

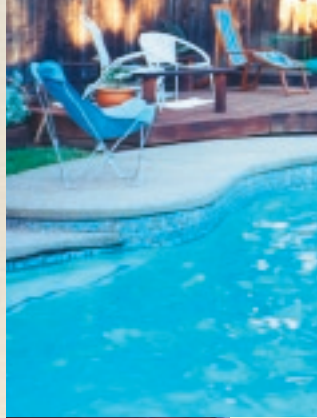
1923-2006

Mr. Proffelo





Progressive Studio
ST. M. BRADY ST.
HAZLETON, PA.



JULY 28 1923

JULY 3 2006

MIKE MEHALLO



The following is a true story.

My dad's parents were born in the Slovak region of the Eastern Austro-Hungarian Empire in the early 20th Century. Dad – Mike Mehallo – was born in Ramey, Pennsylvania on July 28, 1923, one of 9 surviving children.

Multiple spellings of the last name came next (the doctors wrote on official documents whatever name they “heard.”) And Mike is actually “Mike.” The full name of “Michael” was never written out on his birth certificate.

Dad's parents resided in the borough of West Hazleton, Pennsylvania throughout my father's entire life. My grandmother, Mary, used to cook big pots of potato soup to feed the entire neighborhood. She was also fascinated by a new invention in downtown Hazleton – she used to head to the Leader Department Store on Broad Street just to ride the *escalator*.

My grandfather, Mike Sr., worked as a grave digger and night watchman at a used car lot. Dad learned to drive by “testing out” the cars. His first experience behind the wheel of a car was at a very young age, crashing someone else's car at the bottom of a hill, since he couldn't reach the brakes. He spent most of the day hiding under the bed hoping he wouldn't get in too much trouble.

My grandfather once told his son not to go to the burlesque houses. If he went, he would see something he shouldn't see. Of course, this peaked his interest, so one night, my dad and his friends snuck in to the local theatre. Dad told me, “Yeah. I saw what I wasn't supposed to see. My dad in the front row.”

My dad once told a friend, “Barking dogs don't bite. You can go pet that one.”

Boy was he wrong.

Michael Mehallo
“Feeling Like A Dream”
Mike has plenty on a basketball
At Surman's he makes many a
call,
Pepsi-Cola is his favorite drink,
Of “Juan” Autry does he often
think,
We often wonder if he wants to
be,
A hero as in the many movies
he does see.



THE PEPSI-COLA KID





After High School, Dad joined the Merchant Marines for two simple reasons: he wanted to see the world (the “Keep ‘em Sailing” publicity posters won his attention) and he was too young to apply to the regular military. The Merchant Marines would take anyone, for they are the backbone of supplies during any war. Without them, no tanks, guns, bullets or food.

Maritime training was physically grueling, mathematic and intense. At one point, due to a clerical error, Dad ended up teaching cadets on a schooner ship in a class he signed up for. The paperwork listed him as instructor, instead of student.

Dad invented an easier method of Celestial Navigation and was one of the most sought after navigators in the Merchant Marine. To him, it *just made sense*. His process eliminated about one full page of calculations and he was incredibly accurate based on whatever star was in the sky.

During WWII the Merchant Marines had the highest casualty rate of any of the armed forces, Dad used to have his paycheck sent directly to his parents, not knowing when or where a torpedo would end his life. His estimate was that he saw over 70 Liberty Ships sunk around him, at one point, a bombing raid in North Africa almost ended his life. Dad said they used to spend a lot of time steering the ship while lying on the floor of the bridge, “Only way to avoid the bullets.”



Coffee kept the Merchant Mariners alert. Even bad coffee. Food for these “expendable” soldiers was the lowest grade imaginable.

The coffee came in patriotic art deco-styled tins, with “Keep ‘em Sailing” emblazoned on the cans.

Since the Merchant Marines was a supply operation, Dad decided one day to track the source of the horrible coffee, eventually discovering that what they were drinking was (a) stored in a warehouse in Saudi Arabia and (b) left over from World War I.

For the first part of the war, merchant ships were unarmed (they would often paint telephone poles to look like guns), and so with German U-boats sneaking around, the Merchant ships were “sitting ducks.”

One day, during a convoy in the Atlantic, Dad noticed a German periscope appear alongside. The scope followed them for a long time. His ship was loaded with potatoes, and so with no munitions and nothing else to do, Dad came up with the idea of trying to hit the periscope with a potato, in effect, possibly breaking the mirror; blinding the sub (Maybe it might surface, an armed ship could then take a shot at it).

Everyone on board took aim, throwing the entire load of potatoes at the periscope. Not one hit its mark.

Weeks later, when Dad got into Baltimore, the rumor had spread: “Are you the nut who tried to sink a German submarine with a potato?”

“Imagine what the Germans in the sub were thinking ...” Dad once told me.





Dad was part of the Mermansk Run, a supply run into the northern ports of the Soviet Union, one of the bloodiest deliveries of the war. The supplies helped the Soviets repel Hitler's move into Russia. 50 years later, after the fall of the Soviet Union, The Russian Federation awarded surviving American Merchant Mariners medals for their brave service during WWII.

Dad was also given the Merchant Marines' Meritorious Service Medal for his actions in saving a burning Liberty Ship. Filled with high octane gasoline, the SS. Henry W. Longfellow was in port in Bone, Algeria and my father and 5 men decided to stay on board and fight the flames.

Years later, my dad set about researching his war record only to find that Bone was the staging area for the Allies' Sicily Invasion force. And had the fire actually continued, the entire port, town and troops would have been instantly vaporized by a fuel explosion. As he fought the inferno, he kept thinking, "What is keeping this ship from blowing skyward?!"

Dad hated "Hollywood's version of the war," and his shipmates laughed their heads off at a theatre in London when they saw Humphrey Bogart in the Merchant Marine-themed *Action in the North Atlantic* (1943). "Where'd they get those uniforms?" they joked. For Dad, *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) was the film that finally "got it right."

While serving as a Merchant Marine, Dad's draft card came up and the Army was out for him. Dad was classified as a draft dodger and a warrant for his arrest was issued.



In Brazil, the FBI caught up with him. My dad was arrested and hauled before a federal judge. He was scolded for his disloyalty to his country and given a choice of Federal Prison (hard labor) or a two year stint in the Army.

Dad chose the latter, insisting on wearing his Purple Heart during basic training.

In 1950, my Dad checked himself into the Marine Hospital in Baltimore. Dad was diagnosed with Leukemia, declared a walking dead man and discharged. He decided to head back to his family in Hazleton, but ran across a guy named Robert outside the hospital.

They talked and it turned out this man was a relative of Dr. John R. Brinkley, noted quack physician who experimented with goat glands. With nothing to lose, Dad travelled with Robert to a clinic in Mexico where a steady macrobiotic diet and experimental treatments ended up curing the Leukemia. Except for the paperwork declaring his illness, Dad had no record of this visit to the clinic, and spent the past 30 years trying to find out more about what he went through and why it actually worked.



Andy: I have to get going, my niece is getting married tomorrow.

Mike: Hey, you know, I'm getting married tomorrow too.

Andy: Really? Who are you getting married to?

Mike: Dorothy Polchin of Hazleton Heights.

Andy: Hey, that's my niece!





Dad married my mother on her 26th birthday, September 15, 1956. They settled in San Bruno, California – a suburb of San Francisco. After traveling around the world, he always liked the weather there.

It also helped that he won his first house in a poker game.

“Are you sure you want to put your deed on the table?” The guy said “sure” and when my dad had the winning hand, they guy gave him the house.

Dad drove Dorothy from Hazleton directly to San Bruno, surprising her with the new house. The home was near the Tanforan Race Track, near the then burgeoning downtown (shopping!) and across from the growing San Francisco Airport.

After military service, Dad used his Merchant Marine contacts and became a construction foreman with the Stan Flowers Company at the Oakland Army Base.

Dad loved meatballs, and would argue with anyone who charged too much for them.

He may have been banned from the Roma Deli in San Bruno for this sort of thing. “What a clip joint, who charges a dollar for a meatball? Do you know how much ground beef I could get for a dollar?” Dad’s homemade

meatballs contained ground beef, veal, pork, eggs, salt, pepper, huge chunks of 3 types of onion, salt, multiple peppers, slabs of bacon and the balls themselves were larger than your fist.

Dad’s stew was made this way: he’d go into refrigerator and grab anything that was just “sitting there.” He’s throw it in a pot with a can of chili, a can of kidney beans (he loved kidneys!), add a handful of cayenne, chili powder, gobs of garlic powder, cheap tin packets of a very *fragrant* curry sauce he once got his hands on ... whatever he could find.

“I’m doctoring it up,” he’d say. Simmer a bit, serve over rice.

When he’d cook with the curry, it *was just best* to leave the house.

Steve was born in 1967, a year after the move to a brand new “modern” home on Beech Avenue in San Bruno. The view from the front windows stretched from South San Francisco to Burlingame, roaring silver 707s flew by daily.



477 Beech Ave. San Bruno, Calif. 94066

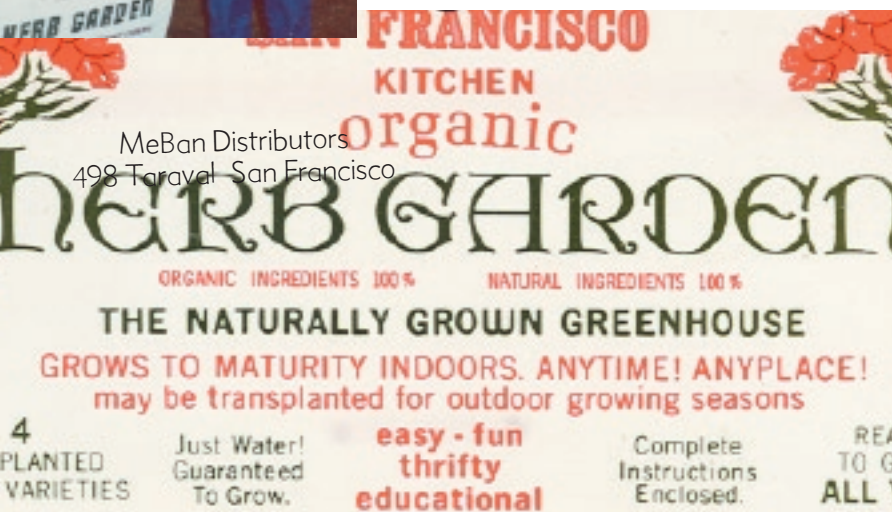


The 1970s were ushered in after the purchase of a Hardware store which grew into a distribution company – MeBan Distributors. MeBan specialized in supplying military bases with everyday items such as Blu-boy toilet cleaner and the first instant start charcoal on the market.

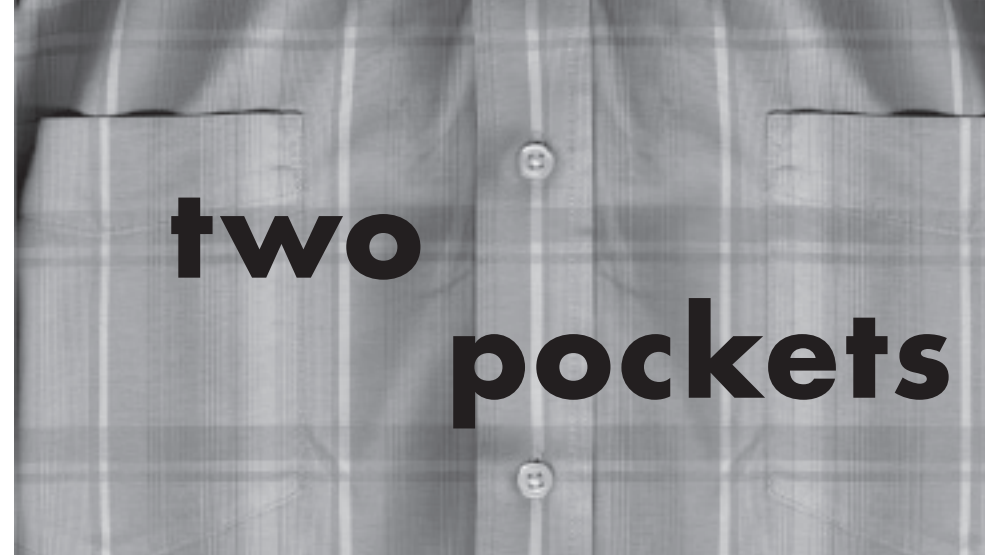
MeBan became a manufacturer of “Space Garden” hydroponic countertop greenhouses and “Off Limits” Animal Repellent, which became the most effective product of its kind, protecting gardens like nothing before or since.



INDOOR SPACE GARDEN GREENHOUSE
HERB - VEGETABLE - FLOWER
MILAZZO ANIMAL CHASER &
INSTANT CHARCOAL
BLU-BY - INSTA KOLD - DRI-GIDE
& INSTA-BLAZ PRODUCTS



MeBan Distributors
498 Taraval San Francisco



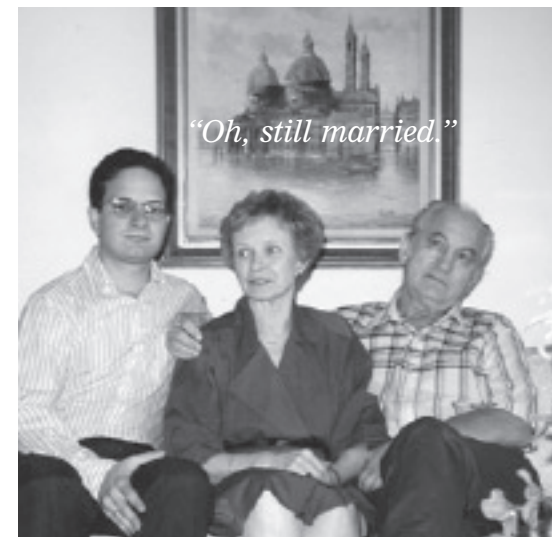
After MeBan, Dad had several odd jobs, often freelancing as “Lt. Haul,” having converted his pickup truck to a dumptruck using a hydraulic system acquired in one of his entrepreneurial endeavors. At one point, he ended up in a security position at the San Francisco Airport Hilton, where deductive reasoning (which involved a strange car consistently parked in the lot certain nights) led to the apprehension of a cat burglar.



Always versatile, Dad’s Merchant Marine medical training came in handy. He ended up working as a nurse in the Emergency Room at Stanford Hospital for 6 months before they realized he didn’t have his credentials.

After some night courses, Dad became an in home aide for terminally ill patients. A rewarding job, Dad kept many patients happy and comfortable in their final days. And he wasn’t happy when his own health problems eventually forced him to retire.

In 1997, my parents found themselves baby sitting my bird “Junior.” And Junior fell in love with my father and simply had to move in. Dad’s new best friend was always on his shoulder, eating off his plate and singing bird song.





Then, after 44 years in the Bay Area, my parents did something unexpected. They packed up and moved to Roseville, California. New home, new hot tub and a large screen tee vee. Retirement for Dad became another adventure; eating out, hanging out with my wife Jeanne and myself, rebuilding fences (left) and working as secretary for the Disabled American Veterans group in Auburn.

Steve: Hey Dad, whattya want to do for your birthday? Dad: Buy a new toilet.

Dad's negotiating skills never wavered, a new German toilet replaced the low flow irritation that came with the new house.

Dad passed away July 3. My father's life was full, his careers many, his hobbies, unusual, his outlook, *unique*. He was an entrepreneur, a "Daddeo," a hero and a best friend.

steve mehallo, July 15, 2006

"Oh My GOODnesss!"



Retired · Over-Qualified · Not Young Enough to Know Everything



*I am now home in heaven;
All's so happy, all so bright!
There is perfect joy and beauty
in this everlasting light.*

Safely Home

*All the pain and grief are over,
Ever restless tossing past,
I am now at peace forever,
Safely home in Heaven at last.*

*Did you wonder why I so calmly
Trode the Valley of the Shade?
Oh! but Jesus' love illumined
Every dark and fearful glade.*

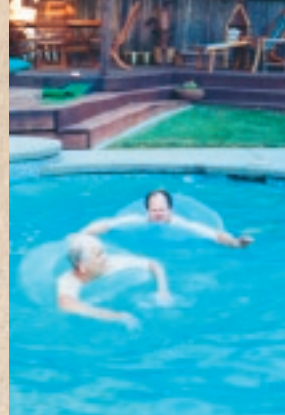
*And He came Himself to meet me
In that way so hard to tread;
And with Jesus' arm to lean on,
Could I have one doubt or dread?*

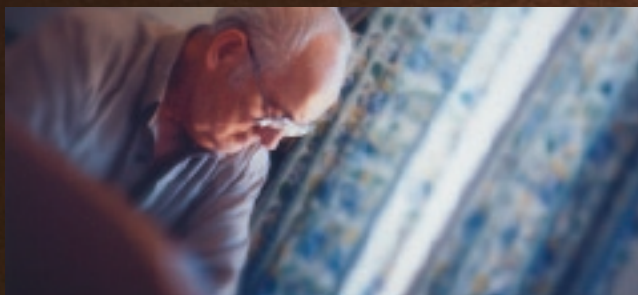
*Then you must not grieve so sorely,
For I love you dearly still;
Try to look beyond Earth's shadows,
Pray to trust our Father's will.*

*There is work still waiting for you,
So you must not idle stand;
Do your work while life remaineth –
You shall rest in Jesus' land.*

*When that work is all completed,
He will gently call you Home;
Oh, the rapture of the meeting!
Oh, the joy to see you come!*

"Nice for you to have met me." – Mike Mehallo





www.mehallo.com/mike