

Rabbi Shoshana Perry

Keriah.....

The poet Laura Gilpin wrote:

These are the things I know

How the living go on living

And how the dead go on living with them

So that in a forest

Even a dead tree casts a shadow

And the leaves fall one by one

And the branches break in the wind

And the bark peels off slowly

And the trunk cracks

And the rain seeps through the cracks

And the trunk falls to the ground

And the moss covers it

And in the spring the rabbits find it

And build their nest

Inside the dead tree

So that nothing is wasted in nature

Or in love.

Today we remember Fred Wikander and we join our hearts together to give comfort and strength to his family. To his beloved wife Esther, to his loving children Eric and his wife Bree and Kristen and her husband Paul, to his cherished grandchildren Ben, Rachel, Sarah, Catie, Shea, Trevor, and Drew, and to his brother Matthew and his wife Christine,

I hope that in some small way, our being here with you, helps to bring light into this darkness and that even in the midst of your shattered world, you feel surrounded by love and support. Esther, all of us here hope that there is great comfort in being encircled by your family and friends. We will be there for you. I know that Fred would want you to find healing and wholeness, even in the valley of this profound loss. He would not want his passing to leave you feeling diminished or less loved.

Mourning is a time filled with many emotions and memories, both bitter and sweet. But what I know is this: If in our time here together, we were to fail to celebrate the love and meaning of Fred's life, we would not honor him the way that we should and we would not be living with the spirit he would want us to live.

How do you capture with words the fullness of a person's life? It is an impossible task. This is especially the case with our friend Fred. As a son, brother, husband, father, grandfather, friend, physician, colleague, volunteer.....

Fred touched countless people in more ways than any of us can ever imagine. Here are a few personal anecdotes that I would like to share with you about Fred. Early in my time at Congregation Shalom I was not feeling well and I had a lot of pain in my ear. Our family was going to be heading out on vacation the next day and I had not really established myself with a new doctor. There was an inner hypochondriac inside my head saying I certainly had an ear infection and that I needed an antibiotic. Not knowing what to do, since this was before urgent cares were on every corner, I called Nancy, Fred's office manager. Nancy who is also a member of the congregation, fit me into Fred's busy schedule. This was the first time I was seeing Fred in his professional setting. He welcomed me into his office took a look in my ear and my throat and with subdued irony said, "I think you will live". He explained that all I really needed was some Mucinex and saline. The thing I appreciated most was that Fred used humor but never made me feel silly for my concern and he was genuinely happy to help.

Fred was a truly humble man who did not often toot his own horn. It was not until one of our last visits, when we were talking about woodworking, that he mentioned that he had helped to stain the very first lectern I needed when I came to Congregation Shalom as a new rabbi. I knew Mitch had built the lectern, but I had forgotten that Fred had also had a role. Mitch also reminded me that Fred, without fail, would call him 2 weeks before the High Holidays, to ask when he could help set up the chairs in the sanctuary. Fred never needed to be asked; he always, on his own initiative, reached out to offer help.

As I thought about Fred's character and of what I might want to share today, I found myself recalling the words of the poet Emily Dickenson.

If I can stop one heart from breaking,

I shall not live in vain.

If I can ease one life the aching,

Or cool one pain,

Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.

Fred faced a profoundly difficult period of time these last several months. He was a fighter, but also, as a friend wrote, a realist. I hope in the quiet times when I am sure he reflected on the meaning and experiences of his life, he knew that his life had not been in vain. Far from it.... He comforted so many people and eased their suffering through his life's work as a physician, he brought that wry humor to others and most of all he shared with us his keen insights, his intelligence, his humility, his commitment, his compassion, his friendship, and most of all his love. No, his life was not in vain – it was full of meaning.

Rabbi Jacob Rudin wrote:

When we are dead, and people weep for us and grieve,
Let it be because we touched their lives with beauty and simplicity.
Let it not be said that life was good to us,
But rather that we were good to life.

Fred, there could be no truer words than you were good to life.

As many of you know, Fred loved woodworking so much so that he was willing to sacrifice his side of the garage, even living in snowy New England, in order to have a woodshop. Over the years he built beautiful furniture and most importantly, he built beautiful boxes for his grandchildren. There was the time that Hale and I visited Fred and Esther and Fred had been working on the beautiful gentlemen's box he was building for Ben. It had a very complicated box lid but Fred was so excited to build this for Ben and he relished the challenge. Then Fred also made lovely jewelry boxes for Catie and Shea for their 16th birthdays. He worked with them, teaching woodworking as they built the boxes together. Rachel, too, received a box from her grandfather when she became a Bat Mitzvah. Even until the end of June, Fred was determined to finish building Sarah's jewelry box to give it to her for her Bat Mitzvah in November. He didn't know if he would be there but he wanted to finish it so that she would have one of her own. When I visited Fred shortly before he died he proudly showed me the box he had lovingly finished. It had her initials on the top and inside each compartment was carefully cut felt. Being a sentimental sort, I made a comment about how wonderful it was that as he was building the jewelry box and cutting out the felt, he could be thinking of Sarah and sending her all sorts of loving energy into his creation. Fred, being the guy that he was, dryly said, "Yeah and I said a fair amount of curse words at the same time!" Sarah, I am so glad he was able to share the gift with you on Zoom and share his words of pride, L'dor V'dor with you.

It is in this light I share with you the poem Woodworker by Keven C. Kato:

Each piece of wood is judged by knowing hand and eye.
Carefully measured twice before cut once,
Sanded down to a fine finish that delights the touch,
Varnished to protect and enhance the wood's natural grain,
Assembled piece by piece according to design,
Each joint fitting seamlessly, each hinge hung true.
Until at last, it stands complete and whole,
Reflecting the woodworker's years of experience and pride.

Fred built many things he was proud of in his life. But today, I am confident that the things he is most proud of building were his relationships – as a husband, a father, a grandfather, a brother, a friend... Fred in looking at the relationships you built we see enduring beauty, strength in craftsmanship and we hope you felt the gift of pride, for surely the life you lived is an enduring legacy that we will always cherish.

Barry Danzig - Friend

The Rabbi is a tough act to follow.

Fred. What can I say about Fred? Esther, don't worry. He was a very dear friend. Despite all of his accomplishments, skills and knowledge, he was a modest, unpretentious, sweet and caring guy. He usually was concise and to the point in his understated speech except when his face beamed talking about his grandchildren's academic, athletic and other accomplishments. We know how much he loved and was loved by his entire family.

So, I am getting this image of Fred right now, with that mischievous smile on his face, looking at me and saying something like " Well look at you. You're the one going to say all these wonderful things about me? Knowing you Barry, just keep it short."

Fred and I had a very compatible sense of humor which some called wry but at times may have been a bit warped. We had so many laughs together. Fred was not only my friend but my doctor as well. Years ago he put me on a beta blocker and a diuretic. Soon after, we were on the 5th hole on a golf course when the diuretic kicked in. I immediately gave Fred a hard time about those meds he put me on. With no facilities around, I ran into the woods. About ten seconds later Fred runs into the woods next to me, we both proceeded, and then with a shoulder shrug Fred says " Guess what, I am taking the same meds you are." We both had a great laugh.

The Wikanders and the Danzigs have been part of each other's lives for about 45 years. We were all so involved in temple life. Lucy and I have shared all life cycle events with Fred and Esther. On April 29th of this year our grandson Judah was called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah. Other than the enormous joy we had experiencing our first grandson's bar mitzvah service, the happiest and most uplifting moment that day was when we saw Fred and Esther, wearing their masks, walk into the temple. They had just gotten permission from Fred's oncologist to attend only the service and social hour after. That vision of Fred and Esther walking into the temple will stay with us forever. So will the dignity and courage Fred and Esther displayed over the last eight months.

While Fred was in treatment, the four of us would take our walks or have munchies outdoors. Esther and Lucy usually sprinted ahead while Fred and I brought up the rear. This gave Fred and me time for some man talk, whatever man talk is. It was obvious when I spoke with Fred that he had a clear physician's perspective of his situation and while hopeful for any treatment possibilities available, he described himself as a "realist" and would deal with what comes in his own way. When we talked, his love, respect and concern for Esther was made very clear. His only goal at that time, he said, was to try to make it to his granddaughter's bat mitzvah in November, but he was not confident he would.

It is comforting to think that Fred now has the peace and tranquility that we saw in him whenever he was in his boat on Balch Lake. I hope remembering Fred like that offers comfort to Esther, Eric, Kristen and the entire family. Fred was a very special person and will be so very missed.

Rest in peace Fred

Nemeskal Grandchildren (Kristen and Paul's Children)

CATIE: Over the past few weeks, we have had the time to reflect thoughtfully on our grandfather, his legacy, and his life. Grandpa was many things: kind, thoughtful, smart, funny, loving. He had a unique capacity for humor and could spin any situation into an adventure. Grandpa was magic.

TREVOR: My grandpa loved many things. He loved his lake house on Balch Lake in Maine, He loved vanilla almond cereal from trader joes, he loved M&M's and of course, he loved golf. My grandpa taught me everything that I know about golf. I still remember my first lesson at the richardson's driving range like it was yesterday. I was eager to swing a club for the first time and become the next child prodigy like Tiger Woods, who allegedly could drive the ball over 200 yards at the age of 3. Grandpa and I purchased our buckets at the window and hid in the shade beneath the barn style awning to protect us from the sun on that hot day. Grandpa poured a few balls into the tray next to my mat and I teed up the ball ready to go right away before grandpa stopped me. "stand with your feet shoulder width apart and put the ball in the middle of your stance" he told me I did my best to replicate what he told me. "Now, when you swing, always keep your front arm straight" after trying this and taking a couple practice swings, I stepped up to the ball and swung with all my might, I looked into the air, expecting to see my golf ball soaring through the sky, but when I looked up I saw nothing, I looked down to see that I had missed a crucial step, make contact with the ball. I looked at my grandpa feeling disappointed, but he just smiled and said "Good practice swing, make sure you keep your eye on the ball when you're ready to hit". At just five years old I thought my grandpa didn't know that I had intended to hit the ball, but many years later, I realized that he was keeping me from giving up and encouraging me to keep trying, this is something that he would do repeatedly over our time golfing together. Whenever I hit a bad shot, Grandpa was ready with a second ball to try again. My grandpa may have only taught me the basics that day, but later, he would teach me everything I know about golf today. Including what happens if you don't hit your drive past the front tee box. Symbolically, my grandfather passed while I was on a golf course, trying to contain my frustration after making a double bogey. I looked up at the group ahead of us and saw someone wearing a blue shirt and Grandpa's patented sun hat that is almost synonymous with golfing or boating with Grandpa. Even though this was just someone enjoying a round of golf on a sunny afternoon, I knew that grandpa was on the golf course with me from that moment on. And Even though he's not able to golf with me anymore, he's always waiting on the tee box with an extra ball.

CATIE: Nearly every single early memory of my grandfather consists of inside jokes and games we played out over days, weeks, even years in many cases. In preschool, my grandfather babysat Shea and I regularly during the week. These visits were genuinely the highlight of the week. Grandpa's signature move was to trap us in his arms in a configuration called "the pretzel." The pretzel is a prime tickling position and he knew exactly how and when to catch us off guard for a pretzel attack. Grandpa's babysitting visits usually included several of these attacks. Another favorite game of mine was "the washing machine." Grandpa wrapped us up in a big red blanket,

gathered the corners together, and swung us around until we were dizzy and screaming. At lunch time, Grandpa served all three of us on identical kids plates - the colorful animal ones with separate compartments for the ears. When we asked Grandpa why he was eating off a kids plate, he always responded the same way: "because I'm a kid!" Everything was an adventure with Grandpa. He always gave us the space and freedom to explore and learn, but when he whistled, we came running. Grandpa blurred the line between a child and an adult, bringing magic to our childhoods.

Grandpa's magic didn't fade, even as we grew up. He could literally create something out of nothing: from the highchairs we used as babies to bunk beds we slept in at the lake. I was lucky enough to help Grandpa build a jewelry box for my sixteenth birthday. Crafting such a complicated piece took extreme patience and skill, and with what felt like a sweep of magic, the pile of wood Grandpa had carefully selected was sitting on my dresser, with functional drawers and an engraving of my initials. He made cradles for our dolls, pizza peels, cornhole boards, and flower planters, constantly planning, creating, and giving. But above all, the best gift he ever gave us was his selflessness and wisdom.

SHEA: Another integral piece in our childhood was our infamous family trips to Maine. Nearly every summer, our entire family heads up to the lake for at least one sacred weekend of tube rides and lobster dinners. It quickly became my favorite tradition. It was the one time a year where we were guaranteed days of time to spend with our cousins. It was undoubtedly one of Grandpa's favorites too. And while the magic of this weekend seemed to radiate from the dock, the boat, the bunks, the kitchen, and the Maine air itself, Grandpa was behind the scenes, manufacturing this magic. It was he who assembled the dock and floating raft that provided us the perfect spot for cannonballing and playing "King of the Raft". It was Grandpa who drove the boat for endless tube rides and taught us each to waterski. Grandpa was the one who built the bunk beds that we would stay up all night whispering in. In the morning, Grandpa was often in the kitchen with his coffee, whipping up Mickey Mouse shaped pancakes for the kids. This added touch transformed what was a simple breakfast, into a delicacy to the grandkids. And of course, one of the best parts of the weekend was a Maine classic- the lobster dinner. When the cooler of lobsters arrived, Grandpa would help us to line them up on the deck, allowing them to race along the planks of wood. Then, he would spend his afternoon boiling massive pots of clams and lobsters and corn on the cob. Lobsters always tasted better with a touch of Grandpa's magic. The next time I eat a lobster or cannonball into Balch Lake, I know Grandpa will be right there with me, because even now, I can still feel Grandpa's magic.

DREW: When I think about my grandpa's life, I think of all the funny, happy, and fun moments we've had with him. I also think of all the times he helped me through things. When I learned to waterski, he was right there, driving the boat to guide me through it. When we worked together to build a wooden planter box in his workshop in Maine, he let me operate most of the machinery, but he was right there, guiding me through it. And of course, when he took me to a driving range for the first time, he was right with me, guiding me through the perfect swing. So, even though he's not here anymore, I know Grandpa and his magic will always be there to guide me through whatever's next.

Wikander Grandchildren (Eric and Bree's Children)

Ben: My Grandpa Fred was such a great man and he will always have a special place in my heart. We had so many great memories, from all of the summers in Maine to the golf rounds in Florida, I will always cherish our time together. You were always willing to take me, my siblings, and cousins on however many tube rides, waterski or wakeboard laps around the lake with no indication of how much you wanted to take a break. That is how I will always remember you, an extremely selfless grandpa who always wanted to do all he could to make others happy.

When I was injured 5 years ago, you were one of the greatest helps to me and I will never forget all that you did. You were always so willing to do whatever you could to assist me in my recovery process, from taking me to so many of the doctors and wound care appointments to helping my parents and I understand all of the different medications i had to take and procedures I was going through. You played such a crucial role in helping me get to where I am today and I am forever thankful for all that you did.

You were such a great role model to me and I hope that I am able to follow in your footsteps on the path of becoming a physician. I will always be grateful to you that during your fight these past few months you were so eager to write me a recommendation letter to Wake Forest and do all that you could to help me in my application process to medical school, it meant so much to me and I hope I am able to make you proud.

I love you Grandpa and will always miss you.

Rachel: My grandpa was so selfless, he always put everyone's needs and wants before his own. He taught me unconditional love and how to treat somebody to make them feel important. When I told my friends a few stories about grandpa, they expressed how lucky I was to have someone like him in my life. We had a special bond and he taught me so much. One of my favorite qualities about him was his sense of humor. From a young age, he always knew how to make me laugh and smile. i will never forget all the rides on the boat in Maine or the family dinners in Florida. I love how you always made special time for the grandkids in Maine when you would take us to the marina and we all got to pick out a special treat. Another memory I will always cherish is how you were always in the audience cheering me on at every one of my 16 dance recitals. It always made me feel so special and loved to have you watching me doing what I loved. I will always be grateful for the time I was able to spend with you, rest peacefully Grandpa, I love you so much.

Sarah: There are so many fun memories I have of my grandpa my favorite one was him trying to convince me go on the tube on the boat when I was little. At first, I was really scared and kept telling him no but he convinced me somehow to not be scared and I'm so glad he did. From that summer on going on the tube became one of my favorite things to do.

He came to a lot of my birthday parties and that always meant so much to me. I loved when Grammy and Grandpa were in Florida because I would get to see them all the time and... the dance recitals. how many hours did grandpa sit through those dance recitals? Definitely too many to count - he may have even snoozed a little but that's ok because it wasn't when Rachel or

I were dancing.

Another one of my favorite memories is when grandpa took my dad and me to go monster mini golf. For those of you who don't know what that is it's an indoor mini golf place in the dark with neon glowing lights. It was really fun for me but I think grandpa used it to practice his putting skills.

Two weeks ago when my dad was visiting grandpa, we got a facetime call from them and grandpa showed me a wooden jewelry box that he made for me and was planning to give to me at my bat mitzvah in November. It means so much to me because it came from his heart. all the granddaughters in our family have handmade jewelry boxes that he made. This will be extra special because it was the last thing that he ever made. I really wanted grandpa to be at my bat mitzvah but i know he'll still be a part of it in my heart. I love you grandpa

Eric (Son)

I knew this day would come at some point, but if you had asked me a year ago if this is what I'd be doing in August 2023, I would have told you that you were crazy. Based on how long my grandparents lived, I figured I had another 10-20 years with you dad. Maybe more. I thought I would be able to enjoy many more rounds of golf with you - even as you complained that your ball wasn't going nearly as far as it should. I looked forward to the time you spent in Florida each year and how often we were able to see you.

Born December 23, 1946 you grew up in Northampton, MA where you met mom while working at a summer camp when you were both about 15-16 years old. While she was busy tending to the needs of a group of kids as a counselor, you were the custodian/maintenance person taking care of the pool chemicals and cleaning up bathroom messes. Fortunately, your career aspirations far exceeded this summer job! A chance encounter in the bathroom, while you were cleaning it, and mom had to bring a camper to use the toilet began your romance.

After dating for a few years through college, you and mom married in June, 1969 and recently celebrated fifty-four years of marriage. During this time, you produced two incredible children – if I do say so myself – and welcomed a daughter-in-law and son-in law into the mix. And then, we collectively added 7 grandchildren into the family. You had a special bond with each and every one of us.

You graduated from American University undergrad and Wake Forest University for medical school and then trained as a doctor with the navy for a few years. After settling in Massachusetts, you worked for a few medical groups before setting off on your own. You built a successful medical practice in Chelmsford from the ground up. I always had admiration for you that you were part of the minority in the medical community – a doctor that also had business sense. I challenged you in a quest to understand why many doctors (including you) could not keep an appointment time the way I had to in the business world. You provided me with an interesting perspective I had not considered and showed just what type of doctor you were. One that did not rush their patients and sometimes spent too much time answering their questions.

Anyone that knew you knew that you were quick to lighten the mood. Your contagious sense of humor as well as your distinctive laugh always had people joining in laughter. You always seemed to have the right timing for an off-color joke or a witty pun.

You found a great hobby with woodworking. As a child growing up, I realized you were handy (and thank you for passing some of that knowledge onto me). I recall your taking a class or two to build our kitchen table utilizing tools that you did not yet own. Eventually, you built your own workshop in the garage on Wagontrail Road and made countless pieces that will be treasured by all of us, including some furniture for your Florida house, easels and rocking horses – well actually rocking dinosaurs, multiple jewelry boxes, and pizza peels to name a few. Until I visited at the beginning of August, I didn't know that you first became interested in woodworking by taking a class in sixth grade. You shared with me that your first creation was a Rabbit Trap. When I asked if you caught any rabbits, you quickly replied – “I tried!”

I have so many great memories of you and all of our times together – far too many to list. A few stand out and are worth sharing....like the multiple times icicles formed on your moustache while skiing on a very cold day. Or the annual summer vacations with the Brickers renting houses in different places – I will leave out the part about the glass table that I broke within 15 minutes of being in one particular house. Or the many weekends on the lake in Maine with the Kelcourses. When I was ready to quit Boy Scouts because I didn't have a great experience, you asked me to give it one more shot and found another troop for me to join – which ended up being a much better fit. Your being an Eagle Scout inspired me to follow in your footsteps – an accomplishment I still boast about to this day. When I was at Syracuse University you would come for my fraternity's Father-Son weekend – we always had a great time (but I will leave the details out of this tribute). You had a love for dogs – even though you had to wait until Kristen and I grew up and moved out of the house to realize it, since mom was smart and knew that she'd be the one walking it and taking care of it if she had ever said yes to any of the three of us about getting a dog. I can still hear you saying “Hiya Maya” to one of our Golden Retrievers as she greeted you with a big hug! You were on a life-long quest to find the perfect French onion soup. I know you had some that you rated really highly – but I don't think you ever crowned a winner – always wanting to find one better than the best one you had tasted. You taught me how to cook steak on the grill – which I have now taken to another level. I am so happy I was able to cook for you 2 weeks ago...it was a true delight seeing you enjoy that sous vide prepared filet mignon and is something I will never forget.

You were a loving husband, father and grandfather. You always put others needs ahead of yours - a characteristic you unknowingly instilled in me and how I've chosen to be a parent to my own kids. You made sacrifices along the way - to allow Kristen and me to have more opportunities. I will be forever grateful.

While you are now gone from this world, the memories I have of you will live on. I won't be able to call you on the phone to tell you about where work was taking me this time or share the highs and lows about my latest round of golf. But, know this, I will still have those conversations with you in my own way.

Rest in Peace Dad – I love you!

Rabbi Shoshana Perry

The poet Mary Oliver wrote a poem called: When
Death Comes.

These are the final lines:

When it's over, I want to say all my life

I was a bride married to amazement.

I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder

if I have made of my life something particular, and
real.

I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,

or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this
world

Fred – you did not simply visit this world. You lived with purpose and with intention, with
friendship and courage, with the desire to make the world a better place. You brought us laughter
and hope and love....