



Jack Melnick

April 19, 1935 – August 21, 2013

John L. “Jack” Melnick, a lifelong Arlington resident who represented the county in the General Assembly during the 1970s and was active in the local legal profession and a host of community organizations, died Aug. 21, 2013.

Melnick, who had been battling heart issues, was 78 years old. Born in Alexandria – but only because Arlington did not have its own hospital at the time – Melnick spent much of his life in the county. In 1971, two years after Republicans swept all four House of Delegates seats in Arlington, Melnick was part of a Democratic counterpunch that won all but one of those seats back and saw the return to Richmond of Mary Marshall, a beloved figure in county Democratic politics. Melnick served three terms in the General Assembly, then in 1977 launched a bid for the Democratic nomination for attorney general, but fell short.

Though he hardly knew it at the time, perhaps the seminal moment of Melnick’s life came in first grade at Monroe Elementary School, where he was classmates with Marjory Helter. They later attended Washington-Lee High School (Class of 1953) and, after going their

separate ways for college, would be married and raise two sons and two daughters.

Melnick first attended Roanoke College, but said that after years at the 3,000-student Washington-Lee High School, life in a small college town wasn't his thing. He transferred to the University of Virginia, earned undergraduate (1958) and law (1961) degrees, then returned to Arlington to practice law alongside legendary attorneys David Kinney and Ken McFarlane Smith at the firm Kinney, Smith & Barham. He also served as an assistant commonwealth's attorney under the equally legendary William Hassan, an Irishman so temperamental, according to legend, he occasionally would yell at judges who irked him.

Melnick was instrumental in the creation of the Arlington County Sister City Association, was active with the Arlington Symphony and was a 50-year member of the Kiwanis Club of Arlington, the second of three generations of his family to be members. Melnick also was active in many other community groups, including the Arlington Salvation Army.

Later in life, he became an avid connoisseur of early Ford vehicles, owning classic Model A and Model T sedans. Among them was a 1931 180-A Model A Deluxe Phaeton, of which only about 100 remain.

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REMEMBERING JACK

On Wednesday, August 21st 2013 at 4:00am, our fellow club member John "Jack" Melnick passed away from complications due to pneumonia and various heart issues. Mr. Melnick had many friends in the club, including me (despite our age difference), and was a tremendous benefit to the club leadership for many years. He also led an extraordinary and exciting life outside of the hobby, even launching a bid in 1977 for the Democratic nomination for Attorney General. I always enjoyed speaking with him and greatly appreciated his praise and trust of me and my life's work.

John Melnick joined the George Washington Chapter in 2005. He already had a Model T, but had always had a soft spot for Model A's. You see, when Jack was at Washington and Lee High School, a friend of his had a Model A and would drive him to school every day in it. He never forgot it. In no time, Jack bought a 1931 Roadster and began getting involved with the club. Besides touring and attending every meeting he could, Jack served as Vice President and Program Chairman in 2010 and 2011. Around the time Jack's tenor as Vice President was coming to a close, Jack became rather obsessed with finding an ultra rare 1931 Deluxe Phaeton. He had always admired open cars the most, and the Deluxe Phaeton was definitely one of the most beautiful, desirable and rare of all the open cars. Jack scoured the classified section of several national Model A websites and eventually ran across a Deluxe Phaeton in West Virginia. The listing was marked "sold". In typical fashion, Jack called to insure the Phaeton was not available. As it turned out the Phaeton was not sold. A previous buyer had backed out of the deal. As of yet, we had no idea why. Jack saw this as fate. There would be no time wasted. Jack immediately commandeered a truck and trailer and headed to West Virginia with his son Paul and myself.

What we found in a barn in West Virginia was a 1994 MARC of Excellence, MAFCA Award of Excellence, Master Restoration and Henry Award winning 1931 Deluxe Phaeton! Unfortunately time had been unkind to the vehicle. It ran, but just enough to load it on the trailer and head back to Virginia. Mr. Melnick was undeterred by the vehicles mechanical condition. Once back in Virginia, almost the entire drive train was rebuilt for show, and some touring modifications were made as well. John was going to drive this car everywhere he could to show it off. It all paid off for John when the car received a 1st place in its class at Sully Car Show in June of 2012. John Melnick drove the car to work with the biggest smile I've ever seen, at least once a week, until his death. George Smolenyak