

## 1. Relationship

Having read and drawn upon John Goodlad's work, especially for my doctoral dissertation in the mid- to late 1970s, I seized the chance to hear this amazingly insightful educator speak in Denver soon after *A Place Call School* came out. The late Cal Frazier, then Colorado's education commissioner, had engaged John in an effort to create closer school-university connections. I had the good fortune to be part of that effort.

Circa 1985, John and others on the selection committee offered me the chance to work with the embryonic National Network for Educational Renewal, an opportunity that changed the course of my professional life. The initial role was as one of three NNER regional coordinators. It led me to work nationally with the NNER, then also locally as director of the Colorado Partnership for Educational Renewal. During those years and now, John has been a mentor, colleague and dear friend. And in recent years—in my retirement, but not John's—David, my life partner, and I have been delighted to spend some relaxing summer days with John on his beloved Lopez Island. Two photos are from those lovely days.

## 2. A Funny Memory

It may have been that what John was proposing was just too sensible, i.e., that school districts and universities work together for their mutual benefit, for their simultaneous renewal, that each partnership set its own agenda within the overarching goals of the NNER. Or it may have been that the idea of school districts and universities working as equal partners struck a nerve with one or two folks not quite comfortable with the idea. Whatever the reason, and time has blurred that aspect of the memory, at a meeting of education deans early in the NNER's development, one person doggedly questioned John about what he really was after, about what he wasn't telling the group. John repeatedly rejected the notion of a hidden agenda.

On the second day, when the question arose once again, John was prepared. He looked around the group, rolled up a shirtsleeve, pulled out a page of paper, held it up, and declared, “Okay, you’re on to me. Here’s my hidden agenda.” The paper was blank.

John clearly made his point, and the meeting continued in a much more productive manner.

### 3. Keywords

Keywords: the silent laugher, proposal to the Last Laugh Foundation.

The Last Laugh Foundation (LLF) consisted of a zany group of Denver area educators—school, university, state department—teachers, professors, superintendents, principals, an assistant commissioner, all of whom, coincidentally, were involved in the work John was encouraging and supporting here. The LLF name may have derived from a Tom Robbins novel, or vice versa. Its Board of Directors, which included everyone, met irregularly at various locations around town. LLF’s secretary, a superintendent, wrote the meeting minutes before the “meetings,” and read them when all assembled.

John attended one or perhaps two of these gatherings when in Denver supporting educational efforts, and he wrote a very funny letter/proposal for funding from the LLF. Here’s an excerpt from the “proposal,” which is dated December 17, 1985.

It became clear to me, while seriously contemplating whether yesterday’s laugh was, indeed, my last, that your ultimate policy, however obtuse, simply must include some provision for inquiry into last laughs. Who gets the last laughs? Under what circumstances? Who decides that the last was the last and not just one in a whole series of last laughs? And what about the silent laughers? Perhaps silent laughers are almost always the last laughers? These straightforward questions suggest more profound ones. What are the personality differences between last laughers and non-last laughers, and of special interest, between last laugh outlouders and last laugh silent laughers? And what becomes of each group subsequent to determination that the laugh last identified was the last? The possibilities for gathering, masticating, and misinterpreting data are virtually limitless.

Ever the researcher, that John! Incisive, thorough, and creative. Alas, his proposal was questioned, particularly the budget, and was never funded. This was partly because LLF had no funds. Otherwise, the result might have been different.

#### 4. Most Significant Accomplishment

In her poem “Spring,” Mary Oliver writes, “There is only one question: how to love this world.” John’s sense of humanity, deep commitment to contributing to the renewal of our society and world, his tenacity and ability to move forward in the face of huge challenges show us what it means to love this world. This is a significant accomplishment.

#### 5. Essence and Nature

One has only to talk with John a short while to appreciate his brilliant mind and also to understand his love of the humanities—art, music, literature, history, philosophy. His profound caring for the human condition permeates everything he does. And so, it seems fitting to include a poem by Marge Piercy that, for me, captures John’s essence.

*To be of use*

*The people I love the best  
Jump into work head first  
Without dallying in the shallows  
And swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.  
They seem to become natives of that element,  
The black sleek heads of seals  
Bouncing like half-submerged balls.*

*I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,  
Who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,  
Who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,  
Who do what has to be done, again and again.*

*I want to be with people who submerge  
In the task, who go into the fields to harvest  
And work in a row and pass the bags along,  
Who are not parlor generals and field deserters  
But move in a common rhythm  
When the food must come in or the fire be put out.*

*The work of the world is common as mud.  
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.  
But the thing worth doing well done  
Has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.  
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,  
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums  
But you know they were made to be used.  
The pitcher cries for water to carry  
And a person for work that is real.*

from *Selected Poems of Marge Piercy*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982, p. 106