Eulogy

I start predictably with a lyric from my great hero Stephen Sondheim whose work gave me so much pleasure and wisdom throughout my life — this is from Into the Woods:

_Sometimes people leave you halfway through the wood. Others may deceive you. You decide what’s good. You decide alone. But no one is alone…Hard to see the light now. Just don’t let it go. Things will come out right now. We can make it so. Someone is on your side. No one is alone._

As I write this, I recognize that today is more difficult for those of you that are here than it for me. How I wish that I did not have to leave my family halfway through the wood. While I did run into some bad luck medically, and I would have liked to have had many more years, I had a rich and wonderful life. I wish there was more time to see my children into the future, have grandchildren, do more traveling and see more theater and movies with my extraordinary wife. But life sometimes does not work out the way you expect it to. I feel good about the way I lived my life and enormously grateful to the friends, family and colleagues who helped make my life so wonderful and my synagogue friends who have been so amazingly supportive.

At times in this process, my physical limitations and problems made me wonder if life was worth living. I quickly came to my senses and realized that whatever my circumstances, we always choose life and strive for more time. Every minute of life is precious and I would give anything to have more time to spend doing the things that I love.

I was fortunate to have many interests and the time to indulge in all of my passions. I am one of the lucky people who loved my work, loved the people I worked with, and knew that the work that I had chosen was exactly right for me. Find what inspires you and spend as much time as you can living your passions. I was passionate about theater and movies, politics, sports and other statistics (notably dental product sales), great restaurants and food, wonderful trips to explore the world, time spent with friends and family, my Jewish Center community, and the Mets and Jets who never won enough to give me complete fulfillment. I found much humor and joy in everyday interactions and enjoyed the pleasure of my own company — I recommend to everyone that you find a way to love the time that you spend alone. We live not for the judgments of others but for our own internal assessments of our lives and achievements. I was always my harshest critic but also appreciated what I was able to accomplish at work, at my volunteer activities, and in my role as a father and husband.

We put too much pressure on ourselves to be perfect — I know I did. I wanted every business presentation to be perfect, every men’s group meeting to be inspiring, and every social interaction to be filled with joy and fun. We need to take the pressure off ourselves and understand that life can be goofy, imperfect, and unpredictable. Life surprises in good and bad ways I feel an obligation to thank everyone for making my life so wonderful but recognize that I cannot thank everyone by name. I was blessed by a long
and happy marriage to Joanne, a person whose zest for life, extraordinary intellectual curiosity, and utter devotion to family made every day of my life interesting and rewarding. Joanne, be strong as you always are and move on with your life, I know you will. I was blessed with three wonderful children—my Sophia who has accomplished a remarkable amount in her young life and has been so amazing in helping to take care of me since I got sick. My Alex whose wisdom, wit, and good nature have made me so proud. My Ethan who is gifted with exceptional talent, social intelligence, and enthusiasm and has added so much joy to my life. I see so much of myself in all of my children and know that you must move on and must seek all the pleasure and fulfillment that there will be in your lives.

My father has been a wonderful role model and utterly devoted to me throughout his life. I have learned so much about life from my mother and stepmother. My brother and sister and my inlaws have meant so much to me and have taught me the importance of family. And so many friends from childhood, school years, business, and my local community who have helped make my life meaningful and happy. My happiest memories all relate to travel. A dinner with Joanne in a small town near Lake Maggiore. My adventures when traveling with my children. With Alex, we were always cold. The Angels game in Anaheim when we had to buy sweaters, the boat ride through the Norwegian fjords when we were too cold to actually go on deck to see the fjords. The amazing weekend when Ethan was younger when we went into 32 hotels. The amazing dinner at Toast in Quebec City where I enjoyed learning from Sophia’s insights and remarkable palate. How I wish I could be there as your lives move on.

The building that we are in and the sanctuary that we sit in have been very important to me over the last few decades. I have been lucky to have clergy and fellow congregants who have been wonderful mentors and friends. I only hope that we can continue to see our synagogue as our extended family and put aside the petty disagreements that sometimes have shattered the peace and comfort that we can realize in our synagogue community. If there are memorial contributions, I would hope that they go to The Jewish Center of Princeton, a place that has made such a difference in my life.

I wish that I had more time to give more to each of you but let my death be a lesson that there is much in life that we cannot control and we have to make sure that we live each day with a commitment to finding fun and fulfillment in every moment that we live. Be fearless for our fears are often unfounded and get in the way of our hopes and dreams. Be insatiable in your search for meaning and pleasure in your lives — indulge your whims and spontaneous desires because they will add joy to your lives. And never stop learning — I knew that every day in my life was an opportunity to expand my knowledge of how to live in this world through books and conversations. Humor and laughter is so important — I just found in my e-mail as I write this an e-mail from a clothing store titled Final Days-25% off and I wonder how they knew.

I feel guilty (as I often did) about leaving you so soon although obviously my guilt is irrational and I had no control over what happened. I know I had much more to contribute and much more to do if only I had the time. I know how hard I have tried to be a good
father, husband, son, worker, community member, and friend. My greatest wish is that starting today, you put my death behind you and go on to make the most of your lives. I know that my family will do fine, that my business will thrive, and that friends and community will take something out of this experience and make your lives even greater and more fulfilling. I am sorry that I won’t be with you to enjoy the glorious food platters and great conversations that will be found at my shiva minyans. I would have enjoyed myself.

I close with some more Sondheim lyrics — this time “Move On” from Sunday in the Park with George which became my favorite Sondheim musical as I got older — it dealt with the inner creative struggles of George Seurat, the French painter who died young before he could share with the world all of his great talent.

Stop worrying where you're going-
Move on
If you can know where you're going
You've gone
Just keep moving on

I chose, and my world was shaken –
So what?
The choice may have been mistaken,
The choosing was not
You have to move on

Look at what you want,
Not at where you are,
Not at what you'll be –
Look at all the things you've done for me

Opened up my eyes,
Taught me how to see,
Notice every tree-

Notice every tree..

Understand the light--
…Understand the light…

Concentrate on now —

I want to move on