

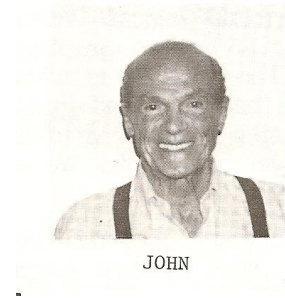


"Johnny D"

18 Feb 1918 to 16 Jan 2011

Article written by

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Johnny DeDomenico, died two months ago, in early February, and it has taken me this long to be able to write about him. He was my best friend and much like the father that I never had. Though he was our oldest club member, I never really knew how old he was. He had been telling me for the last six years that he was 92, and I had been telling him for the last eight years that I was 49. We always had a good laugh about this.

The picture above was taken on July 11th, 2010, at my mother's house, where I cooked him his favorite salmon meal and we later watched the World Cup Final between Spain and the Netherlands. Johnny had Spanish blood in him, as does my mom.

Johnny was a highly decorated World War II bomber pilot, flying 52 missions over Nazi occupied Europe. He and his crew bombed countless oil fields, commandeering B-17 Flying Fortresses. Johnny's planes often came back riddled with bullet holes and engines lit in flames. He explained to me that by bombing the oil fields, Hitler's war machinery was slowly strangled, which proved to be the decisive punch in the end. Somewhere in my hundreds of photographs at home, I have a picture of young Johnny in his officer uniform, a picture that would make any current, or past movie star envious. After the war, Johnny became a Pan American pilot for many years. He married young, had several children, and left many grandchildren behind.

Johnny goes way back at the San Diego Swing Dance Club. He was a Newsletter Editor at one time, remaining a superbly clear writer and thinker until the very end. He was also one of the coolest swing dancers I've ever seen, having taught me, and others, many nifty patterns. And his Foxtrot was arguably the best in the club. He always loved the people at the club and never had criticism for anyone, being the most positive person I've ever met, one reason I was so close to him.

Johnny stopped going to the club at the same time that I did, around 2003, when he started losing his balance and did not trust himself on the dance floor any more. I tried to talk him into going many times, just to sit with me and watch the great dancers. But, he did not want to be remembered that way.

Two months ago, in early February, I had the great pleasure of running into Jack Siegler at Von's Supermarket in Mission Valley, where I told Mr. Siegler about Johnny. Mr. Siegler asked me to tell Johnny to come to the club, where he would do a special tap dance just for Johnny. I was excited about this proposition, knowing that Johnny would probably accept. So, I quickly went outside and dialed Johnny's number. His daughter-in-law answered the phone and said, "I am sorry, but Johnny has passed away."

Boom, boom! I was stunned, a one-two punch.

I asked her if I could write something about him for the Newsletter and she said that Johnny did not want a big fuss made about him, but that it was okay. So, Johnny...here is to you, old friend.