

Jethro Loftus

Jethro Loftus of Geneva, Ontario County, New York was born on September 23, 1955, and died at age 55 years old on October 4, 2010.

GENEVA - Jethro Loftus, 55, a highly respected public defender for Cayuga County, passed away on Monday (October 4, 2010) of heart failure while visiting family in Kansas.

There will be an interment open to family and friends at 2 p.m. on Friday (Oct. 15) in Glenwood Cemetery in Geneva, 1000 Lochland Rd. (For directions call (315) 789-7271). A Memorial Service is being planned for a later date.

Donations in Mr. Loftus' memory may be made to the Finger Lakes SPCA of CNY, 41 York St., Auburn, 13021, (315) 253-5841.

Family, friends, co-workers and clients past and present of Mr. Loftus have expressed shock and grief at his unexpected passing.

Mr. Loftus was a tireless attorney who earned his Juris Doctorate degree from the City University of New York in 1994. While many attorneys with a J.D. degree pursue more lucrative areas of the law, Mr. Loftus spent his professional life ardently defending the rights of the indigent as a court appointed criminal trial lawyer. He was a deeply compassionate man with a stated need to give back much of himself to those who needed his help.

Mr. Loftus was born to Gloria and John Loftus on September 23, 1955, in Denver, Colo. Jethro's father was an accomplished and prolific artist. His mother, Gloria, holds degrees from CUNY and Columbia University. Jethro grew up in an atmosphere of artistic endeavor and intellectual pursuit, instilling in him an appreciation for the arts, letters and sciences.

From a very early age, Mr. Loftus showed great intellectual curiosity. There were few subjects or pursuits he did not explore. In 1969, Mr. Loftus was granted a scholarship to Windsor Mountain School, a college preparatory school formerly of Lenox, Mass. Excelling academically, he graduated at the age of 16. A former teacher there, author Gerald Hausman, remembers an unusually academically gifted student, who was equally adept at repairing and restoring cars and motorcycles. "I can still see his motorcycle stored in the barn at Lake Buel. Like a part of him" said Mr. Hausman. Another friend of more than 40 years, Anne Hemenway wrote, "People would remark on how well he understood how things work. In addition to being so incredibly erudite and brilliant, he had great integrity and compassion. He saw the world for what it is, generally through a somewhat amused yet Kafkaesque gaze."

Other friends remember him as a great dancer and with a joyous love of music. He had life long friends who remained close to him and who relied on his perspective and his sense of humor. He was inspiring and daring, always maintained his non-conforming spirit and had a fearlessness and innate sense of justice that often prompted him to challenge authority. These combined influences finally brought him to his calling as a public defender.

Many friends of Mr. Loftus from his youth were surprised in the 1990's to learn he had pursued a career in law and a life of public service. Like so many of his contemporaries who grew up in the 1960's and 70's Loftus appeared uninterested in the prevailing values of society at the time. The values he did hold were those of hard work and dedication to those in need. Being a little older than most of his fellow law students, he returned to college with a vigor and seriousness only maturity and life experience could bring. Mr. Loftus would at times refer to the second chances he felt he had been given in his youth as karmic debt he wanted to repay. Working with those too poor to afford a paid defense attorney was one way he found of paying it back.

The great number of defendants Loftus represented, in capital cases, misdemeanors, and everything in between, were those who are often shunned and ignored by society and an overburdened judicial system and frequently find themselves with a less than adequate defense. Loftus took pride and genuine relief for his client whenever a verdict of innocent or a lighter than expected sentence was handed down. He experienced personal pain in the rare case that was decided against him. In spite of the fact that it created a much heavier work load for him, Mr. Loftus always preferred to take a case to trial, whenever possible. He felt confident that in taking a case to trial, he could achieve a more satisfactory outcome for his client than he would get by simply opting for a plea agreement. "Judges and prosecutors don't like to see me coming into their courtrooms." he once said. "They know they're going to have to really work on a case when I'm involved." Knowing that public defenders are largely viewed in a negative light by the public gave Mr. Loftus an almost contrarian sense of pride in his job and an ardor to do it well. Taking the side of the underdog, he sought to give each person he represented the very best possible defense.

In addition to his life as an attorney Jethro was devoted to his siblings and parents. He took on the responsibility of caring for his father, the late John Loftus, after he had been severely injured in an attack by a deranged man that left him in considerable pain and incapable of caring for himself. Jethro lived with his father and attended to him for two years before Professor Loftus succumbed to his injuries. Almost up to the day of his own passing Jethro has been a central element in the support and upkeep of his family in the Geneva area. His loss, while significant for the people of Auburn county, is an incalculable one for his family.

It is fitting also, to point out how much Mr. Loftus loved animals. He was rarely seen without his beloved dogs, Milou and Jennie for whom he had perhaps a higher regard than he did for much

of humanity. "They are always innocent." he once remarked.

Mr. Loftus leaves behind his mother Gloria Loftus, of Geneva; a sister, Tara and; brother, Joseph also of Geneva; and sister, Ariel (Gregg) Schwendner of Wichita, Kan.

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