

## **Matthew Meyerson**

When I think back to my childhood memories of my father, I remember most his thirst for learning, his reverence for books and the written word, and the way that he shared and transmitted his commitment to knowledge. I picture my father sitting at the head of the dinner table, my mother always seated to his right. Joining us would be companions from many walks of life, scholars, diplomats, artists, students. My father would lead the discourse on a topic of interest, often with historical and cultural roots. During the conversation, he would call to me: "Matthew, go get the Encyclopedia Britannica. Let's read about the medieval history of the Illyrian city of Dubrovnik." Then we would read aloud from the volume and carry on our discussion.

My father's love of discussion was coupled with a deep curiosity about all fields of learning. Not long after my wife Sandra and I were married, we went to a seminar on molecular biology and neuroscience that my father led every summer. Sandra was astonished by how my father, with no background knowledge in these fields, could eloquently lead the discussion of a room full of Nobel laureates and other great scientists. In this and so many ways, my father was able to partake in universal knowledge, part of his personal commitment to the dream of the university.

Above all, my father loved every kind of book. If you ever went to my parents' house on Spruce Street, you could see my father's love of books made physical...a vast library with shelves of books from floor to ceiling, and more bookshelves in almost every room...But that wasn't enough...climbing the stairs to the third floor, you would walk through a vertical library with a stack of books on every step. So it was no surprise that my father wrote many books, lastly a history of the University of Pennsylvania, and my mother, too, authored several books. And it came as no surprise that my father, when he became president emeritus at Penn, would move his office to the University Library.

My father shared his love of books and learning with my brother, my sister, and me. When I was around fourteen, I remember him telling me how I hadn't read enough great books and writing out a list for me, including his favorite, Rabelais "Gargantua and Pantagruel". So I would like to close with a quotation from Rabelais' story: "Therefore, my son, I beg you to devote your youth to the firm pursuit of your studies and to the attainment of virtue. And as for the knowledge of Nature's works ... let none of them be unknown to you."

Dad, you have always inspired me and motivated you as you have so many people. I will miss you.