

Joseph L. "Nel" LeBlanc

March 22, 1932 - July 26, 2024

FITCHBURG: Joseph L. "Nel" LeBlanc passed away peacefully Friday July 26, 2024 after an amazing 92 years of living life to the fullest.

Born in Fitchburg (Cleghorn to be exact) on March 22, 1932, "T-Nel" was the 7th of 14 children born to his parents Alphee and Marie Blanche (Landry) LeBlanc. Nel was short for Lionel (His presumed name) until he was 17 years old when in 1949, he enlisted in the National Guard Reserves and obtained his Birth Certificate where he learned his name was, in reality: Joseph Lionel. From then on, he was Joe LeBlanc (Yet at home in Cleghorn he was always still Nel).

After joining the US Army, once he came of age, Joe deployed to the Far East as a Paratrooper in the 11th Airborne, 34th Infantry Division and as a Medic in the Medical detachment of the 6th Tank Battalion. His tours of service included combat on the Korean Peninsula. After being injured in 1954, Joe was honorably discharged as a Sargent through Walter Reid Army Medical Center in Washington DC. Upon his eventual recovery and return to Fitchburg, Joe took advice from his oldest brother Romeo, who was studying Dentistry at Tufts University, and using funds from the GI Bill received a degree as a Certified Dental Technologist from the Boston Institute of Mechanical Dentistry.

As a boy Nel was inspired watching the activity at the Cleghorn Fire Station from his apartment across Fairmont Street. Acting upon the inspiration Nel joined the Jr. Fire Corps prior to his enlistment. Post-service, Nel volunteered with Fitchburg Fire and began a long history with the Department. Over the following 50+ years and serving under 7 Chiefs, Nel fought fires along with his FFD brothers all over the city and made the Cleghorn Station his 2nd home. He was the deputy director of the Fitchburg Civil Defense and was the last authorized Volunteer on the force. In the late 90's he was honored to give the Fireman's Sunday address and share stories of the brave young men whom he served alongside and had lost their lives in the line of duty. Of all his work, Nel was immensely proud of the countless hours of volunteer service he performed for the city. He loved to tell whoever would listen how much he did, "Without ever charging the city a penny!".

In 1961 a beautiful young woman, Phyllis Ann (Secino), finally said 'yes' to his many proposals and they were married on November 11th, the nation's 1st ever Veteran's Day, after a courtship of 7 patient years.

Phyllis was employed by her family at Independent Cleaners, Inc. eventually coming to own the business herself. This meant Nel, by default, was an unsung, de-facto, reluctant and unpaid employee of Independent Cleaners for the next 50+ years. Without his help and support Phyllis would never have been able to thrive in her endeavor.

Also in 1961, the couple built a new home in "Upper- Cleghorn" where they would live for the rest of their lives. Along with this new address came new neighbors, life-long best friends Fiore and Irene Brogna and their children David, Randy, Cheryl and their God-daughter Karen. The two couples' enduring friendship over the years never wavered and together the four traversed the highs and lows of life sharing an abundance of laughter and a few tears through travels and adventures that always came with a "story" in

their wake.

In 1968 Nel and Phyllis welcomed their only child, a son they named Christopher, making their family complete.

Professionally, through the 60's and early 70's Joe worked for Dental Laboratories in Worcester and Nahua, NH before establishing Central New England Dental Laboratory on Fairmont Street in Fitchburg with business partner and friend Robert Membrino. Supporting dentists throughout the region, the two soon moved to a larger space on Daniels Street. In the early 80's Bob moved on to Pharmaceutical Sales while Joe continued in the lab for several years before reassessing his life goals and stepping away from the Dental industry, but not for long. In his sabbatical Monty-Tech recruited Joe to close out their post high school aged CDT program. It was here that he got his first teaching experience. This was a game changer. From that time on Joe was an Instructor of Prosthetic Dentistry. He held the position of Associate Professor at Massasoit Community College for several years. In 1988 Joe joined a Research Team at Harvard University pioneering the new field of Dental Implants with Joe serving as the CDT on record. That association led to his being offered a position on the faculty of the Harvard University School of Dental Medicine where he ran the Maloney Lab and taught an entire generation of promising DMD and Post Doctoral Candidates in Dentistry from around the world.

He retired from HSDM in 2002 leaving behind a legacy in his students whose success warmed his heart. His enduring influence was acknowledged 20 years after his retirement when in June 2022, at HSDM's annual Alumni meeting and reunion in Boston, Joseph LeBlanc was awarded the first ever Distinguished Service Medal presented by the HSDM Alumni Association. This honor was not lost on a 90-year-old Joe, who accepted the award before

many of his former students, all of whom he holds dear to his heart to this day. These amazing professionals include but are not limited to former Alumni council member Dr Jenny Chang, its former president, Dr. Dino Bertini, Dr Douglas Haghghi, Dr Tevi Dines, Dr Justine Tomkins and Dr Mark Wang. We would be remiss if we didn't mention Dr. Nancy Medina and "#15" Dr. Ayesha Nawab, two accomplished women who Joe loved dearly and considered part of his extended family.

Joe always seemed to have a "Side Gig" over the years, often supplementing his income in positions like Matre'd at the Old Mill Restaurant, as an assistant manager of the former Benjamin Hill Ski Area in Shirley, and as a volunteer Ski Patrol, allowing him to "Ski Free" at areas around New England. During many of his summers off from teaching Joe worked for the Arnett Family as the night manager of the Anchor-in in Hyannis while Phyllis's family spent the summer close by on Craigville Beach. Joe paved the way for Chris to get a summer job at Anchor-in in 1984, neither imagining Chris's influence would help develop the hotel into Hyannis's premier waterfront lodging destination through his affiliation with the hotel and close relationship the Arnett/Simpson family over the next 38 years.

A pilot for many years Joe flew from Fitchburg Airport. His other hobbies included owning and driving British Sports Cars as well as a deep love of Sailing, owning several sailboats of various sizes. Chris often sailed the Cape waters with his Dad and still puts the sailing skills Nel taught him to good use. Uncle Nel paved the way for several of his nephews and nieces, as well as neighborhood kids, and especially his son, to learn to Ski.

Finally at rest, Joe is survived by his ever-loving wife of 63 years Phyllis Ann (Secino), his only son Christopher Ralph LeBlanc and his partner Albert Joseph Martin IV of Hyannis. His last remaining sister Jeanette Salerno of Fitchburg and last remaining brother Robert "Bird" LeBlanc of Duxbury, and a

most beloved brother-in-law Mark Roy and his wife Cheryl of Sebastian, Florida. Nieces and Nephews abound with 13 siblings and “Uncle Nel” loved them all. We would be remiss not to mention a few who have been especially close through the years: Larry Galipault of Fitchburg, Marie LeBlanc and her husband Greg Schnipke of Hyannis, Linda Salerno of Fitchburg, Kelly LeBlanc Bouchard of Leominster and Jamison Bedard of Fitchburg.

Joe was an active member of the Disabled American Veterans, Past President of the former Cable Club, a lifetime member of the former St. Joseph’s Club, American Legion Post 429, and Phyllis’s forever +1 at The Fay Club. Italian by association, Joe was a proud member of the Fitchburg Son’s of Italy. For many years Joe attended Mass at Madonna of the Holy Rosary Parish and was a long-time member of St Joseph’s Parish as well.

Joe was predeceased by his siblings: Dr. Romeo LeBlanc, Leopauld “Paul” LeBlanc, Edgar “Guy” LeBlanc, Roger “Fat” LeBlanc, Ronald “Pete” LeBlanc, Yvon “Bo” LeBlanc, Alfred “Fay” LeBlanc, Lena Galipeault, Gloria Forgues and Bertha Maki.

Funeral Mass will be celebrated 5PM Friday, September 6, 2024 at St. Joseph Church, 49 Woodland St., Fitchburg. Interment will follow at the Parish cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, in Memory of Lance Corporal Geoffrey Cayer and his family, it is Joe’s wish that donations be made toward the training of Service Dogs for Veterans in care of NEADS, Inc. P.O. Box 1100, Princeton, MA 01541 or online by visiting neads.org/donate

Isabelle and Anderson Funeral Home is assisting with the funeral arrangements.

Cemetery Details

St. Joseph's Cemetery

Fitchburg, MA

Previous Events

Funeral Mass

SEP 6. 5:00 PM (ET)

St. Joseph's Catholic Church
46 Woodland Street
FITCHBURG, MA 01420

Tribute Wall

TP

“ My name is Tom. I was a student of Joseph’s back in 1982-1984 at Massasoit Community College, Class of 1984. I’m so sad to hear of my old Professor’s death, he meant a lot to me back then and was my inspiration on being the best I could be in the Dental Lab Industry. Here I am now 42 years later still working in the Industry always thinking of what Joe taught me and inspired me to do. He was known to a few of his favorite students as LB, that was the Nick name we gave him and he seemed to like it. I only once ran into LB at a CDT Clinic up in the north shore back in the late 90’s and hadn’t kept in touch, regretfully. LB, I did do you proud and I hope now that you know that. Your teachings and knowledge you gave me were not in vane. Rest In Peace. One of your favorite students Tom.

Tom Pendleton - October 28, 2025 at 12:17 PM

YH

“ Young and Nan Hee purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Joseph L. "Nel" LeBlanc.



Young and Nan Hee - September 03, 2024 at 07:55 AM

JL

“ Jeannette and Linda purchased the Blue Caribbe an Bouquet for the family of Joseph L. "Nel" LeBlanc.



Jeannette and Linda - September 01, 2024 at 12:12 PM

AM

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Albert Martin - August 03, 2024 at 11:55 AM

AM

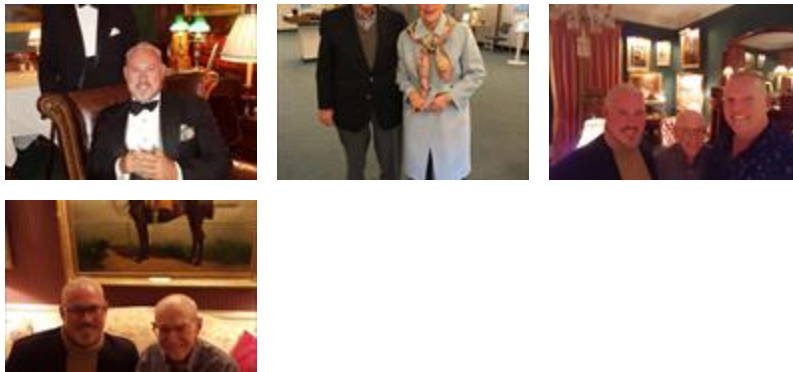
“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Albert Martin - August 03, 2024 at 11:53 AM

AM

“ 4 files added to the tribute wall



Albert Martin - August 03, 2024 at 11:53 AM

AM

“ 4 files added to the tribute wall



Albert Martin - August 03, 2024 at 11:52 AM

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“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Albert Martin - August 03, 2024 at 11:49 AM

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“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Albert Martin - August 03, 2024 at 11:48 AM

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“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Albert Martin - August 03, 2024 at 11:46 AM

CL

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Christopher LeBlanc - August 03, 2024 at 11:45 AM

MD

“ Michele & Joseph Dick planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Joseph L. "Nel" LeBlanc.

Michele & Joseph Dick - August 01, 2024 at 02:05 PM

MD

“ Michele & Joseph Dick purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Joseph L. "Nel" LeBlanc.



Michele & Joseph Dick - August 01, 2024 at 02:05 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Joseph L. "Nel" LeBlanc.



July 31, 2024 at 09:31 PM



“ Dr Nancy Medina & Dr Ayesha "#15" Nawab planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Joseph L. "Nel" LeBlanc.

Dr Nancy Medina & Dr Ayesha "#15" Nawab - July 29, 2024 at 02:30 PM



“ Dr Nancy Medina & Dr Ayesha "#15" Nawab purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Joseph L. "Nel" LeBlanc.



Dr Nancy Medina & Dr Ayesha "#15" Nawab - July 29, 2024 at 02:30 PM



“ Uncle T-Nel and I shared same birthday, so glad I shared a ride to visit my dad with him, the stories I never.knew! Forever in my heart .
Donna Marie

Donna Leblanc McCarthy - July 29, 2024 at 09:46 AM

MW

“ *Amazing man; Amazing couple; Amazing family; and an amazing life!
So long.*

Mark Y Wang - July 27, 2024 at 10:36 AM

AN

“ *In memory of the cherished times at HSDM and the love with which Mr Leblanc welcomed me into his family.*

Ayesha Nawab - July 27, 2024 at 09:46 AM

GS

“ *To the Lazarus of modern time and a man of many talents and professions, time for a rest Nel.*

Greg Schnipke - July 27, 2024 at 08:42 AM

SL

“ *Sue-Anne Siano Llulla purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Joseph L. "Nel" LeBlanc.*



Sue-Anne Siano Llulla - July 26, 2024 at 09:19 PM

JF

“ *I remember trying to learn to ski at Benjamin Hill when I worked at Independent Cleaners. Afterwards we would go to the Bull Run to warm up. I never did well skiing but we had fun after the lessons. Fly high, Nel.*

Janet Duval Fortunato - July 26, 2024 at 04:00 PM

RG

“ *Rich Gendron lit a candle in memory of Joseph L. "Nel" LeBlanc*



Rich Gendron - July 26, 2024 at 02:20 PM