

He Called Everybody 'Hun' And Ho

By BOB HURLEY
Sun Columnist

He was a giant of a man, or was it just that he was so strong? And the straw hat made him a little larger than life, too.

He had a way with getting a piano from one place to another with hands just a couple of sizes smaller than a tennis racket. With those same hands, he could handle life's most delicate trinkets and life's most delicate feelings and never break a dish. Or a heart.

Leon Dickson was big enough to strike fear into the heart of any mortal. But that was not his style. Picture a widow who needs a leaky roof or busted pipe fixed, then picture her calling Leon for help, and you'll have this big man pictured right.

In the past couple of days, I've heard so many kind things said about Leon that I'm more convinced than ever that he carried about half this town on his broad shoulders.

Leon died last week. His funeral was yesterday. I never knew him all that well, mostly just in passing, but I saw him around town an awful lot, always busy, always in the constant, deliberate motion that was his trademark. The wide-brimmed straw hat was another trademark.

I tried to get to know him better. I had bugged him several times to let me get some pictures of him in the big straw hat. Big straw hats make for good pictures, I told him. Actually, I was trying to get him in the paper. He was too modest for that, and turned me down time after time. He told me that he was a nobody in the world of news and newspapers. He told me he was just trying to get along as best he could.

The constant motion was another motive. That kind of work tells me a lot, makes interesting stories. I remember him pointing out to me how work never hurt anybody, and, come to think of it, if you didn't work, you weren't Leon's kind of people.

As I argued with him about the story he refused, I reminded him over and again that a nobody has never raised a large family and



These snapshots from the Dickson family albums show Leon at work, at a swanky Chinese restaurant in New Jersey where he was visiting children and grandchildren (top right), and causing some family laughter (lower right).

educated them the way he and his wife did.

I reminded him that a nobody had never created the legacy of friends that he and his beloved Miss Mary had created, and I reminded him that I had no less than a half dozen little ladies on my case who wanted to see him in the newspaper.

He just laughed me off. He thought it a little silly, I think, for me to even ask. By my continued bugging, I saw that all he wanted was to remain the private person that he was, and I never bothered him again.

I reported back to the little ladies. Leon wouldn't hear to a thing about him in the paper. I told them that he had told me that he didn't need any publicity. They understood.

The case was closed until late last week. Since Leon's death, I have been back in touch with the little ladies. To put it mildly, they say they are lost without Leon. They don't have anyone to call now when something goes wrong

with their lights or the water or when the roof needs patching or when a window needs fixing.

In addition to telling me that he was just a nobody, Leon once told me that he was just a handyman. Try telling that to the little ladies. They looked to him to do some pretty impossible tasks, ones involving everything from electricity to expensive crystal. According to them, Leon should have been the Chamber of Commerce Outstanding Citizen of the Year. Every year.

When word first came of his passing, two things came to mind: his exhaustive quest for excellence, whether building something with his hands or trimming a hedge, and the things I had heard about his prayers at meal time. I had heard plenty about Leon's table grace.

He was deprived a formal education himself, but he was known as much for his wisdom as he was his kindness. It rubbed off on the five children, too. All five of them finished college and now

they do everything fashions in New Jersey law in Beverly Hills,

His table grace famous. The little ladies hearing you about looking Leon at. They've told me he finished his prayer book to "bless our friend would pause and pray would "bless our ene

They thought the w and when it came goodbye to him yes refused to talk or even old man who had lived then died. Instead, Leon pursuing excellence conversation.

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He was the kind of could go into the grocery almost cause a work stop the clerks knew him his style of fun and he would tell them some or josh with them over of things. Mostly, though ed to hear him call the version of Honey.

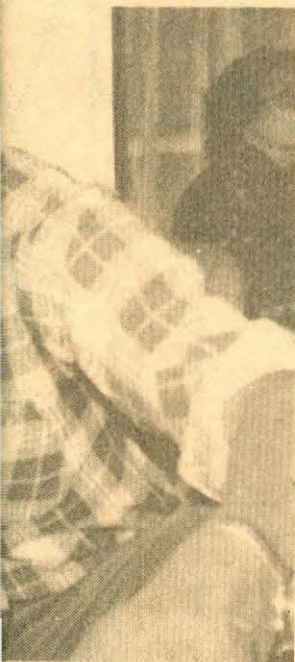
Come to think of it, just about everybody became such a part of many, in turn, called too.

You heard it over again: Leon was as kind you'll find. Leon loved his family proud as a papa can never bragged. Leon town and its people. Leon anything for you.

Late yesterday after an impressive memorial friends and family final time to remember who called them Hun. I that he knew well. He the land of this old town part of him. Now he was

As the final prayer w the afternoon sky appeared more threatening, chat light to a darker shade

ly 'Hun' And He Rang With Laughter



Albums show Leon at
in New Jersey where he
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law in Beverly Hills, California.

His table grace is almost
famous. The little ladies I was tell-
ing you about looked forward to
hearing Leon at lunch time.
They've told me how he always
finished his prayer by asking God
to "bless our friends." Then he
would pause and pray that God
would "bless our enemies, too."

They thought the world of Leon,
and when it came time to say
goodbye to him yesterday, they
refused to talk or even think of an
old man who had lived long and
then died. Instead, Leon was still
pursuing excellence in their con-
versation.

For almost 80 years, he had lov-
ed Greeneville. Helping people
had become a major theme in his
life. Working, he had said, is what
makes the difference in human
life and he set about to prove it.

He was well known for his
carpenter skills. Bricks and
blocks lined up perfectly under his
hands. He could handle plumbing
and electrical work, never quit-
ting until he had put his Leon sign
of excellence on it.

There would be time, of course,
for laughing and loving the family
he adored, but he simply would
not hear to wasting time.

He was the kind of man that
could go into the grocery store and
almost cause a work stoppage. All
the clerks knew him and enjoyed
his style of fun and laughter. He
would tell them something funny
or josh with them over the prices
of things. Mostly, though, they lov-
ed to hear him call them Hun, his
version of Honey.

Come to think of it, Leon called
just about everybody Hun. It
became such a part of him that
many, in turn, called him Hun,
too.

You heard it over and over
again: Leon was as kind a man as
you'll find. Leon laughed a lot.
Leon loved his family and was as
proud as a papa can be, but he
never bragged. Leon loved his
town and its people. Leon would do
anything for you.

Late yesterday afternoon, after
an impressive memorial service,
friends and family gathered a
final time to remember the man
who called them Hun. It is a place
that he knew well. He had loved
the land of this old town and it was
part of him. Now he was part of it.

As the final prayer was prayed,
the afternoon sky appeared a little
more threatening, changing from
light to a darker shade of gray.
The crowd broke up, quietly, and I
found myself repeating a line
from Leon's table grace, the one
about friends.



**He Called
Us All 'Hun'**

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