



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

“Family Values”

by Sam Lewis

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A value is something that you keep close to your heart, or something you believe in and want to project to others. For this paper I spoke to many relatives who told me stories about themselves and their families. The values here were derived from those stories and passed down to me.

Family, in Hebrew, mishpacha, and friendship, chavareem, are the two most important values to me. In all my interviews these values kept coming up over and over. My parents and family are the people I know I can count on, and depend on. Family is the bond of life so I am not surprised that it appeared in many of my relative’s stories.

My great grandmother on my dad’s side, Millie Lewis, who I call Nan, was born in what is now the Ukraine, in 1906. She had a big family that came through Ellis Island and eventually moved to Williamsburg, Brooklyn. They all lived on the ground floor of an apartment and rented out the top two floors to other families.

Her mother, Ida Alluhut, always had a full house of friends and family and there was always room for more. As Nan said “even if you could only visit for a short time it’s okay because at least you visited.” When Nan died last December at age 99 I remember her saying that and it made me cry.

My great-great-grandmother on my Mom’s side was Sarah Katz Rosenbluth. Every Passover, even when Sarah had grandchildren, the entire family would move into her house for the whole week. This way only one household had to change the dishes and they could all be together. Every Sunday there would be a large family gathering at Sarah’s house. It was that important for all of them to be together.

Education, cheenuch, is very important in my family. I believe that in order to be successful in life you need to have a good education and I need and want the knowledge and culture to go far in life!

Education has been important to Jews since ancient times, when the Torah was read aloud seventy two times a year. It was the obligation of anyone who could read, to read it aloud and just as important for the people who couldn’t read to listen. This was meant for everyone, men, women and children, and is maybe the basis for the fact that we value education so much today.

Despite the fact that my great-great-grandmother Sarah, and my great-great- grandfather Louis Rosenbluth didn’t go to college themselves, it was their highest priority to send their children to college. They sent all the boys and girls even though it was rare for women to go to college in those days. They knew that knowledge was the key to life and success.

Leonard Orkin, my mom’s dad, comes from a small town outside of Boston, where his was the only Jewish family. His dad was the town tailor and his mom a homemaker. He received a full scholarship to Harvard. It was a place that made him question every thing and shaped his ideas causing

him to be open to rights of others, seeing the true facts and not taking anyone's word for what they said, this is where he became a critical thinker.

My dad believes in intellectual curiosity and that education never stops, at home he emphasizes the importance of study and hard work. Work, avodah, is a part of life and it is always better if you enjoy it, so I'm glad many of my relatives value their work. I think of work as a value because it is the foundation for every other part of life. I also believe that if you enjoy your everyday job you will do it better and you will be a much happier person.

My grandmother on my dad's side, Bobbie Lewis, lived in west Philly with her parents and two siblings, Harvey and Elaine. One day, when she was in 1st grade, she was walking home from school for lunch and she saw her street full of fire trucks and lots of people standing around. Her house and family hardware store was in flames.

The fire started in the basement and destroyed everything they had. She had to stay with her Aunt Sylvia until they rebuilt their home and hardware store from scratch. That experience really taught her the value of hard work. She has worked her whole life to support herself and her family. Last year she had a major stroke and she worked so hard so she could be here today and see her grandchildren grow up.

My great-grandfather on my dad's side, Gus Lewis, brought his tiny arcade photography booth in South Jersey up to two full-sized studios in Philadelphia and Chester. He made them such a part of his life that one was in his own house. It was called Lewis Studios and by the time Gus retired he was very well known in Philly. His son, my grandfather Stan Lewis, as a child worked in the back rooms of the studio during the day. He had to wait until the workday was over to be able to go hang out in his room.

When there are people who are less fortunate than you, you should help them make ends meet and live life happily. A great gift of Charity, or tzedakah, was when Pop, my great-grandfather on my mom's side, received money from his family, who were already living in Massachusetts, to get here from his small town in Russia.

That gift started my family in America.

My parents and grandparents both give a lot of money to charities every year. They give to charities that help impoverished people in other countries and locally. Now I also give some money to charities when I can.

I believe where you live is usually a big part of your life. That's why Justice, tzedek and Community, kehilla are two of my values. Community can be anything from family to village and town, to the world as a whole, so I believe it is right to keep all of these places clean and keep them working well. Whether it be by lowering your CO2 emissions or picking up litter in your neighborhood, it is really important to help out. My dad helps design green sustainable buildings that are good for the environment, like his new building, Seven World Trade Center.

Gus Lewis, through his business clubs, encouraged people to buy U.S. bonds during WWII and Israel bonds throughout his life. He was also block warden during WWII telling people what to do in case of an air raid.

Louise, my mom's mom, has always been very active in getting the right politicians elected in order to better society.

My mom is one of three co-chairs of the Irvington Education Foundation Gala which raises a significant amount of funds for the Irvington schools.

My last value is Humor, or hu-mor, but it is not the one I believe least in. I believe that if you are a humorous person and don't go over the limit you can be someone people like being with. It also keeps a smile on your face and makes your outlook on life much better. Laughing is also really good for you and can actually make you live longer.

Looking at my values, and speaking with my family about theirs, has shown me that most but not all of the values I have are passed down to me by my family.

Most of their values were passed on by their parents and relatives and it keeps going back and back. Who knows, I probably have some of the same values as an ancestor of mine who lived a thousand years ago.