

A Tribute to Ed Pajak
COPIS Annual Meeting
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By
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It's a great honor to talk about our COPIS colleague Ed Pajak at this special event. We pay tribute to a life fully lived. When Ed passed, the outpouring of thoughtful emails by COPIS members about his life and his legacy was wonderful. These expressions filled our email boxes daily for many, many days testifying to the respect and care we have for Ed and his wife Diane, their daughter Alexandra, son Zachary, and Alexandra's husband Chris. As COPIS member Noreen Garman wrote, *"I've been reading your email expressions of sorrow and loss that are echoing through the COPIS community.... It's clear that these beautiful exchanges reflect the caring spirit ...that resides in COPIS, perhaps giving us a glimpse of ways in which colleagues live with love in educational communities ...and (such community is) ... embodied in the legacy of Ed Pajak."*

Over the past few months, I have communicated with Diane Pajak about this gathering and asked her if she might find photos for tonight's event. She was pleased to do so and she helped answer my questions about various periods of Ed's life. She specifically told me how much COPIS meant to Ed and she so deeply appreciated the emails, cards, and personal visits by so many of the COPIS members. She hopes that tonight's tribute will be mostly a celebration. I assured her we would do our best.

She told me that Ed and COPIS came together in the late 1970's with Art Blumberg as his major advisor at Syracuse University. Art made sure that Ed attended and presented at COPIS meetings while he was still completing his doctoral dissertation. Diane narrated this story to me. While Ed was finishing his

last semester at Syracuse, he received several job opportunities at the same time and was not sure what to do. Ed called Art at his home for advice, but Art was momentarily away from his phone when the call came in. Shortly after, Art listened to the voice message and promptly returned the call. However, it was Ed who now was away. Remember this was before cell phones!

Turns out, Ed was in his backyard working in the vegetable garden. Art, not knowing how to reach Ed, hurried to his car, drove across town, knocked on the door, and with no response, walked around the side of the house and discovered Ed in the yard, The conversation commenced and Art's advice led Ed to his first academic position at Virginia Commonwealth University. Art continued to be a wise counsel to Ed throughout his career and their families have continued to be close.

It is the caring of one person for another that makes lasting memories of appreciation. Ed carried on this legacy within the COPIS community. In the spring of 2004 after the death of Art Blumberg, Ed showed his appreciation by initiating the COPIS Scholarship fund for graduate students in Art's name. Most fittingly, tonight's COPIS banquet will include the awarding of this year's recipient.

My Memories of Ed

In 1981, I served on the faculty search committee, myself only two years at the University of Georgia (UGA), and I remembered interviewing Ed the first day of his two-day stay and being impressed. The next morning I met him for breakfast at the downtown hotel where he was staying. We had a casual

discussion about life in Athens, working at the University of Georgia, and we shared our research interests. Eventually, perhaps after our second cup of coffee, he told me about his participation as a co-investigator with his major professor on an ethnographic study of teachers at local bars and taverns at the end of each school week. I was completely won over. Anyone savvy enough as a doctoral student to draw a research stipend for drinking beer and wine on Friday afternoons while listening to teachers was all right with me. But more importantly what Ed was studying— again, influenced by his advisor Art Blumberg’s scholarship in psychology, sensitivity training, and conflict management –was an ingenuous way of discovering how teachers behaved together in a social setting related to the type of autocratic control exerted over them during the school week. At that time, Blumberg had a top selling book titled *Supervisors and teachers: A private cold war* by Arthur Blumberg (1974).

As Ed moved into the professorial ranks, he took Art’s work and did what we as major professors dream about for our students. He extended Blumberg’s work into novel ways of understanding teachers through their psychological profiles, their depiction in the media, and school interpersonal interactions that lead to or blocked professional development.

Ed’s supervision books have included:

- *Handbook of Research on School Supervision* co-authored with Gerald R. Firth in 1998.
- *Approaches to Clinical Supervision: Alternatives for Improving Instruction* in 1999

- *Honoring Diverse Teaching Styles: A Guide for Supervisors* in 2003
- *Supervising Instruction: Differentiating for Teacher Success* in 2008

His first book, written during his early years at UGA, and less well known than his others, was titled *The Central Office Supervisor: Setting the Stage for Success* in 1988. This book altered my thinking greatly about successful supervision. The book says much about Ed and I will get back to that influence later in my talk.

More Memories

Over the fifteen years at UGA, Ed and I worked together. We had offices across the hall from each other. We did presentations and workshops in and out of state together and we were co-investigators of several studies on teachers and supervisor interactions. In the 1980s, the UGA graduate department in Supervision was the largest in the country, we had nine full time faculty members and the concentration was solely in-school supervision of practicing teachers. Ed and I were much younger than the rest of the faculty. We were the new kids on the block. A highlight of every fall for our department was attending the annual meeting of COPIS.

The faculty would include five to eight doctoral students, and we would caravan in cars to far away COPIS meetings in Texas, Pennsylvania, Florida, and Maryland. Ed and I enjoyed being with the graduate students and with our seasoned group of elders; Gerry Firth, Ray Bruce, Les Bishop. Edith Grimsley,

Charlie Franzen, and Reba Burnham. The young tend to poke fun at their elders and Ed and I were young and we had our own non-verbal forms of what you would call today “eye rolling!”

At each COPIS annual fall meeting there inevitably would be some academic debate about defining the field of supervision, still goes on today, correct? In those discussions some prominent COPIS pioneer in the audience would stand up and begin with, ““It might be helpful to refresh everyone’s memory as to how COPIS began...” And then he or she would go on about how the organization came to be, something about a small private room at an AERA meeting where professors of supervision in dark flowing academic robes held a cloistered gathering in the basement of a dark, cold cellar of an ancient AERA convention hotel, and over wine, whiskey, cheese, and a ouiji board, the skies thundered and lightning struck, and from a mystical shroud of fog and smoke there emerged an organization of scholars called The Council of Professors of Instructional Supervision. I admit, I probably don’t remember the story quite right!

Seriously though, in all told creation stories, over time, there always are degrees of exaggeration as to what occurred in what private room and who attended. Whether it was Gerry Firth or Barbara Pavan, Ben Harris, Noreen Garman, Bob Alfonso, Bob Anderson, Dick Neville, Ed Champagne, or Tom Sergiovanni, year after year, Ed and I would listen to these stories with bemused smiles and a knowing nod of the head. Later we would joke with each other about how once again we had listened to the moment of COPIS creation.

Fast-forward twenty-five years to three years ago. I had been absent from COPIS for more than a decade and had returned for the COPIS meeting in Austin, Texas. After concluding my Saturday morning presentation, I sat in the group sessions for the rest of the day. At some point in the afternoon, Ed, in the audience and across the room from me, listened to a panel discussion about the meaning of supervision. He waved his hand, jumped up and said to the group, ““It might be helpful to refresh everyone’s memory as to how COPIS began...” and off he went with his version of the story. After he sat, I looked across the room. He looked back at me with a nod and his noted, mischievous half grin. At the break, he walked over to me and said, laughing, “We do become our parents don’t we!”

My point though, is not to make fun of elders or telling creation stories, but instead to underscore the importance of elders and their stories for maintaining and renewing the purpose of an organization. Ed’s telling the story, showed his commitment to ensuring that COPIS would remain an intellectual, supportive community for those who pursue scholarship and activism for helping teachers improve the lives of children.

Conclusion

Now let me return to Ed’s first book *The Central Office Supervisor: Setting the Stage for Success* written in 1988. In this book, Ed wrote that if supervisors do their jobs well, they purposefully become invisible to the public. He used the term “backstage,” never hogging the limelight, instead giving the front stage to teachers to be duly honored and respected. That was Ed to the bone. His form of

leadership was back stage coaching, and mentoring to help students and peers shine.

After leaving the University of Georgia in 2001, Ed had thirteen incredibly productive years in major leadership roles at the Johns Hopkins University. I want you to view the front page of the Johns Hopkins College of Education web site as school began this fall semester. Such pushing Ed into the spotlight shows the regard that Johns Hopkins had for him. The announcement under the picture said:

“School of Education Professor Edward Frank Pajak, widely admired by faculty, staff, and students for his scholarship, humility and sense of humor, died Thursday, August 7, at his home surrounded by family.”

I narrate the quotes that followed this front page photo:

Betsy Mayotte, Associate Dean, *“Dr. Pajak’s leadership in developing our doctoral programs assured us ...that students would be... inspired by faculty who truly cared.”*

Assistant Professor Eric Rice, *“He was a mentor to his younger colleagues, a fierce advocate for his students, and brought his sense of fairness and decency to every interaction.”*

Janet Mason, academic program administrator, who worked alongside him for more than a decade, *“Ed was so kind, compassionate and very*

respectful of everyone....He really cared about the School and the people in it - both students and colleagues. This is a great loss for all of us,"

Mary Ellen Beaty-O'Ferrall, associate professor, *"A wonderful friend. His wit was wonderful and the ideas he pursued were original and compelling,"*

Linda Tsantis, associate professor, *"Just working with Ed made us a better people and being his friend made our lives more meaningful."*

Let me run through some photos that Diane so graciously found for me and I will end with a quote from one of our COPIS members and a thank you. Don Beach said it well with this email he sent to us:

"I have enjoyed reading each of your comments regarding our dear friend Ed. Quite honestly, for once I have been stunned in silence as I have processed the news. You have all talked about his commitment to COPIS, his scholarship in the field of supervision, his support and encouragement of young scholars, and his remarkable career in higher education. As I think of Ed, I think of him as my "bridge over troubled waters." When I needed a friend, he was there...when I needed an advocate, he was there.... when I needed sound advice ... he was there. For me, it is that personal connection that I treasure and I sincerely hope I have learned the lessons he taught me about friendship."

Thanks Don, and thanks to all of you COPIS colleagues, thanks to Diane,
Alexandra, Zach, and Chris, and most of all, thanks to Ed for a life well lived!