



**Louis Ermano Cairo Jr.
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His given name was Louis Ermano Cairo Jr. It was his father's name as well. Growing up he wasn't at all comfortable with his middle name, which had also belonged to his grandfather before him. More often than not he preferred to use the letter "E" rather than admitting to his full name with Ermano, and acknowledging a little reluctantly that he never knew or cared to know about what the name meant. Even lacking awareness of its derivation or family meaning, he plainly just didn't like it.

People did often refer to him by his knick name '*Big Lou*' distinguishing him from his father. That habit took hold once he grew larger than his father and it still holds true today.

Lou was married twice. His sons from the first marriage are getting up there now. They are thirty eight, forty and thirty five. He also has two step daughters. One is thirty-one, the other is twenty seven and he has a little girl who is now ten years old. They're living in a comfortable townhouse in Manorville, and things he says, are going pretty well. They live there with the family dog. The other boys are all on their own now.

Keith, is his oldest son. He'll be forty in January. Keith heads up one of the big stock broking outfits. He does all of the communications for them. He takes care of all their satellite offices, and if they need computers he acquires them and has them installed, and if they need telephones he gets all that stuff brought in. He's doing alright. Keith has two sons and lives in East Islip.

His middle son Scott, who's thirty-eight, is in charge of the whole New England area for Walker Mufflers, and he has about nine or ten sales managers

under him. He sets up just about everything that goes on within the company in the New England area. Scott lives in New Jersey and commutes full time to New England. He has two children; one daughter and one son.

His younger son Roy, is thirty-five, single and lives in San Francisco. He was here on Long Island for a visit about two weeks ago.

Lou is now a grandpa. His oldest grandchild is almost eighteen. The youngest little guy was just born.

Jacque, his stepdaughter was just thirty-one. She graduated from C.W. Post College as an accountant. She never really worked as an accountant, because she got married and had children right away. However, her husband is a CPA (Certified Public Accountant), and they just opened their own business. She helps with that a great deal.

The youngest one, Jeanine, is twenty-seven and lives in Florida. She's like a District Manager for a whole bunch of Video Stores.

Then there's his daughter Jillian, who's his pride and joy, is ten years old, a beautiful little gal, and a fifth Grader. His daughter talks like his wife, non-stop, okay? She's just like her grandfather. He talks non-stop. That's his wife's father. *"It must run in the family there, you know? The boys are pretty much, I think, like Keith who's a tough businessman, you know? He keeps his nose to the grindstone and so does Scott. Roy, the youngest, is kind of unbelievable. He loves languages, and he speaks Mandarin Chinese. He speaks Italian fluently, writes it fluently, got into French, but does nothing. That's why he's still single."* And he told me this time he was really going to put his roots down. Then the next thing he heard him say is that he's going to visit France with a friend of his, because he can live there free since her mother and father own a big house. That's his son Roy.

"My father was the businessman. He owned his own fruit and vegetable grocery store. He did that for a long time. That's where the passion for business came from. It wasn't from me. What about the languages? Not me! My father was good though. His customers would speak German, he'd speak German. If they spoke Yiddish, he would talk Yiddish. Italian was his primary language, but my

mother was the same way. She could speak Italian, she could speak French, you know? Fluently, I mean. The only musician was my brother Ray”.

“In my own nuclear family my sister Gloria was the oldest. Ray was after me and my brother Ronnie was the youngest. Do you maintain contact? “Oh sure, oh yeah, all the time”!

“I was born June 1st 1933 in Ozone Park, Richmond Hill, Queens, but the hospital was in Brooklyn. My father had the fruit and vegetable store on 8th St. and Liberty Ave. It was my father’s business, but my mother worked in the store. As the oldest son I also worked in the store. I began working when I was eight years old. I’m sixty-six today”.

“One of my earliest memories was when my father’s store caught fire and was destroyed. My cousin and my uncle died in that fire. That happened in the early forties; 1941 or 1942. I remember all that and what happened after; it was a major trauma and family tragedy. At first my father and his brothers were partners, you know, Cairo Brothers, but afterward pop took over the store and built it up all over again. Then he took over my uncle’s family to make sure they had food and stuff like that”.

“Oh, I was a dreamer as a kid. I wanted to be Roy Rogers and have a palomino horse like Roy Rogers. I wanted to save the beautiful girl. He was my hero. I named my youngest son after him – Roy! Those were not just the days of radio cowboys but also of television cowboys. But owning your own horse, Oh Boy!”

“Mom’s full name was Josephine Aggresti. My father was born in Italy and came here by himself when he was fifteen. He just got on a boat and came here. My mother’s mother, - Things were bad in Italy, so her father had gone to France to find a job, which he did, and then my grandmother came there and two weeks later my mother was born. Two weeks after that they got on a boat and came here. My mother was really Italian, but she was born here. She came here when she was only two or three weeks old. My father must have had a great deal of courage to travel here all by himself at his age. He was a pretty tough little guy, you know, in fact, he was lying in a bed freezing in an attic in ‘Little Italy’, where he had pneumonia, and his father was worried about him, because he hadn’t

heard from him. So, his father called what they called a 'paisan', someone from his same town; a countryman, in Jamaica, who found him up there and took him in, and they just happened to own a fruit and vegetable store, and that was where he learned the business. See? Then of course, he had to pay them back. He had to wash their floors, work in the store and things like that, but they saved his life. Yeah! They did."

"My father's family was pretty well off. His father was a steam ship Captain. They lived in a town called 'Formul' which was a summer resort town somewhere between Naples and Rome. They owned farms and stuff. His mother had what they called a Canteena and sold spaghetti and wine and stuff like that. His house was right on the water. The backyard was like on stilts, and he would always play hooky and fish off the back, and if the Carabinieri would catch you, they'd catch you by the neck and force you into school. So he wasn't much for school.

When your mother arrived in America, your father was already here. "I have to think about how my father and mother met. Let me see. They had to be introduced by a relative, because my mom was nine years younger. She was a bright lady; the Valedictorian of her eighth grade. She had to quit school to help support the family. Her father was a shoemaker. She always told me stories of how when she first met my father (he was in Ozone Park and she in the Bronx) you know, he always made his own wine and he would always bring up a couple of gallons of his wine each week, he'd have big bags of fruit and vegetables that he'd bring up because of the store and that kept them going. "Oh, absolutely I had a part in that wine making tradition. "Oh sure. As an older son I had to do everything. You know, in an Italian family the older son had a lot of responsibility. The younger guys got away with murder. But around October time we'd go down to the market and he's taste the grapes until he found the right taste. There was a big place we'd go in Canarsi. Yeah, he would buy forty or fifty boxes of grapes and then we would go down in the cellar and have the barrels ready and he had a crushing machine and we'd put the grapes in and you had to turn it and he would put his hands in there. It was my job to turn it until I couldn't turn it anymore and then he would turn it. And then we'd let it sit in those barrels for a week. And then it starts to ferment already and he would drain off the wine and put it in closed barrels, they were still open and had paper across the top. Then we had a big press, a giant press and he's say "Press" and I'd press and take this big bar and

turn it around and he'd say more, more, you know, and I'd say I can't do anymore Pop and he'd take over and press and there was more and more wine. And I'd say, that's it now Pop right? Nope. Then he'd take it all off, put his hands in and shake up all the rinds and stuff that was in there and he'd start the press again because he got more wine out of that. That was called the second press you see. You got more wine out of it. Till your arms couldn't...you couldn't do it anymore and then he's say, "Get out of here," and he'd take over. He made red and white wine both. He made Zinfandel and I forget what the other grape was." I'm guessing but was that enough for the whole year? Yeah, but he never sold wine. He gave it away to his friends because they always liked his wine". "No, I don't carry on that tradition. I've let all that stuff go".

Do you have memories of your mother that are near and dear to your heart? *"Yes, I do. She used to make Pizza, four pies at a shot. Not those great big ones, all different sizes depending upon the tray, and we would enjoy them for days after. She used to make some great pies. She was a great baker. She was a great cook. Cooking gave her genuine pleasure. She also worked her rear end off in the store when it got crowded. That was when my father would call for her, "Hey Josie...come out," and she'd run out and stop what she was doing. She also had to work for the workmen that Pop had too. You know, she made food for everybody.*

His father once told him stories about back when he was growing up, how one day with a group of his friends when he was about eight years old, they saw some money on the ground, and they all dived for it at the same time. His father recalled how he found himself on the bottom of the pile under all his friends with his face pushed into the ground. He also remembers being told about the carbanieri, and how they grabbed him by the neck and pulled him into school and about his fishing; all that stuff.

"No, I never met my father's people. I knew my grandmother from my mother's side, but her father I never knew because he died early too. The only one who lived long was my mother's mother". What do you remember about your Grandmother? *"Oh, she was always laughing, she was always singing, she was singing songs in French and in Italian, and she was some hell of a pie maker. She used to make an apple pie, I'm telling you, you smelled that and she'd put whipped cream on it. But she was also crazy when she would make her chicken*

soup she would hold the chicken's feet over the gas burner and the stench would just drive you crazy. Wheeeew! To this day I don't like chicken. That's one of the reasons why. The other reason why was because as the elder son, my mother used to make me go with her to the market. I could smell that place two blocks away and the stench in there. Then she would feel the chickens in floor to ceiling cages of chickens and she'd feel the chickens until she found one that felt good to her and she'd point to that one and say, "I want that one" and then he'd carry it to the back (I forgot the sequence), next he's chop the head off and then dunk it in hot boiling water and pluck it right there for you, and the stench. Wheeeew! I never ate chicken."

As the oldest male in the family you learned a lot. What's the most important lesson you ever learned from experience in your family. *"Responsibility, You were given a job, you had to do it. You were there on time. You did your thing"*.

Now, that doesn't mean that you didn't have fun as a kid. *"No. I had a lot of fun in between. Sometimes, I didn't have fun"* What did you enjoy doing as a kid? *"When I was a young kid I was an American Nautical Cadet and I liked that. I liked boats. I liked going out and we did go out on the boat. In fact I have friends today that were with me when we were kids in that organization. Yeah! But wasn't there someone in your family you mentioned earlier who had had a nautical interest? "Yes, my grandfather had been a Steamboat Captain". That's very interesting.*

"I had two uncles that had a formative influence on me; one was a city cop, but he wasn't really a cop anymore. He was tough. He ended up being a driver for one of the District Attorneys while he was still a police officer, and I learned a lot from him. This was a tough guy for whom you towed the line, and he taught me a lot".

"The other guy was my Uncle Mike who was a nice guy. He made you laugh all the time. He's the one who got me interested in fishing. He had a fruit and vegetable store in Lynbrook, and occasionally I'd go out there and spend the weekend, and he'd take us fishing and have somebody else watch the store. This had to be in the 1940's when Lynbrook was a different place. 'Lynbrook was a beautiful place back then, and he lived in East Rockaway which was even nicer. I would have given my eye teeth to have been able to live there, but his wife, - let

me tell you another chicken story. His wife Emily was something else again. She made one hell of a spaghetti sauce. We'd come back from fishing, "Louie, you want some more sauce on your macaroni? It was great macaroni and she tilts the cover on the pot to give me more sauce and what do I see floating in the sauce ---- a chicken leg." I said, No thank you Emily, I just can't eat anymore."

"When I was in eighth grade I had a shop teacher who really influenced me to become a teacher. Years following that moment and many teachers later prior to completing high school, I said to my higher self, "You know, I wouldn't mind doing this. I knew I didn't want to be a fruit and vegetable man like my father. So in March of my senior year I walked into what they called the Guidance Office at my high school. Sitting there was an old English teacher who was retired and I said to her, Miss Law - because she wasn't married, I want to go to college. What should I do? She said, "Just go into that room right there pointing. The room was filled floor to ceiling with shelves of books; College catalogues. Holy smoke! Where do I start? Right in front of me there was a big table with more catalogues . I picked one up and it said, The Institute of Applied Arts and Sciences. Okay, I said, This looks good! I'll go here, because I didn't know where else to go. That was how I made my decision. This looks interesting: Dental Lab Technology. Once I got into the school I knew I'd never be a dental lab technician even though I was at the top of the class. I was lousy in high school because I was lazy. Once I got into college I decided I had to work and I was on the Directors Honor's List for two years. The second year there they changed their name to New York City Community College. It was at 300 Pearl Street, Brooklyn. Based then on what I had done in college NYU accepted me as a student. Then I was drafted. They said, that's alright, after you get out of the army you can come back to NYU. So, that's what I did".

You finished your undergraduate work at NYU? "Yes, and completed my Masters Degree at NYU. As an undergraduate I had majored in Industrial Arts Education. Then I took my Masters in Guidance and Personal Services over at NYU. During my senior year at NYU I took nine graduate credits toward Guidance. I graduated by January of 1959 by June of 1960 I already had my Masters. And then I went to Hofstra University in 1966 and took my advanced Graduate Diploma and I did that in Administration and Secondary Education and stuff like that."

At that point you had a clear career path and knew exactly what you wanted to do. Your first paying job at eight years old had been working in your

father's store delivering orders. *"No, I actually had to work for Pop for nothing all the way up through high school. When I wanted to work to make money I worked after school to buy my first boat, I worked in a rubber factory. You have to understand, I was always a big kid. It's important to understand that. Then I worked in a place where they made stuffed animals. This was where I really hurt my back the first time. That was in Queens someplace? Yep! Yep! One of my jobs with baling hooks that rolled in 640 lb – 740 lb. bales of cotton off the sidewalk, another guy helped me but nobody ever told me how to bend, so I did all the work with my arms and back. Then you had to go down in the cellar in the city, you know what a city store looks like. It's very narrow to get up to the top and two guys can't get on it together with the bales of (inaudible). I would take the hooks and bring it up to the top, again, with my back. So I made my 50c an hour doing that. That was the wage in those days. I did that for quite a while too".*

"You know what I can remember? This goes way back to when I was a little guy. I must have been somewhere around seven years old. I can remember everyone getting into the back of my Uncle John's truck...that would have been all the relatives that I call 'paisan'; the whole family, for a long ride out to Valley Stream State Park and we'd have a picnic and the picnics were great. I remember the singing and this one guy played the mandolin and another guy played the guitar and everybody singing. It was fun. That always stuck in my mind.

"You know what I can remember the most? I was raking the lawn on my first home in North Babylon, and I heard that John F. Kennedy was killed. That really hit me hard. You know? I didn't vote for him, but it hit me extremely hard. That I do remember. I remember the end of World War II and everything that happened then. I remember Guadalcanal and all the stuff that happened. Oh sure!

I was into History. I liked History. Oh, I was a reader from the time that I was a little boy. I still read to this day. I don't remember the first book I read from cover to cover, but I can tell you what I did do, I read all of the Tarzan Series by Edgar Rice Burroughs, in fact when I got older I collected them all and saved them for my sons, and none of them were interested. Now I'm saving them for my daughter. I'll wait for her. Then I also got into 'Horatio Hornblower' I saved his whole series of books. I read them all. I saved them for my son. He wanted nothing to do with it. But my son Scott is a voracious reader too. My mother always read too. That's where that came from".

“My favorite seasons have always been the fall and the spring; with the renewal of life and the splendor of nature's rainbow of colors out there”.

Considering all of the many teachers you've had over the years, was there any one of them who stood out as a favorite? *“Joe Scarlotta” He was an unusual human being. He was drunk half the time, but he was also Head of the Phys Ed Department and the football coach. He was a special type of a person. If a person got into trouble he was always there”.* So, in a rough sort of way he provided you with a role model for the path you chose for yourself since you had chosen the path of counselor.”

What was your least favorite subject in high school? *“Spanish. I should have chosen to take Italian. I don't know why I didn't”. I probably didn't take it because of my father, since I was at war with him most of the time.”*

“I first came to Brentwood in 1962. I was teaching at Elmont Memorial High School, and I knew I wanted to get into Guidance, so I sent out applications all over the place. I happened to have an interview with Gerry Smith, who in those days was Director of Guidance. I guess we hit it off because some of the things I said, he liked.” “He hired me. I started in the Ross Building working with 10th Grade. I knew Gerry Smith was going to be a tough taskmaster, and that there was going to be an awful lot of work and an awful amount of time. We put in a tremendous number of hours in those days. Seminars were going on all the time. We were always going to this place or that place. You couldn't say you were coming here from 8 to 3 because sometimes you didn't get home until 6 pm or 7pm. It depended on what you were doing. Right before I came here, they'd been producing The NY State Department of Education film called “The Challenge of Change” describing the revolution in Guidance taking place in Brentwood. It had just started being shown around the country at that time. The film was considered to be at the cutting edge of change in the public school Guidance area and utilized Administrators and Teachers in performance roles in the movie along with students from the high school population. Newcomers to the film industry like Martin Sheen cast in the role of a potential high school dropout focused on one of Brentwood's problems at the time. It painted a very idealistic as well as humanistic picture of future high schools in America while Brentwood at the time was obsessed with discipline and control issues. Given the population explosion,

the district was currently experiencing the caseloads Lou and other counselors were expected to handle were huge. They were somewhere in the area of 500 students per Counselor *but Gerry Smith still expected you to do the job. You had to.*

Gerry Smith liked Lou's vocational background, but he always put another Counselor in with the new guy in the beginning to function as Mentor. He assigned two people with Lou; Tom McDonough and Mike Zimmer. Tom McDonough didn't have much to contribute but Mike Zimmer and Lou Cairo became the best of friends and remained so to this very day. Then what happened with Mike was he got heavy into the union movement and other things. He and Gerry came to a not too happy parting of the ways. He went to Bethpage and led the first strike there representing the Bethpage Teachers Association and then got himself blackballed *from every other Guidance Department in every District on Long Island. We found that out from another friend, Bob Robb, who was a Director of Guidance at Amityville. He was about to hire Mike and he told him, you've got a job. He then had to call Mike up and say, "You don't have a job because you've been blackballed. I can't hire you. None of the Superintendents will hire you". This stuff actually went on. Back at Elmont Memorial High School the Board of Education in one year granted an annual raise of \$96 a year. There were a lot of young veterans hired at that point and we all turned their offer down flat so the Board of Education replied by saying, 'if you don't like what we've offered to pay, you're free to go anyplace else to find preferred employment'. You know what? That was the end of the Teachers Association in that District. The teachers all got together, rented the Calderone Theatre in Hempstead and brought in all kinds of union representatives to speak with us and at that point we became a Union. So, "I'd already had that experience before I came to Brentwood. When I came here there still was a Teachers Association in Brentwood. I was also one of the initial movers supporting teachers having a union come in. You know, I didn't really even want to get involved with the teachers association then. I had a friend, Dick Zuck and I kept pushing him to become more involved with the teachers and he finally said, 'Why don't you get involved with all the things you're pushing me to do? And I did.'* I was a Delegate for many years, I was a Chief Delegate and I was on the Executive Board for a number of years once I acquired my tenure. But you can't say because when I was still in Elmont I had had a tremendous fight with my Supervisor and then I wrote a letter to him and the Principal took the liberty of taking it out of my mailbox. I

said to him, "Oh no, you put that back. - and that was my tenure year – and I got a call from the Superintendent of Schools and this guy's name was Tom Cain, and he says "Come on in Lou". He shook hands with me and said "What's the problem"? And then said, "Come on in and sit down," but before he said anything, he told me that "I want you to know you have tenure." I said thank you, and we went over the whole thing and then he said, "In the future, please do me a favor. Call me first. Don't write any more letters. "I said Okay, "and that's the way we solved that problem."

"It was with that kind of experience already in my tool kit that I arrived here in Brentwood. It was why I became so assertive in negotiations. Yeah! I was assertive; even as a Counselor; not with kids, only as an advocate with fellow Teachers or Administrators. You know what was great about Brentwood in those days? The District Principal, Eugene Hoyt. You had parties in the school. I mean you had liquor in the school. Oh, it was quite a time. We were really a close group of people. Yes, it was fun, you know? And then, time marched on and you couldn't have liquor any more, no more parties. Things kind of like –flattened out, and in all likelihood some of the laws changed too. It was also pretty much still a rural district as well"

"I went to South Junior High School until 1975 and then I went back into the Ross Building and remained there until I retired" Were there other Certifications or did you teach in the Evening School? "Oh yeah! I was involved with the Evening School as a Counselor in the evenings for twenty-five years. Oh Sure, plus, I used to do the High School Equivalency testing and I did the American College Test and I used to proctor for the SAT's. So, I did a lot of that stuff".

"And yet, with all that, many of my fellow teachers including yourself, had to get and maintain second jobs, just to keep a roof over the house. For example, I always had two or three other jobs after school. I did many things. One was called a "Crisis Intervention Counselor" at " Little Flower Children's Services" and, what you did, was, you really intervened. It was a physical thing. A lot of times you put people on the ground until you got them calmed down and back into their cottages and stuff. I was always chasing runaways. And they ran away all the time. So, you know? I made good friends there too. They were super, and most of them, believe it or not were ex-priests who worked there ie. ex Maryknolls, who'd worked in the missions. They were all married priests; great guys who were

married to Japanese, Korean or Chinese girls they'd met in the missions and most of the men had been serving for ten or fifteen years before they left".

"Oh, let me tell you about the first guy that I saw when I came to Brentwood. His name was Reggie Poquette. I had turned into the corridor near where the old library used to be and I see this teacher coming in and he has this kid by the hair dragging him down the hall holding him out at arm's length and the kids swinging at him, never touches him and he takes him and brings him into Fred Weaver's Office. That was my first time seeing him. He was the Department Head of Industrial Arts."

"Then I remember coming down to see an old friend of mine who used to live across the street from me in Richmond Hill; Frank Ruska. Frank had 'Fat Mike' in his class as one of his students, bending over his desk. And he was holding on to one of his old college fraternity paddles with both hands. He would take it up to Mike's rear end and then take it away again until about the third time when he lifted Mike up off the floor after which Mike was good for the next week or two. Frank had no more problems. In those days you could get away with that but you can't do that anymore – thank God! It was not even against the law back then but it solved a great many of the discipline problems we had - then".

"I was in Elmont for three and a half years and served in Brentwood for thirty one; a total of thirty-four and a half years. You know, when I went to the Junior High I was really unhappy and I had looked around and I said, "I'm gonna' get a job out of this district. I had an interview over at Cold Spring Harbor, and I was sitting down with the Superintendent and he said, "You know Lou, you're going to have to spend eighty percent of your time with parents, and I said no I'm not, because I don't want this job." I went back to South Junior High School and became friends with Mike DeBellis who was the Principal there, and I got into hunting with him and Dick Zuck and a whole bunch of other guys, like Jerry Cohen and it was fun; a good place to be. It was like a family, you know? Mike always said to you, - Your family comes first. If you have a problem you let me know, and I'll have somebody cover for you and you take care of your family. He was a real human being."

"I don't believe the training anybody gets beforehand ever prepares them for what happens when they get in front of a class. Where I really learned what to

do was as a student teacher and I had an ex-football player; a professional football player and an ex professional wrestler who was Chairman of the Industrial Arts Department of New Hyde Park Memorial High School. He said to me, "Lou, do you want to succeed? I said yes! He said, then when you go into that class don't be a friend. You can be a friend six months down the road. You go in as a friend, you're gonna' lose it and you're never gonna get it back."He said, you gotta be tough! Okay! And that's what I was and he was right".

"From day one and job description aside, what was my own personal purpose for doing what I did for thirty-four and a half years? I'll tell you. I liked kids and I always wanted to help kids. I did a lot of things that I could have been fired for. I could, but I won't mention the girl's name, but she had taken off from her parents home and was living with her boyfriend, she might have been fifteen or sixteen at the time, and I got a hold of both the boys and the girls friends at the time and found out where she was and I took a boy with me and a girl out of the high school and we went down to where she was, took her out of the boy friend's home and I took her back to her mother. And I got her mother and her together again and her father was a Lieutenant in the Fire Department and of course he accepted them back, but you weren't supposed to do things like that. Another time, and this was in the seventies, I had a girl come to me and she said Mr. Cairo, I think I'm pregnant. And I said, Oh, and we were talking. I said we ought to find out. I'll take you down to South Side Hospital. You're not supposed to do that. I got Rose Marie Loveman. In those days she had a different name. She remarried. She was a Counselor too. She said I'll come with you and I said, Fine! So now we got through it and I thought it would all be for nothing and now they tell us we have to pay. Well, someone has to pay for this. I found out she wasn't pregnant, by the way. I said Okay, I'll pay for it. She said, Oh, Mr. Cairo you don't have to pay - Oh no, I didn't want any problems, you know, "My mother will send you the money from Puerto Rico, She'll send you the money. So I just forgot all about it. Months later I got a letter at the high school from Puerto Rico with a check for the amount and her mother had written, "Thank you very much for buying my daughter new school books" She told me she lost them and you bought her new ones. I got paid back too."

"Then how many times and for a host of how many reasons, have I and other teachers had to reach into our pockets to provide kids with money in an

“emergency”? even though, most of those kids pay me back too. Only a few never did.”

“What makes me angry? I may seem like an easy going guy, but oh, I can get angry very easily. When someone comes on to me in an arrogant fashion or assumes a confrontational stance, I’ve been known to respond without hesitation in a correspondingly appropriate manner”.

“It was back in the late seventies and early eighties that I was on the Executive Board of the Union. That was when Jack Zuckerman was serving. When he stepped away I got off only because I had backed the wrong political candidate. He was a friend from school and I could not do it but I saw that it was a mistake if I wanted to continue being politically active. That was when Les Black came on. I remember going to so many of the RA Assemblies. We went all over the place. We went to Toronto one year, to Albany a number of times and to Niagara Falls a number of times. I volunteered to be the Sergeant at Arms there at a number of the meetings. There were times when I often found their meetings to be redundant so I’d play hooky a lot and go visit the Falls. I’d enjoy walking the Falls. Tom Dwyer used to walk with me all the time. Beverley Baum used to walk with us too. She had just gotten remarried and she asked me, “Would you do me a favor?” Sure, Beverley. We walked over into Canada. I want to buy my husband a necklace. Would you mind putting it around your neck so we can walk back here with it? Sure. That’s what we did.”

“In the old days when you said you came from Brentwood, people looked up. They really did. Those were the days when Gerry Smith was Director of Guidance; and they knew Brentwood - everybody knew Brentwood. You know, even though you worked so hard you were kind of proud that you came from Brentwood. The Ford Foundation issued a Grant to Brentwood to transform the purpose and function of the Guidance Departments as well as to revolutionize the teaching of Mathematics in New York Secondary Schools. There was in fact a national spotlight on the Brentwood School District. It became known coast to coast as a place where serious curriculum innovations were taking place. Norm Roberts was here, computers were being introduced at StonyBrook before PC’s were invented and Cuisenaire Rod manipulatives were re-introduced to a new generation of young Americans far and wide from Brentwood..”

Lou's support for and his belief in unions hasn't wavered a bit over the decades. He believed that without the advances we've seen in the union movement since the 1970's, the education profession would be nowhere near where it is today. During his first year teaching in Elmont they gave him credit for three years of his business experience. He started at \$4,800. That was the third step and before taxes. He took home approximately \$80 a week and was paid once a month. Without our union we'd be nowhere today. We'd still be at the mercy of School Boards and Administrators, he said.

Was he ever afraid to come to work? "No. Never" Was there a day that forever stands out in memory as being particularly stressful? "Yes, there was that time when we had trouble over at East Junior High School. When the guy walked into a classroom and held the class of student's hostage until that night, he shot himself. All the Districts Counselors came over to help. I remember that day." Something like that had also happened at Elmont to a very tough ex-Marine English teacher – a lady. A kid walked into her class with a pistol intending to shoot someone and, she disarmed that kid. I'll never forget that. It had to be 1959 or 1960.

"I liked what I did in Brentwood as a Liaison Military Services Counselor. I liked that and the fact that I used to go out in the early days on speaking engagements that you had to do. Yeah, I enjoyed all of that, and I met a lot of interesting people and went to a lot of different places".

Do you have any regrets? "No. I'd do it all over again; that I would. In fact, half the time now I wish I was back. I really do. In fact, I dream about the place, believe it or not. It's crazy; Guidance. You do it too? Yes, every once in a while and we're not the first to say it. I miss the kids too. I ran with an open door policy. Anybody can come in. You made an appointment and that was fine. If you didn't that was fine too." We talked before about the energy level. It keeps you young. Did you have a favorite time of the year? Yes, when the summer time came around; like the kids when all that work was done. I hated the college applications and writing all those letters of recommendation all the time. That I really didn't need. I must be very frustrating as a Counselor to feel like a paper pusher. "Now it's different. They all have their own computers in front of them. We didn't have that. You know? I wish we did. We pushed for it back in those days and that's probably why we got it and we pushed hard. I think they got them somewhere

around 1994. That left more time to be devoted to actual counseling. You know, with the program changes and all that. It's all on their computers now. They can see if a class is overcrowded or not and that kind of stuff. It's good."

Given a chance to do anything over again do you think there is anything you would have done differently? "Yes. I think I would have kept my big mouth shut. Well, you know, I used to put in for a lot of Administrative jobs here. I never got them. Finally, I spoke with my old friend Mike DeBellis, "Come on, be honest with me for once – in your life. No –he was honest with me a lot! I asked, 'Why haven't I gotten an Administrative job?' He said, 'Lou, nobody wants somebody telling them they're wrong all the time. I don't want that and nobody else wants that either.' I said alright and I stopped applying from that point on and I didn't. We used to have some notorious faculty meetings when Fred Weaver was Principal. They'd go on and on sometimes until 6 pm. That's pretty tough when you'd come in at 7 am and not leave until it was almost dark. But he's still teaching in the Evening High School. I'll bet, he's close to ninety now - if he's a day."

"When I retired I was living in Cutchogue and still taking care of that place. It was a full time job. And then I moved to this other place which is a Town House and everything is taken care of for you, I was working out in their gym all the time but I just stopped that in the last couple of months. My back's been killing me so I'm involved. I take my daughter here and I take her there to the swimming place. I play cards with the guys Friday nights over at the club house and you know we're active. We do things with the other neighbors, so we go places. My wife is a shopper, so I go with her. I don't mind that".

"I'm always a morning person. I still get up at a quarter after five in the morning. What happens you see, is that it takes me so long to get started. I'm a diabetic, and I have so many other things now. It takes me a long time, so by the time I get done I have to go downstairs and have breakfast, I walk the dog, I make breakfast for my daughter, I make her school lunch for her, and she comes down and we talk together and then at 7:30 we go down and wait for her ride to pick her up for the bus stop and that's it you know? I usually have to wait for her to get off the bus that's my job. Another neighbor brings them to the bus and I have to pick them up. I'm always doing something. It's good. It's not bad at all."

"I retired July 2nd 1993. What made me retire is going to sound funny, but I had a ball-buster of a parent the year before and his son. I got this guy into Georgetown. I wrote a good letter and I said gee, I've got to put up with that father again and I've got a daughter in eleventh grade. You know what, I said, I don't want to put up with him, and I put my papers in. It was kind of a silly thing to do, but it's a good thing I did because I retired July second I think it was and on July Ninth, I had my major heart attack with five bypasses plus a corroded artery, so the timing was right. I would have been out a long time anyway, because it took me a long time to get back with all the other stuff".

What's the passion in your life now besides your family and your little girl?
" ---and my wife Patty, now too. Patty is a funny gal. She used to supervise the money room for Northwestern Bank and she also ran the money room for 'Revere Armored', and she knew this was a dishonest place, and she quit. Six or seven months after that they had the owner arrested on federal charges. She's a very bright woman, and she's very good with math. She probably should have completed college, but she had children very early and that was the problem. But she's still a very bright lady.

"We just moved to Silver Ponds in Manorville. Pat and Jillian wanted to do that pretty much so we did that. We travel in the summertime. We like doing that. We usually go away during the summer with Rosalee Semente and her husband. We've been doing that for years. This past summer we went to Canada and spent a lot of time in Montreal, Toronto, Quebec and another time we went to Tennessee together. The year before that we went to Bar Harbor, Maine, we've been doing that for quite a while now over the years.

"This decision to retire was more an impulsive decision than a considered and thoughtful move on your part was it not? Yes, I sometimes do things like that. Do you have a Hobby? Yes. I like model railroading. When I lived in Cutchogue I had a tremendous basement and I had what they called "G" Gauge trains which were about this big, and I had about \$5,000 worth of trains. And when we moved to Manorville I knew we couldn't use the "G" Trains, they were just too big, so again on impulse I sold everything, I had put about \$5,000 into it to a guy for \$1,000. The guy took everything. Did you regret that? Yes. I did. I should have kept them even though I didn't have the room I could have given them to different sons and daughters, and stuff like that. So now I'm into the opposite, the "N" Gauge

about this big. I'm really not that crazy about them but there's room for them in the garage. It's a way to create your own world. You can become the creator of your own universe. So that's what I do".

Are you doing any reading these days? "Oh sure! I'm always reading. I finish one book and pick up another. Right now I'm reading a guy by the name of W.E. Griffith. I like his writing. He did a lot of work with the military services. I like the military. So I'm reading that now. I read anything I get. By the way, I have a ninety-one year old uncle who's still alive, as I finish a book he gets them. He's a voracious reader. He doesn't like television, he reads constantly. He lives in Hauppauge. I get a big bag full of books and bring them over. He's something else. He's so in love with my aunt Mary that he would never marry again".

What advice might you offer to an audience of new teachers if you had the opportunity to tell them what you've learned about the art of teaching? "Human nature really doesn't change that much over the years. People are people you know? I still would say the same thing. You can't always be the friend of the student. Sometimes you have to be the disciplinarian. You have to take charge of your classroom because no teaching goes on when there's hollering and screaming and there's no control. It's chaos. So you have to be a little strong and tough. It may still be true, so it's important to always remember that you as that single teacher or counselor may be the most important adult in that students life. You'll never know if you're the one so you should always act as if you are."

"When I was down to one of my lowest points, when I had gotten divorced from my first wife, and I was sitting in the Guidance Office there, after school and Mike Gomez one of my former students came in and I said, Hey Mike, come on in, and he sat down and I said what can I do for you? And he said, I have some ideas I'd like to kick around with you and I'm thinking of going into business. So we kicked that around for a while and then he was ready to leave but before he did he said, Oh, By the way, I never thanked you for all the help you gave me when I was in school and you were there for me when I needed it. Gee! Thank you. It really helped. Pay Day! Another thing that happened and I'll never forget this one either. I was on line waiting to cash my check in the bank, and I can't even remember the girls name right now. The girl came over to me and she said to her son, "I want you to meet this man. He was mommy's counselor when she was in school". And how that makes you feel is right up there. Wheew! And about a month ago I met

Donna Barrow who was one of my old kids and we met over at Good Samaritans Hospital where my son's wife was giving birth. We just reminisced and talked back and forth and she introduced me to her young son who was there, as her former counselor, and it was nice.

And what about Guy DiPietro? "Oh, I liked Guy. He was a good guy. I'm glad that he got as far as he did because he died so young. Guy was a person you could depend on too. He knew ME! I can remember one time I was hot under the collar, because a parent had said something and it was a lie. Paul Harenberg had gotten involved and I was so pissed off. So Guy calls me over and puts his hands on my shoulder and says, "Now Lou, be calm! Keep that Italian temper of yours under control." We had things like that. It was good."