

Nature of Relationship with John

I first met John sometime in 1984 when he was starting to come to the UW following his retirement from UCLA. I was familiar with some of his work, of course. A Place Called School was getting a lot of attention. My first in-person impressions came at a working lunch at the UW Faculty Club. Some 16-18 of us were in one of the Club meeting rooms at a long table. I was at one end on one side, John was on the other end, other side. I couldn't see him very well. After finishing our lunch, work began in earnest on planning the project. There was the usual hum of voices, the usual people saying the usual things. This went on for quite a while, the usual circles, repeats, false starts. Then I heard John say something like "It seems to me that there are five factors that demand attention," and with that, proceeded to a brief outline of each of the five, followed by a brief discussion of how each of the five was related to the other four, followed by a brief discussion of the possible options thus open.

What struck me was not only the astute analysis and synthesis, but the *manner* in which John talked. A strong voice, with clear command authority. Not Patton. But, maybe, George Marshall. John's voice didn't overwhelm people or make them feel like they couldn't argue back. And they did argue back, as we all did, over the years. But there is no gainsaying the command authority emanating from John. With that brief analysis and synthesis, John changed the course of the meeting and the course of the project.

When I first heard John at this Faculty Club lunch, I was reminded of the description of Clemenceau given by John Maynard Keynes in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*: "Clemenceau was by far the most eminent member of the Council of Four, and he had taken the measure of his colleagues. He alone both had an idea and had considered it in all its consequences." Compare that to Keynes's comments on the ineptness of Wilson, who could come up with nebulous commandments: "he could have preached a sermon on any of them or have addressed a stately prayer to the Almighty for their fulfillment; but he could not frame their concrete application to the actual state of Europe." No wonder Clemenceau ran rings around Wilson. Clemenceau "alone both had an idea and had considered it in all its consequences."

I'm taking a bit of time with this initial first-hand impression of John's leadership style, his voice, his command authority, his ability to listen to others, his strength of analysis, because I was to see the pattern of behavior repeated many hundreds of times from 1984 to the present (2012). John and I had offices on the same floor at the UW. I was acting as special assistant to the Dean of the College of Education and liaison officer to the Seattle School District on a major education reform project involving partnership with the UW. I didn't know what John was working on. But we would run across each other in the hallway, stop and talk a bit, and continue on our way. Then one day in February 1985, John asked me into his office and came directly to the point. He was here at the UW now, he was going to embark on a new project focusing on a study of the education of educators, and he would like very much for me to join him and another colleague (Ken Sirotnik, still at UCLA at the time) in forming a new organization, the Center for Educational Renewal. I told him I needed to talk with my current boss and mull things over for a bit. Of course, he said, get back to me when it's convenient. Of course I got back to him the very next day – an opportunity like this doesn't come along all that often!

From that beginning, we developed a relationship both professional and personal, one that quickly became very close, and has remained close over the past twenty-seven years.

Most Significant Personal or Professional Accomplishment

John has a long-term time perspective coupled with—back to Clemenceau (who is critical to an understanding of John’s thinking and approach)—ideas considered in all their consequences. He also has the same approach Franz Liszt used: a principle of action, an image of what is to happen, but with an additional principle that the *context* of action – for Liszt, the concert auditorium, will demand subtle adjustments and changes.

Moreover, John has always been close to Dewey with notions of putting research and ideas into practice.

With these notions in mind, we can consider a good chunk of John’s work since the late 1970s. John and colleagues designed and conducted the Study of Schooling, resulting in many articles and reports and, of course, in *A Place Called School*. But, one might say, that was the *research* part. Where was the action, the putting into practice the reforms called for? And here is where the larger idea and the long-term perspective come into play. John was well aware of the need for changes in K-12 schooling. But he also knew that unless we changed how we prepared those going into teaching, there would be little chance of effecting those changes. What he had enunciated in a number of places was the notion of simultaneous renewal of schools and teacher preparation, the notion that if you want at school renewal without attending at the same time to teacher preparation, you were bound to fail.

Thus, the ink was barely dry on the thousands of copies of *A Place Called School* before John started outlining an idea and all of its consequences: a national study of teacher education followed by the creation of an action network of school-university partnerships that would embrace the fundamental principles of simultaneous renewal, while in each partnership setting, making the necessary adjustments as dictated by local circumstances (Liszt and a desired image tempered, if you will by local auditorium acoustics).

And thus, our Study of the Education of Educators, designed and conducted in large part by the three of us - John, Ken, and I - resulting in many reports, articles, and books. We began in 1985 and continued with the publication of the first three books in 1990 (*The Moral Dimensions of Teaching; Places Where Teachers are Taught*; and John’s report on the whole, *Teachers for our Nation’s Schools*).

It should be noted that the first book out was *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*. The title gives the substance. We were arguing for viewing teaching as a moral matter – and a political matter, for surely teaching in a democracy has little to do with teaching in a dictatorship. We were arguing against viewing teaching as some sort of technical matter, a way of ensuring slick performance on so-called tests of academic performance.

While the Study of the Education of Educators was being developed, John and colleagues were already developing the action arm, the collection of school-university partnerships given the name of the National Network for Educational Renewal. (There is no need for me to go into detail here because all of this is in many books readily available.)

I suggest that we look with some perspective of distance at just what John accomplished here. He leads a huge national study of K-12 schooling. He pauses for a moment, and then sets into motion (and gets the funding for) a huge national study of teacher preparation, joins the two together, bringing together research and practice, with the National Network for Educational Renewal. Look at the record, look at what the National Network settings have accomplished (the organization is still extant and going strong).

So this is a major accomplishment. But underneath the specifics is another accomplishment. John showed how to have a long-term time perspective, and showed us how to operate in both the conceptual *and* the practical and prudent world. Again, I suggest, how Clemenceau approached matters is the same way John approaches matters, and we would do well to heed what they have shown us.

Essence and Nature of John

Well, I've already mentioned George Marshall and quiet command authority. Combine that with Clemenceau, and we're getting close. But there is surely more. Both Marshall and Clemenceau (and Churchill, even more) knew how to seek information and advice from many perspectives, and knew how to weigh what was told them. John always does the same thing. He genuinely wants feedback, honest feedback. Over the years this desire for feedback made for some excruciatingly long and often boring (for me, because I'm not all that patient, certainly not as patient as John) meetings. And more beyond that, and much of that I talked about in the "In Keeping with Character" chapter in the festschrift, and see no need to repeat here.

I'll close with one observation. It's not funny or "roastable." But it shows John in all his consistency. John and Ken and I spent a year traveling to various teacher education sites as part of our Study of the Education of Educators. A lot of flying. John had been flying for years and had accumulated untold millions of miles on most major airlines, so he could have with ease (especially back in those days of the late 80s) gotten first-class seats. Ken and I always urged him to get a seat in front - he was, after all, in his late sixties by now, and even though in great health, we thought he ought to enjoy some comfort while we two, younger by some twenty years, could put up with the usual cramped coach seats. He never accepted our suggestions. All those trips, the three of us rode together in coach. I don't know what that might mean to others. I know what it means to me.