



## Joel Labovitz

Labovitz, Joel (June 3, 1928 - February 13, 2021) Joel died peacefully at home Saturday morning holding hands with Sharon his wife of 60 years and each of his children, Sarah, Anne and Mark, and two of his grandchildren, Jackson and Maya Li. Through recent months of illness, Joel enjoyed visits from family and especially Sharon's constant presence and loving care. The blessing of many wonderful care givers and the close attention of devoted household staff made possible a gentle transition. We are truly grateful to have shared in his large, improbable life. Together with Sharon, Joel enjoyed unusual travel to Russia, China, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, and many European countries. His reading interests included poetry, philosophy, ethics, history, and stories epic, detective, intrigue and more. A generous teacher, mentor and true friend who led successful business ventures in Maurice's apparel stores, hotels and real estate, Joel made the world better through his treatment of people, curious encouragement for well judged risk taking and optimistic belief in American opportunity. We feel a great loss and miss him dearly already. Survived by wife Sharon, son Mark (Jennifer), daughters Anne Labovitz Gamble (Bill), Sarah Bauer (Mick), grandchildren Jackson and Tessa, Henry, Isabella and Eddie and Maya Li, Cecelia, Rosie and Eva, sister Shana Lowitz and many dear friends and colleagues. Joel was born to Ella and Maurice Labovitz and grew up in Duluth, MN attended Congdon Park Elementary, East Junior High and Central High schools and graduated from UMD in 1949. Once the Runner-up in the 1939 City of Duluth Marble Tournament and always an entrepreneur, Joel shoveled snow, delivered magazines, and held many jobs that ranged from selling shoes to working on ore boats. In 1950 Joel joined his father Maurice Labovitz as manager of the third Maurices store in Virginia, MN. From its Duluth headquarters, Maurices grew to 175 stores across 18 states and employed 300 people in Duluth when sold in 1978. Joel continued to be an advocate for Duluth by investing in real estate and hotels with his childhood friend Monnie Goldfine and ZMC Hotels. In 1981 he and Bruce Stender initiated a fruitful, loyal, long

lasting partnership forming Duluth based Labovitz Enterprises and Lion Hotel Group which owns and operates six hotels. One of Joel's great gifts was recognizing and cultivating talent in others and the sale of Maurices made time for a new opportunity to complement Joel's love of mentoring people. He developed and taught UMD's first courses in Entrepreneurship in the 1980's. This reconnection led to Sharon and Joel's 2003 gift helping UMD build the facility that today houses the Labovitz School of Business and Economics. Joel adored Sharon since even before he learned her name in 1958 at Duluth's Flame restaurant. They happily "retired" to La Jolla and enjoyed the blessings of many new found friendships and frequent visits from family and friends from back home in Minnesota. A small celebration of life and burial was held in La Jolla, CA. Those wishing to remember Joel with a gift may contribute to: Labovitz Scholarship Fund UMD 1049 University Drive Duluth, MN 55812

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**Damien Chadwick**

3 years ago

To Anne and the Labovitz family, my most sincere condolences. While I only met Joel a few times, he left an impression on me and it's very clear why he and Sharon were able to raise such a great family. My thoughts and prayers are with you.

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**Linda Parish**

3 years ago

Joel was my boss and mentor; first at Maurices, where I served as his Executive Secretary, and later at Labovitz Enterprises as his Assistant Office Manager. I learned so much from this accomplished man over the few years I worked for him. It was an honor and pleasure to be part of Joel's entrepreneurial endeavors. My heart goes out to his family as this sad time.

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