

DONOR STORIES

RALPH & JANE SCHWARTZ

“Ralph and Jane Schwartz Endowment Fund”

RALPH:

Ralph Jerome Schwartz was born in Chicago where his parents had a fur shop. A series of robberies finally convinced them to leave the city and settle in Kenosha, Wisconsin, a distant suburb. At age fifteen Ralph spent a summer in Pre-World War II Europe with his father, who was reunited there with relatives he had left behind when he immigrated to America.

High school over, Ralph headed for the University of California at Berkeley. During his sophomore year his father fell gravely ill, so Ralph flew home (an unusual thing to do in those days), staying until after his father's death. Back in Berkeley, he made up the work he had missed and finished the year.

As his mother was now alone, it was decided that Ralph would continue college closer to home. He was interested in theater, so Northwestern University in Evanston was the logical choice. There he took courses in speech, which made him decide that, instead of becoming an actor, he would go into a brand new profession – speech pathology.

After getting a master's degree at Marquette University in Milwaukee, he took his first job in the field – working with the Red Cross in McPherson, Kansas. At the Institute of Logopedics (now part of the University of Wichita) he studied cerebral palsy then worked in that area for two years in Baltimore. After earning a PH.D. at Purdue University, where all his professors were pioneers in the field, Ralph returned to the Institute of Logopedics, this time as a member of the staff. In 1963 a former colleague there, now a professor at the State College of Iowa in Cedar Falls, persuaded him to become the second member of SCI's speech pathology team, a tiny section of the huge Department of Humanities.

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At SCI, later UNI Ralph taught courses, directed research papers and these, helped students deal with clients in the speech clinic and had clients of his own. As his specialty was voice, he worked with singers and others having voice problems, with laryngectomies who needed to learn how to speak without a larynx, with men who were undergoing a sex change so wanted to sound feminine and with foreigners who wanted to lose their accent. He loved every aspect of his work.

Meanwhile, the two-man team grew into a full-fledged department with ten full-time instructors and had several adjuncts. First called Speech Pathology and Audiology, now Communication Disorders, it has always stressed clinical training (as opposed to research), offers a Master's degree and has a fine reputation in Iowa and beyond.

JANE:

A year before Ralph's arrival at SCI, Jane Sherwin, a newly minted PH.D (University of Michigan) had been hired as an assistant professor of French. She had been teaching at Colby College, Maine, while finishing her dissertation and before that had been a teaching assistant at Michigan, taught four years in two private colleges in Illinois and four years in private girls' schools in Indianapolis and Seattle. She had an M.A. in French and Spanish from Middlebury College in Vermont and a B.A. in French and German from Rockford College (Illinois), then a woman's college famous for its first graduate Jane Addams. After Rockford she had spent almost three years in the U.S. Army Air Corps (The two branches of services were not separated then), traveling from her home near Chicago to bases in Florida, California and Alabama, where she taught English to French air cadets who, after learning to fly, would go back to join General Midwest to be discharged from the military at Fort Des Moines.

Jane's travels had begun at an early age when, at twenty months, she left her birthplace, New York, to live in England for almost four years while her father was in business there. After the war she traveled extensively in Europe, spent a semester at the Sorbonne and, much later returned to France for a summer as a Fullbright Scholar.

Jane would spend twenty-nine years on the faculty of what became the University of Northern Iowa, the only woman professor in the department of twenty. Most of her colleagues were Europeans and Latin Americans who could not accept the presence of a female on staff. So it was a constant struggle for her, only to be tenured and promoted but to be assigned advanced courses to teach and to be given responsibility in the graduate program. Eventually, thanks to persistence, slowly changing attitudes toward professional women and to the American Federation of Teachers, which helped her assert her rights, she made it through the ranks to full professor, directed graduate research papers and theses and taught both literature and language courses, of all which she thoroughly enjoyed.

In 1973 Jane was one of four women instructors who, having failed to convince UNI administrators that women and men doing the same work should receive equal pay, sued the state of Iowa, the Board of Regents, etc. for discrimination in the matter of salary. (Males then averaged \$2000 per year more than females.) Three years later, after seventy-five or more women had joined the class action suit, it was settled out of court in favor of the plaintiffs. UNI had to pay them a large sum, which was divided among the litigants. Local headlines and articles in publications across the country announced this news. (Sadly, the suit's results were not long-lasting: in 1996 males at UNI averaged over \$7000 more per year than females.)

HOW THEY MET:

Fortunately, Jane's life in Cedar Falls was not one hundred percent professional. In March of 1964 she had spent spring break in New York and was returning to Iowa on the Illinois Central's "Land of Corn." Aboard the train she ran into friends, a couple new to the college that had lived in the apartment next to hers. They introduced her to another passenger, Ralph Schwartz, whom they knew slightly. After a short chat, Mr. Schwartz excused himself, saying he was going to the diner. When he was out of earshot Jane's friend Sally told her that, in helping compile the latest list of newcomers to campus, she had noticed there was no Mrs. Schwartz on it. Propelled by an irresistible force, Jane headed for the dining car and, finding Mr. Schwartz sitting alone at a table, slide in across from him. Always a shy person, she could not believe what she was doing.

Conversation came easily during the meal despite the fact that Mr. Schwartz had laryngitis and had looked forward to the train ride as a time when he wouldn't have to talk to anyone.

In Cedar Falls the two couples took a taxi. Jane sat on the front seat with Mr. Schwartz although he denies it to this day; she swears he put his arm around her, at least briefly during the ride home.

It was obvious that a bachelor like Mr. Schwartz would not be an easy catch. Luckily, Sally, who lived next door,

was a born matchmaker and eager to help. Jane did her part by inviting Ralph to dinner frequently. Finally, after spending a year looking for a house, Jane and Ralph were married in October 1966. They've been traveling together ever since.

GIVING:

When Ralph and Jane were asked why they decided to establish a fund within the Community Foundation, Jane shared, "We wanted to give closer to home, where we can see our money helping." Giving to organizations outside the community had caused a great feeling of disillusionment for Jane and Ralph as is reflected in the delightful article Jane authored called, "Cast Your Dough Upon the Waters... And It May Come Back As Chopsticks."

Through the Fund Jane and Ralph established, grants will be made over the years to help many charitable organizations in the community. Included will be grants to support the cultural arts, which Jane and Ralph have loved and enjoyed.

*Historical vignette prepared by the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa.