

# LIVING Brentwood

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## Jack Mansfield

*A Man for All Seasons*

Inside:

Neighborhood  
dads  
PAGE 16

Fire up  
the grill  
PAGE 23

Summer in  
the garden  
PAGE 34

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# Jack Mansfield

*A Renaissance man with a legacy of love...at 92*

BY ALINA GONZAQUE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT STALEY | SPONSORED BY THE SHELTON WILDER GROUP

The Korean War started on Jack Mansfield's 20th birthday, June 25, 1950. He was a young Chicagoan who loved jazz and art when he was sent to Japan to serve his country. At 18, his family had moved to LA, traveling down Route 66, passing now-historical landmarks like Grauman's Chinese Theatre and the Griffith Observatory. The skyline in LA at the time of the family's arrival would have included far fewer high-rises than Chicago's, but the weather was certainly more temperate — and LA was a good place to work and raise a family.

Jack spent most of his military service in Japan; his time there punctuated by lively shows he performed for his fellow troops as part of a barbershop quartet. "I wouldn't make a career out of that," he jokes modestly. "My voice served its purpose — and it got me out of a lot of duty!" In December 1951, Jack was promoted to sergeant and sent to Korea, north of the 38th parallel. "Sleeping in a tent was uncomfortable because the temperature would drop to 20 below," he recalls. He

came back home to Los Angeles in 1952.

The following year, Jack needed a new(er) car. He searched along Hollywood Boulevard east of the Pantages Theatre. "I found a used 1950s Pontiac," Jack recalls, "and I went in every month to pay the installments." On one such visit, he noticed a young woman as he handed his check to the receptionist. "I thought she gave me 'the eye,'" he recounts with a laugh. He asked the worker, "What's her name?" Jack credits the innocence of the times for the reason he got an immediate honest answer. Committing "Joan Consiglio" to memory, he later picked up a phone book and started hunting. The first listing was Andrew Consiglio — Joan's father — but, luckily, she was the one who answered.

"I was working a swing shift at the Technicolor film plant in Hollywood from 3:00 to 12:00 midnight," Jack recalls, "so I asked her to go out with me on a weekend." Joan declined, but agreed to meet Jack at one of the restaurants on Hollywood and Vine during a weekday

afternoon. Very quickly, "it was clear we enjoyed each other's company," Jack says. They married in 1959.

Jack spent the next 30 years of his professional career as the head of the projection lab at MGM and Disney studios, and concurrently at the Playboy Mansion as Hugh Hefner's projectionist for 20 years. Hefner held movie screenings for guests at his home, and Jack set up the reels. *Jaws* was screened for 80 guests before it played in the theater, as was the German film *Das Boot*. That lengthy film required three reels, which Jack only discovered just moments before Reel Two ended. Wouldn't you know it, the last can was still at Sylvester Stallone's house, who had borrowed it from the studio first. Reflecting upon his years in that industry, Jack says his all-time favorite film was *A Clockwork Orange*. "The glamour was bouncing off the walls [at the mansion]," he says, "but it was still a job, and Hefner and I had a professional relationship."

### "The glamour was bouncing off the walls at the Playboy Mansion"

Joan, meanwhile, was Julie Andrews' personal assistant for 25 years. The Mansfields became good friends with Julie and her husband Blake Edwards over that time. "Lisa played with their daughter, Emma," Jack says, "and we spent time in their house in Malibu and at their chalet in Gstaad." Jack and Joan loved to travel, particularly to Europe. Among other destinations, they visited Italy, France, England, Germany, Scandinavia, Ireland, and Denmark — Jack's collection of a handful of words in half a dozen languages getting them by. The trip to Copenhagen was Jack's first to Europe, and the first of many encounters with hospitable locals.

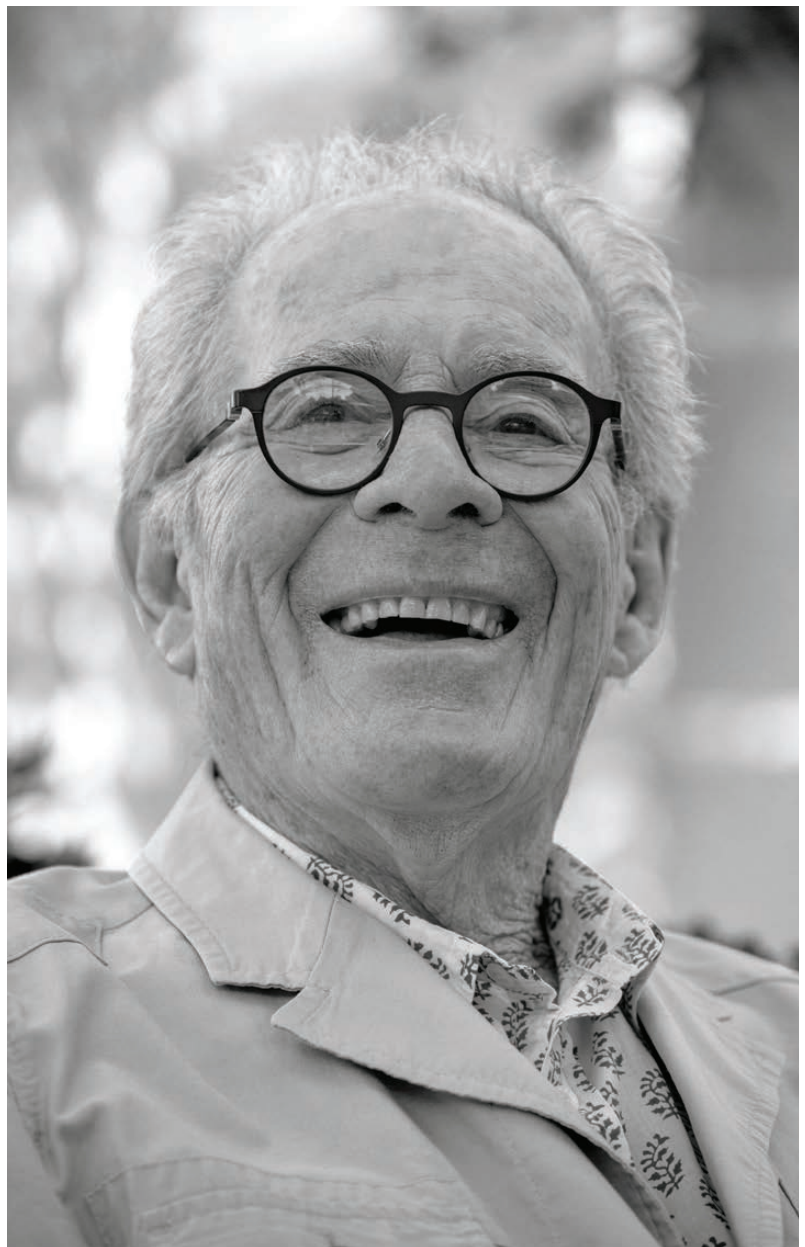
Jack's older daughter, Lisa Mansfield, observes, "My parents had this incredible appeal." People in each country her parents visited were so taken by Jack and Joan that they opened their homes and even yachts to them, then stayed in touch for decades, like the Danish couple who wrote back and forth for years, and the well-to-do English doctor who threw a party in their honor the day he met them.

Andrea Mansfield, Jack's younger daughter, enjoys her dad's magnetic personality. "He is a blast to be with," she says. "He brings intelligence, heart and humor to all he does."

"My parents were a glamorous couple," Lisa adds with a laugh. "They'd been to Europe more than a dozen times. They once stayed two months in Munich and Switzerland, where my dad acted as an extra in the *The Pink Panther*." Joan, her daughters say, encouraged Jack to live large. "Neither came from a wealthy family," Lisa says. "But my dad had a willingness to embark on a bigger life that my mom inspired. He had to shift his belief in what he could have for himself — my mom opened up a whole grand world."

"Joan had more nerve than I did," Jack agrees, "and great judgment." It was Joan's idea to buy the house on the corner lot in Brentwood Glen in 1973, even though Jack said they couldn't afford it. "I never took chances, but she always did," Jack says, "and she was always right."

Joan's death from lung cancer complications in 2019 came two months after their 60th wedding anniversary. It was a tremendous loss for the family, but they talk about her as though she's just in the other room, the memory of her enor-





mous presence still a comfort. Jack continues, "Joan and I realized over many years that all the potential problems that arose in our life somehow got resolved to our satisfaction. We always had the feeling we were being watched over." The feeling endures.

Now more than ever, Jack indulges his passion for jazz. When he first heard it, it was called swing, and he was just a nine-year-old kid in Chicago trying to catch a movie with his mom and big brother. "Every large city had a theater, what we called a 'first run theater,'" Jack says. In between film times, a band would often play a set, and that's how Jack heard popular music for the first time. He thinks it may have been the master of scat, Cab Calloway, but he can't be

### "Joan took chances, and she was always right"

sure. "Syncopation is what makes jazz," Jack muses. "Otherwise, it's just rhythm and music. The soloist plays his part — a chorus on the melody, but in his own way. I've been in love with jazz ever since."

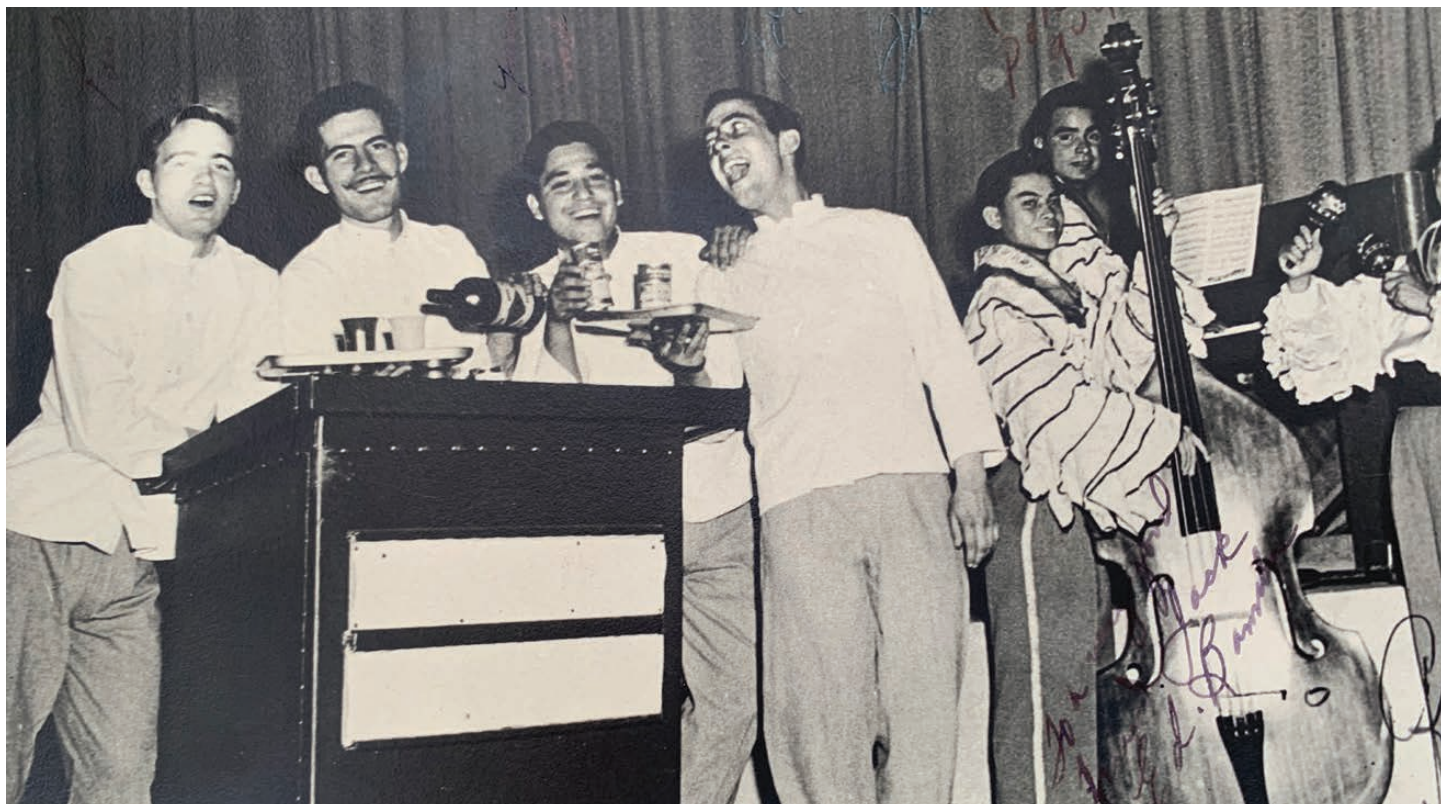
Consequently, Jack reproduces melodies of his favorite jazz pieces on his ukulele, thrilled that jazz has come, in his opinion, roaring back to life. "I gave up on hearing good jazz again after the 60s," he says, crediting the Barcelona-based Sant Andreu Jazz Band with rekindling his passion.

Jack's first ukelele was a Martin that he bought from a store on Hollywood Boulevard for \$18. "It was a lot of money for me," he recalls, "but Arthur Godfrey's baritone uke fascinated me, so I stretched my dollars and got it." He still loves to sing, strums a little, and picks the melodies with his fingers. When asked if he courted Joan with his ukulele he laughs. "No, I saved Joan from that; she didn't deserve that."

Drawing and painting keep Jack occupied. Art has been an interest for him since grade school, and he works with acrylics and water colors, pencils and ink. He copies some of his favorite painters, such



Family photo. Jack and Joan at New York's Tavern on the Green



Family photo. Jack's quartet; Jack second from left.



as Cézanne and Braque, and creates his own works, sometimes as a commissioned artist, mostly just for himself and family.

Jack finds peace and beauty in his European-style garden, which he lovingly maintains. His miniature brown poodle, Teddy, makes him laugh, and he still stays in touch with friends. But it's the time with his daughters that he savors the most. Though Lisa is a busy local Realtor and Andrea is her marketing coordinator, they don't take the time with their father for granted. Together, they'll be celebrating Jack this month as he turns 92.

"We've made the best of it," Jack says. "We cook together, play

French café music, and connect over conversation and laughter."

Lisa adds, "Every day I learn a beautiful piece of knowledge, some deep wisdom or profound perspective from my dad," she says. "He was a loyal husband, and is an attentive father. He is so compassionate."

Andrea joins in. "My dad has an unrelenting desire and ability to be loving, caring, joyful and responsible," she says, "as a human being, a husband, a father and a friend."

Their words earn a warm smile from Jack: "I'm really lucky that my children love me so much." ■