

# A Tribute to Larry Litwack

Larry Litwack was a mentor and friend. His fifty-two year career in Counseling and Psychology continued until his death at the age of eighty. We always joked that Larry would work until he died...and he did!

I met Larry, who was Chair of the Counseling and Personnel Services Department at Kent State University, when I was interviewing for an Assistant Professor position following my graduation from The Ohio State University. Things were different in those days...I was interviewed on a Monday and offered the position on Tuesday and started teaching two weeks later. The interview was very unconventional...I was interviewed by individual faculty members, including Larry, in the morning, followed by a luncheon with the entire faculty.

At the lunch, I was bombarded with so many questions I did not have a chance to eat my meal...which didn't seem to be a problem for anyone, especially Don Wonderly, who finished my entire meal as it was cooling before me. I should have been scared to take this position as every one of the twenty-six faculty members were very different personalities! However, these differences made for rich variations in ideas and opinions and a faculty who served the needs of a wide range of students.

Even the students of this department were different since the department served only graduate students, about half of them older than me. My first college teaching experience was made richer because Larry encouraged

differences....some departments went to lunch together...our department had people who didn't speak to one another. Larry was the first person I ever heard talk about diversity, and encouraged different points of view...our faculty consisted of African-American, Jewish, Japanese, Female, Atheist, Farmers (me) and Big City folks. We had a real variety of backgrounds and personalities and we learned a lot from one another. Larry was the reason for all of this diversity. He loved differences and the positive outcomes it produced.

My first professional convention with Larry was in Detroit, the year Martin Luther King was assassinated (1968). We sat together near a hotel room window and watched Detroit burn. It was one of those memories one never forgets and Larry and I talked about it often over the years. It is not often that a young professor gets to spend 4-5 hours alone with the Department Chair...and that time together seemed to seal our bond with one another. That was Larry...he would rather sit and talk business with a new professor than to attend one of the many social hours...all business all the time!

I say Larry was all business, but he loved Kent State basketball games. We all teased him about his behavior at games as he would get a score card, sit very still, but with each Kent State goal thrust his hand in the air once...then record the score. No other emotion...just the arm thrust. Ask anyone if they ever attended a game with Larry and they will thrust their arm in the air!!!

Larry and Jan would host regular parties for faculty and they were always lots of fun. I suspect Larry wanted to have a party to improve faculty harmony as he usually spent the time talking business.

Larry was an excellent Chair in a very productive, contentious and diverse department...we were always arguing and he loved every minute of it. He was a friend on whom you could count. He loved being a professor...more than anyone I have ever known. He didn't care about titles...he just wanted to teach things he knew to others.

The only negative thing I have to say about Larry is: "Never ride in a car he is driving...even in Heaven!"

Larry loved his family...Jan and his girls, Kim, Kathy, Lauri and Jody. He was very private, but could talk to anyone about anything. He suffered pain from certain illnesses but NEVER talked about his own issues. He was frail but tough. He made many of us better for having known him.

Larry Litwack was a great guy! The finest tribute I believe one can say about a friend!