

Remembering Patricia Carini

I first met Pat at the Prospect School in the early 1980's. I had just been hired to help re-organize the upstairs library and lend some support to the longitudinal study Pat was doing with the North Dakota Study Group. Everyone working at Prospect, regardless of position, was welcome and encouraged to participate in staff meeting and it was there that I first became familiar with Prospect's Descriptive Processes. I was a young artist accustomed to a 'critique' form of feedback when considering a piece of work, and the Descriptive Processes opened my eyes to other possibilities. The practice and discipline of descriptive inquiry was a paradigm shift for me.

Pat's kindness and generosity to me at that time was exceeded only by her glowing brilliance. To be part of a Descriptive Review with Pat was an extraordinary experience. Being introduced to Pat and her peer's philosophical thinking marked a shift in my own work and perspective that continues to this day. The deep seeded democratic principles and the general stance that we all have something to offer has fueled my work, my aspirations and my world view.

After the closing of the Prospect School in 1991, I joined the first board of directors at the Hiland Hall School. Years later, I enrolled my children and continued practice in the Descriptive Processes and, still later, after my children had grown, returned as director. Interactions with Pat happened only occasionally through colleagues and friends but these intersections are bright in my memory.

The Hiland Hall School hosts a monthly Educator's Inquiry Group that Pat started (I believe in her living room in Hoosick Falls, NY) over thirty years ago. I feel fortunate to continue practice in Prospect's Descriptive Processes with this group as well as with the Hiland Hall School staff at our regular and in-service meetings. It's important to me as director at the Hiland Hall School to continue to make time and space for this practice and the manner in which the methodology developed in the Descriptive Processes is able to "broaden and deepen" thinking about children and their education.

In 2016, I was awarded a Practitioner's Fellowship in the Prospect Archives at University of Vermont Libraries. While already very familiar with Pat's published works, this Fellowship gave me the opportunity for a deeper sense of Pat's work and the development of Prospect's Descriptive Processes.

I never had a close personal relationship with Pat, but her influence has been enduring and profound. Her leadership in the development of Prospect's Descriptive Processes, her insight and intelligence combined with authentic caring and humanity offered a model for my life's work and ways in the world. Of all of Pat's writing that has informed and taught and moved me over the years, it's "A Letter to Parents and Teachers on Some Ways of Looking At and Reflecting on Children" that continues to resonate so deeply. I return to this letter over and over again. It contains wonderful suggestions and examples of how one might address the various headings when preparing for a Descriptive Review, but it is Pat's call to, "attend to children with care" that says so simply and directly something I hope to continue to do forever.

- Meg Cottam, January 2022