

A Pat Story

I find, as I start to tell this story, that the difficulty with it is that I have known Pat and Lou for upwards of 60 years, in many relationships, as babysitter, advisee, advisor, confidant, colleague, friend...thus, as I start to tell one story it runs away into many other memories, and the result I fear will be a document with many parenthetical remarks. Oh well.

This is essentially the story I told at their Memorial in July.

I met Pat through Lou. Lou was my freshman advisor when I came to Bennington College in 1960, a piece of luck that has essentially determined the arc of my life. Lou listened with enthusiasm and responded with integrity. I continued my relationship to Lou in various guises to the end of his life, and he never failed me in his responses. Putting Pat to one side for a moment, Lou was himself a remarkable teacher, advisor and friend.

Then they had a baby, Peter, and I became one of the babysitters. Thus I met Pat, and over time we became friends. I remember sitting on the edge of the sandbox watching Peter play and discussing schools with Pat. It seems strange to me now, but I came to Bennington with the intention of starting a school some day. I had already read some Dewey, and we both agreed about his importance as a thinker. I wonder whether Pat had an inkling then that *she* would start the school, and *I* would teach in it. (Afterwards, when I was working at Prospect, I decided that I would in fact not need to start a school, only to find myself indeed doing so, much to my surprise, after Prospect closed.)

Prospect was founded in 1965 by a diverse group: Pat, Lou, Joan and Ricky Blake, Dr. Worthington, as well as Marion Stroud. Marion was the first teacher, but could not formally be an incorporator, as she was an English citizen. Even today we use some of the structure she introduced: activity time, the making box, and Writing and Drawing Books I learned from Marion.

I was invited to be the second teacher, and arrived in 1966. I remember being interviewed by the board: Lou, Dr. Worthington, and I think Mr. Cummings – all also parents in the school. Although Marion was technically my supervisor (this was only my second year of teaching) she never did supervise me, for reasons I never heard. (I knew there was some argument about it from a remark Lou made to me.) Pat became my *defacto* go to advisor. I think best by talking and never did a young teacher have a better listener, questioner, and observer. No one ever saw *what* and *how* Pat saw. And thus began the second phase of our relationship. I will miss her forever.

So - many, many, stories and memories. I chose one to tell you. But before I tell the story proper, I want to pause and say a word about Prospect and Pat's relationship to it – and us.

I think it is no exaggeration to say that Prospect's primary contribution to the world, (aside from educating generations of children, which I don't mean to minimize) was or is the development of the Prospect Reflective Processes. I will not here develop their many facets and uses – if you've ever participated you know what I mean, and if you have not...well, try it, you'll like it. It seems to me they offer the process that is missing in Dewey's work – the compliment to his thought.

I point out we call them the *Prospect* Processes, not the *Carini* Processes. And yet they are and forever will be linked to Pat's name and memory. Why is that? She did not invent or develop the processes – we all did that together. And by 'we' I mean everyone who participated, Prospect Staff, workshop

participants, and even today people who practice and then reflect on the practice. What Pat did is what she always did: she observed what we were doing, described it, and gave it back to us to use more fully and with greater awareness. **This is one of her major gifts: to observe, describe, and return to the rest of us our own experience illuminated.**

So, on to my story. (Uh oh, again I pause. I first made these remarks at the memorial held for both Pat and Lou. At the time, I remarked that while the story illustrated values they both held, it was in fact a Pat story. Pat would probably have preferred I not put her in the limelight, but Lou, I remarked then and wish to repeat here, would have approved.)

1985. Prospect's 20th year. It seemed important to us to celebrate, to mark that moment. Twenty is a good round number anyway, and many non-profits don't make it that far. And besides, Prospect's journey had not been easy. There was always something threatening our survival, either financial issues or staffing, so twenty years seemed kind of special. We decided to have a dinner at the Park-McCullough House, with speakers. David Kelso agreed to MC.

As we discussed program it became apparent that a lot of people wanted to use the occasion to honor Pat in some way. How could we not? But Pat was not in favor of this, and in fact was pretty irritated by the idea. (You could always tell when Pat was mad, even when she kept her cool, because her ears turned red.) In addition, we had expected her to speak, among others, but she declined. Meanwhile, we felt a little awkward: you can't invite people to speak and then tell them what they can and can't say. (At least one *can* do that, but *we* would not.) And then she changed her mind: she would speak, but she would go last. Great. All settled.

When I told this story at the memorial, I knew that a number of people there had also been to the 20th year celebration. I had no idea how the evening had felt to others – I suspect there might have been a degree of anxiety for people actually running the event. Dirck, for instance had a lot on his shoulders. I remember it as an evening of joy and hope. Old friends all dedicated to a piece of good work, which with luck might continue for many years to come. And yes, the speakers did tend to mention Pat a bit. Again, how could we not, when her thought and writing, and observations and sheer dedication had time and again pulled us out of the muck?

And then came Pat's turn. I have often thought about what she did that evening, and gradually have come to realize what it meant about her deepest values. And it still makes me laugh to think about it. She told the story of Prospect from her point of view. She named each one of us whom she considered central to the workings of the school, named our contributions, and did that other thing she does so well: wove us all back together into a unity, a whole. The evening was about the work of the School, not about Pat.

Any one who has participated in a Reflective or Descriptive process with Pat knows how exhilarating and illuminating it was to listen as she wove all our thoughts together into some larger whole, that yet contained and honored each of us. Isn't that the fundamental vision that Dewey describes when he discusses the idea of Democracy? A functioning whole, composed of many moving parts, all in respectful and mindful awareness of each other, and yet each one also itself. Pat's work to the life.