

Louis Finerosky

*Leib ben David u'Batya*

August 26, 1920 – November 19, 2007

Louis Finerosky left us for *Ha Olam Ha Ba*, the world to come, while Jews around the world were chanting the Torah portion, *Vayishlach*, from the Book of Genesis. This Torah portion details the care and attention our patriarch, Jacob, showed to his family. Jacob's devotion and care to his father, whom both he and his brother Essau buried; his efforts to reach out and reconcile with his brother Essau; his nurturing and protection of his own 12 sons and one daughter – all these relationships are documented with loving care in this week's Torah portion.

What a perfect Torah portion to understand Louis Finerosky's life! Because if I could choose one word to characterize what was most important to Lou it would be *mishpacha*, in Yiddish: *mishpucha* -- family. First, dedication to his beloved father and sainted mother, of blessed memory; then to his wonderful five siblings and their kids; then to his lovely wife; and culminating in the love he felt for his only daughter. Like our patriarch, Jacob, of whom we read this week, Lou was deeply dedicated to his family and their well-being, and there was nothing that he would not do for them, and they knew it.

Lou was born on August 26, 1920, the third of six children born to David and Bessie Finerosky, of Penns Grove, New Jersey. Lou's oldest sister, Dora, is at the Kutz Home, and she is represented here this afternoon by her daughter, Lynn. Helen, the second eldest, has since passed away. Nate, affectionately known as "the play boy" among the siblings was not in good enough health to be here today; Morris, the fifth of the Finerosky sibs has since passed, and dear Rose, the baby is here, along with her daughter, Denise. Rose, said that she adored her big brother, Lou. Lou always watched after her and she felt protected. She especially enjoyed when Lou would take her along in the truck to make all the grocery deliveries from their family store. Lou showed his love and fidelity to his family through his devoted work to the family grocery store, first in childhood, then after

World War Two, when he returned to run the store to help his father, David, whose health was failing. When David passed away in 1947, Lou continued to work in the store out of devotion to his mother for another six years, until they finally sold the store in 1953.

The six Finerosky siblings were very close. They would call each other on the phone almost every day. They really loved each other, and Lou, exactly in the middle of all the siblings in age, was the glue – he as the go-to-guy, with Lou, it was always “yes.” It is indeed heartening to know that this love between the Finerosky sibs was passed down to the next generation, as sib daughters and first cousins Lynn, Andi and Denise are very close to this day. Some say with that good looking black, curlie hair, and petit physiques, that they all resemble one another.

Lou had a basic Jewish education at the synagogue in Penns Grove and at age 13, had his bar mitzvah. His secular education included attending and graduating from Penns Grove Regional High School, and continuing his higher education at Goldie Beacon College, where he majored in accounting. Upon graduation, he briefly went to work for DuPont in accounting but his employment was interrupted by World War Two.

The U.S. armed services used to have a rule on the books that if more than one brother from the same family was serving in the same service, that only one would be stationed for hazardous duty. Out of love for his brother and devotion to his parents, younger brother Nate took the Pacific Theatre posting in the war with Japan, leaving older brother Lou free to take a state-side job, where he put his accounting skills to work first in Georgia, and later in Washington, DC. Uncle Nate wanted to keep Lou safe, out of love, and also to assure that his parents would be looked after, if G-d-forbid, anything were to happen to him. This act of self-sacrifice on Nate’s part cannot be stressed enough. Thank G-d, Nate came home safe...and thanks to Lou, at least during World War Two, our nation’s ledger sheets were balanced and organized.

One day, in 1953, Lou was driving past the Newport division of DuPont when he saw a sign posted outside saying “help wanted.” Lou inquired and he was immediately given a position in the Accounting Division of the Pigments

Department. Lou would spend the next 31 years working diligently for DuPont, acquiring numerous commendations and awards for his efforts. At one point he was responsible for the DuPont accounts for the entire country. And back in the early fifties, it was no small thing for a nice Jewish boy to be in the employ of DuPont. Today many of Congregation Beth Shalom members worked or are currently in the employ of DuPont, but back then, it was a rarity. Speaking of Congregation Beth Shalom, Lou joined the shul back in 1960, and made sure that his only daughter would attend its Hebrew School, and with a little *sturm und drang*, managed to have his daughter become a bat mitzvah there under the leadership of then-Rabbi Cohen and Cantor Sultzer.

It was thanks to Lou's sister, Rose, and Evelyn's cousin, Ann, that Lou and Evelyn met on a blind date back in January 1961. Lou was 41 at the time, hazel eyes, black, wavy hair. Evelyn tells me he was a good-looking guy. I have found, in my three-plus year tenure as rabbi of Beth Shalom, that there is a historic pattern of nice Jewish boys from Wilmington, traveling north and marrying nice Jewish girls from Philadelphia. It's how these Jewish male Wilmingtonians achieved class. Marrying a Jewish Philadelphia girls was these boys ticket to social upward mobility and these girls who would then be dragged back south across the state line into Delaware, never letting their husbands forget it. After four months of courting, Evelyn and Lou were married on May 28, 1961, at the Drake Hotel in Philadelphia. Their 46 years together were happy. Evelyn said Lou always let her do what she wanted, he never objected, even after she went to work for DuPont the year after he retired from the same company. They did not go to many exotic places together. Lou found pleasure in trips to Atlantic City, down to Cape May to visit his brother, Nate, and always to the Howard Johnson's (now Hollywood Grill) on Concord Pike, where Lou could always be counted on to order the grilled cheese sandwich for lunch. In later years, Lou would meet his secret group of associates for breakfast every morning at the Hollywood Grill. None of the family knew what went on during those meetings – for all we know, major issues affecting world peace were decided upon at those meetings; it's a mystery.

If one were to look for a definition of Daddy's Little Girl in Webster's Collegiate, it would be accompanied by a photograph of Andrea, Lou's beloved daughter, born in 1963. Lou's siblings were surprised that Andi ever learned to walk because Lou would never put her down. Perhaps he was afraid that she would fall, perhaps he was afraid that she would get dirty, or perhaps, as everyone suspects, he was just so overjoyed to have a little girl. Andi fondly remembers the Father-Daughter dances at the annual Christmas parties hosted by DuPont, and she still has the life-size teddy bear given to her at one of those memorable dances. Evelyn felt that Andi was like her father in almost every way, so close was their relationship. Everyone knew that Lou was Andi's biggest fan, and that support was given unconditionally and enthusiastically.

Lou was loved by all. Even when his health deteriorated in the past two months, Lou never kvetched, never complained. Perhaps he ought to have. Stoicism is not always a virtue, especially when it comes to early diagnosis. Never-the-less, all of Lou's care givers loved Lou, and they let Evelyn know how much they appreciated him by the way they treated her. I got to meet Lou in the hospital, during the second of his three most recent visits to Wilmington Hospital. At the time he was working diligently with a physical therapist, but his health, both physically and mentally had already been severely impaired. Although he is missed, the family is relieved that he is no longer suffering.

The mitzvah of *bikur holim*, visiting the ill, was something which Lou really mastered. Upon retirement, Lou went to volunteer first at Wilmington Hospital, and afterwards, at the new Christiana Hospital, where he established and headed up the Flower Department, ensuring that ill patients would get flowers. He logged in and was recognized for investing more than 4,000 volunteer hours for Christiana. Lou will be blessed for many reasons, but his volunteer work for hospitalized patients will give him special *kuvud*, honor, in the World to Come.

In summary, Lou Finerosky was one of the good guys, a real *mench*, if you needed help, he was there for you. His volunteer efforts on behalf of the ill were legendary. May Lou's memory be for a blessing and serve as an inspiration to all of us, and let us say *amen*.