

Uncle Lou had without doubt the purist most beautiful of souls. At these most difficult of times when we, none more so than today, are all touched by the impact of current events, we believe that life will never return to our previously polarized society. Rather, we hope and believe that a better society will rise, one that is characterized by goodness, kindness, generosity, loyalty, selflessness, sweetness, friendliness, gentleness, sincerity, warmth and smiles. These traits are very much the buzz words of the moment but each has been used on multiple occasions to describe Uncle Lou upon people reacting to his passing.

The truth is that Uncle Lou embodied all that is good during his 97 years and was literally adored by all those that were fortunate enough to encounter him. It meant that acquaintances never forgot Uncle Lou and were more than acquaintances. Friends were not just friends but were lifelong friends, many for over 90 years from his days at Poulteney LCC Elementary School. Family cherished him. Those fortunate enough to be able to call him Uncle Louis, Uncle Lou or Uncle Louislah just wanted to kiss him, cuddle him and shower him with the love and respect he deserved. For me, I had the greatest father a son could wish for and his remarkable identical twin for an uncle. Uncle Lou treated me as a son and I was the luckiest person and always knew it.

This is the eulogy of Louis Feldman, a real real one-off, which says something given that he was one half of the Jackie Louis, Louis Jackie twins.

The above traits are commonly bandied around with often little consideration given to their true meaning. Based on my

memories of Uncle Lou and the stories I never heard too many times, this is how I believe Uncle Lou embodied them.

### Respect and Love

Uncle Lou was a special gentleman. And I mean gentleman - at the age of 95 he would still stop on the pavement to let others pass, often with a doffing of the flat cap. He would do the same in the corridors at Rosetrees Care Home at the age of 97.

In turn, Uncle Lou was hugely respected and loved. I would meet him in St John's Wood and upon our walks, shelf-stackers in Tesco would stop what they were doing and joyfully greet him. He would walk past Panzer's delicatessen and staff would rush out to say hello. We would go out to a restaurant and he would be treated as a long-lost uncle. Uncle Lou was respected by all who came in contact with him - those with whom he served in the army in WW2, the diverse characters he worked alongside in the country markets and all at the West End Great Synagogue where he was adored and served as a Warden for many years with distinction.

And then there was Uncle Lou's capacity for love. He loved his family and was always eager to share stories of his childhood in Soho, constantly talking of his father in reverential terms and his sweet, lovely mother and beautiful elder sister on whom he doted. As for my dad, I have reserved a special section for him as their lives were interwoven for almost a century. The importance Uncle Lou attached to family was surely due to his upbringing and he was never happier than when with the family at our Friday nights, Seder nights etc. He just exuded warmth and contentment on such occasions.

During my childhood I remember the ‘Lah Leehs’ as we would cuddle and rock side-to-side, a show of love that did not end with childhood. There was the kissing of the Cappilah and the schmeck of the cheeks, which did end with childhood. There were the “ehehs” as we would laugh and joke. The weekly trips during my school holidays as he would take me out, always to a new place of interest in his beloved London. There was the joy with which Uncle Lou would greet me: “Hello son! - and then say, “How are you Brian”, believing me to be Brian Tredler. Upon his retirement I would go out with Uncle Lou for dinner on a weekly basis and when it would come time to say goodbye, Uncle Lou would stand by his flats as I would walk to my car or to the nearest tube station - he wouldn’t move until I was out of sight and I used to turn round several times only to see him waving and blowing kisses. Now that was what it was like to be loved by Uncle Lou. And how wonderful that Hannah and Sam and Rafi (who he would fondly call ‘the boys’) experienced that love too.

Whilst probably least appropriate for inclusion in the ‘Love and Respect’ section, there were also the scarcely believable antics that Uncle Lou would get up to with dad and their pals when living in Soho, serving in the army during WW2, holidaying and elsewhere. Uncle Lou would always describe how he loved a good pair of boobs, though perhaps not in those words. In later years this changed somewhat and he would regularly comment on a different part of a woman’s anatomy that sounded the same - “*You have a lovely set of teeth*” he would say to those lucky enough to receive the compliment.

Loyalty

Uncle Lou and dad served together during WW2 in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in Italy at Casino in the Signal Platoon. Though Uncle Lou was too modest to say, dad would often recall how if the boys were ordered to go on a patrol, they would only ever want to be with Uncle Lou because they knew he would stick with them should there be trouble.

### Generosity, Kindness and Selflessness

*“Louis was the dearest, kindest, funniest gitenushuma that it was my privilege to know.”* So read one message - and he was. A compliment was never far away from Uncle Lou’s lips and he never failed to put others first.

I will never forget that in the immediate aftermath of dad’s car accident, mum, Hannah, Uncle Lou and I were speaking with the consultant who advised that dad’s leg would have to be amputated. *“There is not enough skin to perform a skin graft”* the consultant explained. Then I hear a voice who responds without hesitation, *“but I am his identical twin brother, take my skin.”* That was Uncle Lou!

### Gentleness

*“People had to know that they could not take a liberty with you”*, Uncle Lou would recall as he would describe the fights that took place at the Top Arch at school, how he would have to fight to get to Cheder and of course the more chilling action that he experienced in Italy during WW2. It was difficult to reconcile Uncle Lou’s stories of Soho and the army with the gentle person that we all knew.

Uncle Lou had the softest of voices and never raised it or lost his temper. I have received so many messages in recent days referencing his gentleness. *“He didn’t have a bad bone in his body”* one person commented. *“He was the most mild-mannered of men”* said another. *“He was the friendliest, warmest man I ever met. So gentle, loving and caring”* read another message.

### Lucky

That Uncle Lou passed away at the age of 97 was nothing short of miraculous. Uncle Lou may not have enjoyed 9 lives but he certainly enjoyed 6.

- 1) During the blitz Uncle Lou was working for a furrier in a workshop in the West End. He was called over to the other side of the workshop only for a German rocket to crash through the window where he would normally have been standing. He escaped the resulting inferno but others were not as fortunate.
- 2) After being called up in WW2 Uncle Lou completed the tough physical training, but only after having nearly drowned when a makeshift boat capsized during a training exercise.
- 3) As part of the Signal Platoon Uncle Lou used to repair those telephone lines at the front line damaged by shelling. On one such job, he took cover behind a cart as mortar bombs fell. A mortar fell 20 yards from him and with a flash of light a piece of shrapnel made for his head only for Uncle Lou to be saved by the metal shaft of the cart which was one inch thick.
- 4) During one of the big battles in Italy - the crossing of the Senio River - Uncle Lou, dad and others were ordered to

collect prisoners. Upon heavy enemy fire Uncle Lou was blown up to the first floor of a barn. Rifle still in hand, he was absolutely fine.

- 5) Uncle Lou was pinned down in an Italian cemetery with mortars raining down, throwing coffins out of the walls and bodies out of the coffins. He made it back to his battalion unscathed.
- 6) Only 2 years ago Brian, his nephew, happened to visit Uncle Lou's flat, only to find him slumped on the floor having sustained a heart attack. Another recovery followed and we got to enjoy him that bit longer.

### Love of all things Yiddishkeit

Uncle Lou enjoyed a heimische upbringing in Soho in a Yiddish-speaking household (he always loved hearing and speaking Yiddish). He was a devoted member and Warden of the West End Great Synagogue where he and dad enjoyed their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Bar Mitzvahs, their 3<sup>rd</sup> taking place at NNLS. Uncle Lou was just proud to be Jewish and he told of how during the war, when their battalion would come out for a rest from the front line, he and dad would take the time to search for Jewish families to give them food and money. I have wonderful memories of our Friday nights, sitting next to him at Shul on Shabbat services, the lighting of the Chanukah candles and, of course, the huge fun we had at Seder nights. Whilst Uncle Lou and dad may both have passed Chaddy Gaddy Yoddy endures.

### Drooshers

Uncle Lou used to love reminiscing - stories would abound about his life in Soho (his parents, his pals, pranks played, schemes to earn money, his school, cheder, the boys club and the dances attended), time in the army, life as a furrier and in the country

markets. And so many stories not befitting this occasion. The family are so fortunate that he documented his life story.

### Jackalah

The first lines of his life story read: *“This is our story. This is how I remember my life. Whatever I write concerns my brother Jack as we went through most of this together.”*

He may be not be a trait but dad was such a fundamental part of Uncle Lou’s life that he requires a brief section. I thought I understood Uncle Lou and dad’s closeness and the unshakeable bond they shared. After all, I was told how upon the conclusion of the service on his wedding day and amidst laughter from guests in Shul dad did walk back up the aisle with Uncle Lou, leaving mum under the chupah. I think I had always been surrounded by that bond, taken it for granted and never really considered it. Dad’s passing and the loss of one of the twins made me realize and understand how inseparable they had been.

In recent days he has been variously described as *“the greatest”* and *“a legend”*. The truth is that the above words scarcely do justice to Uncle Lou and barely describe the remarkable life that he lived and certainly not how he will be missed. The end of an era, I will not know his kind again. In the words so often used by Uncle Lou: Uncle Lou, wherever you are, be *“gezunt, obergezunt!”*