

Deeded Body Memorial Service Virtual Ceremony

Introduction

John F. Engelhardt, PhD

Good afternoon and welcome everyone. My name is John Engelhardt and I have the privilege to serve as Chair of the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology in the Carver College of Medicine. This is my 16th Deeded Body Memorial Service as Chair of the Department. Previous ceremonies have endured unanticipated 110-degree heat and stormy weather, but nothing like these unprecedented times of COVID-19. We truly regret not being able to fellowship and thank you in person for the wonderful gifts your loved one has bestowed upon humanity through the programs you will hear about today. Your safety was paramount in our decision to hold this ceremony virtually, and given recent high numbers of new cases in the Iowa City area, we feel the decision was the best one for you. We hope that post-COVID you might be able to join us in person at a future ceremony. On behalf of the Carver College of Medicine, the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, and the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, we deeply appreciate you watching this virtual ceremony as family members, friends, students and faculty.

On June 12, 1968, the first University of Iowa Deeded Body Memorial Service took place here at Oakland Cemetery under the direction of Rev. Jack Zerwas. That service initiated the heart-felt traditions you will experience today in our 53rd annual memorial service honoring your loved ones. This service reflects our gratitude and respect for all the participants in our Deeded Body Program and our deep appreciation for the compassion and support of their family and friends. This service is truly dedicated to those who, in death, have served the living. Each of these donors, by their final compassionate gift, has participated in a great humanitarian and educational endeavor. Each had the courage and the concern for the future, which motivated them to become great humanitarians who, by their final bequest, have so valuably assisted in our teaching and research programs. We honor their memory and acknowledge their generosity today. By their act, hundreds of students in the disciplines of Medicine, Dentistry, Physician Assistants, Physical Therapy, Nursing and Sports Medicine have been able to learn the intricate details of the human body through a very special study of these donors. As you listen to the health professional students today, I hope you will appreciate how

your loved one's generosity will eternally benefit humankind. This benefit stems not only through the quality healthcare they will provide to their patients, but also the quality of education they will provide to the students who will eventually succeed them.

In addition to the education of our Health Science students, many physicians have benefited tremendously as well, through focused educational programs that serve to enhance the practice of medicine. And finally, important research and insight into the causes of many different diseases has been enabled through the tremendously generous donation that could not have been achieved in any other way. This afternoon's service is truly an expression of our gratitude for their bequest to medical science. A countless number of patients in the future will benefit from these studies. Therefore, my colleagues and I, in teaching and in research, offer to you our heartfelt appreciation for your loved one's final bequest to humanity.

I also wish to commend the outstanding efforts and wonderful stewardship of the Deeded Body Program Staff, including Brian Chapman, Daniel Buckingham, Ryan Glesener, Jon Scranton, Jordan Kohlmeyer, Chandler Jensen-Cody, and Mackensie Spicer. Over many years these individuals have faithfully administered and maintained an extremely successful Deeded Body Program that serves as a model for all other medical schools throughout the country. As Chairman of the department for the past 16 years, it has been a privilege for me to work with these individuals and observe the impact their efforts have on the education of Health Science Professionals. I can say with firsthand knowledge, that your loved ones became members of this Staff's extended family while under their care.

I would also like to acknowledge the medical student coordinators, Brian Kinnaird, Timothy Morris, and Ashley Vaughan. Your efforts and contributions to the Deeded Body Program are also greatly appreciated.

It has been a long and difficult time for many of you to endure the grief you have felt in the weeks and months since your loved one passed away. As you have waited for this service that will assist in bringing closure to your grief, it is our hope that as you listen to our guest speakers today, you will not only find comfort and be uplifted from what they say, but that you will also be able to leave this ceremony proudly, and with a greater appreciation for what these donors have done for humankind. We thank you very much for coming today and sharing in this very special service. In my closing remarks, I would like to share comments from two students, who in previous years, benefited greatly from the study of their donors. The first is a

poem written by a medical student upon completion of her first gross anatomy course.

Her name is Amy Marie Milligan and I think that she says, in a very touching and gifted manner, exactly what it meant to learn from all of these deeded gifts today. Amy entitled her poem “*Anatomy Teacher*”.

When I touched your hands, I touched the hands that had felt the chill of ninety-four winters, fingers that had stretched in the sunlight of as many springs.

When I touched your feet, I touched the feet that had walked the paths of nine decades, toes curling and uncurling through the uncertainty of five wars.

When I touched your arms, I touched the arms that braced you from and embraced the world, a world I know only through historians and faded photographs.

When I stared into the shell of your eyes, I saw the screen upon which a million irreplaceable scenes had been played, visions of a world rapidly changing at once both like and unlike my own.

When I held your heart in my hands, in a moment filled with awe and grace, I held a heart whose mysteries I will never know, a heart that gave me the gift of itself.

When you invited me to know you, to be a guest in the house that your spirit left, you forever altered my life.

My feet, with the knowledge of yours, will walk into the future carrying you with me.

My hands, as they reach to comfort and heal, will do so never forgetting the delicacy of yours.

My eyes, as they sweep across the landscapes of my future, will find in it reflections of the world I saw in yours.

My heart, in the rhythm of its beating, will carry with it the stillness and wonder of your heart, lying silently in my hands.

Our thanks to Amy for allowing us to share this very special poem and her talent with you today.

I would now like to read reflections and a letter from a health professional student about her experience in gross anatomy lab training.

“For all that I’ve learned about the human body in medical school, I still don’t know what happens when we leave our bodies. High school physics taught me that energy can neither be created nor destroyed, so I must believe our essence still exists after we die. Last year a brave woman donated her body to science so that my classmates and I could learn from her. This is the letter I wish I could send to her.

Dear Lucy,

I wish I could meet you, the real you. I wish we could go get coffee together and you could tell me about the life you led, the places you went, and the people you loved. I’ll never know any of that. I don’t even know your real name. I do know that you were my first patient, my greatest anatomy teacher, and a model of the awesomeness of the human body.

If I’m being honest, I did not like anatomy lab at first. It felt invasive. On the first day of lab we learned that you had a hiatal hernia. I found myself holding your arm and hoping that it did not cause you much pain. Later when we were learning about the upper extremity we learned you had a ganglion cyst at one of your proximal interphalangeal joints. Did you know it was there? Because it felt wrong to have such close relationship with you and simultaneously know nothing about you, my lab mates and I lovingly called you Lucy.

We tried to imagine what your life was like. We knew that you were tiny but strong with long fingers and painted nails. Were you a dancer? Did you play the piano? Did your daughter paint your nails? Gradually the unease with anatomy lab melted away. You generously and courageously donated your body so we could learn from you and apply what we learned to help others. It was our responsibility to honor that sacrifice by learning as much as we could from your body. Believe me, you taught us a lot. You taught us the brachial plexus, muscles of facial expression, and the cranial nerves. You made the flat images in Netter’s Anatomy Atlas suddenly make sense.

Even though I’ll never know you, I know I’ll forever be indebted to you and your family. For all that you’ve done for me “thank you” just seems too small. You changed me as a person. You

made me a better student, and in a few years, you'll have made me a better doctor. For all that you taught me, and the lives you'll touch through your teaching, thank you."

From my heart to yours,
Elle (Pronounced "L")

Representatives from several of the Health Science classes, who have benefited from your loved ones' gifts, are with us. They will now share, on behalf of their fellow students and their colleagues, their deepest gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity to learn, which has been made possible by your loved one's generosity. Thank you.

Testimonials and Readings

- *Andrea Lawrence, Medical Student*
- *Megan Cannon, Physician Assistant Student*
- *Kyle A. Bennett, Dental Student*
- *Kelly Crowley, Physical Therapy Student*
- *Mariam Monsour, Medical Student*

Special Music:

Vocalist and Musicians: Jessica De Haan, Brittany Todd, Samantha Swartz (Medical Students)

Homily and Committal

- *Noelle K. Andrew, MDiv, BCC*
Associate Director of Spiritual Service, UIHC

Taps

- *Captain Kimberly Kinnaird, Army National Guard*

Closing – John Engelhardt

This concludes our virtual service today and we thank all of you for taking the time to join us for this very special event. While these times are unprecedented, this crisis will pass and we truly hope you will visit the site of interment of your love ones at Oakland Cemetery once it is safe. We also hope at some point, post-COVID, you would join us at a future in-person ceremony and talk one-on-one with the hundreds of health science professional students that attend this ceremony every year. Thank you again and stay safe.