



Remembering Grandmaster Daniel “Danya” Naroditsky

Thursday (10/23/25), I had the honor of delivering this eulogy at Daniel’s funeral. With the family’s permission, I’m sharing it here so that those who couldn’t attend can read and remember him.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all members of the chess community who came together to honor Daniel’s life. Your presence and support meant so much to his family, friends, and all of us who loved him.

There is much more I’d like to say about Danya and the impact he had on all of us, which I plan to share in a later tribute.

Peter Giannatos

Thank you all for being here today to honor Daniel and to celebrate his life. It's a testament to the impact he had on so many people that we've gathered here from near and far, all connected by our love and respect for him.

I first met Daniel in 2018, when we were both coaching at the Castle Chess Camp in Atlanta. From the very first night, I'll never forget watching him play bullet chess on his Mac laptop — on a trackpad, no less — while the rest of us watched in awe. That alone would have been impressive, but it was just the beginning...

Those early nights quickly became legendary among the staff: late-night blitz chess matches, spirited games of ping pong, endless conversation, and laughter that stretched into the early hours. Sometimes we'd finally go to sleep around 5 a.m., only to be back in front of our students a few hours later. Looking back, those nights captured the essence of Daniel: brilliant, playful, energetic, and always bringing people together with warmth and energy.

Between Castle Chess Camp in 2018 and 2019, Daniel and I often talked about the possibility of him pursuing chess full-time. Chess was his true passion and love, and we discussed what it might look like if he followed that path. I remember telling him that if he wanted to, Charlotte would welcome him with open arms — a place where chess is respected, valued, and celebrated. He also knew he wouldn't be alone here; Charlotte had a strong peer group ready for him, friends who would meet for dinners, late-night blitz sessions, and offer unwavering support as he pursued his passion.

In 2019, after graduating from Stanford, Daniel made the bold and defining choice to move to Charlotte to fully dedicate himself to chess. It was a decision that reflected his courage, his commitment, and his willingness to follow his own path, to pursue something he loved deeply.

In Charlotte, we are a family. We were so close we even had our own language. At dinner tables, Danya and I had another quiet signal: glancing at our watches upside down to silently indicate it was time to leave. These small, playful rituals weren't just jokes — they were reminders of the bond we shared, of the laughter, understanding, and connection that existed between us.

Another part of our private language was “**hep.**” Not only was !hep a command in Daniel's stream, but our peer group used it constantly — arguably one of the most used terms we ever made up. We used it to focus ourselves and the room, much like soldiers might, often when notable people were present — esteemed individuals, and of course, his mother — as a playful way to direct attention and remain on our best behavior.

In fact, I always saw Danya's mother as similar to my own, and we shared that connection. When she came to visit, they would often host dinner at his home. “hep” was an understatement whenever she was around. It was cultural for his mother not only to attend to guests herself but also to ensure that Daniel did the same — a reflection of the hospitality she valued and instilled.

The part we would laugh about privately was my little running joke: after politely declining coffee or tea when Danya offered, I would sometimes turn around, just when his mother was listening, and ask if there was any coffee or tea after all. Inevitably, she would urge him to serve us — even though it was all part of my setup. We would always laugh about it afterward... Moments like that captured the warmth, humor, and thoughtfulness that defined his home and his heart.

Daniel's passion for chess was central to who he was. Whether online or in person, he approached each match with intensity, creativity, and joy. He loved the challenge and he also knew he wasn't alone — he had the support of the entire Charlotte chess family. We would watch him play, cheer him on, and offer encouragement, and he thrived in that environment... That combination of skill, focus, and community made his chess not just a game, but a shared experience, one that brought people together and inspired those around him.

Daniel was a star in the chess universe, admired not only as a teacher and friend, but also as a great player and commentator. His skill over the board, his insight in commentary, and his ability to make chess accessible to everyone combined to make him a true pillar of the community. He inspired players of all levels, entertained fans, and left a mark that few could match. **He was also the light of the Charlotte Chess Community**, someone whose presence, energy, and guidance enriched everyone around him.

As recently as last Friday, Daniel and I spoke about his legacy. His impact was extraordinary — far beyond what most in the chess world could ever dream of. It is up to us, those of us here today and everyone he touched, to ensure that his legacy endures. Through the students he coached, the friends he supported, the audiences he reached, and the games he played, Daniel's influence will live on. We will honor his memory by carrying forward the passion, generosity, and joy he shared so freely...

As I reflect on my time with Daniel, what stands out most is not just his talent or his brilliance at chess, but the person he was — kind, generous, playful, and deeply devoted to the people and passions he loved.

Daniel lived fully, pursuing his passions with courage and joy, and he shared that life with a community that loved him in return. While we mourn his passing, we also celebrate the impact he made — the students he taught, the friends he encouraged, the family he cherished, and the countless moments of laughter, insight, and connection he created along the way.

In remembering Daniel, we carry forward his spirit — his curiosity, his generosity, his humor, and his passion for life. And in doing so, we honor him in the way he would have wanted — by celebrating the game he loved, supporting the community he cherished, and ensuring his legacy continues.