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REQUIESCIT IN PEACE: They always say nice guys finish last. But for my money, entirely too many nice guys keep finishing early. In 1975 we lost that sweetheart actor Larry Blyden; just recently we lost that gentlemanly good fellow and great talent Jack Cassidy.

Because Jack was blond, suave, almost too good-looking and frequently played cads, many people assumed he was a scoundrel in real life. Let me say he was just the funniest, best-humored, sweetest, brightest, most charming guy ever. His acting gifts were beyond price. (You'll see Cassidy in his last acting job as Damon Runyon in the new J. Edgar Hoover film.)



Cassidy

Mary McGrory wrote that John F. Kennedy would have enjoyed and liked his own funeral. The same could be said of Jack Cassidy. Out in Beverly Hills, the people who loved Jack came to sing, tell stories, laugh and cry at the Pierce Mortuary. It was a real Irish wake, with Barbara Cook trilling on tape. (Of his "She Loves Me" co-star, Jack had always said, "She is a real star!") Nanette Fabray conducted proceedings, and three of Jack's sons read poems he had written them last Christmas. Young David Cassidy didn't speak — he was too overcome.

Afterward, everybody trooped back to Shirley Jones' house. Though Shirley and Jack were divorced, she really loved him.

Cassidy was always wonderfully ahead of his

time and famous as a snappy dresser. Elaine Stritch always tells of presenting Jack to her visiting parents as a possible husband back in the '50s. That night, Mrs. Stritch woke to find her husband pacing at the bottom of her bed.

"What's the matter, George?" she asked.

"Mildred," exploded Elaine's father, "did you notice? Why, that S.O.B. was wearing suede shoes!"

Nobody loved this story more than Jack Cassidy.

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