

## LEO E. OBERTO

Leo Oberto was born in Telluride, Colorado on May 17, 1902 to Gio Oberto and Henrietta Gallon Oberto. He had one brother Silvio "Dutch" who was born in 1904.

Following his mother's death in 1913 Leo and Silvio were sent to a military school in Nebraska. After two years at the military school, they went to live with a farm family by the name of Graham near Crete, Nebraska. Leo graduated from high school at Crete and then attended Doane College in Crete for one year. He entered Western State College at Gunnison, Colorado for his sophomore year in 1921. He was expelled from Western State that year for helping sneak a girl back into her dorm after curfew!

Leo returned to Telluride and worked for his father at the "Pastime" for a short time. He and two friends left Telluride and wandered up the West Coast for two years, working in orchards and doing odd jobs along the way.

In early 1926 Leo Oberto went to Grand Junction to work in the wholesale house that J. W. (The Big Kid) Eames and Joe Oberto owned at 4th and Colorado Avenue.

On May 29, 1926 Leo married Emma Nardin whom he had known in Telluride and who was in nurses training at St. Mary's hospital. In 1927 a baby girl, Josephine, was born to Leo and Emma. Unfortunately she died shortly after birth but a son Edwin was born in 1928 and a daughter "Peggy" Nadine in 1932.

In 1930 Leo's father, Joe Oberto, leased the Farmer Coal mine north of Grand Junction and Leo operated the mine for about 4 years. In 1935 he worked as a bartender at the Elks Club and

then in 1936 he became the manager of the "Oriental Lounge" in the St Regis Hotel which was owned by Harry E. Burnett and located at the southwest corner of 4th and Colorado. (The J. W. Eames & Co. wholesale house was on the southeast corner). In 1942 he worked briefly for the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad as a machinist at their Grand Junction shops. Later in 1942 he went to work for Philip McCary at McCary's Machine Shop which was located at 445 Colorado Avenue. In 1945 when Phil McCary wanted to retire, Leo Oberto, Hermann Hutton and Dr. R. F. Gilmore formed a partnership and purchased the business, renaming it Grand Junction Machine Co.

In 1946 they built a new building at First and Chipeta in Grand Junction. Leo remained in business there until his retirement in 1972 at which time the business was sold to Edward and Peggy Lippoth.

Leo Oberto was a life member of BPOE #575 in Grand Junction and was very active in the Masonic Lodge. He was awarded the degree of 33 1/3 in the Masonic Lodge in 1975 for his many years of work as Almoner of the Scottish Rights Lodge in Grand Junction. He was also a member of ElJebel Shrine and a Past Watchman of the Sheperds of White Shrine. He enjoyed jeeping in the high country and the desert and was an avid rock hound and photographer. His six grandchildren were his special interest and he was much loved by all around him.

Leo Oberto died June 23, 1977 at the age of 75 and was cremated with his ashes being spread over a hillside near the site of his cabin on Pinon Mesa, south of Grand Junction, Colorado