

Good morning, I am Ron Gelfand, Larry and Miriam's youngest son. On behalf of the Gelfand family, I want to thank you for being here today to celebrate my father's life. He was an inspiration to his students, friends, and family.

Ring, ring, ring, "Gelfand Speaking." That's the way my father answered each phone call at 215A Schafer Hall. There's no doubt Gelfand did speak. His words were often kind and also troubling. He spoke his mind and one of his famous quotes was, "If you have a mouth, use it." My father was a very interesting character. A friend of mine years ago when trying to describe him said, "Your father," she paused and then added, "He's very fanciful." One could easily say he lived in his own fantasy world. His world was of music, food, history and family. He enjoyed an easy lifestyle, one without traffic jams and lots of crowds. This is why he raved about Iowa City, the University of Iowa, and the State of Iowa. For him, driving to Oxford, Cosgrove, and Kalona provided him with the relaxation and the grandeur of living in rural America.

He knew from an early age what his favorite tastes buds were. Raised in Cleveland, he was very fond of rye bread and kosher hot dogs. He liked the deli's. His appetite was amazingly strong. If you could start a conversation with food or music, you were in his favorite circle. When he entered the grocery store, he quickly found his way in the cereal aisle. He could stand for long periods examining every brand and reading about its contents. There's no one who could get more excited about discussing their breakfast. He even ate cereal for his midnight snack. When he had a cold, he thought the remedy for his cure was eating a raw onion. When he slowly got back into bed, my mother yelled, "Larry, you reek." However, borscht was not his cup of tea. As a youngster he said he would slide many deserts in his pockets after the Shabbat service. When he hurt his hip in September, lunch came first before the hospital visit. When we visited him in the hospital in California, his first words were describing the meals he just had.

His love for classical music and teaching began when he saw the Cleveland Orchestra perform at Severance Hall. At an early age, he admired the talents of conductor George Szell. He marveled on how George Szell had unbelievable high standards. He was privileged to have played french horn in the orchestra and band at Heights High School, a mecca for music with exceptional talent in his class. I recalled the time when he and I drove back from Seattle and I tested him on which cassettes I had in the car. When the music played, he identified each composer. It was name that tune in split second. He could be seen in the living room, in the driver's seat, conducting music. In his fanciful world, he aspired to be a conductor. He had his imaginary orchestra under his palm. Singing was also part of his gig. And last week at the beginning of Hanukkah, my son Ben missed out on his grandfather not singing the Hanukkah songs and prayers like he did every year over the phone. We all loved to hear his voice.

When he wasn't reading dissertations, writing book reviews, reading the *New York Times* or the *Smithsonian*, he enjoyed memorizing timetables. Timetables, you say. What are those? It all began back in the 40's and 50's with the trains. He knew every destination of which train went where and the connections and the specific time schedules. And then he became fascinated with planes air travel. It was amazing that he knew all airline schedules at a time when there were a vast number of carriers. The timetables were his favorite bedtime reading. On my visits to various airports, I would make my way to each airline counter picking up a timetable.

In fifth grade, he was questioning his teacher on subjects of history proving that his teacher was incorrect with her facts. It was apparent early on that the subject of history would carry him. One of his first jobs was shelving books at the Coventry Library in Cleveland for 35 cents an hour. The library would be his hiding place away from home. Each student has a mentor who makes a strong influence in their development. My father decided to do his doctoral work under Professor W. Stull Holt at the University of Washington. Stull Holt shaped my father's future in academia. Similar to George Szell, Holt demanded perfection from his students and my father would do the same for his own. In three short years at the University of Wyoming, he had many MA students. At the University of Iowa, he had close to 30 doctorate students. He worked countless hours writing job recommendations for his students. When you were a student of Larry Gelfand's, you were a student for life. He claimed he never typed the same recommendation twice. His biggest achievement, he said was when his students received job offers. His goal was to provide financial assistance for those in need to attend graduate school or collect research grants. He introduced fellowships so this could happen.

Academic life meant being on committees and my father couldn't say no to any offer. My father was chair of nearly every major committee at the University of Iowa and countless historical associations. You name it, LEG's name was listed next to it. He even was on the search committee to appoint a new rabbi for this synagogue back in 1968. He wanted to please me one year so he accepted the invitation to be on the committee to construct the new sports arena, which is now Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

His office at 215A Schafer Hall had the scenic view of the university's pentacrest. At homecoming pep rally's, he always took the boys as he called Daniel and I, to his office. My favorite event from his office was when the university celebrated the country's bicentennial at the Old Capital and we had prime seats to hear Simon Estes sing the National Anthem. His office is where he actually trained his children about filing papers and, of course, we dusted thousands of books and his 8' bookshelves. After the Saturday morning of labor was over, he anxiously treated us to a lunch at Hardees. He trained each one of his children to work in the library-to locate books in the card catalog, to find periodicals, to find reference materials, to use maps, to use microfilm and microfiche. It is no wonder where my sister, Julia learned her trade.

He was old school. His vocabulary was not of twitter, facebook, internet, i-pods or i-phones. My father was a believer of the arts. His trips had a detour through an art museum or some kind of museum.

Married for 57 years, my parents had a routine that was good enough for the stage. It was comparable to Edith and Archie in "All in the Family." They were the real "Odd Couple" and guess who best resembled Felix and who best resembled Oscar? My mother was the editor of my father's writings, his speeches, and could easily put him back from dream world to reality. My father spent a life which included time in WWII, receiving a Purple Heart, writing books, travelling the world and being a father to three children. However, his greatest pride and joy was to see his grandson, Ben. Only a few days before his passing, Ben, who recently began playing the piano, performed a few songs by memory for my father. I am grateful that Ben brought a lot of great thrills to his life.

My father liked to go for "little walks" as he phrased it. In the winter, you could always spot him wearing an ivy cap. In the summer, he liked growing marigolds. He liked sitting outside to view the nighthawks that flew over the Iowa skies. He liked sitting on the porch listening to Iowa football games. On the Saturday after this last Thanksgiving he remarked that he wanted to sit outside. He just wanted a little bit of sun. And that was the last photograph I took of him. Most of all, he liked to have someone sit next to him and with whom to watch the Hawks or one of those murder mystery movies.

There are many great stories my father told. We all know that his hearing wasn't his strength. When he was testing a new battery on his hearing aid, he said, "hello, hello, hello, hello, hello, hello." He once spent a week in Washington working at the Library of Congress. And when he arrived each day, he walked through a security gate. On Monday, there was a beep. My father, thinking it was his hearing aid, he took it off. On Tuesday, the gate beeped again. He thought it must be his belt. So he took the hearing aid and the belt off. On Wednesday, that gate beeped again. He thought it must be his shoes. On Thursday, he took off his hearing aid, belt, shoes, and of course, the gate beeped again. Now, you must know that he was losing was his cool. He was furious with the guard and said, "Do you want me to take out my teeth?"

My father once wrote a song for his young children. It went something like this, "Me and my Daddy are pals for life. We travel the highways together. Me and my Daddy are pals for life." At parties, he enjoyed making toasts. Today, I would like to extend a toast. To Dad, you are the pal of my life.

Ron Gelfand
12-10-10