

In Loving Memory of

Stephen Joseph Testa
January 1, 1927 – July 17, 2022

Today is a sad day for the Testa Family, my Dad passed away last night quietly in his sleep surrounded by his three daughters and loving family. He was 95.

Stephen is survived by 5 children; Maria, Dominick, Peter, Fran, and Cathy. 13 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren. He was married to my Mom, Fran, for 64 years, she was his only love. When she passed my sisters took care of my Dad day and night and he was not always an easy patient, very set in his ways. Yet, they did a great job especially my sister Cathy who took great care of him over the last few months when his health really started to fail.

My Dad's life was filled with the usual ups and downs of everyday life. But the absolute driving force in his life was the produce business. He worked all of his life, only slowing down when his kids came into the business and "slowing down" means he went to Arizona with my Mom because she made him. He would still call me to check on things every week. Coming to work is what kept him going well into his eighties. One of the worst days of his life came when he could no longer drive and come to the office. He told me once, it was like he didn't have a purpose and sitting home was all bullshit. My Dad said getting old was not what he wanted to do. He wanted to go on his own terms. I told him many times he did not have an expiration date. So too bad, you're stuck with us. Just one week ago when he could still talk, he whispered in my ear it was still all bullshit!

My Dad was in the Navy during the Second World War. While stationed in Hawaii he was tasked with guarding the pineapple fields which he never knew why. To keep the boredom away he would use his bayonet to cut the pineapples in half for fun. He also enjoyed eating lots of pineapple, so he would always ask if we were selling Hawaiian pineapple because "they were the best" to which I would say, we did up until the eighties. Now they have golden ripe which are supposed to be better, but he never thought so.

My Dad's office was directly across from my sales department. He would always talk with the sales people and tell them about restaurants and hotels they should call on and who to go and see, and he would remember people's names and places better than all of my sales staff, he loved interacting with them. In fact we still have customers he brought on to this day. His knowledge of the produce industry was vast and cannot be duplicated as his life spanned decades in the business from horse and wagon with his Father to compressed natural gas trucks, from no refrigeration then everything refrigerated. And when it came to food safety he was not a fan, he would say "I would eat produce right out of the ground and now everyone thinks you've got to wash everything 20 times, that's why all of the kids get sick." You know he could be right.

Dad would come into my office and sit in the chair in front of me and ask "how are things? Do we still sell this hotel or that restaurant?" Asking what reps are not doing a good job so he could talk to them and help them out. Always concerned on how the business was going.

Ten years ago during a very challenging time for Testa, my then bank suggested I cut expenses. One of the people they told me to fire was my Dad and the other, my Brother, my reply; "That will never happen!" Should that day ever come, Testa Produce would no longer exist. They thought he was an unnecessary expense. Who would have thought a bank thinking one of the founders of a company as an "unnecessary expense?"

My Dad was the best person, he always backed me up, and no matter what I had done he supported me and always had my back. When I began the process of building Testa's new building and told him it would be the only one of its kind, he was confused because he had no knowledge about LEED or renewable energy, yet at the grand opening he was beaming with pride to see the Testa name on a brand new state of the art building. Dad's office was decorated with pictures of his Wife, Mother, Father, Children and Grandchildren along with our then Mayor, Rahm Emmanuel who when the Mayor came took a great liking to my Dad.

My Dad was never a show off, he loved his family and loved the produce business, it was his life. I will miss his influence every day and, more than that, I will miss him. Rest in peace Dad.

Love, Peter