

Hesped for Orli Golding Barr z''l
Name changed to protect privacy
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I would like to paint the picture for you of a magnificent woman.

Orli Golding Barr was born in Flint, Michigan in 1955 to two loving parents Ronda and Martin (of blessed memory) and to her adoring big sister Betty. Two years later, Mary completed the "Golding Girls" trio, who would forever go down in history as serious partners in crime.

From a young age, Orli was clearly an imaginative, creative, determined soul. She and Mary would scheme ways to climb high onto their closet shelf and hide out. Many nights at 3 am with flashlights in hand, Orli and Betty would sneak into the bathroom with their favorite baseball cards to memorize all of the player statistics - only to later quiz each other to see who could remember the most. Together, the Golding girls formed bonds that lasted a lifetime.

Orli was an artist. In addition to learning to weave, sew, draw and paint - Orli, along with her mother and two sisters, were practiced musicians and singers. In conversation with Ronda, I learned that The Golding Girls could be heard harmonizing to their favorite Joni Mitchell, Joan Baez or Peter, Paul & Mary tune. Only one rule guided them: "no boring music!" Orli, her sisters and her mom squeezed four guitars into the car before room was made for suitcases on any road trip. To earn extra money as young women, the girls taught guitar to local kids - and when it was time for them to purchase their own instruments, they had to save up at least half of the cost of their instrument before mom and dad would pitch in to secure the purchase.

Orli was daring. Betty recalls a time when she and Orli decided to skip school for the day. They ended up miles away from home with faulty brakes. Their only solution was to scrape together hard earned money, quickly get the brakes repaired and drive the car back home by the end of the day before anyone learned of their rebellious act. Somehow when Orli was around, mischief was always afoot - and somehow - Orli never got caught.

She was audacious with the clothes she wore and loved to play with bold fashion statements. If she couldn't find exactly what she wanted to wear, Orli would make it herself or turn a found vintage garment into something new and spectacular.

Orli was fearless. In 1973 she spent much of her second semester of her senior year of high school taking courses in Art History at the University of Michigan Flint satellite campus - against her high school's wishes. She always valued her education and loved learning. Even until her final days, Orli could be overheard discussing Strategic Planning with Carly or studying for a financial analyst's Exam.

Orli was adventurous. She traveled to Israel in the early 1980s where she lived on a kibbutz for a year - and as you do on a kibbutz - Orli cleaned chickens. While there, she continued her love of teaching guitar, making frequent trips into the city to offer lessons. Soon after her year in Israel, Orli found her way to Florida and in 1982, Orli became a mother.

Carly became the light of Orli's life. From the very beginning, Orli showed Carly what it meant to look at the world creatively; seizing every moment as an opportunity to make the mundane fun and exciting. Orli taught by example and to this day Carly embodies everything Orli stood for, by being a loving wife to Don and a devoted mother to Simmi with the same passion, zest and love of life. Orli can rest with the knowledge that Don and Carly have each other's love and now with their own light of their lives - Simmi - they will all find continued joy and comfort.

Orli loved games and this led Orli to the love of her life. After being coerced (by her father) into the Jacksonville Jewish singles club Trivial Pursuit event, Orli met Stu. Stu perked up the moment Orli walked into the room and was eager to speak with her that night. Orli, however, left the party before he could get her number. Stu thought he could get Orli's number from the sign-in sheet, but alas - Orli did not sign in. However, all was not lost. Later that week Stu got a call at work from Orli who had an "urgent question" about the Jacksonville Jewish singles club - and plans for their first date were made before either hung up the phone. Their love developed quickly and they were married within a year of meeting. Orli became the love of Stu's life.

Orli was a masterful storyteller. By the time Orli's beloved Jon was born in 1987, completing their family, she had perfected one of her many crafts - cooking eggs. As a child, Jon simply couldn't wait for breakfast. Every morning he would eat the most delectable poached egg delivered from pot to plate by mom. These poached eggs were SO good that Orli had convinced Jon she was a highly sought-after "poached egg chef." She had Jon believing that she would sneak out early in the morning to assist the local restaurants with their poached egg-making and then rush home to ensure that Jon had his perfect breakfast. It was many, many years before Jon realized that he, in fact, did not have to share his personal poached-egg artist with the rest of the local restaurant community. Not much later in life, Jon met Jenny, who nurtures the same qualities of Orli's in Jon such as a deep love of music and family.

Orli was devoted to creating the amazing. She hand-made quilts for all of her grandnieces, nephews and grandson. She encouraged her children to dress themselves in whatever they wanted. She made Jon a cape that was reversible so he could be Superman on some days and Batman on others depending on his mood.

She had the joy of giggling with, playing, holding and loving her most amazing grandson, Simmi. One of the family's favorite pictures of Simmi is of him from this past Halloween. He wanted to be a pilot - so Orli made him a detailed airplane costume replete with helmet, goggles and an actual stuffed airplane. She always had a creative project ready to go for any child coming to visit. She encouraged imagination and offered inspiration to anyone whom she encountered.

Orli was loving and giving. Just these past few weeks Orli was diligently at work crocheting a quilt she intended to give to local sick children.

It seems to me that it was no coincidence that Orli left this world on the day she did. Saturday, May 28th coincided with the 36th day of the Omer. The Omer is a period of 49 days that Jews mark between the holidays of Passover and Shavuot - when we received the words of Torah at Mount Sinai. 36 is an auspicious number in the mystical realms of Judaism. Our Midrash teaches that the first light created by God shone for 36 hours before God created the sun. The Torah commands 36 times to love, respect and protect the stranger. In modern day, we light 36 candles by the culmination of Hanukkah. Judaism also upholds that in every generation there are 36 righteous people (or "lamed vavniks") - and "the world exists on their merit." Thus, Orli left us on the 36th day of the Omer, leaving the world a brighter, better place because she had been in it.

Orli was a life-long friend; a doting aunt; a loving sister; an encouraging wife; a daughter who made her mother proud - and a mother who was proud of her children. She was truly her children's champion. She was a mother to every child that met her. It is a testament to her spirit that so many of her children's friends are here today.

And, she was a tenacious fighter. Up until her final moments, Orli never ever gave up on life. She embodied unprecedented strength and determination. Carly encapsulated Orli's passion beautifully by saying, "We lived to love each other every day."

Another wise woman once sung, "We can't return, we can only look behind from where we came." Orli's life has given us so much to reflect on. Every person in this room has experienced Orli's spark - and though her light has faded - her legacy lives on in those she forever inspired.

Zichrona Livracha - May her memory be for a blessing.