



## Sarge Funicello

November 27, 1917 - November 24, 2008

Dad passed away November 24, 2008; three days shy of his 91st birthday. He was born in Utica, NY, the second child of Antonio & Congetta (Altieri) Funicello. He attended Conkling Elementary School, then Utica Free Academy; graduating in 1936. He mentioned many times that he was proud to have earned that diploma even though it meant returning for a fifth year.

On June 14, 1941 he married Nancy Rodio at St Mary of Mt Carmel Church, Utica; a truly blessed union of sixty-four years until her passing on December 31, 2005. Their love and devotion to one another was inspiring and without question. Dad said when he first met her he knew they would marry...however it was Mom who proposed.

Though Dad was never in the military, and was christened Alfred Robert, he was known to everyone as Sarge. That nickname was bestowed upon him at an early age by his cousin Dick "Mud" Alberico who insisted that a character in a movie they'd seen together resembled him. Family and friends quickly adopted the moniker and the name stuck. To this day the name Sarge is recognized by many people in and around Utica.

Dad wanted to pursue his education and hoped to become an attorney. However, the Great Depression was raging and he had to work in order to help support the family of seven. On the day after high school graduation, he

encountered his brother Joe who was operating an auto repair shop in a garage behind the family's home. Joe asked what Dad planned to do for a living. When Dad indicated that he was undecided, his brother suggested he help him that day by cleaning some auto parts. So began a sixty-five year plus auto mechanic career. Initially partnering with his brother, later renting space in other shops and culminating with the opening of Sarge's Service Station, 1028 Albany St, Utica on January 20, 1956. Dad was never comfortable if he had a debt. He worked seven days a week in order to pay off the acquisition and construction loans. He accomplished that goal within four years at which point Mom said enough was enough and insisted he be closed Sundays...he complied. Dad was a voracious book reader which served him well as he studied on his own over the years to become the best he could be in his chosen profession. By all accounts he was an outstanding mechanic and businessman.

In addition to his main occupation, Dad was also an accomplished trumpet musician who played professionally from the 1930's through 1952 with various dance bands, the last of which being Ray Dimitrich's. Dad spoke about the sometimes difficult travel around New York State to play gigs and how, if they weren't "stiffed", they'd be paid two dollars per man for a night's work.

The Albany St Garage was more than simply a place for auto repairs and gasoline. It was where his sons, who at various times worked along side him, not only acquired automotive knowledge, but came to admire and respect their father. It was a gathering spot for his friends and those of his sons. On occasion the sons, who would take a work break, and their friends played whiffle ball in the vacant lot across the street (Dad wasn't always pleased with these events). The neighborhood children would frequent the Pepsi machine and Dad took an interest in their lives. Every Christmas and New Years Eves found holiday decorations in the windows and cookies on the office desk as well as something to "nip" on. In more recent years Dad and his friends would

regularly meet for “coffee an”, discuss how to “solve the world’s problems” and admire and tend to each other’s Cadillacs (which Dad thought was the finest of cars) and other vehicles. The garage is closed now, but for many, the memories will live on.

Dad wasn’t a sports fan and he didn’t have any hobbies although he enjoyed crossword puzzles, good cigars, wine and Utica Club Beer. Instead he shared more important things such as honesty, integrity and perseverance. He felt that a person’s word was their bond and a promise given must be fulfilled. He was a well-spoken man and was always willing to offer counsel or assistance. He gave his sons an appreciation for music and guided their educational pursuits. He was elated that each earned a college degree. He took great joy in assisting with his grandchildren’s rearing and they affectionately called him Dada or “Dod”. His work ethic was second to none. A good example was the Monday following the blizzard of 1966. Though his car was buried to the roof in snow and over Mom’s strong objection, he insisted on going to work. She finally convinced him otherwise when she pointed out that no customers would be there. He reluctantly agreed, but went the next day...traveling the one mile on foot. His love for his cherished Nancy and family was absolute. He was a man of moral conviction and strong religious beliefs who attended Catholic Mass every Sunday. He was a role model to many and will be missed by all. God bless you Dad.

Sarge leaves his sons and daughter-in-law: Anthony Funicello and his companion Lisa Eustace, Leonard & Alyce Funicello and Al Funicello and his companion Rhonda Barlow. Also granddaughters and their husbands: Noel & Jim Day, Holly & Rich Maline and Bonnie Funicello. Also great-grandchildren: Griffin, Hayden & Ava Day and Dana, Connor & Cameron Maline. Also brother Joseph Funicello, sister Elsie Cardamone and sister-in-law Nancy Funicello. Also favorite nephew and his wife Robert & Joanne Funicello. Also “adopted

daughter” Linda Perryman and close friends Dave Conti and Hank Casab. Also friends Sal and John Piazza (brothers) who shared much respect and admiration for Sarge. Sarge was predeceased by great-grandchild Aaron Maline, brother Robert Funicello, sister Ida Battle and close friends, who he sorely missed, Tony “Priest” Picente and Pat Giovinazzo.

The family wishes to thank Dr A. L. Shaheen for his many years of care, Dr James O’Malley for his years of friendship & professionalism and the entire staff of the Charles T Sitrin HCC, 2nd floor East who tended to Sarge during his stay.

Education was always a top priority for Sarge. By family request, in lieu of flowers, please consider contributions to a scholarship fund to be established in Sarge’s honor. Envelopes will be available at the Funeral Home.

Visitation will be held on Tuesday from 4-7 at the Eannace Funeral Home, Inc., 932 South St., corner of Hammond Ave. Sarge’s Mass of Christian Burial and Celebration of Life will commence Wednesday morning at 10:30 from the funeral home and at 11:30 at St. Mary of Mt. Carmel/Blessed Sacrament Parish. Interment will take place in St. Agnes Cemetery at the convenience of the family.

Dad, you no longer need to miss Mom or experience visions of her. Though the world is a lesser place without you, may you be happy together for eternity in a Heaven richly deserved.

Lovingly written by his son: Al Funicello

# Tribute Wall



“ *Eannace Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Sarge Funicello*



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**Eannace Funeral Home, Inc.** - November 24, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ *Dear Al, Lenny and family:  
Please allow me to offer my sincere sympathy at the loss of your dad. You told a wonderful story about him in the OD that was very heartwarming. We should all be so thankful for fathers like him. You are correct, his shop will be an East Utica "landmark" for years to come.  
May God bless you all in your time of sorrow, and lift you up in the joy of celebrating his life. I am sorry that I was unable to attend services.  
Sincerely and respectfully, yours  
Vince Mazzei and family##imported-begin##Vincent F. Mazzei##imported-end##*

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December 03, 2008 at 08:34 AM



## “ MEMORIES WITH DOD

By Noel (Funicello) Day, granddaughter

*I went to visit Dod in December of 2004 at the Sitrin Rehab Center. At the end of the visit, I told him how much I loved him and what a great grandfather I thought he was. His response was, “I hope so.” I’m glad I took that moment to say those things to him because the next time I would visit, he would no longer recognize me or be able to hold a normal conversation.*

*My best memories of Dod were the times he played Old Maid with Holly and I and would let us cheat horribly. He would color with us in the patio of his home for hours. He would let us comb his hair and put barrettes in it, with the stipulation that we put his hair back to normal when we were done playing. He only had 3 strands of hair that went across his bald head and be darned if we could ever comb it back to the way it was supposed to look. Gram would always cook good meals that Holly and I would never eat, and she would send Dod out to get our McDonald’s happy meals because eating something was better than eating nothing. Having sleepovers at their house meant Dod would do a DanDee Donuts run in the morning to retrieve our breakfast of coffee and taillight donuts. Rides in his Caddie were so much fun, like being in our own private limo, and reluctantly Dod would turn off the big band music and turn on one of our radio stations and suffer through it for us.*

*My favorite memory of all was when Dod would unexpectedly show up on a Sunday morning for a quick pit stop carrying a brown paper bag in his arms. He would give us the stink eye because (a) we were still in our pajamas and had just woken up which meant that (b) we didn’t go to church that day. He would unload the bag and inside would be all of our favorite junk foods.*

*He was a wonderful grandfather that was loved and appreciated dearly by his granddaughters and will be deeply missed forever.##imported-begin##Noel (Funicello) Day (Lenny's*

*daughter)##imported-end##*

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December 02, 2008 at 11:54 AM



“ *Our deepest sympathy to your family.  
Sincerely;  
Carol and Phil Scampone##imported-begin##Philip  
Scampone##imported-end##*

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December 02, 2008 at 06:32 AM



“ My memories of Sarge begin several years ago. In 2000 I was taking photography classes at MVCC and also traveling Albany St many times to get to Proctor High School where my daughters were attending. I was always fascinated by the old gas station which seemed to be in a time warp. One day I stopped and photographed the station, “Sarges”, on a wintery day. However, my instructor was less than impressed with my efforts. The plain white block building on a snowy day was not an interesting subject to her. Never the less I liked the picture and enlarged it. To my surprise one day, two years later, while passing the station early in the morning I saw what I thought was perhaps a vision. An older man was sitting at the desk inside the gas station. I made a u-turn to confirm that what I saw was real. Over the weeks I would look and see that many times the man was there early in the morning when I passed by. One day after making an extra enlargement of the photo, I stopped in to give it to him. I was very surprised to find that he was in fact “Sarge” and he told me he had been owned the service station since its construction it in 1955 when I was only 2 years old. I found that if the Cadillac was in the garage, Sarge was there. I stopped and visited several times and Sarge told me stories, of his life in Utica, how his Mother encouraged him to go into business, his opinion of the changes over the years, which concerned him, and his concern for his wife’s well being. Sarge was of my Father’s generation and hearing about the “old” Utica brought back great memories of those days when life seemed to be less complex. When the Cadillac was there but Sarge was no longer at his desk, I came to know Lenny and to realize that Sarge was well known by many in the area, an interesting “one of a kind”. Please accept my sincerest condolences.  
Rich VandeWater  
Utica###imported-begin###Rich VandeWater###imported-end###

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December 01, 2008 at 09:52 PM



“ *Al: On behalf of my family please allow me to express our deepest sympathy in the passing of your father. You and I always took pride in the relationship between our two families and your father being my uncle Joe's best man.*

*These days and the days to come are difficult ones, but I'm sure your faith in God will see you through. Our prayers are with you and your family.##imported-begin##Tony Spina and Spina family##imported-end##*

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December 01, 2008 at 09:36 AM



“ To the Funicello family. It seems not so long ago that I was a little 4th grader running up to the corner of Albany and Webster Ave climbing the snow hill playing with my friends and brothers. On that corner was "Sarges" gas station. A place where I would go in to warm up when I was cold. A place where I leaned so much about life. I spent many days talking to Sarge and all my good friends who would visit every morning and have discussions about everything and anything. As I grew older, we all would have a drink for the Hoildays and wish the best to each other. As time went by, one by one, all my friends passed on. It was then when I would spend every morning from 8:00 to 11:00 talking with Sarge about the good old days. He would always give me words of encouragement in anything I did. He said many times how proud he was of me beacause of the success I have had in my business. I really knew I made good when he said "Sal. take my car to V Sac and get a part I need". Oh my God, I thought. Sarge asking me to take his Cadillac? I felt like a big shot.

When I would visit him in the nursing home, he told me "Sal, you did alright". Those words have stuck with me and I will never forget them. His passing is so hard for me. I have lost someone who meant so much to me. He was not only a mentor, but my best friend. Words will never express how sorry I am. I do know that he is in heaven smoking his cigar running the show again with all his friends. Most of all, he is sitting with his true love Nancy once again. God bless you Sarge, and may God be with the Funicello family.##imported-begin##Sal Piazza##imported-end##

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November 25, 2008 at 08:45 PM



“ Dear Anthony, Len, Al and Family,  
I just heard the news of your fathers passing and am sorry for your loss. Most of the important lessons I learned in my lifetime were taught to me by your father. I admired, respected and loved him and will miss him. His death marks the end of my childhood. At the passing of our friend Tony "Priest" he said that death is only a part of life. So, life must go on without Sarge. If there is a place in heaven for him he'll be with Nancy his true love. She'll be telling him that he should give free oil changes for Jesus. Sarge will somehow convince Jesus that he has to pay reminding him of the pennies he picked up during the depression. Every time I see a penny I think of him and the stories he told. Find a penny, pick it up and think of Sarge. I will miss him and think of him for remainder of my life.  
John###imported-begin##John Piazza Jr.##imported-end##

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November 25, 2008 at 08:24 PM