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Ethics for the Young Mind: A Living Curriculum

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Abstract

We explore the experiences of confronting an episode of bullying in our humanistic school, developing and teaching a course in ethics to the junior high group, creating an art exhibit of the work done in the course and finally writing a book about *Ethics for the Young Mind*. Throughout the process of exploration, we discovered much about ourselves as teachers, researchers and writers.

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Introduction

We have enriched our lives with the teaching of an ethics course to the junior high students of the Project Learn School. No less rich was reflecting on the year of teaching, writing a book about the experience, and promoting our work by talking about it everywhere we go. The level of reflection today is quite different from the time during and after the ethics course was introduced in 2010. What we reflected on close to the moments of teaching the course was a life that no longer exists. The acts of teaching, and the work of writing the book about our multi-faceted experiences are here subjected to reanalysis. The focus is now on the entire experience from bullying to writing a book.

From Bullying . . .

Sitting in a diner in South Philadelphia where regular folks come for breakfast and for neighborhood gossip, we are pondering how to understand the writing of *Ethics for the Young Mind: A Guide for Teachers and Parents of Children Becoming Adolescents* (Allender & Allender, 2014) in relation to Living Theory (Whitehead, 1993; Pinnegar and Russell, 1995).

Our initial formulaic plan for writing this article soon became obsolete. It had seemed obvious that we should start with an outline. How did the course come about? What was the experience of teaching ethics to junior high students? What did we learn from writing a book about the year we spent with the students? The amount of knowledge gained over more than three years of the writing expanded the possibilities for what a curriculum might look like today. But nothing we began writing for this article adequately satisfied what we want to say. A friend had once described our writing as a form of jazz, because it unfolds as a surprise even to us as we push back and forth within a hazy structure that guides the riffs as we moved along in the teaching and the writing.

This wasn't a writer's block in an ordinary sense. There had been competent paragraphs; they still remain on our hard drive. The magic, though, of what we experienced through painful obstacles that were hard to live through and the many moments of insight and real joy were absent from the writing. We have always experienced teaching the middle grades a joy—in the face of students' attempts to bring us to our knees, where we on the other hand hope to succeed by discovering the most interesting and fun students among all the levels we have taught. Here and now, we need to discover an evolving process for discussion and reflection that matches the spirit of our work. If you would like to see and feel our expressions of the spirit of our work there is the following 25:24 minute clip of a conversation with Jack Whitehead on the 25th August 2014 in which we are sharing our thoughts on where the next ten years of his work might take him.



Video 1. Jerry and Donna in conversation with Jack
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5B6dHR7eGKU>

We began writing this article over a month ago. Today, Donna began anew, digging deeper, by asking another kind of question, ‘Why ethics? Why didn’t you offer to confront the bullying?’ Jerry responded that he believed the problem of the bullying was a symptom of a more systemic problem in the culture of the junior high group (11-15 age range). There was an erosion of the culture of the group that could best be described as an erosion of its ethical underpinnings. Rather than addressing the symptom, he knew that we had to engage the students in developing a more fundamental understanding of how that bullying could possibly have occurred in a supposedly humanistic community.

Donna and two of her teacher colleagues founded the Project Learn School (PLS) 45 years ago. Primarily, they were motivated by their need to have a school that they felt would meet the needs of their children, still young and some yet unborn. And, they knew of enough other parents who were concerned, who they were sure they would join in their endeavor to create a cooperative, independent elementary and middle school in which teachers, students and parents work together to create a progressive and humanistic school community that promotes mutual respect, involvement and curiosity (see <http://www.projectlearnschool.org/about>).

The story in detail is the subject of *The Humanistic Teacher: First the Child, Then Curriculum*, published in 2008. This is the setting in which the bullying occurred.

The bullying more recently, however, was not just an isolated incident; such an occurrence would be easier to understand. Children quite normally act this way in any kind of school. But for Project Learn, systemic bullying was a more serious problem, as it is anywhere.

However in this small school, every child in the junior high was involved as a bully, a victim, or a bystander. There had never been such an event in over the more than 40 years since the school began.

Just as the medical world too often doesn't perceive disease as part of a malfunctioning system, bullying is rarely seen as a symptom of the breakdown in the social fabric of the classroom and the school culture. It is usually regarded more simply as the fault of the bad behavior of a few children who willfully are dismissing familiar rules of good behavior. Successful strategies include identifying and punishing the culprits, teaching the bullied how to take better care of themselves, and insisting that those students who are bystanders recognize that they too have responsibilities that sometimes require them to intervene. With experienced skill, this kind of leadership can resolve the problem of bullying. It does indeed often go away. There is a truth to this approach.

But in Jerry's mind, stopping the bullying is only a small part of resolving the problem. To fully express the kind of education for which we aim required an expansion of the students' understanding of the misbehavior as well as achieving a wider range of self-motivated community experiences within the junior high classrooms. From this vantage, we could build together a renewed community – teachers and students – that embodies the skills necessary for getting along ethically on a daily basis. This is not just a problem of confronting suppressed anger and gross misbehavior. The questions raised entail digging into how can we work together. The focus has to be on how do we learn from each other? And how does everyone in the system meet his and her needs and wants, however these are conceived?

In generating our living-theory we have to consider our different styles, abilities, and preferences. Living on the planet is the big picture. Having a satisfying family life is the intimate frame. Our early schooling is the significant arena where outsiders begin to explore how a mix of children and responsible adults functionally learn how to get along—how to get along in an effort to meet important everyday life-goals. This is not what is normally expected from school experience, but certainly central to our expectations.

A week after the bullying incident, Jerry returned with a question about how the ethics course began. 'Why,' he asked, 'did you tell Liz to talk to me?' She was the math and music teacher, and the one who was most unhinged by the children's behavior. Donna replied, 'I knew it was unwise for me to come into Liz's class as an expert. I needed to keep a less figural place in the school as the founder and one time leader of the staff.' He then asked, 'Why me?' Donna chose him because he too was one of the founders of the school but at that time not an active participant in the daily life of the junior high group. He was assisting teachers in the lower grades and was leading staff development with new teachers.

In order better to understand the junior high group with whom he was going to work, Jerry sat in on one of the math classes that Liz was teaching. The next time he came to class, he taught a part of the lesson. He now felt better prepared to plan ethics lessons for these particular students.

Coincidentally, he observed the students' weekly planner. The back cover highlighted mainly academic concerns. The front displayed an array of words that reflected ethical values. He structured his first ethics lesson by having the students look at their planners. In twos they

were asked to discuss how the covers were different and to decide which cover more closely reflected the study of ethics. Not one child in the room was unable to identify the cover that represented a definition of ethics.

Serendipity, in the sense of connecting events creatively, based on our perception of significant events, was the name of the game throughout the rest of the year. Each semester had a plan. But every week's work followed from what occurred the week before. The children's reactions and ideas affected the plan for the next lesson. A prominent theme was not even of our making. There was no end of complaining by the students. It wasn't the content or the manner of teaching. In accord with the other teachers, we decided to replace the students' elective time with a required course in ethics. It wasn't the course to which they objected, but its place in the curriculum. 'Unethical', they declared!

This theme did not stop us from doing our needed work. In important ways, it energized and clarified the dialogue. The ethical problem over which they complained was fair and reasonable. The answer that Jerry gave them was 'This is not one of your choices.' Essentially what we taught is that ethics is about getting along with each other – with each person having a voice in the choir. The important learning here is that at different times different voices have more strength than others. In this case, the teacher was setting the boundaries of the course. Within these boundaries, the students' voices often trumped the teacher's original plans.

Words, words, words. Though words were essential in the course, the beauty of the experience was that those words were translated into so many possibilities of expression. We drew what we meant; we role-played ideas; we moved without speech to represent feelings. There were so many ways as well as written words. The Spring 2015 newsletter celebrating 45 years of PLS describes the evolving nature of our activities (see http://issuu.com/ericmoore/docs/pls_spring2015/1?e=3163694/13137218). In these activities, the students actively recreated the activities to suit their needs, wants, and uniqueness. We became a collage of the knowledge we were learning, the insights that were forming, and the new ways in which we were learning to get along. Treating each other as adversaries was replaced by working together as a team. The social environment was marked by respect in all directions, and how disagreement and respect can be compatible was revealed.

Reaching these conclusions came about toward the end of the first semester. An unplanned event gave them a big boost. Early in the week, the assignment had been to write a short definition of ethics. They were to be used for a discussion in a class that happened to be postponed until the following week, the last week of the first semester. Meanwhile, over the weekend, Jerry was responsible for hosting his multicultural men's group. By tradition, the host was also responsible for the topic. Spontaneously and humorously, he chided each man as he arrived, jokingly, 'no coffee or food until you fill out an index-card with a short definition of ethics' – wondering what they, as adults, would have to say in response to the same assignment. At the end of the meeting, upon comparison, the results were surprising. The definitions of the junior high students now in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade and these grown men who first began getting together over 20 years ago to discuss ethical concerns, had written some

similar definitions of ethics. Some of the definitions were indeed quite different, but half had significant similarities.

For the final mid-year class, as a part of a small celebration, we prepared a large poster. All of the definitions were posted. Across from each of them was a flap that hid the name of the author. Each definition was then discussed. In turn, before revealing the author's name, we voted: student or adult? In addition to the students, there were a few guests, a couple of teachers and a few parents who were also a part of the discussion and the voting. There were enough clues to identify most definitions correctly. There never was a consensus. But when a mixed majority mistook 8th-grade Mathew for an adult, a cheer rose up (Allender & Allender, 2014, p. 135).

For the second semester, from many possibilities, we chose four themes to form the foundation of ethics for a young mind: Bullying, Community Ethics, Work Ethic, and Global Concerns. With these four, we felt we could cover the issues that young people need for building ethical relationships with their classmates and for the future. To provide a framework for the themes, we began with a discussion of ethics around issues we believed would be compelling for these children: right vs. wrong, right vs. right, challenging dilemmas, and the kinds of conversation that might help. In closing, we summarized kinds of agreement: laws, majority rules, minority concerns, and the significance of compassion. Altogether, we had generated 12 topics concerning theory, practice, and kinds of agreement to intrigue the students:

Right v. Wrong—Right vs. Right—Dilemmas—Conversation

Bullying—Community Ethics—Work Ethic—Global Concerns

Laws—Majority Rules—Minority Concerns—Compassion

... in Between Teaching and Writing ...

At the end of the semester, the students, some of the teachers, some of the parents, and a few volunteers from the community constructed an Ethics Exhibit. Constructed with a colorful array of what had been learned throughout the year—with art and written work shaped for 4 x 8 poster boards, the exhibit was installed in two local coffee-shops, one for two weeks and the other for a month, both not far from the Project Learn School.

The success of the definitions poster-board we had created at the end of the first semester attracted thinking about how it could be used again as part of a larger presentation at the end of the course, not only for the junior high class, but as a way to celebrate their learning with the entire school community including students from the lower grades, teachers, and parents.

In the first week of class after the vacation break, a second image of how this could be accomplished appeared in Jerry's mind. Asking for involvement in the curriculum planned for weeks ahead, including the upcoming spring, the students sat around tables coupled together to make space for three 8-foot long butcher-paper, equipped with dozens of large colored

marking pens. They brainstormed ideas of what they wanted to happen in the work ahead. In response to a lecture detailing the unfolding curriculum, what changes and additions did each person want to better satisfy his and her needs and wants? The result was a graphic display of words and pictographs, with the orientation of the words changing according to which side of the table the young artists had sat, using a full complement of colors. It was truly a work of art that attracted attention.

The next step was a discussion of what they had produced. Now there was time to question and imagine what would be realistic as a guide for teaching and learning. There was a practical glitch. There wasn't enough open wall-space to hang these three works of art horizontally around the classroom. In the bubble above Jerry's head, there was a triptych with the three strips of butcher-paper hanging vertically from a wire stretched close to the ceiling – a wire that had been hung there by another teacher a week or so before. And, so we put up the three panels for all to see and discuss.

When the exhibit that was finally installed in two cafes, the definitions poster was redesigned into a horizontal triptych (<http://tiny.cc/bl0fzx>). And, so the plan grew. Each focus of the curriculum was transformed. We added to the three walls available a six-foot cubic space overhead to hang our outline of the curriculum on twelve placards. They were suspended like a mobile. On each small sign were words like right vs. wrong, right vs. right, bullying, community-ethics and laws, minority-concerns, compassion (<http://tiny.cc/ko0fzx>). The original sketches were replaced with three collages (<http://tiny.cc/ew0fzx>). To this, the students added photographs, short essays and interviews (<http://tiny.cc/6s0fzx>, <http://tiny.cc/dy0fzx>, <http://tiny.cc/az0fzx>).

There was also a brand new idea that Donna set up on a 4 x 4 poster board—a Post-It board. Members of the neighbor community including children and adults were invited to display their own short definitions of ethics (<http://tiny.cc/610fzx>). It was a success. The day of the first opening we heard by the grapevine that the baristas wouldn't serve you coffee unless you first wrote a definition of ethics of your own. And these same baristas had put theirs up before the café opened! Our school community wondrously engaged the larger community in which it served. We think it is fair to say that the notes that were affixed to the board were Living Post-its.

One of Jerry's former students, who had become an architectural photographer, after seeing the show, graciously offered to document the exhibit with seven high-definition photographs (<http://tiny.cc/q30fzx>). Seeing the photographs, Dean Birkenkamp, the head of Paradigm Publishers, who had published our previous book, *The Humanistic Teacher* (2008), wanted to publish a book about ethics for children becoming adolescents.

Now, we have to ask ourselves, why did we take up the challenge? An easy answer is, of course, we were established writers with enough experience to know how difficult it would be. We were skilled enough to know how much work was in store. Gently pushing us into taking on the project was also the fact that our publisher values our work and the concern we were showing for the development of ethics for children and the adults who care for them. We weighed our choices and decided that this was the top of the list – what we really wanted to do.

The larger story is more complex. In our minds, we had already written our last book. *The Humanistic Teacher* is largely about The Project Learn School, and we had wanted to tell this story ever since we retired from direct involvement in the daily responsibilities of the life of the school. At this new point in time, while choosing to take on systemic bullying, we no longer had a life plan for another book. We are now at an age, nearly 80, where a lot less pressure than we had welcomed for so many years, would be fun and appropriate. We do credit ourselves for paying more attention to the number of hours we sleep. The larger goal as a whole is still elusive. Our friends now believe even less that we won't write yet another book! We have nothing else to say on this matter. We just hope we will not be living contradictions 'til death do us part.

The ethics book is the result of the importance we attached to its relevance in the lives of maturing children. But we had never placed any attention to the need for these teachings to be a part of an elementary school curriculum. Few schools do. The children's lack of responsibility brought us up short with a hard question: how were we irresponsible all the years of our careers as educators? This new 'last' book increased our confidence that the small changes we make have potential for significantly affecting the value of education in the world around us.

... to Writing a Book.

At this point it is important to explore how our living curriculum was enhanced as we wrote this ethics book for children becoming adolescents. There are several aspects of the writing process we identify as influencing the development of a new curriculum for teaching ethics to kids. We recognize that we would not teach the class in the same way it was taught at Project Learn School. Over the course of preparing to write, we have changed our ideas and sense of what makes sense. We have looked at how the books we found and used influenced us. We know that our decision to insert text-boxes into each chapter was really important to making the material thought provoking. And we understand more now how a curriculum could be structured to involve our students more personally in the ethical process.

After deciding to write a book about ethics for children, both of us needed to explore the existing literature about this subject. In the course of looking through bookstores, searching the web, and talking with many friends and colleagues, we found books that challenged our ideas and beliefs about ethics. The difficult notion of right versus right that R. M. Kidder explores in his book, *How Good People Make Tough Choices: Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living* (1995), began the process of our rethinking. We all know that concept from our experience though too often we reconstruct it as, 'I am right and you are wrong' in what we believe and what action we need to take. Kidder makes it clear that it is a problem of both being right and having to deal with that. Shift your thinking, reader.

Among the many other books we discovered, the name and work of C.A.J. Coady came to light with the book, *Messy Morality* (2008). In that book, the author uses the example of lying as a messy issue. Though lying usually is believed to be morally wrong, it is not so when used to protect people from harm. And though Donna had been telling her students for over

thirty years that they need to save their lies for very special use in saving the good guy from the bad guy, the introduction of the concept of messy ethics as it was translated for this book, really changed the way Donna thought about ethics. In effect, it is an example of the power of Living Theory as opposed to static beliefs. We all really know when the issue is a choice between right and wrong and knowingly make the choice, but most ethical issues are much more difficult to assess and negotiate. They are messy and she had to incorporate that into how she moved forward in her thinking and in the work of writing.

One of the delightful discoveries for Donna was the book, *Doctor DeSoto*, by William Steig (1982). Because Dr. DeSoto is a mouse dentist, he states he cannot treat an ailing fox, his natural predator. The problem escalates as the fox's pain becomes excruciating. As a doctor, he feels ethically committed to healing the dental pain of other animals. But he is also committed to preserving his wife and his lives. Very messy. There is an important lesson learned about finding the middle ground in this wonderful book. Children love the book and so do we.

Another book that has made a change in how Jerry thinks about ethics is John Wall's *Ethics in the Light of Childhood* (2010), 'To be moral, in light of childhood, is to construct and reconstruct social meaning over time and in response to one another' (p. 179). And though once again we knew this at a core level, Wall's work helped both of us reconstruct our own sense of ethics more clearly as a relational issue. Our theories of ethics became more fluid and meaningful. We learned that a 'workable bargain' is the foundation of any ethical community (Allender 2014, p. xi).

The use of text-boxes heightened the challenge of our readers and ourselves. We learned that we had to find what was real in the intellectual and philosophical writing that we were doing. What was it that all of us could feel and know. What were our day-to-day responsibilities for the issues raised in the chapter?

The work on the laws of slavery led us to create a text-box titled, *Immoral Laws*. That box and the law it describes has affected us throughout the writing of this book. In effect, it stayed in our minds and hearts as we moved forward, never letting us for a moment forget the powerful conflicts that arise when humans talk, think or write about ethics. We had to change our theory from our early beliefs that if we just talked it out, we would come to real harmony. We moved to, 'We must expect to manage with imperfect agreements' (Allender, 2014, p. xi). Thus we moved from the idealism of the possibility of perfection to the idealism of the imperfect being all right.

When Jerry revealed in a text-box in Chapter 4, *The Many Faces of Bullying*, that when he had pressed one of his Hebrew School students against the blackboard to control him, being a bully became very real to him. As readers, we are challenged to explore our own bullying no matter how insignificant it might have seemed at the time. We learn from Jerry that what drove him was fear, which is most likely what is driving all bullies when we look deeply into their actions. Though the motive is never a viable excuse for bullying, it does help us figure out how to deal with the bully in real life.

Exploring the Code of Hammurabi in a text-box in the chapter on laws and compassion makes us aware of how the issues with which we struggle today were issues 4000 years ago. We need to find out how people have solved these problems without the use of violence throughout history. Our despair that kids today are unmanageable unless we have zero-tolerance for unwarranted behavior does not serve us well. (The folks proposing zero-tolerance do not figure out what is to be done with those who are rejected from the community.) We learned that there were many more than our ideas for solving difficult issues between people.

The difficulties that we had over the years of writing inform us well about the problems folks have in creating harmonious relationships that account for each person's needs. Having lived together and loved together for nearly six decades, it would seem that working together would have been a 'no-brainer'. But indeed it was not. We had to consciously listen, regard, and accept the ideas that we rejected out of hand. We had to stop at times and just burst out laughing at how much we had made out of some simple disagreement. And what this taught us is how serious the work we are doing actually is. If we, who have chosen one another and have committed our lives to each other, cannot easily move to consensus, however can folks who are in historic conflict reach even tenuous terms of agreement? And what we've discovered and believe is that the underlying elements of our conflicts are exactly those of the folks who are seemingly so different, our fears, distress, tensions, hungers, and an array of other unexplored feelings that keep us from contact.

It is amazing how many ideas for teaching ethics have tickled our brains since we started writing this book. The ethics course was 'on the money', but as we read, thought, and talked together and talked with others, new possibilities emerged. And well they should have, because that is the essence of learning. So now there are other right ways to teach ethics. And, as Donna says to clients who imagine in their therapy that they are stuck with two impossible choices, she says, 'I imagine there are 437 other choices that we just haven't discovered. Let's make that our work.'

Donna's Last Word:

Donna's last word is imperfect. Once again we are sitting in the diner in South Philadelphia and once again the regulars are gossiping about the events in the neighborhood. One event catches our attention. One of the older women will be getting her college degree tomorrow. She returned to college at 70 and now at 74 she is graduating. I exclaim, 'Mazel Tov!' And she tells us her story.

This lifts my spirits. I have been troubled by how to end this tale of writing about ethics. I need to find the 'Mazel Tov' for myself. And the trouble I have realized is that though I said we had to find the idealism of the imperfect, I have not. I struggle to accept that once I wrote about ethics for children, the world did not immediately see how important these ideas are and change how children are educated. Just as I once believed that when I developed a school where children's needs and ways of learning came first, those who saw it would immediately replicate and improve upon that model. They did not.

As Jerry and I continue to discuss the ending of this article, I find myself so disappointed about Project Learn School. The teachers do not really understand why it is critical that children have time to come to real consensus in their arguments and discussions. They seem to believe that the subjects must be covered at all costs. And in that way it becomes just like any other alright school. They are not willing to find the time to teach ethics to the students though they believe that they teach them by their actions. I imagine every teacher in the world believes she or he teaches ethics by their actions.

I then think about our wonderful community coordinator whose two children graduated from PLS and how she helps kids resolve their differences every day. When kids are spating in class, the teachers send them to the office. They sit on opposite ends of the couch. And after several minutes, Roni goes over and sits on a chair and says, 'Tell me what happened.' After both tell their tale, she magically figures out a way to get them to talk to one another and to recognize how the other person felt. She learned that by being an involved parent at Project Learn. And so I have to believe that what we have done and do is just fine. For Roni does teach ethics by her actions.

Working with Jerry is a gift I received in writing about ethics. He is an ethical person by his nature. Our struggles lead us to places of understanding and humor. When we come to understand our own underlying feelings that are keeping us from contact, I gain greater empathy for others who do not have the privilege of time to explore and struggle together.

And finally, working on this article has opened me to an understanding of my own struggles and to allow me to accept that I do not have to change everyone in the world. As Rabbi Hillel said, 'Whosoever that saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world'. So with that thought in mind, perhaps I can say 'mazel tov' to myself.

Jerry's Last Word:

What satisfies me is the ongoing dialogue I have with my good friend Dave Bass. We meet nearly every week at a coffee shop close to home to talk about our recent strategies for promoting the book. He is dedicated to making sure that children becoming adolescents study ethics. After reading *Ethics for the Young Mind*, he decided that it should become part of the curriculum in every school. He is sure that our working together could make this happen. He delights in being an unrepentant idealist. And best of all, we make each other laugh out loud.

We began meeting over a year ago. Before the book was released for sale, we planned and put up a website, now named for the title. (<http://ethicsfortheyoungmind.com/>) It was delightful how I learned some of his skills, and he engaged in his study of ethics. For the site, we created our own exhibit from close ups of the photos from the Ethics Exhibit (<http://tiny.cc/9fmryx>), glowing reviews of the book, a slideshow we produced, and two videos – one from a talk Donna gave at a bookstore in downtown Philadelphia about humanistic education and one I produced while Dave and I were working on the website. In addition, we posted the first chapter of the book and established a blog titled *Dylan and Nana's Messy Ethics*. Dylan is our grandson and Nana is Donna's grandmotherly name.

Right now, we are exploring websites of universities where Donna and I have colleagues from all over the world. We search for names of people who express interests that connect with ethical concerns, the courses listed that embrace similar concerns, and books found in the university bookstore that are within a category that would include *Ethics for the Young Mind*. We triangulate the three sources and sometimes find we can get picture of a faculty member who teaches one of the courses and has adopted one of two of the books from our list. Then, Donna or I send our friend at the university the data and ask for advice on how best to contact this person. So far, we have had luck in intriguing our colleague enough to offer assistance. As of yet, there have been no adoptions, but the correspondence has been delightful – full of discussions about ethics and even an invitation to come talk with faculty and students.

At our meeting a few days ago, Dave and I talked about the writing of this article. This included a discussion about the value of the paper in front of you now. Dave queried me about what I get out of it? I asked him to answer about his work first. He wrote:

What I really get out of this means not viewing this project as a job. I have been paid money, yes. But working on this grew out of my valued relationship with Donna and now Jerry. And as an unrepentant idealist I absolutely believe in the idea that children should be taught in an ethical environment. As an unrepentant idealist who's done gritty and grimy rank and file union organizing for almost 40 years, I love finding the concept of 'messy ethics' for the difficult choices I had to make almost every day. Each and every meeting with Jerry, a man similar to myself in many ways and strikingly different in others, was a trip through intellectual concepts and the most honest and direct emotional expression. My favorite moment has come to be toward the end of each meeting when you inevitably ask, 'why are we doing this?' And you always say, 'because it makes us feel good'. (J. Allender, Personal Communication)

Another love of my life was Tony Caciatore. He was born and raised in South Philadelphia not far from our diner. Years ago, Tony and I played music together, mellow jazz. Once, we heralded a bride up the isle. Wherever our playing was particularly delightful, Tony at the end would always say, 'It doesn't get better than this.' Yes indeed, Donna, it doesn't get better than this.

By the way, while we were leaving the diner yesterday morning, our waitress asked me about our work. 'Bring a book to show me next Friday,' she says, 'I'll buy it off you.'

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