

SHEILA'S READING AT THE FUNERAL SERVICE FOR BELOVED HUSBAND SAM FINKELSTEIN – 11/23/07

Dear Family and Friends,

Thank you all for being here to honor Sam and our family and to celebrate Sam's life. Many of you only know Sam through one of our sons and/or the wonderful wives they chose and the children they are so beautifully parenting. How Joe and Rob are as husbands and fathers are a loving and lasting tribute to our beloved Sam, their father.

It's probably unusual for a wife to be standing here during the memorial service for her husband. I did it for both my parents when they left this world and having known Sam longer than I knew either of them, I'll pull together the strength for it. I have already done two dry/wet readings to friends who couldn't be here.

My parents gave birth to me and nurtured me for the 20 years before I married Sam. Through his unconditional love and support, Sam birthed so much more of who I am today. The educator/coach portion of me invites you to listen and take from today, something beyond what you hear, have heard about Sam or any of our family. Please look into your own lives and those dear to you and take the time now to learn a little more than you might already know and honor yourself and them through your actions and your words.

Years ago Joe and Rob, as teens, brought back a plaque from a Florida visit to their grandparents that stated words to the effect, "If you could only see yourself as other see you, then you would know what a truly special you are." In recent days, and at other times, I've learned through others to appreciate the depths of Sam in many ways of which even I was often unaware.

I invited family and friends who could not physically be here to email me their experiences that they might want to share with you so that they too could be present and that Sam/his spirit could experience the full tribute to him.

I would like to read some of those first and then speak of my experience of my beloved Sam. Much of what you will hear also includes a tribute to me. You might wonder how can she be touting herself at a time like this. I have/had the same feeling and, in fact, Sam and I were and are one, despite many subtle differences. For instance when doing any of our beloved nature walks Sam would often point out images in nature to me, suggesting that I'd want to photograph them. I would often see them at the same time and at others I would look closely and see what he saw, sometimes in a slightly different way.

So my darling, You've heard from our nieces and great niece of who you were before me and now here is what some our friends, neighbors and my cousins have shared with me to share with you and all the people here. Do know also that the aides at Morse Day Center where you went for 4 years will also miss your daily presence and your sweetness. Karen called to extend sympathy and said she will miss you as a dance partner. Remember that you were their king as their Valentine's day vote demonstrated.

Following is what some of our friends, family and neighbors wrote that they'd like me to share with you all.

Neighbors

JOEL SAVITSKY

SAM WAS THE QUIET MAN OF SAN MARCO...A VERY TALENTED QUIET MAN. I PROBABLY KNEW HIM A LITTLE BETTER THAN MOST BEING INVOLVED IN PRODUCING SHEILA'S MONTHLY "ART MATTERS" COLUMN IN OUR NEWSLETTER. I WOULD VISIT THEIR HOME TO BE INTERVIEWED MYSELF AND TO INTERVIEW BOTH SHEILA AND SAM. I SAW SAM'S BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOS AND KNEW OF THE TALENT THAT WAS HIDDEN INSIDE THIS WONDERFUL PHOTOGRAPHER. HE WAS SPECIAL.

THE 4 OF US FIRST MET AT ONE OF SAN MARCO'S NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTIES, WE WERE ALL SEATED AT THE SAME TABLE AND OUR LIVES UNFOLDED AS THE EVENING WENT

ON. IT WAS A NICE BEGINNING, EVEN THO SAM WAS ALREADY SUFFERING FROM THE EFFECTS OF PARKINSON'S.

HE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT WITH SHEILA THERE EVERY STEP OF THE WAY, NOW SADLY IT HAS COME TO AN END...

THE MEMORY OF SAM FINKLESTEIN WILL LINGER ON AT SAN MARCO... WE SHALL MISS HIM, I SHALL MISS HIM...REST IN PEACE.

And from our former next-door neighbor, Arlin Antman:

I'm deeply saddened to hear of Sam's passing. Sam was the first person I met when moving in to San Marco. He was standing at the mail box watching our moving truck unload. His loving smile and welcoming heart made me feel instantly at home. I treasure my moments with both of you. Sam's kind spirit will always be remembered. Please extend my love and condolences to your entire family.

Robin Steiner, Speech Therapist, who recently completed a round of working with Sam for 8 or more weeks:

Once again, Sheila, I'm SO SORRY that this happened - way too soon! I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to know both Sam and YOU - and for letting me into your lives, if even in small measure. I know you were both struggling with your difficulty with loss of communication, and you know I always wished I could do MORE.

What I do know, without a shadow of a doubt, was that you two shared a unique love, and that there was a special man with depth and sense of humor behind the 'masked' expression. I'm grateful for the time we had, though brief.

God bless - - and give you strength - - and may you find solace in the multitudes of photos and memories you have accumulated.

An old friend:

Dear Sheila, Family, & Friends,

I'm sorry that I am not there to deliver this in person. But It's probably

better that I'm not in the sense that I'd have a very hard time getting thru it.

I went to Textile college with Sam, & remember always seeing him with his camera. Photography was a strong love of Sam's, but only after Sheila and his family.

When I left the Army in 1958, I moved into an apt at 415 E. 78th St. in New York City. Sam was already there sharing an apt with a friend, and Sam and I became very good friends. We spent many evenings together, and I really got to know Sam very well.

He was a bright, kind, and compassionate guy who would try to help in any way he could. Sam had a good sense of humor, and he was the type of person you could always count on. I valued his friendship for the 45 or so years that I really knew him. He was a very good friend, and I will treasure always the memories of the times we spent together.

I must also mention Sheila. She was a super wife who was always there for Sam----- constantly doing whatever she could to make his life better. They had a fine life together---it was truly a love story.

Although I can only speak for myself, I know that Sam's passing will be a big loss for all of us.

With much love, Bill First

My cousin, Susan Handis wrote:

Dear Sheila, My thoughts and prayers are with you and the family.

My thoughts about Sam are of a kind and caring person who gave you support and strength in all that you did. I will never forget how he rushed to pick up my mother first (before anyone got to her when she fell in Rob's home) and the kind look on his face to make sure that she was Ok.

We all think about him taking family photos and recording all of us at every family function- especially the black and white photos in the back of Aunt Wowa's house with the famous photo of all the women

(the sisters- Mary, Eva, Fannie, and Wowa and their daughters and daughter-in-laws) and the men (Marty, Moe, and the sons and son-in-laws).

He was always so carrying when we had dinners at your house on Margaret Street and very knowledgeable about many subjects. Those are my thoughts, I hope that the service is an expression of all of the love that he had for his family and all of the love the family had for him.

Love, Susan

And from my cousin Sandy who lives in India -
Dearest Sheila,

Please know that we are thinking of you with our most heartfelt sympathy and fondest memories even though this all comes over physical oceans and great distances. I feel especially fortunate to have spent a few "everyday" days in each of the past couple of years with you, Sheila, and Sam in your sunny and welcoming home in Boynton Beach. It is these recent memories which bring such strong emotions to me now.

Wakodohatchee...walking the boardwalk over the wetlands reserve, cameras at the ready...early in the morning, another quick visit in the evening...Sam and Sheila, that young couple, admiring the birds, animals, plants, companions til the end, though it was heartbreakingly that Sam's communication capacity was so diminished.

Sitting and looking at boxes of old photos together. Sam's insightful and interesting wartime photos from Europe. All the wonderful proud-Papa ones he'd taken of Joe and Rob, starting even when you were so prettily pregnant, Sheila! He was really an artist with the camera. The all-family ones in the backyard at Margate which Susan mentioned are so special. So is one he took of Thomas and me at Gettysburg shortly after we got married - he's captured all the starry-eyed contact! Best of all was the one you weren't sure of, Sheila, where was it taken?, so beautiful in the composition of the woman and child at the seashore. "Ventnor" insisted Sam...after all, he remembered where he'd taken it!!!

I feel lucky to have seen the loving care and concern with which you, Sheila, surrounded Sam. He always looked so spiffy when we dropped him at the day care center. The goodbye kiss at the door. Helping him when it was hard to get into the car with your famous hip-bump. Preparing all kinds of nutritious food. Giving him always the space and time to try to do as much as possible on his own. Always exploring new ways to make his days more meaningful, make his life fuller, continue the rich pattern of your lives together. It wasn't always easy, but you were magnificent in the endeavor, Sheil, and I'm sure Sam knew how much you loved him.

And so, maybe someday we'll go back to that spot on the bay where we skimmed pebbles and shells into the water...one for each of our beloved family who'd passed away...now another for Sam... My hope is that you'll find the peace and strength you need now. All of us, even so far away, are with you.

Sandy's sister Addy,

Sam was such a gentle and kind man, quietly taking pictures and being there to support us all. And you, Sheila were and are the ultimate caregiver, keeping him active and engaged as he declined physically. My fondest memory was after most people had left one of our summer swim parties, and you and Sam were "cuddling" in the jacuzzi. I went inside to let you have some privacy, but with a smile on my face!! Know that Sam will always be with us, and always be loved.

My dear friend, Ina,

I met Sam through Sheila. Sheila and I were participants in a course in Boston, my home town, and we became email buddies. As Sheila and I moved from email buddies to sisters, Sam became a person in my life, my sister's husband. Before I met Sam, I'd imagined him. Nothing I imagined had prepared me for the real Sam Finkelstein. The man I met appeared to be a quiet, shy, introverted man. I had no idea how he had stood up to Sheila all those years. However appearances, as we all know, can be deceiving.

Sam was not as simple a man as he appeared. Over the years, I noticed that Sam almost always got what he wanted and when he wanted it. It was just that he was so much in love with Sheila that unless there was something about which he felt strongly, he didn't care. When he felt strongly, he got what he wanted. Otherwise, he was happy to be with Sheila and make her happy. And then I noticed the reciprocity. I realized these two wonderful people loved each other so much that they took joy in giving each other what they wanted. Not always. But mostly.

So much for wondering how he had stood up to Sheila. The question became how did Sheila get what she wanted. The answer was simple - because Sam wanted her to have what made her happy. That made him happy. One of my favorite Sam stories is recent. Sam was at the adult center and they took him to a supermarket. He had only \$5.00 in his wallet, looked unhappy and so the adult center assistant asked Sam what was the matter. He wanted to know if he had enough money to buy Sheila flowers. She told him that he did, and that is what Sam did. He bought his beloved flowers even when he could no longer navigate the world alone. What made Sam happy was Sheila being happy.

Sam also was what I call a "secret zinger". You'd be in a conversation and Sam would be sitting, mostly listening keenly and then all of a sudden he'd say one of the funniest, wickedest things you'd ever heard in your life. A true zinger. And you'd be laughing so hard you didn't know if you could control your bladder. And for days, you'd think of the zinger and laugh. Sam had one of the sharpest wickedest senses of humor I've ever seen.

[An example of this, my insert, happened a few weeks ago Sam was in his chair and I asked if he'd like to have a conversation. He said, "Yes." I said, "About what?" He, "George Bush." I, "What about George Bush?" Sam, who was so challenged in speaking because of the Parkinson's responded clearly, "I can do a better job than he!"]

I'm going to miss Sam. I already miss Sam. Last July I went to Florida for my annual visit. July seems silly to people, but it's when it works for me. Besides in July, Florida is only a few degrees warmer than Boston. After a wonderful long weekend with them, I went

home. Much to my surprise, I had a reason to visit Florida the week before Labor day weekend, so I took extra time to be with Sheila and Sam. We went out to eat a lot, because I wanted to. And Sam wanted to. And we went to our favorite local Japanese restaurant and our favorite local Italian restaurant. Sam was a man who enjoyed good food thoroughly.

Others speaking today can tell you what a great Dad and Granddad he was. Some might mention how Sam taught Sheila photography and what a great gift that was to all of us. I can't exactly say how Sam impacted me most, his committed love, his gentle but firm manner, his wicked sense of humor or maybe the depth and breadth of his interests. Each of us has his or her own areas of impact. Sam was special. And we were special because he was in our lives and we were his. And we were lucky to know him. Shalom Sam.

And from a few other friends and cousins –

Lisa Syring from California –

I happen to have a very powerful memory of Sam on the evening after we had 2nd Seder at your house. We sat in the room in which you kept all of your photos, and got out Sam's work to show to us. What a fine eye was used to capture those images!

They were so passionate and intense that they sent chills up my spine. Sam was with us as we were going through them, and we were asking him to tell us about them.

He was struggling very hard to answer our questions, and it was clear that all of the answers were inside of him, but they were simply not all coming out. I like to think that he is free right now to express himself fully again.

Carol Weiss, Philadelphia Club President –

Sam, was a man with a great sense of loyalty, a kind and gentle heart, a love of family and unquestionable integrity.

Cousins Toby and Joel,

We remember Sam--his camera around his neck, the sweet , quiet, caring soul that will always be remembered in our hearts.

And Cousin Hannah,
Sam was a sweet, gentle man and we will miss his presence in this world. - Hannah

CONTINUATION - AFTER READING OTHER'S THOUGHTS –

Thank all the rest of you here and not who have the same, similar and more thoughts and found it too difficult to express in these circumstances. In addition to my family and their friends, special thanks to Barbara Dubyn, Gigi Smith-Gilcrease and Shellie, who spoke, for your ongoing love and support these past two difficult weeks.

And from me, my sweetest love, I thank you for my life. The biggest gift you gave me, in addition to our wonderful family, was the gift of allowing me to always be who I was at whatever time, through whatever venture I was getting into, to thus continue growing into the person I am today and will be tomorrow, for your love for me and mine for you is eternal. You were unconditional love and will always be in my heart as such.

Two of my earliest memories of how we meshed so easily and well, were first your coming home from a mill trip to Statesville, NC telling me about an oil painting with which you fell in love and wondering if you should buy it. I said if you love it and have the money for it, buy it. Bottom line you did and we decorated the bedroom in our first apartment with a purple rug and purple bedspread to accent the purple flowers. Then we bought our first dinette set that we had for over 30 years. I liked the black chairs; you liked the gold. I jokingly suggested the back one color, the seat another and when the salesperson said why not 2 gold chairs, 2 black, we looked at each other and said fine

Amongst the things I will miss the most in addition to your warm body beside me in bed and your hand in mine as we walked, will be being with you on trips I might take. You were the one who always loved the planning of our family road trips and the few international ones we took in later years. Simply one more way you took care of me and

us. When I stepped across a crevice in an iceberg in Alaska, your concern was for my safety.

And how can I ever forget all the hours you spent in the darkroom printing the hundreds of black and white photos I took when I taught art. Long before the days of digital cameras, you were constantly reminding me that it was not a movie camera I was using. And your printed the photos anyway. Many of them were published in Art Education publications.

Years ago, when I was teaching a teacher's aide was surprised to learn I had children. I occurred to her as a "pampered wife". At first I was taken aback. My first thoughts of a pampered wife were those of one bedecked with jewels, fine clothes, polished nails and sleek hairdos. None of that was important to me or you. And then I realized she was, in a way, correct. You pampered me by allowing me to be and by being there for me, taking care of me whenever I needed anything. In the days, 40 years ago, when a working wife was a threat to many a man, you were fine with it, happy for me and most tolerant of the many hours I spent on art and lesson plans.

I'm laughing, as I remember, that when I was back in school getting my Bachelor's or Master's degree you taught the boys how to clean the bathroom. You were getting tired of doing it yourself, again in the days when most men did not help wives with housework.

OK, my dearest sweetheart, I am going to stop now. I'm probably boring people here. It's obvious that there you were a richness that will remain with us always, the lasting tribute being your sons and their children and the lives that they too are now impacting in the world.

I do want to honor and thank your parents and brother Hank, long gone, and your beloved brother Dan and his family for all they were in your life that prepared you to be who you were for all of us.

Lastly, I am forever grateful to Alan Remstein, your best childhood friend and Army buddy, and Debby Medvene who introduced us. Without them know of this/us would have been.

I'd also like to take a moment to remember with you Ron Gerber, close college friend, and Bruce Cooper, fellow Parkinsonian and friend, who both have also moved from this life during the past month. Please enjoy celebrating life with them, as well as all our family who have passed on, wherever you all are.

In conclusion I'd like to share a poem by e.e. cummings that brother Jeff emailed to me, the one I was reading you so often these last days –

"i carry your heart with me(i carry it in
my heart)i am never without it(anywhere
i go you go,my dear;and whatever is done
by only me is your doing,my darling)
i fear no fate(for you are my fate,my sweet)i want
no world(for beautiful you are my world,my true)
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant
and whatever a sun will always sing is you

here is the deepest secret nobody knows
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows
higher than soul can hope or mind can hide)
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

i carry your heart(i carry it in my heart)"

As I comforted our beloved grandchildren I reassured them that they were in Poppy's heart as he was in theirs. May you all experience the same.

Rest in peace, my beloved. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all you've been and given to all of us by being fully who you were.

You have my eternal love. As our wedding bands say in Hebrew, "Ani l'dodi v'hu li. Ani l'dodi v'he li." I am my beloved's and he is mine. I am my beloved's and she is mine.