

REMARKS AT PHIL ZIMBARDO'S RETIREMENT PARTY

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Well, Phillip, you've beaten me to the retirement finish line. But then, you were the track star. It's hard for me to imagine you retiring, since I've only seen you moving through life as a whirlwind, going at warp speed, jetting from one meeting to another, making educational TV programs, lecturing everywhere around the planet, doing radio or TV interviews, collaborating in research projects in Italy and Germany, writing editorials for newspapers and the APA Monitor. Frankly, if you were to stop, we'll think the most movable feast of psychology has closed up shop.

Phil and I go back a very long way, from 1955 when he was about the first classmate I met upon entering Yale graduate school. He told me he'd taken the research assistantship that I'd turned down so I might study mathematics for a year at Minnesota. That year for Phil had been absolutely wretched, since his professor went into deep depression and committed suicide, leaving Phil to pick up the pieces, finish the on-going research projects, write final reports to the grant agencies, account for grant monies spent, close down his lab, and deal with the man's grieving widow – all a bit much for a first-year graduate student. So, when I came waltzing in to Yale, falling into a cushiony research assistantship with the famous Neal Miller, Phil looked at me and said, "You dumb cracker, why couldn't you get your hillbilly-ass over here last year and save me from that horseshit job I had to take in your place?"

Well, that was the beginning of a long and dear friendship. Our backgrounds were as different as you can imagine. I came from a tiny, bucolic village on the edge of Appalachia

where our biggest excitements were watching pig races, demolition derbies, and hog-calling contests, where we thought high-risk sex behavior with school girls was pulling their pig tails, where guns were taken out only to hunt possums, and where the most egregious crime was tipping over an outhouse on Halloween. In contrast, Phil came from an impoverished, tough, crime-ridden neighborhood in the Bronx.

- 1) There a man with convictions was one who'd done time in Sing Sing .
- 2) There, nobody asked you for the time. They just took your watch.
- 3) The muggers were so bad that rental apartments were advertised as being only a short run to the subway.
- 4) That's where Phil got in training for his college track team.

And his neighborhood was very poor, lots of unemployment.

- 5) If a guy paid his rent on time, he was suspected of burglary.
- 6) As a boy Phil got so little to eat and got so thin, his belt buckle scratched his backbone. They once took an X-ray of him and missed.
- 7) Phil says he's been making up for this food deprivation ever since.

Despite our different backgrounds, I think Phil and I as young boys shared the same dreams and ambitions: first, to get in the sack with Marilyn Monroe; second, to excel at sports --- he in track, me in baseball--- and third, to get the hell out of our neighborhoods and seek a better life. Kids usually got out of Phil's neighborhood in an ambulance or a paddy wagon; they got out of my neighborhood by back-breaking, mind-numbing work on a farm or in the coal mines. So, Phil and I had similar reasons for going to college and graduate school.

At Yale's Psych department, we could always joke about some of the characters---there was J. J. who was studying imprinting in chickens and was so hard up that he'd rush his subjects

to finish their testing so he could eat them for dinner; or Ed Looney, who decided to become a psychiatrist so he changed his name to Ed Lowney; or H. B. the Third --- Phil called him “One-One-One” --- who would record rats’ sex orgies in Frank Beach’s sexorama as he soaked his infected feet in buckets of fungicide; or adenoidal B.W. with the coke-bottle glasses who frightened all of us by obsessively chanting his paranoid mantra, that he – and all the rest of us - - were about to be kicked out of the program; or D. J. who claimed to get conditioning in paramecium but the rest of us couldn’t even see the little buggers, not even with a microscope; and D. D. who produced homemade beer in his bathtub that tasted like it was indeed fermented from his bath water. Or that borderline personality, T.B. who’d drop by unannounced at midnight to drink up all our cheap wine and insult us.

I remember we both played on the Yale department’s softball team; they put me at first base because I could hit but couldn’t run; they put you in center field because you could run like the cops were chasing you, pulling down those deep fly balls. Years later at Stanford, we were permitted to play on the Psych department team only after we’d signed a medical liability release. We could still hit the crap out of the ball, but were starting to creak and lose a step or two getting around the bases. And whenever we bent over to field a groundball, we’d go “Unnh”.

While at Yale, Phil and I shared a cold-water flat on the second-floor of a dilapidated house near the psychology department --- it’s since been upgraded --- into a slum. We share many memories of those days. Phil had a far-out scheme for interior decoration of the apartment --- what it was mainly far out of was good taste. He had us painting every room a different outlandish color. For example, the bathroom was in baby blue and the toilet seat was painted black. You can imagine the problem this created when you had to go in the middle of the night. There were three young women living in the flat above us who were in training to be spinsters.

One look at us, and they were reinforced for their decision. Nonetheless, we had a passing parade of fleeting and fleeing young maidens romping through the apartment. Phil, you might recall that we competed to see which of us could dance the closest to M.M., who had her good points; or which of us could resist the drop-dead charms of S.L.M., who resembled Charlie Bown's friend, Lucy.

We can recall the neighborhood characters —the lady of the night next door who hung a red-lantern in her window, or Rocky Bellow who ran the Mafia-front, filling station on the corner who snuck in his deliveries of high-jacked gasoline around midnight, or old Sam Lee, the Chinese laundry man next door, who inspired us to work ever harder when we saw him still ironing shirts at 1 a.m. We can recall Guarino's grocery where we bought the cheapest bargains of the day and transformed them into truly abominable meals. Our gourmet entrees were tunaruni, Kraft's macaroni and cheese, and our all-purpose culinary repair — a thick swill of tomato soup poured over any overcooked, unrecognizable food that needed to be camouflaged. I'm grateful that Sharon married me away from those culinary catastrophes, rescuing my stomach from a lifetime of gastric perdition. Despite our interior decorations and those dead-on-arrival cooking entrees, we nonetheless agreed that we'd be friends for life.

I am grateful for that because life gives us very few truly amazing and memorable friends. And you, old buddy, are surely among my truest and most remarkable of friends. You are the most consistently interesting person I know (Sharon – that's excluding wives and children, of course) It's just plain fun to be around you because you are a natural born raconteur, fascinating us with interesting observations on the humor in the banalities of life.

I was delighted when you joined our faculty at Stanford. I recall your brother, Donald, warned you as you were leaving for California, saying “If you feel tremors of an earthquake, remember to do two things: stand in a doorway; and make sure the doorway’s in Cleveland”.

Thankfully, you made it all the way to Stanford where you have had a wonderful career in research and teaching. Who but you could hold 300 Psych-1 students spell bound by your teaching style, year after year, and learning all the right stuff? I’ve been pleased and proud to see your talents recognized on the local, national and international playing fields of academia. You have influenced many thousands of students. Beyond the academics, you have lived your life to the fullest: you could totally quit right now, with the satisfaction that you’ve done it all --- been there, done that, in all aspects of living.

So , my friend, now that you’re retiring, just a year ahead of me, let’s hope we can both slow down a little, take time to sit and reminisce, crack jokes, laugh, and share our senior moments of fog. We can be comfortable old timers, grateful for having known each other so well and for so long. So, congratulations, Phil, on your final promotion, into the ranks of Stanford’s Distinguished Emeritus professors. As usual, I’ll be coming just behind you as we search for our proper place and identity in this new reality called retirement.