

Some Enchanted Meeting...

September 01, 2007

One of the two questions we are asked most frequently, especially by those who know that Sam has been at Princeton for most of his academic life and that Kay was at Purdue University when we got together, is “How did you two meet?” The answer lies in academic rather than geographical space. In 1983, Kay was chair of the APA Publications Board, and Sam was editor of *Journal of Experimental Psychology (JEP): General* and Chair of the APA Council of Editors. The setting was hardly romantic: a meeting of the Publications Board in Washington, DC, where the burning issue of the moment was whether APA journals should be printed on acid-free paper. After a demonstration of how non-acid-free paper turned yellow after a few hours in sunlight, we both agreed, along with a majority of the Council, to recommend acid-free paper for the APA archival journals. This was the first of many points of agreement in our shared life.

Two years later, after both of our personal lives had undergone some changes, we met again at the annual APA meeting in Los Angeles. There began our personal and professional life together, first in a year of commuting between West Lafayette, Indiana, and Princeton, New Jersey, and then in a wonderful year at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Palo Alto, California. To the Center, as a contribution brick in the courtyard attests, we give thanks for a wonderful year, both academically and personally.

Having decided during that year that we wanted to stay together, we faced the dual career challenge, which was resolved when Kay took a position at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Now the commute was between New Jersey and New York — a much shorter distance, and one that was easily managed by having two residences.

That, in fact, leads to the answer to our second most frequently-asked question: “How do you handle the commute?” Princeton and New York City are about 50 miles apart. Translated into Northeast Corridor traffic terms, this means about two hours door-to-door on public transportation (most typically, a combination of taxis and train) or one hour and some minutes driving from one place to the other (depending always, in this part of the world, on traffic). We decided at the outset that neither of us would commute on a daily basis, but rather that we would spend some days of the week together and some apart. During academic terms, our typical schedule is to be together about half of the Monday to Friday week, but with weekends always together (excepting independent travel commitments) at one end or the other. Summers offer more possibilities for togetherness, as do professional meetings, such as APS, where both of us have a home.

Beginning with our agreement on acid-free paper, we found that we had a surprising amount in common despite surface dissimilarities. Kay was born in Cleveland and did her undergraduate and graduate work at Northwestern University and the University of Texas, respectively. Sam was born in Montreal, grew up in the Bronx, and studied at City College of New York and New York University. Yet we discovered that differences in backgrounds, social class, and ethnicity had been trumped by the political and cultural

currents of the 1960s and 70s. We each had Beatles and Judy Collins records, *Joy of Cooking* and Julia Child cookbooks, a largely overlapping set of professional and literary books, and similar political inclinations. Further, as we had defined our lives, we both enjoyed art, music, and travel. We each also brought a common personal trait to our union: Kay, a social psychologist, terms it social comparison; Sam, more literal-minded, owns up to competitive tendencies. Surprisingly, however, this tendency, so common among ambitious academicians, never (well, maybe hardly ever!) surfaced in our relationship. Instead, perhaps because we were both well-established in our careers when we married in the fall of 1987, mutual respect and support has characterized our professional relationship. And a good thing too.

When Sam told his family about Kay, one of his nephews — a librarian at the Library of Congress — informed Sam (and other family members) that she had a more impressive vita than he did, even though she was nine years his junior! But who's counting? At about the same time, Kay's elderly aunt said "I liked that guy from day one." Whatever the basis, we felt accepted by those who had known each of us separately for years.

Freedom from competition may also be due to somewhat different professional tracks. Although both of us are strongly identified with the field of psychology, our careers are slightly different: Sam is a cognitive psychologist and psycholinguist, and Kay is a social psychologist. In some respects, our academic lives are quite distinct. At the Graduate Center of CUNY, Kay's teaching is exclusively at the graduate level. Sam, in contrast, has been intensely involved in undergraduate teaching and advising at Princeton, in addition to the usual graduate student mentorships. Further contrasting our careers, Sam has played out his leadership roles in the publication domain, as editor of both *Psychological Science* and *JEP: General*, whereas Kay has taken on more administrative roles as president and council member of various psychological organizations (including as President of APS). And yet there are frequent points of intersection. We read and critique each other's work, and we commiserate and offer advice when problems arise with colleagues, administrators, or students.

Would it be better if we worked in the same institution? Probably not. We enjoy the relative independence conferred by separate academic positions, and we also enjoy the complementary life styles and social circles provided by our two residences. We can bike in New Jersey and go to the theater, concerts, and art galleries in New York. We can feast on Sam's barbecues in Princeton or indulge in the wonderful restaurants of New York City. Our professional and social networks are certainly larger because of the arrangement we have forged — more complicated at times, but decidedly richer.

This article can go on record as the first official collaboration we have done, at least in an academic venue. Perhaps the very construction of this article reflects the nature of our lives — the shared immediacy of first-person plural combined relatively effortlessly with the distinctiveness of two third-person singulars. We hope it works as well in this account as it has worked in our lives.
