

To my Grandpa on his 95th birthday:

Yale Norman Zuckerman was born on November 23, 1928 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania to Benjamin and Sara Zuckerman. The youngest of five siblings, Yale had a happy childhood enjoying playing basketball with friends, learning math in school, and attending synagogue. He was a devoted and dutiful member of the family, often working at his father's shop to help the family make ends meet.

If you were to ask Yale what one of the earliest pivotal moments of his life would be, he'd probably tell you about a fateful day when he was 21 years old and traveled to a nearby park with a friend to meet a young woman named Betty Fine. It was an instant connection between these two, and they saw each other for six months before Yale was drafted into the army and spent his service in Japan. It was there that Yale and Betty truly fell in love, exchanging letters back and forth over those couple of years, which Betty still holds onto and cherishes.

When Yale returned from the service, he and Betty rekindled their romance immediately and eloped in 1952. Ever the technology enthusiast, Yale had an early tape recorder and captured the whole affair on tape, which he and Betty have listened to on many an anniversary since. In 1954, Betty gave birth to their first daughter, Linda, and under two years later, their second daughter, Debbie. Yale took a job with a relatively new company in a burgeoning field – computers – in 1955 and ended up working with them for 31 years. His work for IBM took Yale and the family all over the country until they settled in Southern California, now a family of five as their third child and first son, Gregg, was born in 1967 in New York.

It was in California that Yale discovered a new career pursuit in real estate. Balancing his work at IBM, his parental duties, presence in the local synagogue, and young Gregg's baseball games, Yale started building his real estate business from the ground up, finding success in this mid-life career transition. He retired from IBM in 1987 and some while later from real estate.

Much of what Yale loved in his early years have brought him joy throughout his life. A love, comfort, and respect of Judaism fostered by his parents in his youth came to life in his later years, as he attended Chabad regularly. A deep appreciation for the music of Perry Como led Yale to uncovering all 700+ of his recordings – even the hardest to find tracks! – and has stayed with him into his final days. And family, which now includes not just three children but six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, who love him dearly and hold so many cherished memories of their time with the one and only Yale Zuckerman.

I write this as one of his grandchildren, the third of six. It's impossible to encapsulate 95 years in a few hundred words when there could be a whole novel written about my grandpa's life. I've been spending a lot of time thinking about his footprint, in all the ways we know right now and all the ways we will never know, like:

- Those young children in Japan, who walk so happily by his side in his photos from his time in the service. What fond memories do they have?

- The countless friends, family, and strangers he poured hours into helping with their genealogy. What wonderful connections to their own identity or as-yet-undiscovered family members did they make because of Yale?
- The fellow residents of The Village, the place my grandparents have come to call home in their later years, and his unwavering help for them as President during his term and a half. How did he make so many people feel heard and welcome?
- My grandma, who has been a beacon of strength in this last year and has never in all the time I've known her, been too far from my grandfather's side. What can we all learn from a love as pure as this one?

In these last few weeks with my grandpa, I've tried to ground myself in gratitude and remind myself of everything he has instilled in me that's become a core part of who I am.

- On a vanity level, my grandpa and my Aunt Linda and I shared our red locks. There are a lot of cliches about redheads, but I always felt that as superficial as this connection was, it forged a bond among us uncommon reds.
- My grandpa would often talk about how he didn't have a college degree, but he took so many classes that he probably could have gotten a Bachelor's and then some. I took particular pride in bringing him to one of my UCLA classes when I was a student there. What I take from this is a deep curiosity and a lifelong love of learning. At the age of 33, I went back to school last year and earned a professional certificate from my alma mater. It puts a smile on my face to think that in some way, this is in my grandpa's footsteps.
- A love and respect for Judaism and a pride in our culture as Jewish Americans. When we gather together for Rosh Hashanah, we feel this. When we take turns reading from the Hagaddah on Passover, we feel this. And we feel this because Grandpa and Grandma set these traditions in motion.
- Lastly – but certainly not the last thing I've learned from him – is reverence of family. Grandpa would talk about the commitment to honor thy mother and father, and I will take that with me for the rest of my life. I will continue to honor him and his legacy on our family through our care and love of Grandma, and for me, my own parents, who carry so many of his exceptional traits that I've noted above.

In his final few months, when we would come to see him at The Village, when we would say goodbye to Grandpa, he'd always say "so I'll see you tomorrow?" This was Grandpa's sense of humor – a little cheeky, optimistic, and like it came with a warm hug. I'd often reply, "not tomorrow, but we'll see you soon Grandpa." I love you Grandpa, we'll see you soon.

Love,
Amy