bath so better probably not to post it here haha*

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**Hilary Barnett** - June 12, 2015 at 05:42 PM

BT

*We were born in Virginia which was a segregated state. Before ever hearing news of a Civil Rights movement our father took us to a black revival tent meeting in Hampton. We were the only white people there. I was scared and uncomfortable. He didn't give us any explanations of why it was important. He showed us with his actions. After moving to California he brought home African Americans, Latinos, Italians. Some were friends, co workers, or someone he met at the local bar. And he treated them all with respect. I didn't know how ground breaking this was.*

*In the 50s and 60s we didn't have the term "helicopter" parents. We were thrown into whatever situation was available. I don't think it was to consciously teach us lessons. It was just how my father lived life. My mother took us to music lessons and made us practice. But my father took it to the next level. When there was a party, we kids were relegated to the back of the house. Not because we were being protected, but because my father didn't want his guests to be inhibited with children at the party. But he would call us out one at a time to perform. I felt the pressure, "Play something." There was no chance to run from it. And there were no bribes or rewards. It was understood, that's what you do. After the performance he would send us to the back of our house where we spied, joyfully, as much as possible on the adults.*

*My mother gave us swimming lessons every summer. When we were older my father started going to the beach after work. We would change into swimming suits and pile into the car. He taught us to catch a wave with an air mattress or styrofoam board. There was never talk of, oh it's rough out there today, or cold. And nothing about what to do if the wave was extra big and dragged you on the bottom. We figured out how to hold our breath until we could come up. Yes, it was scary. But we just did it and went back out to do it again.*

*Later Mickey got interested in spear fishing with a mask and snorkel. He showed us at home how to fit the mask to our face, then how to spit in it to keep it from fogging up. Then he took us to Palos Verdes. We climbed down a steep cliff to a roiling tide pool. Waves were breaking around us. He said, "watch me, do what I do. You've got to time it right." He got into the water. I stood on those rocks and watched the waves. I didn't think, like a sane person would, "this is too rough. I'm not going to do this. If I don't do it right I could end up bloody and banged up on these rocks, or worse" Instead I followed him. The waves broke on the rocks. I timed it so I got in and waves took me away from the rocks. My father handed me the mask to put on. I looked under the water and was thunderstruck at the new world under there. Of course there was the sticky business of getting out... alive. Again, we watched him and timed our exit between the waves.*

*I owe my father my love of the ocean and my sense of adventure.*

*When we lived in Redondo Beach my father ran for the city council. He had brochures printed up and walked door to door to every house to talk to people and give him a brochure. He always took one of his kids with him. I was amazed that people would start out looking at us suspiciously. Then he would start talking and they would open the door and listen to his spiel respectfully. He didn't win, but it was one more adventurous experience.*

*When we went to bed at night he sometimes recited poetry to us. He gave a dramatic reading of "Invictus".  
My sister, Hilary, will share that with you.*

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**Barbara Torres** - June 25, 2015 at 10:53 AM