

## My early memories of Daniel (Danya) Naroditsky

By Karen Wagshul, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Teacher

My recollection of Danya was that of him being a gentle soul. He was kind, quiet, soft-spoken, sweet, and a nice friend to all. He had a great head of thick curly/wavy brown hair, a sweet smile, and big welcoming brown eyes.

Danya was in the other 1st grade class, but during those early years as the school was growing, we often shared job responsibilities between the two 1st grade classes. I mentored and supported the literacy band of the curriculum, as well as did art classes several times a month with his class. He was a teacher's delight, a student who enjoyed learning, well-mannered, a critical thinker, and always on task.

He was liked by all and connected with his peers by playing board games at Friday Fun or throwing a ball around outside. He also liked to read a lot. I remember asking him, "how did he get so good at playing games?" He said his older brother Alan was his best friend and he played games with him. What I remember was that it was either his older brother Alan, or his dad and brother together, that introduced him to this new game they were playing, which was chess.

Danya said it wasn't his favorite game. He liked playing other games more, because he didn't lose at those, like he kept losing at chess with his brother. But he liked hanging with Alan, so reluctantly he played the game of chess more often. His dad coaxed him that if he practiced, he could beat his brother.

Before we knew it, Danya was leaving school early or taking time off to play in chess competitions. None of us at that time realized the magnitude of where this would lead. I remember he won some early competitions that were on his grade level. To say we were impressed was an understatement. Over the years as a Wornick student, we heard he went on to state level competitions and gained high recognition. He was out of 1st grade, but we all followed his journey.

We continued to hear about him moving up in the chess arena, later gaining World Level Championship notoriety.

I will always remember the little boy who was a delightful addition to the Wornick community. I think of him as an inspiration to so many young people who he motivated and encouraged to find joy in playing chess. We send our thoughts and prayers to his family. May his memory be a blessing and live on in those who crossed his path, those who knew him, and those who loved him. I know he is playing chess somewhere!