



Peter Robert Di Mento
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Peter Robert DiMento was born in Winthrop, Massachusetts, on August 3, 1936 and grew up to attend Salem State Teachers College in 1958. He was twenty two years of age when he first came to Brentwood and met Fred weaver and Eugene Hoyt. They both made a great impression on him. Brentwood High School opened to graduate a modest fifteen students in 1957. Slightly less than half went on to become teachers in the district. Peter received a Masters degree in Special Education from Hofstra in 1961 attending part time while holding down a full time teaching position in Brentwood just as many who followed him would do. He became state certified as a Superintendent of Schools and as an Administrative Principal.

He's married to Noreen and their 50th Anniversary fell on May 26th less than one month following his interview. They have four great sons; Patrick, Michael, John and Dan. The unique thing about all of them is that they all attended the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. They each graduated; played lacrosse and three of the four are pilots and the fourth a successful contractor living in California. They all served in the military; three of the four flew in Desert Storm – where all participated; Patrick in a B52, Mike in a 141 and John in a C45, a monstrous cargo plane. All had their experiences and all had trials and tribulations while serving. Part of their responsibility for graduating from the Air Force Academy was to put in a minimum of five years. When you go to flight school you must pay back that year of flight school and then do four more years. They all served between nine and eleven years. Each are now out of the service. Patrick, the oldest, is an Assistant Chief Pilot for Fed-Ex., Michael, the second oldest flew for nine years for United and then also decided to make the switch to Fed-Ex. John, came out of the service and also flies for Fed-Ex. Mike is an Instructor Pilot and John is also an Instructor Pilot who does a lot of training

of new people coming in. Dan, the fourth brother left the service after nine years and is now living in California.

Their parents try to see them all as often as possible. Peter said it was nice now with the three boys all in Memphis because they're together. Two live within a couple of miles of each other and the third lives nearby. When he and Noreen visit they're able to see three sons and their wives and twelve of their fourteen grandchildren. And when they get out to California which is a great place to visit, they get to see Danny and his wife C.J. and two of their grandchildren.

Peter sees family qualities showing up in the generations of family that he has seen before. He's seen assertiveness and stick-to-it-iveness. His father and mother raised nine kids and they had lots of problems during those years. There was something about being encouraged to become independent and going out and doing stuff on your own. Peter said he expected that from all his sons. He's aware that they seem now to be passing those similar qualities along to their children.

His oldest son Patrick, has a great ability to get along with people and is self driven, independent and a good student. His second son Michael, is an excellent student and was a physics major in High School and in the Air Force Academy, which was kind of unique, while the third and fourth sons were very loyal to their friends and have always been successful. His first and third sons Patrick and John are the two that are most alike and Michael, the second son and Dan the fourth son most resemble each other.

A few centuries earlier Peter's birthday Aug third, was also the date that Columbus set sail for America and found a new world. Peter was welcomed into that world in the old city of Boston in St. Elizabeth's Hospital. His home town was Winthrop, Massachusetts, a small town that forms the arm of land that protects Boston Harbor to the north. Only twenty thousand people lived in the community and everyone seemed to know everyone else or their family members. It was a good place to grow up. Graduating from Salem State Teachers College in 1958 he was twenty-two years old. He first visited New York when he came down to see a friend, Dick

Dusalt, a Business Teacher at Brentwood High School. Dick come down a year earlier looking for a job and interviewed at Brentwood and Huntington. Brentwood offered him a job first, so he took it. The following March Peter and four other friends got into a car and arrived in NYC on St Patrick's Day. Once there they decided to take a ride to see his friend in Brentwood, which they thought was right outside the city. They arrived via Southern State Parkway. It took them quite a while but agreeably they had a great adventure.

Three of the five were offered and accepted jobs in Brentwood. It was 1958 when they got to see Dick at the High School, and there met a fellow by the name of Fred Weaver who was the High School Principal. He was enthusiastic and called the District Principal right away and said, "*Listen. Five young men have just shown up from Boston looking for teaching positions in the District.*" He came right over to talk with them and wanted to interview them right away. They all filled out applications not really being serious at the time about moving to New York. Peter was then thinking about going out to Long Beach, California for work. The young men were given a tour of the District and taken to Southeast Elementary. There were only a few schools in the district at that time: Southeast, Southwest, Northeast and Village. There was no Middle School. The High School had opened the year before. Brentwood was still new.

Gene Hoyt came over to see them and made them an offer. By the time they had gotten home on Monday all five had received Western Union telegrams from the district offering each a position in the district. Three of them accepted those offers; Johnny Galaris, Moe Bolier and Peter DiMento. "*The best decision we could have made*", Peter said.

One of his earliest memories was being very sick with pneumonia as a child. It was one of those family stories that his grandmother, mother "*Mithon,*" was responsible for nursing him back to health and giving him milk and brandy and a little bread to keep him going. It was also mother Mithon who bought him a little airplane for him to build his strength up again. He remembers being four or four and a half years old. He remembers going to school and his first days in Shelly Street Elementary School sitting in Miss Wings First Grade Classroom. He can remember going to

the reading groups and sitting in those nice little chairs in a circle in front of the room. He remembers all his teachers in his elementary school, Miss Wing^{1st}, Miss Bean^{2nd}, Miss Waters^{3rd}, Miss Leach^{4th}, Mrs. Kramer ^{5th}, Miss O'Donnell ^{6th}. Every one of them made a positive impression on him including Mr. Chase, the Principal. The kids all believed he had a steel finger, at least they thought he did, because if someone wasn't in line he always gave them a "*thump*" with his finger on their head to put them all back in line, but of course he didn't. He was another wonderful man.

Peter's mom's maiden name was Marian Mithon. Her relatives going back on that side of the family were the Sullivan's and Cassidy's. The family went back to the 1830's where his mother's great grandmother came over from Ireland and was one of the few at the time who was educated and came over as a governess. That was before the famine had occurred in the old country. Afterwards even more came. Back then they would have sailed from Cork and all originally hailed from Waterford, just to the north.

His wife Noreen's family came from the Shannon area in much the same way. The family had dairy farms and still do now in much the same part of the country.

His father's family also immigrated but they came from Italy in the 1890's and similarly, he was an educated man. He lived in the north end of Boston opposite the old North Church at 349 Hanover Street. His father was born in 1905 the same year as his mother but his father had come from a small town called Spotafora, in Sicily on the north coast just west of Messina. Peter still has relatives there, many with the last name DiMento. He was in the middle of an ongoing debate as to whether or not he was going to take a trip to Italy to visit some of his family still remaining there.

Peter met a fellow named Biagio DiMento down in Sidney, Australia when his third son John, was getting married. This fellow stepped up and introduced himself, said he owned a bakery and wanted to know about Pete's family. He checked out the name and the eyes of his son which he said resembled own his son's eyes. He phoned Peter and had his son call Peter to learn more about him. Since then they've all visited twice and become great friends. This

story has gone from Spotafora, in Sicily to Australia and back to Islip, New York.

Peter's mother had been a graduate of Salem State Teachers College in 1925. As mentioned, he graduated from there as well. His mother was well educated and became a life-long learner and role model. Just about every book that any one of her nine children brought into the house had a designated place with all the books that each one of his brothers and sisters brought home. His mother also had a reason to pick up those books because whatever they all read she read. She never quizzed any of them on their books but they all knew that if they ever had questions about any book they were reading at the time their mom would be able to talk knowingly with them about it. It was a pretty unique experience and she did that all the time.

During the Second World War Peter's father had been working as a foreman for G.E. He loved what he was doing. Yet, in 1945 when his father's mother was dying from diabetes, she asked if he would please go into the family business with Peter's grandfather. It was his glass business and the only privately owned glass business in Boston that had survived the Depression because they'd had a lot of insurance contracts. His grandmother had been quite involved in that business and when she was dying she wanted Peter's father to also go into it. He did. It wasn't the best thing for him because he loved working with steam turbines and that sort of thing for General Electric but he spent the remainder of his working career till he was seventy working in the family glass business. The business relocated several times due to redevelopments; the Haymarket Square area, the Boston Skully Square area, were all redeveloped by the Boston Redevelopment Authority. The business was taken and they had to move down to Boston Garden and then that shop was closed because of redevelopment. When the shop closed for the third time even more pressure was put on him at seventy years of age to move but he really didn't want to go. It wasn't that he retired, he just stopped working altogether.

Peter had seven brothers and two sisters in his family. All of them have survived and have had good relationships with one another growing up. His father and mother bought a house up on a

hill on Cottage Avenue for two thousand dollars and spent another thousand dollars to renovate it and make it livable. They grew up in that house and all went to the same high school in town and all survived. They have been very fortunate he said. They always joke in the family that as a family they've had one queen, one princess, and seven serfs. The seven boys were the workers in the family and the sisters were the ones that could please their father by baking brownies or making cookies. "*It was all good*", he said.

Mary Jane was the ninth child and Pete's youngest sister. When his mother was pregnant with her they discovered that she had a tumor the size of a basketball and their doctor wanted to remove it and take the baby but his mother refused so she was told to remain in bed in the hospital for a couple of months before the birth and kept in the hospital for several months after the baby was born. It was a tough time during which not only the brothers and sisters and his father stepped up to help but so did his aunts and uncles and their extended family.

His mother had five brothers and sisters and his father had five brothers and sisters. It always seemed that within the family they were the godfathers and the godmothers. Peter's Uncle Jimmy was his godfather. He was a doctor and he was wonderful according to what Peter told us. He was a great guy who started his practice in the north of Boston in a poor section. He opened a clinic there even after he stopped practicing and moved out to Brighton to St Elizabeth's Hospital. He also kept his office open in the North end as a clinic every Wednesday afternoon and evening . If anyone ever needed to have a physical or something they could always go to see Uncle Jimmy. His grandmother on the Winthrop side – (the Mithon side), only lived five or six houses down the street.

They called home "*The Home*", and they called their grandmother's home "*The House*". So they always went down to visit the House and his grandmother was always a very positive influence. She died when Peter was nine years old.

His grandfather worked with his father in the business and he was called "*Willie*," Willie Mithon. He was also a big influence. On the Italian side – his father's side of the family, Peter didn't know

his grandfather, but his grandmother, “Nana”, was, he said, just a “*wonderful, wonderful lady*”, and she died in 1962. She told him she was worried about him meeting “*the right girl*”. The last time Peter saw her when she was in her nineties, she told him not to worry because she knew he was going to meet the right girl and “*it’s going to happen soon*” and she was right. He met his wife Noreen that March. Nana died in February a month before Peter met Noreen. “*And here we are*”, he said, “*fifty years later*”.

How did it come to pass that Peter chose to become an educator? He said, “*It probably had mostly to do with where I went to college*”. His mother he reminded us, graduated from Salem State in 1925. It was about thirty minutes from Winthrop. She was encouraging him to go to school but it was his decision to make regarding where he went to school. There was no money in the family and it wasn’t any chance of him going to private school. A lot of his friends had gone into Boston to attend Harvard, Northeastern, Boston College, Boston University, Bentley and all those schools which didn’t really seem to be much of a choice. One of Peter’s good friends who graduated the year before him said he wanted to go to Salem and he wanted to go and take the test and asked why didn’t I go with him and take the test at the same time. That was in May of Peter’s senior year of high school. Other than that his plan was to go into the Service just like a lot of kids of his generation. “*I said, Okay. I’ll go with this fellow – Frank Beal – I’ll take a ride*”. Frank had a beautiful little yellow Plymouth convertible and off they went. Peter took the test, passed it and the next thing he knew they got their letters of invitation. He was accepted and went to Salem where his older sister Donna was already attending and where his mother graduated. The big influence was definitely his mother insofar as his becoming a teacher and her encouragement was concerned. Not only that, but she wanted him to register on the elementary level. His interest at that time was going to be science or social studies where everything was wide open. He said, his mother was there, “*just to love and encourage me and tell me just do it and you’ll find out what you want.*”

Another nice little story is that in his junior year of College, Salem State has a training school which was right beside the college. He was assigned but doesn’t know how, to work in the 7th

and 8th grade classroom. *“We had 7th grade kids in the morning and the 8th grade kids came downstairs in the afternoon. I went home and told my mother that I’d been assigned to Miss Small. Miss Small was a six ft tall older woman who ran a really tough classroom and was very, very organized. My mother said, “Oh, My goodness.” “Whatever you do, don’t tell her who you are.” Of course, Mithon is his mother’s name and she emphasized his last name is Di Mento”.*

He completed his training experience. It was just a wonderful, wonderful experience. This lady pushed them and made them be the best they could be. They were three student teachers assigned to this junior year training classroom for the first half of the year. At the end of the semester he received what was a tremendous grade in those days from this teacher, one that no one else *had ever received* – 4.3 out of a 4.5. He was taken back and thought I’d better go over and talk with her and thank her, so he did, He said *“I just want to thank you for this grade. She said, “You earned it”.* And he said, *“Now that the class is over I just want to let you know who my mother is. And she said, “I know who your mother is”.* ”Excuse me”? he said, She said, *“You came into my classroom on that first day and I saw those blue eyes, I knew those blue eyes from somewhere and so I went and checked the records. Sure enough, your mother was in my class all those years before when she was a student teacher with me.”* It turned out to be a great experience for him. He went home and of course told his mother and his mother called Miss Small and they began a renewed relationship.

When asked about his first paying job he referenced a time when he was about eight or nine years old and was working as a paper boy. He delivered the *Boston Traveler* in his local neighborhood. He could still almost remember the house numbers. His route started on Perkins Street and ended on Terrace Avenue. It went right over the hill. It was pretty local. In the seventh grade his best paying jobs were when he worked as a pin boy setting up pins at 7 cents a string down at the local yacht club. He did that on Monday night. Monday night was league night. Wednesday night was open bowling. Seven cents a string was big money. Wednesday night he even got 10 cents a string which was really ideal. That job really helped him because from then on he worked at the Yacht club all the way through high school and college working as a

custodian, what they called a *steward* up there doing all the work especially on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

He played football in his Sophomore and Junior year and half his senior year but then times changed which sort of hurt in the middle of his senior year when seven of them were let go from the football team. They had a losing year that year. He also played JV Basketball which was a tremendous experience for him again in his sophomore and junior year when the time came for his senior year he wasn't good enough to continue. Between basketball and work he learned to love basketball. He's seventy-five years old now and still organizes a group. He plays in a group in Islip and they've got a about fifty men anywhere from twenty five to Peter's age that are still playing basketball. It's been great. He happened to go down to Florida in the last eight years and during his second year found a group of men who were over fifty-five playing basketball. There are fifty men in that group that play very good competitive basketball as we do here in Islip, but twenty of those men are over the age of seventy. *"We're from all walks of life whether it is here in Islip or Benita Springs in Florida, it's a competitive group and a social group, guys show up in a pair of shorts and a tee shirt, we bang heads for two hours and it's wonderful. It's an inter-age type thing and it's people in Florida from all over the country; Seattle, Minnesota, Maine, Canada, and they play basketball and as older fellows, stop once in a while, share a drink as well as their pasts.* It's not about who you are it's just about playing ball and sharing good family memories, as it is here in Islip when they get together every once in a while and they're just men enjoying each other's company and the passion of basketball.

He always loved to read and that came from his mother. He loves social studies, and likes math but the one area I love the most is literature and reading that continues through today. It's what his mother gave him.

Growing up his favorite season was summertime because right down the street was the yacht club and he was out on the water all the time. He was independent and many times was sailing as a crew member with men that had served in the second world war; men who were very talented and able that I didn't discover until years

later how important they were to him. They were men that had served across the Pacific – that sort of thing and done a great job.

When we asked Peter about the aromas that he remembered from the early years of life that still pulled him right back to the moment. He chuckled as he replied. *“The smell of the salt water because Winthrop being the home town that it was the smell of salt water was ever present, familiar yet distinct and I love the ocean. We had the ocean on the one side of us and Winthrop being a peninsula, Boston Harbor on the other, both areas were tremendous for me growing up whether going out digging clams or worms for the most part just for bait was great!”*

“And one more smell that is very, very distinct and a lot of people will tell you they don’t remember it though they can smell it very clearly today – is the aroma coming out from under the stands at Fenway Park. It’s the smell of green grass that had only recently been cut. It was such a special place and that green grass that had just been cut gives you an aroma like no other place that I know of in the entire world.”

When he started school there wasn’t any Kindergarten and he didn’t attend Nursery School. He attended the First Grade at Shelly Street Elementary School. It was one half mile to the school and he had to cross a number of streets to get there It was a wonderful school. There were two classes for each grade level; one thru six. Even now he can look out the window from each of those classrooms and tell us what he sees outside. *“Shelly Street was very special”*, he said. Next, he went to the Middle School which has since been torn down and after which he attended high school. All were good schools and all served their purpose and were places where he had great friends. Among his many opportunities to participate included student government. He was on the Social Committees in his Junior and Senior Years in High School. It was like an Executive Committee for organization and served to help them accomplish a lot of things together. Because of the yacht club being right down the street and his involvement with it, one of the key experiences with leadership that he had was getting involved with running dances. There was a dance hall on the third deck of the club overlooking the water so on three sides there was water all

around with that beautiful dance hall on the top deck. Whenever the club wasn't busy while he was in high school he was able to put a little note out to have a record hop or hire a band and he did that throughout high school and college. The opportunities for him while he was still in school there were boundless.

When he came to Long Island, he with Moe Bolier and John Galaris knew they were each required to earn a Master's degree to teach so they all began attending Hofstra College. Peter and Moe completed their degrees in 1961, John Galaris took a couple of more years to complete his while they all matriculated part time while employed full time in Brentwood. Moe eventually became a GIS (General Instructional Supervisor) for a couple of years in Brentwood and then in the 1960's moved to Oceanside as an Assistant Principal subsequently relocating to Harborfield's as a Middle School Principal. It was from there he ultimately retired. John Galaris, who had been a good friend to Peter while they were in college, - as was Moe - played basket ball and soccer together and were in the same fraternity. It was really a social fraternity. They all considered John Galaris to be their *wing man* (because if they ever needed to know a name, Johnny Galaris was the guy who would remember the girls name or who it was or anything about their family. Even when John was down working in Brentwood one of the Principal's, Chuck Puleo, called Peter about a reference that he had written for John Galaris. At that point Peter said to Chuck who was also a very good friend, "Hey, Chuck, you can't remember you wife's name, my name or anybody else's name. I said, "John would be the perfect guy for you. John will not only remember every kid in the school but he will remember their parents and their parent's names. He'll be a tremendous addition to match you. Chuck hired him and thanked me many times afterwards for hiring a guy that was not only a good person but also had a tremendous memory."

When Peter set foot in Brentwood for the first time, among those he met that day was the District Principal, Eugene Hoyt, someone by whom he was deeply and genuinely impressed. He came across as an extremely bright man who cared. Even just meeting him for the first time he seemed to be a philosopher. He encouraged them and told them how good Brentwood would be for them. It worked out that not only Brentwood but the District

Principal –whose title would be changed to District Superintendent shortly thereafter under his successor – would be good for them not only a leader but would become their good friend. He invited Moe, Pete and John to play golf and cards with him Gene Hoyt, and with Leigh Stewart the Assistant District Principal. Theirs turned out to be a truly positive relationship.

Three years later it was announced that the Brentwood School District had been awarded a Curriculum Grant from the Ford Foundation that was written by Dr Raymond Scheele of Hofstra University. Eugene Hoyt had been the impetus for the Grant with a major assist from Ronnie Genese, Chairman of the Brentwood Math Department in the High School. Ronnie had an ability to have tremendous contacts in the math world and he needed classrooms to demonstrate and so he worked with Peter DiMento right from the very beginning when he was at North Elementary School. Ronnie would come into Peter’s class and do demonstration lessons and then insist that Peter do the demonstration lessons when Ronnie brought visitors in from all over the country. He also introduced a set of manipulative teaching tools known as *Quizzinaire Rods* which was only one of the programs introduced. They were involved with a *Schools Mathematics Study Group (SMSG)* started after Sputnik that the U.S. government poured lots of money into. Peter continues to advocate the value of using concrete teaching tools like manipulatives with kids but also believes in the other concepts and studies of other aspects of the Math Study Group. He said Syracuse had a great Math Program; as did Maryland and the University of Illinois. They had a couple of those leaders - Bob Page and Max Liebman - come to Brentwood to work with the District.

One of the many Brentwood students at that time who benefited from the districts emphasis upon teaching mathematics in new ways to its students was a young man named Jefrey Raskin who later became known as the Father of the Macintosh. After his three years in the classroom Ronnie Genise asked Peter, Moe Bolier, Mary Ann Fornier, Helen Yeagel and a few others to come to work with the Math Department and do demonstration classes in the schools, and they did. At the same time Ronnie believed internally that they had to keep learning all the time. Every week they had study groups where he brought in special teachers. They visited

StonyBrook which was just forming and they visited Brookhaven National Lab. It was an opportunity with Ronnie where we had to learn. Ron Genese wanted them to learn Fortran, which was a very difficult language and they did on Saturday mornings when he brought in experts. They learned a lot about how languages are written and what the ability of computers were in those days. They didn't have a computer but they did have Ronnie who had enough foresight to know that this was coming. Personal Computers (PC's), had still not been developed and would not become commercially available until the mid 1970's.

Jef Raskin was in one of the first classes going out to visit StonyBrook University. *"While he was in Brentwood High School he would come into the Math Office and ask the teachers questions – that he already knew the answers to. He was a mature kid but he would just come in and try to "break chops". For the most part they were able to give him the answers he sought or direct him but Peter said he couldn't answer some of his questions but Ronnie Genese or one of the others could. Jef went off to StonyBrook. "While he was at Stony Brook he used to bring in things. One time he brought in a shoe box filled with punch cards with a design on top of it. But I was busy at the time and I said to him, "Ah, I've seen better Jef. I've seen kids that could do more." Well, he sort of stormed out. A couple of days later he came back and he had what looked like a shoe box filled with key punch card with this tremendously unique design on top. "Now, he said," What do you think of this?" I told him, "Jefrey, that's pretty special".*

Peter knew Jef was special. They told him at StonyBrook, if he and his friend broke into the computer lab one more time, they would have him arrested. Well they did break in one more time and campus security picked them up and had them arrested and told not to do that anymore. And then Jefrey disappeared. Jefrey graduated, went out to Chicago and then to UCLA and was working out there and from what Peter had heard, two fellows came to him. One fellow's name was Jobs and the other by the name of Stephen Gary Wozniak. They came to him and they said, *"Look, we have some software and we have some hardware but we're having trouble putting it together and we need some help with it. We were wondering whether you'd be able to help us with it? He did, and the next step*

was, the Mackintosh Computer for which he's been given credit. Peter hadn't seen Jeffrey for a while but one day he opened up a local paper and saw a whole page add from Stony Brook University and it says something along the line of, "Come to StonyBrook because we can help you in the new technology world", and Jeffrey Raskin who was Brentwood's graduate, and who they arrested, is now acknowledged as father of the Mackintosh computer. It was quite a jump".

Jerry Steiner was Brentwood's Public Relations Director at the time. He was told what happened and Peter showed him the picture in the paper. There were a lot of budgetary problems here in the district back then. *"I wonder if Jeffrey would be able to help us"*? His father had worked for the Post Office in Brentwood and he was a friend of Peter DiMento and a member of the local Lions Club - a good man. Peter got his number and called Jeffrey's father. They had a long conversation but how much he was able to give to Brentwood we never learned. It was all interesting. I've read over the years and the truth of which I cannot swear to, that the maneuver we all use to drop and drag, or cut and paste on the computer was attributable to this one of Brentwood's former students who by this one, single contribution, changed the world. He in fact told Peter DiMento at the time that money wise - he was very involved with the symphony orchestra he did a lot of the arrangements and with the help of synthesizers and computers did a lot of arrangements on the coast and that's where he fine tuned an interest in music.

Peter got his Masters from Hofstra. He continued taking courses because, as he said, *"We needed to continue to grow"*. He took all his administrative credits and became certified. He continued to go back to school because of growth and for his own need to know. He had a summer sabbatical for a couple of years where he got a background in Special Education because he thought that was important. He thought he must have ended up with MS eighty or ninety. He knows he had lots and lots of credits afterward. Course work he got the most benefit from were those he took with Ronnie Genise in the Math Department. According to Peter he was perhaps the most influential teaching member of the Ford Foundation staff at the time. Peter said he got such a tremendous Math background from Ronnie that it gave him an opportunity to teach at Hofstra where he could offer Teacher

Education Courses and Curriculum Courses for thirteen years. Some of the others involved with the Ford Foundation that taught at Hofstra were Raymond Scheele and Lenny Sachs, but Ronnie Genese's presence was pivotal. He had the ability not only to converse with mathematicians but also to talk with people like Jerome Bruner who was up at Harvard and was one of the most renowned Educational Philosophers in our country at the time. When Gene Hoyt and Ronnie went up to talk with Jerome S. Bruner it was really Ronnie that had the ability to communicate and tell Bruner what his dream was. Then through Bruner, Ronnie met a fellow named Caleb Catanio who was really the main push behind the Quizzinaire material.

When the Ford Foundation Grant was awarded to the Brentwood School District, partly due to the involvement of Jerome Bruner and Ronnie Genese, the Foundation insisted that areas covered under the Grant be expanded beyond Mathematics to include other areas of curriculum even though Mathematics was the core. Ronnie came back to Brentwood and was able to find talented people here in Brentwood that could key the other areas. Dr. Ray Scheele was the philosopher in the background. Ray Fournier was going to be the point person in English, Vinnie Presno was the designated person in Social Studies, in Science it was Matt Mellelo. In Math he had good people like Norm Michaels, Jack Clifford and Jerry Roberts who was the Math Department Chairman in the High School who all got involved. In the Middle School level Eddie Murphy. The main influence was at the Elementary Level where they had Moe Bolier, Helen Yeager and Mary Anne Fournier and without any doubt – during those years, the Brentwood School District was literally at the cutting edge of educational reform across the country.. – Peter DiMento chimed in to add, *“That was without question”. We ran courses during the year. I was asked to be Math Consultant in East Islip, (Probably one of the happiest days of my life) – I went down and was interviewed by the Superintendent in East Islip. At this time I was a fifth year teacher and all of a sudden I'm being asked to be a consultant and to run math courses for their teachers – which I did. I was making about five thousand dollars at the time and I came down and this was going to be after hours the only time I would be able to work. It wouldn't interfere with Brentwood at all. Ronnie Genese told me, when you go down you tell*

him you think it's going to be worth \$1,500 to \$2,000 and I'd get paid. – Big money! When I went down and spoke with the Superintendent and we had a great interview. He asked me - How Much? I told him. And he says, well I'll tell you what. He says your second figure was \$2,000. I'm going to give you \$2,500 He said I don't want you second guessing in the middle of the year that this is more work than you thought."

He got the job, he got \$2,500 when only earning \$5,000. "I swear I ran back to Brentwood to tell Ronnie Genese how much money I was going to make. It was a great experience. From there I also worked out of West Hampton Beach and a few other districts; Shelter Island, etc. as a Math Consultant all going back to those experiences that I had in Brentwood that gave me a leg up with 16. the background I had with those Math Programs including SMSG and Syracuse. - Wikipedia Footnote, sites (SMSG) The School Mathematics Study Group an American academic think tank as focused on the subject of reform in mathematics education. Directed by Edward G. Begle and financed by the National Science Foundation, the group was created in the wake of the Sputnik crisis in 1958 and tasked with creating and implementing mathematics curricula for primary and secondary education, which it did until its termination in 1977.

The efforts of the SMSG yielded a reform in mathematics education known as [New Math](#) which was promulgated in a series of reports, culminating in a series published by [Random House](#) called the *New Mathematical Library* (Vol. 1 is [Ivan Niven's Numbers: Rational and Irrational](#)). In the early years, SMSG also produced a set of draft textbooks in typewritten paperback format for elementary, middle and high school students.

At just about the same time (1963) a book was being written referencing Brentwood High School by Edgar Z. Friedenberg called *Coming of Age in America – Growth and Acquiescence*, that contained an unflattering chapter about the high school titled *The Cradle of Liberty*.

It began – "Not far from Los Angeles, though rather nearer to Boston, may be located the town of Milgrim, in which Milgrim High School is clearly the most costly and impressive structure. Milgrim is

not a suburb though it is only fifty miles from a large and dishonorable city and a part of its conurbation. Comparatively few Milgrimites commute to the city for work. Milgrim is an agricultural village which has outgrown its nervous system; its accustomed modes of social integration have never even begun to relate its present recently acquired inhabitants to one another. So, though it is not a suburb, Milgrim is not a community either”.

Within the context of change and educational reform we touched during our interview upon the New York State Department of Education documentary film produced in Brentwood and called “*The Challenge of Change*” having much to do with the reformation of the role of Guidance then beginning to take place in public schools all around New York State. This perspective brought into our conversation by Peter DiMento was that everything happening in the District was triggered by one individual and was happening due of the energy, creative genius and imagination of that one man. Everything happening was attributable without doubt to the unprecedented, progressive leadership of Brentwood’s District Principal, Eugene G. Hoyt who was able to encourage a guy like Ronnie Genese, and Jerry Smith, Chairman of the Guidance Department who had lots of energy and lots of ideas “*and was able to get things to grow*”. *It happened in every one of the areas we’ve been talking about.*

I asked Pete what his other plan had been if he had chosen to pursue an alternate plan for his future. His first thought leaving high school he said, was to go into the Navy. He had also considered taking an administrative position with the telephone company or maybe a sales rep or something like that. He really didn’t have any idea until after his junior year with the teacher Miss Small he had made up his mind and decided to become an educator. That did it. He loved being in the classroom, challenging people and working with kids. His introduction to Gene Hoyt *only* served to confirm his decision to become an educator, He was hired after being put through what he called a group interview, What he could tell us about Gene Hoyt followed from this. After three years in the classroom and three years in the Math Department, the District was reorganizing. Instead of having Math Consultants they

were going to have General Instructional Supervisors. A fellow by the name of Joseph Dionne was involved.

Joe Dionne was going to do the interviews. Peter took the interview and thought he was very analytical about it and afterwards was told that he didn't get the job. Well, there were about twelve people chosen from the ranks and here he was doing all this teaching and everything else and he was in shock. So he asked for an exit interview with Joe Dionne and he said, *"Well, I can give you ten minutes."* He went into the office and told Joe straight out. *"Hey, I didn't need to know why I didn't get the job. That's your decision. The thing I need to know is where you think I should go from here. What should I do?"* They started to talk and after an hour and a half he left the room and came back and said, "What do you think? Would you like to be an Assistant Principal at South Junior High School, Joyce Turner was going on sabbatical for six months and then Principal over at Loretta Park for the next six months? Here was a guy that was not sure where he was going to be one minute for the following year. Lou Lotito had offered him a job back with the staff but all of a sudden now he was going to be an Administrator. And I'll never forget when I became a Principal I called Gene Hoyt and asked him a couple of questions. Instead of replying, he turned the questions around to Peter and he said, *"Whoever said that teaching was easy? And whoever said that being a Principal is going to be easy? Can you do it?"* It took me back for a minute and I said, *"Sure I can. Yes"*. And from then on Peter used his own network he'd been building. That was fantastic! You have to learn who your resources are. So he'd check with certain guys like Lou Lotito number one and Ralph Sakin, Joe Karzan and Joe Graff, Jim Taylor. They were all wonderful people; Art Brieger, John Meade. He named almost all the Principals at the time. Every one of them had a strength and he learned to use their strengths and call them up if he had a question. And he was able to do that, and he was always able to go to Gene Hoyt to ask a question. He always knew that he was going to turn it back to him to make him think. It was part of his technique; his Rogerian ability to go back to his Guidance Department and use the Socratic Method to make us do it ourselves. He taught us that even as District Principal or Superintendent. He had the ongoing responsibility to teach us all to always step forward.

It was a small district of about 200 teachers when Peter came to Brentwood. Everyone met in the Ross Auditorium which had only been open a couple of years. Gene Hoyt spoke and they all knew each other. They all did a lot of things socially together. They always had a picnic at the end of the year. Peter knew all the people in the elementary schools, Junior Highs and High School. They were all one big faculty. Everyone was young. Peter was twenty-two. His group were all in their twenties. Senior leadership for the most part was a little older but the average age was in the mid twenties and were single too which insured a lot of social mingling. Gene Hoyt was a little older and Leigh Stewart had a lot of experience from which everyone benefited. The BTA (Brentwood Teachers Association) held a Christmas Party every year that took place in the schools and the Board of Education sponsored it and provided liquid refreshment that was great and stopped after a few years. There was never an incident in anyone of the schools as far as he knew, but pulling it back was the right thing to do at the time. Times were different then. The key element he said, was that we were all together. Roy Rapp, Bob Hoppe, Bill Laun and all those Phys. Ed People; so many great people, Bob Tagner, Stan Kelner who had an opportunity to socialize together, learn together and be together.

Peter put it this way, *“Tony Felicio was absolutely right when he used to describe Brentwood as a family. When we started the math group in the sixties, there were two guys who came into take one of my math classes, one was a Board Member and one was a leader in the Islip community. One was Anthony Felicio and the other was Caesar Trunzo, who some time later was elected to be the Senator from New York. They both came in as interested parents and as members of the community. They took my math class”*.

“There were also people coming in from all over the country to Brentwood in the sixties. We ran summer workshops that ran for a week. It was excellent! South Middle School would be filled with people having lunch together from all over the country. It would not be an exaggeration to interject here that later on school districts from the most eastern part of the Island to the furthest most western districts would find themselves reaching out to Brentwood for assistance as

they began to feel effects of problems that Brentwood had already encountered and for which they'd come up with workable solutions."

Then Peter reminded me that we'd also had an opportunity back in 1970. He said, *"In 1964-65 I was the Assistant Principle at South Elementary School, in 1965 the Acting Principal at Loretta Park, then from 1965 - 70 Principal at South East, then from 1970 to 1974 Principal at South Elementary and South was closed and eventually sold to Entenmanns's Bakery, but in those early years at South Elementary in 1971, we got involved in another Math Program CAM - Comprehensive Achievement Monitoring. That was the very first use of computers to monitor student growth. We were not out to test kids we were out for an evaluation to give teachers feedback on how well their kids were doing in the math class. At the time a group of seven of us, Lou Lotito, Chuck Puleo, Peter DiMento, Ed Harris, Tony Spitznagel and someone else went up to the University of Massachusetts with a fellow by the name of Bill Grath we learned about this program and when we came back we organized it in Brentwood. As it turned out in Brentwood we had target schools. Six of the fourteen elementary schools were designated as schools that had high poverty and were not achieving as high as the rest of the community. The other eight schools were scoring higher. The six schools were scoring lower. So anyway Lou Lotito at Northwest, Chuck Puleo at Twin Pines, Peter DiMento at South Elementary, that first year they wrote up the program, they wrote up a series of tests, we got involved with Stony Brook University to do the computer control end of it, so it was a real joint program. After a year, the three schools that were in the lowest performing schools were now scoring as well as the top performing schools. The second year they brought in three more elementary schools. After the second year those six low performing schools were now scoring higher than the other eight schools. So the third year they asked Peter, can you bring in three more schools? The Assistant Superintendent Art Breiger asked Peter, and he said "Sure". And that was the plan.*

Well, they went to a Principals meeting and there was a battle about which three schools they were going to bring in. Rather than bringing in three more schools they brought in eight more schools that third year. All of the elementary schools Grades four, Five Six at that time were involved with the CAM Math Program. It really

changed the way they taught math; monitored math. They wanted to believe that it really made a difference.

The program started in the first summer of 1971. Now it's 2012 and they're still using the CAM Math Program in Brentwood. Peter said if he'd like to believe a lot of things, legacy wise, about a whole group that were involved in, starting with Ronnie Genese of course, and Gene Hoyt, that's continuing today because we still have that CAM Math Program. We used a set of behavioral objectives and test items. Back in the 1990's Peter requested a State bank of objectives and test items. They sent down – a big bundle of items the State had secured in a big bank. And what did he find? 90% of the items in the state bank were Brentwood items and to this very day it's still a program making a difference with Brentwood kids

He introduced the Comprehensive Achievement Monitoring (CAM) math program in Brentwood which is still used in the District today. He Chaired the District Math & Technology Committee from 1966 – to 1996. *“I never had to go to work”* He said. He was one of those who never had to work a day in his life because he loved what he did so passionately. *“..... I just always had to go to school”*.

At that same time it was true that Brentwood faced mounting issues having to do with a rapid and burgeoning increase in its population. That lead to high school overcrowding and increasing tensions among locals and a growing stream of ethnic and racial minorities locating in Brentwood. Add the incontrovertible fact that South Elementary was located in a predominantly industrial area behind Entenmanns Bakery partly and as a consequence of real estate sales of residential middle income housing developments following the '54 landmark Supreme Court ruling (known as Brown v Board of Education). The decision abolished Separate but Equal status in U.S. public education ordering districts *“with all due speed”* to eliminate remaining imbalances. In a recent study Brentwood had been found wanting in compliance and was under a degree of pressure to conform to the courts order.

As neighbors the Entenmann family had proved to be invaluable. There always existed a cooperative working relationship between Peter DiMento at South and the brothers like Charlie who

would regularly check in with Peter to make sure there were no glitches in their dealings with one another. The district was on good footing as well in its dealings with the wider community and would bend over backward to respond to their every need. Mindful of the big picture the Superintendent, G. Guy DiPietro put forth a comprehensive plan to address all the issues they faced from relocating students and staff from South to other schools in the district to Peter DiMento and other Principals holding meetings with parents. At the same time they responded to any and all concerns while sharing district plans for the future of their elementary school that were in the best interests of their children. There were meetings at school and coffee klatches in neighbor's homes in the afternoons and evenings until all concerns had been addressed and questions answered. The district saw itself in the words of the Board President, Tony Felicio as being one big family who always took care of each other. They tried their best to do all that, and they did. Bussing delivered students to other schools nearby where they would be comfortably accommodated. Staff members were redistributed among other schools where needed and a plan put forth that recognized the needs of high school students with choices that needed to be heard and where possible honored. The building became an annex to the overcrowded high school providing one wing to *The Maslow Toffler School of Futuristic Education*, an alternative to the conventional high school. Another wing of the school housed BOCES classed bussed from the high school in addition to Social Studies Classes from the regular high school. That repurposing solution lasted for about ten years until the need became less pressing. MT was then given the top floor of Village School to use for three years until once again the building was repurposed as the District's Administration Building and M-T was moved to the Sonderling Building for two years when Carmelo Puleo was assigned to be the Brentwood High School Principal.

This bears repeating only because we've heard it said in so many different ways by so many other people we had the good fortune to interview while speaking with retired employees of the district. Pete DiMento put it this way: *"I'm one of those lucky people that never had to go to work. I really say it without reservation, I always had to go to school. I had to go to school because it was the right thing to do and I wanted to be there. There were challenges over*

the years without question. There were days that I had reservations about what I was going to meet up with that day but ninety nine percent of the time I wanted to go, I was willing to go and I wanted to go. And that came not only from kids and the teachers who wanted to be there but it came from the support of the administration on top and the school board especially from people like Tony Felicio and Jim Lynch who were both unique leaders. Jim Lynch came along right when we were trying to decide what we should do with the high school when I was involved with BPSO Brentwood Principals and Supervisors Organization as a leader and it was just bringing the right people together at the right time. We always felt at that time and ever since, I can tell you, that we were backed. I always knew that the superintendent had my back if something came up. I always knew the other principal's had my back that there was someone to go to. I always knew that the school board didn't interfere but was back there and knew who you were and they were behind you also".

Peter had originally been involved when it had been the Brentwood Principal's Association and it was peopled only by Principals. Once the Taylor Law passed they BPSO was changed to be the Brentwood Principals and Supervisors Association and comprised of Principals, Assistant Principals and Coordinators eventually to include Department Heads and Operational Supervisors which worked out fine. Lou Lotito was the first President of the Organization and there were fourteen Elementary Principals at the time. By the numbers it appeared Principals had the vote but it wasn't that way. Lou was such a positive leader and Peter worked alongside him as Chairman of the Labor Negotiations Committee as he recalled. Peter became President of the organization from 1971 to 1972 during some of the largest growth years when they were planning what to do with the high school. He stayed involved afterward for a number of years as well. Peter convinced Lou Lotito, who had a heart attack to come back as the BPSO leader after Peter stepped aside in 1972. During those years they had experienced some very trying times not the least of which included the unexpected death of the Superintendent before his fiftieth birthday. His death both shocked and saddened almost everyone. *"Guy had been a very strong leader and very positive and supportive. He was a man who was honest about his emotions. If someone did something that didn't live up to his trust in them he*

would speak out. You had to be careful with Guy. At the same time when he was positioned for a potential opening at the top Art Brieger who was Assistant Superintendent and Guy and Frank Mauro were chosen to serve on a committee to reorganize the budget. Lou Nannini was Superintendent and they were asked and came together to do it. I was of the opinion that Art Brieger had the experience as an educator working at the elementary level to be successful but Guy believed that I was supporting Art Brieger to be Superintendent. I on the other hand, actually believed Art Brieger was the choice of the next Superintendent. As it turned out it was Guy who was chosen. When he first took over, he called me into his office and said, "Look I know you were supporting Art Brieger to become Superintendent but I fully expect you to back my play. I assured him I would absolutely and without question support him and his position to the utmost."

It turned out that Guy and Peter were both totally on the same page and when they started to go with the new technology in the 1980's, Guy called him in one day. Peter had gotten an experimental computer program, the first mini-computer to be used in a school. "We had used 4K Commodore Computers, Brentwood had a few of them, I was the Math Committee Chairman at the time and we were bouncing them back and forth and learning them, they got this whole data bank that they brought in and was able to drive thirty computers in this computer lab we were able to set up. Guy thought it was too expensive and couldn't be duplicated in all of the schools...and he was right. So he said after two years we couldn't keep it. I was disappointed but the next thing I knew one day Guy called me up and said, "We're going to put up a bond issue. How much do you think we'll need for a computer lab for each of the elementary schools, the middle schools and the high school"? Pete was sitting at his desk and was told that Guy needed the figures right away. Pete said he'd try to get them together."No, Guy said, I need them now. Give me a rough figure. Wait a minute. I don't know if I can do that. Give it to me". So, Pete said, "Thirty thousand dollars for each of the schools, Sixty thousand for each of the middle schools and about one hundred and twenty thousand for the high school"."Okay!" And Peter still has those notes he made located somewhere in his files.

That then became the basis for a program that the district started. Peter started in his own school first by putting together a package. That was at Twin Pines where they set up the first computer lab. They did it at the elementary level first. The third year they did the Middle Schools. By that time they had had a 25. lot of meetings at the high school. Tony DeMarco was in charge of the lab at the high school. Tom O'Brien and the teachers wanted technology labs in each department. The vote of the high school was to set up labs and that was what they did with Tony De Marco being the Chairman of the lab at the high school.

Peter seeming to be unflappable in most respects was asked if ever there were times when his anger had gotten the better of him when something or someone had got under his skin. What would most likely have caused that?

“I used to tell teachers, whatever you do, at the end of the day, I’m going to be here in the morning on time and I’m going to stay here in the afternoon, but whatever you do, do not get run over by a bus.” Meaning, that you’re coming in at the last minute or you’re leaving at the first one. When I had some people that would run out of the building at the end of the day – and they might have had problems and I’m sure they did – but I’m sorry I just couldn’t put up with that. It happened one time down at Southeast that a bus driver came into the front office yelling at my wonderful secretary Jane La Moyne about this teacher that for the second or third time she had almost run over. I didn’t expect everyone to have the same passion - that’s the only way to describe it that I had, or still have, but I did expect them to want to be here in Brentwood. I used to tell people when I was doing an interview, “Hey listen. You fit the bill for all these positive things but I want you to know about Brentwood. It’s not going to be an easy place and when the going gets tough I need people to be able to step forward and I need people who want to be here, not because of a job, making some dollars and that sort of thing but want to be here with me and working with these Brentwood kids. We might choose you, but I want you to choose Brentwood. Generally it worked. There were some disappointments. I tried to be fair and honest with people and telegraph my moods and let people know that they had to grow or something, or seek out help”.

Peter DiMento retired on July 1, 1996 and had given thirty eight years of dedicated service to Brentwood. He was sixty years of age. This 90 minute interview took place on April 28, 2012. Peter's brother Jim was two years older than he was at the time and he had died of cancer that April and Pete thought "if it can happen to Jim it can happen to me. I thought I had an obligation not only to myself and Noreen but to my family to be available and the district was offering a retirement incentive, so I took it. Should I have gone at that time? In hindsight I probably should have worked a couple of more years."

I asked him if there was anything that he would like to have finished before he left. His answer was that of a man who so loved what he did that he had no choice but to reply the way he did, *"There were a million things. I worked from '74 to '92 at Twin Pines, and '92 to '96 down at Southwest and there were so many good things happening; with the library and with opportunities to make a difference".* What would he like to have done that he couldn't get to? *"He said he would really liked to have opened up that two room library to make it part of the community. We did a pretty good job of doing that and making it a really great library and getting a lot more parental involvement with reading books aloud which I'm a great believer in. Some people might tell you that I get too carried away. Every time I'd get upset in school all I'd do is pick up a handful of picture books, story books that I had in my office and walk down the hallway and look for a classroom that I could go into and read. It wasn't just reading - it was talking about books and authors and illustrators. I really liked that".*

And the other thing was that I planted a lot of trees in every school I was in from the beginning – one tree at North and one tree at Northwest, many, many trees and Southeast and South Elementary. When I was transferred to Southwest in '92 the PTA President from Twin Pines took a ride past to see what it was like and she told me when she saw it she started to cry because it was like a blank building. So, one of the things that happened when I left the school was that the faculty and a couple of teachers gave me some trees. These were ten foot trees that I immediately went down and planted at Southwest and we planted shrubs and trees all over the place and the nice thing that happened when I left was that the faculty

dedicated the garden in the main part of the building in my name. One of the things I'll always remember is when Jerry Steiner came down to Southwest and introduced me to this lady from the community who had worked up this master plan for the replanting of the grounds and met with me and a couple of other people in regard to what trees we thought would be appropriate going forward to be planted everywhere on the grounds. I sent out a note and I got a lot of trees donated. I asked either the individuals or the families of each of the Principals to donate a tree in the front. The Principals were Charlie Walters, Art Brieger, Frank Hall, John Meade, Austin Harney and myself. I asked the Assistant Principals to do the same in front of the Annex. I think it was about \$125.00. People were generous.

Which of Peter's assignments had given him the most fun? Not unexpectedly, he responded by doing what Dr. Hoyt had once done when Peter was a beginning teacher and the boss threw a question he asked back at him. "School for him", he said, "*was never so much about fun as it was about being the place or source of the joy of learning something fresh; as in the enjoyment you feel inside yourself when you've been truly inspired.*" He said all his schools had been great but Ronnie Genese had started him on a math program that inspired him. He became Chairman of the Math Committee, for all the years he was in Brentwood from the time Ralph Saikin appointed him Principal and the Chairman of the Math Committee, and he got on the Math Committee in 1965. So, from 1966 on he was either Chairman of the Elementary Committee or Chairman of the District Math Committee and because of the CAM Program, the use and development of technology, being Chairman of the Math Committee for him turned out to be his best opportunity of all, following which he became Chairman of the Math-Technology Committee.

Peter misses the kids and the teachers and the camaraderie of administrative colleagues. He misses the opportunity to stay abreast of what's happening. He doesn't miss the internal politics. For whatever reason he was lucky to have good people with whom he worked on a daily basis and together they were usually able to overcome the negative aspects of the politics that came their way and still manage to get good things done.

If he had a magic wand with which to wave into existence the positive changes that were needed in education even if it meant eliminating something by doing so what would he most like to see?

(1.) *“We have to do a great deal more with parents; share more with them to get them involved. Parents are key elements in getting children involved in their own education success and school leadership can accomplish that, even if it means involving parents in every learning opportunity. (2) If anything needs reorganizing he believes it is the way in which schools are funded by the state. The burden should be shifted to the state, the burden to collect taxes and distribute them properly. Communities like Brentwood that don’t have the economic advantages of other communities get shortchanged all the time. He stopped short of naming some of our closest neighboring school districts who have so much more wealth because of their tax base. and who are able to do so much more with their kids. It’s very much more expensive to educate a disadvantaged youngster than it is to educate kids who have the advantage of two parent families where the families are more involved with their kids”.*

He’d been retired now for sixteen years and no longer knew what the mobility rate in the district is today. People don’t understand what a difference it can make in a child’s life if half of the class leaves school in the beginning of the year only to return before the semester ends. What is a math teacher supposed to do if the basics are covered in the beginning only to have half your students leave for several months and return without everything they’ve missed in between. Those are different kids sitting in the empty chairs in all those rooms at the end of the year. How do you get the continuity you need to make it all happen? Yet, he said, *“the teachers do it somehow”*. When he’d worked in the high school with seniors he saw teachers trying to make a difference and actually making a difference.

(3.) *Brentwood’s teachers are, in Peter’s experience, the very best, without doubt. They work under restrictions that other districts do not have to deal with concerning materials, contact with the home, opportunities to share with each other. People get upset with him but he remains a firm believer in teachers having opportunities to work and plan together without being isolated in their own classroom and*

uninvolved in team building. He knows only too well that teacher's learn more from their peers than they do when someone else is telling them what to do.

Brentwood students, according to Peter have risen to the challenge at every opportunity in spite of difficulties they're experiencing at home. He has met up with kids that others will consider difficult youngsters, tough kids who come to school with a positive attitude and who you can find common ground and are ready to work with their teachers. His experiences teaching math and becoming an administrator were both so positive that it was difficult for him to isolate a single isolated experience that stood out as worthy of being designated "the best."

Approaching the end of our time together we delved into his earliest years in school and in the classroom. I asked if he remembered his very first year and how much he earned. He did. He remembered he had just been appointed Acting Assistant Principal at South Elementary. He said he was scheduled as a classroom teacher to make ninety four hundred dollars but when his contract came through it stipulated \$9,000. He immediately went to see Dr. Hoyt to find out what was going on. Gene said, "*Do you want the job or not*" This was his friend. This was a man that Peter had chosen as one of his mentors. "Yeah", Pete said, "*I want the job*". He worked that summer taking maybe two weeks to go camping with the family but the rest of that time he was in the office with Mike De Bellis and George Pittman over at South. About that Peter said, "*He was right. It was not about how much I made. It came down at the end to Did I want to do the job or not?*"

In drawing the interview to a close I left it to Peter to tell me if there was anything we left out or perhaps something I'd forgotten to include with which we might finish. He chose the following statement for us to conclude our time spent together.

“There were certain people who were just so unique that I could never forget them. They were a tremendous influence on me as a teacher and as a colleague in Brentwood. I’ve mentioned a few of them already. People like Ralph Saikin, Lou Lotito, Mike DeBellis. They were just great people and they made a great difference for me.

I could never forget Gene Hoyt and Lee Stewart. Lee Stewart was the father figure for us all and a great, great man. I can’t forget guys like Hank Salerno, who was climbing trees when Bernie Hankie brought him in for an interview. Bernie Hankie thought he was a bright guy. Not only was he that but he was a great teacher, a great administrator and a great friend. Joan Lang came down from Massachusetts and I didn’t meet her until years afterwards. She turned out to be a great colleague. Tony Spitznagel. We just had so many good teachers and good friends that worked together. Julio Rodrigues, one of the first organizers for the BTA who fought to get the union in Brentwood recognized back in the early sixties. Joe Dionne made a difference. It was he who had lunch every day in five different dining rooms because different sales reps would bring in different people and he would bounce from table to table. Joe was a very bright and able guy who after leaving Brentwood went on to become the first non-family member chosen CEO of the McGraw Hill Publishing Company and then led it as it became one of the foremost publishers in the country for decades to follow. Before him was Art Brieger a tremendous leader who was always trying to do the right thing for Brentwood and to make something good happen. He was a very good administrator and a fine educational leader. It was my privilege to serve with them all and to serve them as a trusted colleague.