



**Richard Graziano**  
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Richard Andrew Graziano received his middle name from his parents and was named after his godfather, his mother's brother. His folks researched British royal names to find the one they preferred. He was baptized Richard. He and his brother Michael are the only siblings in the family; Richard being the oldest by four years. They grew up becoming independent individuals and learned to think for themselves. Richard also responds to Rich.

His own nuclear family includes wife Joanne and son Danny about whom he is very proud. He described himself as more of an extrovert than his brother whom he claimed was his opposite. Rich tends more to wear his emotions on his sleeve whereas Michael is different in that respect. Both of them come to the world with a certain resolve when it comes to completing a task or getting something done once it has been started.

Life for him was never easy whether it was going through school or college, or applying for a job. Nothing was ever handed to either of them. Richard was born in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn and lived there from 1951 to 1955. When they moved from Bensonhurst he was four years old. They went to Bay Ridge, Brooklyn to 15th Avenue and 77th Street and stayed there for five years when he was in the third grade. That was when they moved to Farmingdale, which then seemed at the end of the world. He remembered Civil Defense Drills, - "fire drills" with heads against the lockers. (Great for your posture, he said) The Verrazano Bridge was being built when they were going back and forth from Brooklyn to Farmingdale and visiting his grandmother who still lived in Bay Ridge. He remembered the bridge changing section-by-section and span-by-span.

Most family contact, especially with his cousins, was on his mother's side. His maternal grandfather passed away one year before he was born but he remembered his grandmother well. His grandfather had been a printer as had Richard's father. That was how his father met his mother; through print industry connections. His mom's parents had come from Sicily. His father's parents were from Naples but they met and were married here. They were both alive until his grandfather passed away in 1978. He remembered that because it was the same day Bucky Dent hit the home run against the Red Sox in a one-day playoff on the ride to Brooklyn. Yosemski's pop-up was caught at Exit 28, Hicksville Exit off the Southern State Parkway. His grandmother passed away in 1982 or 1983. He thought his grandfather was about 77 or 78. His grandmother lived until she was almost 80.

His grandfather shined shoes for a living in the Woolworth Building in NYC. He worked hard at it, supported a family and owned a house. He was about 20 years old when he came to America. He shined shoes for a long time. He even made his own wine in the back yard. He had a wine press downstairs. Rich helped carrying grapes from outside to inside whether they were pre-bought or grown in the backyard vineyard. His cousins helped crush grapes in the press. The wine was loaded into barrels and brought to the wine cellar. His grandfather had a fig tree in the back yard. His maternal grandparents also had a fig tree that's still growing today and they didn't even wrap it. Up against the bio mass heat of those bricks in Brooklyn, the amount of heat that was stored by that building was incredible. They didn't have to wrap or insulate the fig tree from winter weather. There are very few surviving fig trees today. It seems to be a tradition that is passing. Richard went to Italy only once when he visited Naples but never Sicily. He was in Italy around 1978 during the Red Brigade Scare. People were being kidnapped and held for ransom at the airports. When a plane landed there were machine guns everywhere. He observed that after 9/11 the whole world changed.

His mother enjoyed travelling. Family gatherings especially over the holidays were most special to her. Her mother's maiden name was Errado. His own early memories of family gatherings were foremost in his mind. Christmas Eve would invariably start out at his father's parent's house and then they'd go over to his mother's parent's house, go to midnight Mass, have a fish and lobster dinner at two o'clock in the morning and sleep over. It was just incredible! In those days Catholics were not allowed to eat meat on Christmas Eve or Fridays.

Only fish was permitted on those days. I asked him what he learned from his brother. Rich replied saying, "At times I wish I had my brother's calmness. There were times I shouldn't have said what I said." The old saying was often true, "The less said the better". He admitted to never having acquired that trait which demonstrated why they were different. He said, "Take this hand. Same family tree but like the fingers, each one is different. Same family tree but each of us is different."

"My brother and I were never really close. I think it was because of the four years age difference." We had our own group of friends growing up and "as the tree is bent, so shall it grow." Moving out to Long Island everything was different. There were sixty kids in a parochial classroom. Out here there were about 20 or 25 maximum. Things changed with more open space. We were outside more and participating in various athletic activities with the neighborhood kids. The biggest things now were due to the digital revolution where most often you do things on your own. Interactions back then were more social in nature. He had felt close to his godfather, Uncle Andrew and Uncle Frank who was his mother's brother-in-law. Also his two male cousins on his father's side were a big influence on him growing up primarily because most cousins on the other side were girls and he always got a different slant on sports from the guys.

Rich said, "One of my male cousins had been a teacher in the NYC school system and the other one was an Engineer. When I started out I wanted to be an Engineer. The ironic thing though, was I used to go to my cousin Charlie's house in Brentwood. The reason I say it was ironic was because the house was 300 feet from the classroom in which I spent thirty-three years. I could have stood outside his house and hit the classroom with a rock. It's just incredible how circumstances change. I realized that after two years of education engineering was not for me. I enjoyed Science and I enjoyed working with students through my Recreation program that I ran in Farmingdale and I said to myself "We'll combine Science with students and we'll become a Science Teacher".

He once had a nun for a teacher in the third grade that he never forgot. She had taught Chuck Connors when he was in her class well before he became "The Rifleman" on afternoon TV.

We spoke about how suburbs were more spread out whereas in Brooklyn a neighborhood was more localized and blocks were shorter than streets. People usually associated blocks with Brooklyn. They didn't use the word block unless you were a child and you were building something.

He came out to Farmingdale in February 1960. In the eyes of every nine year old, every house was attached to every other house and the only space that existed between your own house and the beginning of the neighbor's house next door was the driveway. All of a sudden you're out here and the space is the backyard and the grass. It's different. The other adjustment was that in third grade, the teacher no longer wore a habit; that thing that covered her head. The teacher now was a blue-eyed blond. "Wow! That was different"!

When he first moved out here he went to the Parkway School in Farmingdale, which he believed at one point became the largest Elementary School on Long Island. There are so many wings on the school he thought it might already have had 1,200 students. It's enormous!

We asked if he remembered at first having to get used to the quiet of the night. NYC had a certain degree of nonstop noise that included police sirens, screaming fire apparatus and the unrelenting din of street traffic. He hadn't thought of it before but yes, he said he did remember the quiet and it took some adjustment to get used to it.

He remembered playing street hockey, chess, Checkers, Monopoly, Parcheesi. His first paying job was when he worked for the Farmingdale Youth Council. It was for 4th Grade Boys and was open from 9 to 12. He was 18 then and hadn't worked for anyone before. It was between his junior and senior years and was an extension of all the kid games he played growing up, like duck, duck, goose etc. He loved it. He got experience while learning to become a mediator. After school he loved to play touch football, organizing a tackle football game down at school, organizing a baseball game or playing little league. Teams were big back then and Little League Baseball was big and considering there weren't that many teams, it was about the only thing for them to do.

Ironically, coming from Brooklyn, he wasn't a Dodger fan. He was a New York Yankee fan and came from a Yankee household. He'll never forget the first

time he went to see a game at Yankee Stadium. He was trying to find from where the person broadcasting the game was speaking. When you heard him on a black and white TV set or listened to the game on the radio where was the voice coming from? The person making the announcement of who was at bat was Bob Shepherd. Where was the narration of the game coming from? Also the grass impressed him because when you're in Brooklyn there's very little green grass around. You don't see it – or the volume of it you would see at a ballpark. He was impressed with the openness. It was 1961 but he never saw anything that big – interior wise – even though you were outside in the stadium you're still inside something if that makes any sense. Come to think of it, it made sense because that was before the days of covered stadiums and indoor shopping centers.

Rich remembered going to the World's Fair in Flushing Meadow. He said, "That was BIG!" He was thirteen at the time and was impressed with all the rides, and new technology we were expecting to see in the next few years; including color television and the latest cell phones they were projecting we'd have in the near future and in fact we do have now. He remembered the aroma of Marinara Sauce being the seminal reminder of many years of pleasant childhood memories he had enjoyed.

Richard spoke very highly of his shop teacher and his 12th Grade Physics teacher, Mr. Lopez, who was the main reason he got a Bachelor of Arts degree in Physics. He had always been impressed with his teacher's organization of curriculum and the manner in which he presented his material. "I always liked Science but with him it seemed to be presented in a more organized fashion. I was so impressed with the way in which he taught this class". He said, "Physics is mostly math and the way Math was incorporated into Science really impressed me". He also decided to get his teaching license in Math. "He must have had a powerful influence on me." He also admitted to having a least favorite subject in high school. Admittedly, it was English. He said he had trouble with writing. Even his handwriting was and, in his opinion, still remains illegible. Most of the reading he has enjoyed has had to do with Science or Sports. He has found those readings that were short on words and limited in color mostly in novels that to this day he has not found of interest unless it had to do with History or Sports.

Mr. Graziano earned his Master's Degree at Long Island University at C.W. Post. He was certified in General Science, Grades 7 through 9, Grade 12 Physics

and also certified in Elementary Ed. at C.W. Post. He told me it was during the summer of 1973 that we first began to experience the lack of position openings in teaching on Long Island. Teachers were starting to be let go, but not in Math and Science. That was one of his reasons (besides liking both subjects and there being opportunities to teach), he remembered teaching Physics at Berner High School in Massapequa. At a time when there were far fewer openings for teaching positions than he expected there might be, competition for existing openings grew more scarce because NYC teachers were being excessed in large numbers and were coming out to Long Island hoping to find work. Meanwhile, he'd applied to almost every district in Nassau and Suffolk Counties when he began calling around again. That's when he heard about an opening in Brentwood for a Science teacher. He was interviewed by Ruth Rosenthal at East Middle and invited back for a second interview. It was the summer of 1973 and he was still single. He wasn't married until 1982.

He had his second interview with Steve Howland at East Middle School. Rich got the job. It was great. He was so excited. His friends were waiting for him in the car to complete the interview so they could all go fishing. They went fishing near the Captree Basin Bridge. He told us "I'll never forget this. I lost my High School ring because I was catching nothing except seaweed and cleaning the seaweed off the hook, my hands were wet, when all of a sudden the ring goes flying off my finger into the water. Holy smoke. If my parents hear about this they'll hang me from my toenails. I jumped into the water and began to feel around with my feet and toes trying to locate my ring. I don't know how but I did, I found the ring. I was happy that I didn't have to tell my parents. It was only the second or third time I had worn the ring. I was so afraid of losing it and then having to confess to my parents what happened I was so hesitant to even wear the ring. As soon as I got home I couldn't wait to tell them. My friends were still in the car".

Rich said, "It was a great ride from September of '73 until June of '06". He had always loved being a teacher. He seemed to be amazed by the number of changes that had taken place in only the last fifteen years simply because of the technology.

In addition to all that, Rich had met and married his wife Joanne Assande through his second cousin Linda while he was in Brentwood. His future mother-in-

law had been working in the Berner High School in Massapequa where Richard had taught Physics for a while. He had known Joanne indirectly through Linda. Sometimes they would drive Joanne home to her mom's place in Massapequa Park from his Aunt's summer home on Evergreen, which she still has today and what was the location of occasional cousin get-togethers during the summer. His cousins would ask him, "Why don't you ask Joanne out". His answer was always the same ..... "Naaa!"

Finally, I think it was in 1976, "I better get this right", he said, "We went out... it seems to me it was to an Islander game, because I had season tickets. We went out for about a year and a half, but I wasn't comfortable. I wasn't ready to get married. Meanwhile everyone says, "When are you getting married ... when are you getting married? I wasn't ready to make a commitment. I wasn't ready at all. I didn't know what was important at that time. Then, I guess I broke it off and I hadn't seen her for a while, I'd only seen her periodically through my cousin. I used to run into her at one of those street hockey programs at East Middle School. I was one of the big kids that played with the students. I got clunked in my eye with a hockey puck and was sitting on the curb. I couldn't see for a while out of my left eye and started thinking about all the girls I had been going out with and for some reason just focusing on Joanne. I came home with my black and blue eye. My parents said, "What happened? I'm going out with Joanne again". They said. "What do you mean"? I said, "I'm gonna call her up." I knew that Joanne would go out, 'cause she was sharing an apartment in Brooklyn with my cousin and she would come out and visit her mom on the weekends. So I just went over and we started talking again. I saw my future mother-in-law and I knew things were kind of cool because she smiled. I went into the house and we started to talk and I asked her, if she wanted to go out and she said no. "We went out the next week and I knew after a month that this was going to be it. I thought I missed the boat the first time around". Actually, I told Joanne's brother Michael, I was going to ask her to marry me but I asked him not to say anything. It was that February I asked her out. I'd drive my mother to her mom's house in Brooklyn to visit her mother and Joanne and my cousin Linda lived around the corner from my Grandmother. I never got the chance to ask Joanne that night. Her friend was in the house. The timing just wasn't right. I sort of asked her but didn't. My mother said "How can you leave her hanging like this"? Two days later I asked her and we got engaged. It was great! We go married a year and a half later. So, bottom line, Rich was working in Brentwood for nine years before he got married. Brentwood

had taught him loyalty and made him appreciate the energy that people who worked there were required to sustain. Every one of us picked that up from our students.

East Junior High was like a big family. His cousin's children were in the building the first and second years he taught there but they weren't in his class. The first year they were on split sessions. They were in the morning session. The older students needed time in the afternoon to practice with their football teams and with all the other teams. When Rich started teaching there was a big difference between 12th grade Physics and 8th Grade Science. Even though it was Physical Science it was watered down Physics. Some of the things he was doing for the first couple of years was really too sophisticated. He had to back off on the math because the students didn't have a sufficient background there. Physics was mostly all mathematics. He always had to concentrate on getting back to the basics that was so important, particularly with any job where they have to visualize what they're doing with your eyes. Often that can be difficult because as an adult you're still looking at things as an adult. As a beginning teacher you have a much bigger idea of what is possible in one class period than is ever likely to occur in reality. Teachers must over prepare like crazy.

He said he always feels that "being a teacher is very much like controlling an orchestra. You have to control the tempo. Sometime the instruments are picking up the pace slowing it down, sometime you're going to need to spend a more time on a technique or a certain procedure than at other times, some part of your orchestra might be playing while another part isn't". He always tried to keep that in mind just like he always divided the class into a pie in his mind and use it as a time reference. In that way he wasn't really looking at the clock though he was glancing at it. He had to be glancing at it for different reasons because only he knew what he wanted to do. The pie in his head had to be a gauge too. Rich defined his job in the classroom as being responsible for the transfer of energy and knowledge. Teachers receive a lot back from their students. He found this out later on. Also, after a number of years in Brentwood you begin to have students in your class whose parents used to be students in your class as well. At about the last eight or ten years all of a sudden we started to hear students saying, "Hey! My father was in your class or, my mother was in your class". Now, if you didn't realize that teaching was a responsibility it's now an even greater



responsibility when teaching students whose parents were your students too. We wanted to know if he had continuing contact with former students.

He informed us that he is now involved in the Brentwood School District's Mentoring Program and is mentoring three different teachers in Science. It's a program intended to assist first year teachers by helping them find their way through the various "traffic jams" and avoid potholes in the street in order to make life choices and difficult decisions a little easier for them. It was his opinion that Brentwood was the first district on Long Island to initiate such a program and it is now a New York State requirement that all districts have to have a mentor in place in such a way as to serve as a guide for beginning teachers. The Mentor is not required to speak to an Administrator. They report only to the teacher who they are assigned to mentor and such contact is strictly between that first year teacher and their mentor upon whom they can call whenever needed. Given teaching is such an important civic responsibility, once again the Brentwood School District has been found in the forefront of creative leadership innovations throughout the State of New York where it has been acknowledged and appreciated for its work for decades. Simply having children of your own can be appreciated for the tremendous responsibility it is. When one is working with other people's children it often feels like an even greater responsibility.

He said, he'll never forget how difficult it was during his first year to participate in any activity because being on split session "I started at 12 Noon and we went to 5 pm and with daylight savings time at 4 pm it was getting dark and you couldn't do anything. At that point parents were already coming home from their jobs and students had to leave school to go home to their parents". Two thirds of every day involved some level of education. Beginning at 7 am the morning Session, afternoon session, overlap, and evening school at the high school until 11 at night. There were 23,000 students in district attendance at that time. He had to forego all his Union activities. He didn't have time to volunteer any more.

I asked who had mentored him during his first year. He told me that a Science teacher, Mark Rabin had been particularly helpful to him and he's still working with him today in a private Montessori School where Mark is teaching Science to Grades 6, 7 and 8 and Rich is teaching the same students math, Gary Mintz, a Social Studies Teacher who later became a Principal at the High School,

and Mike Tanoff another Social Studies Teacher, and Artie Freed, all of them active in different ways, all proactive educators in their own right.

One of my questions to him was, “Can you name the one thing about which you have felt the most pride; the thing that has made you more fulfilled than almost any single other experience in your career? This was his reply. “Just the other day I was telling Joanne (his wife) when we were talking about how being up at the High School and doing mentoring for new teachers has affected me”. He said, “ I can’t even walk three or four feet down the hallway without bumping into one of my former students and feeling the degree of affection they have for me.” He said, “ it’s almost embarrassing”. He feels almost like he’s a rock star. And it’s almost embarrassing not only with students but with faculty you see and he didn’t even work with many of these people and yet they know of him. It might sound like he’s bragging but he’s not. He’s really enjoyed working here almost to the point that it feels like it’s not even a job, but it had to be a job, but it wasn’t a job in the way that people describe jobs they have in a traditional sort of way. He said, “It’s more like family and I’m not even related to these people. There’s something here about loyalty or a common thread that you have with these people that work in the building and the students and their parents. I don’t know if it’s like that in other communities. I wouldn’t know”.

What was his last assignment? He was over at East Middle School and finished by teaching 7th Grade Science. For the last five years it was basically the same schedule. Usually, a 7th, 8th Grade Science split. Once in a while it was one or two math classes mixed in with the Science. A few times it was split between East and South and once between East and North, The interesting thing even though North Middle and East Middle are a distance apart and the same thing for South Middle and East Middle the faculties in both buildings are the same even though the names are different the faculties are the same if that makes any sense. The faces are different but the faculties are the same. There’s something that has remained in common even though the buildings are different. The buildings structurally are the same as far as the layout of the rooms go; the architecture. The other thing is - even though the people are different there was something very similar between the people that worked at East, South, North, but Rich himself never worked at West. He worked in the District from September of 1973 to June of 2006 for a total of thirty-three years.

Prior to his working full time in education as a teacher he worked at Gem Electronics for three years. "That", he said, was "Great!" He always used to complain to his parents, "I'm never getting a raise until the minimum wage goes up". It was so great working there because of the stories you'd hear. Ben Campbell was a black man who had seen it all. Those were great stories he told and you just had to respect him because of what he went through and the strong fiber that this man had. He was probably stronger than any red wood tree. Ben Campbell was the warehouse manager over at Gem Electronics and also worked for and lived at Mr. and Mrs. Fines house. They owned Gem Electronics and still own it today, or rather their son's do. What a dynamic person and what energy he possessed and how honest he was, what fiber, and how wise. If you ignored this person you had to be very stupid. He had so much to offer and I was still young and open to learn everything I could. At the time I was also working for the Farmingdale Youth Council and when I received my Teachers License from New York State I got a promotion to Recreation Instructor. Then I was able to play "Duck, Duck, Goose", "Steal the Bacon", with Grades One to Six, Coach the Basketball Team which was "Great" I kept saying to myself, "This is phenomenal. I'm getting paid to do this"? And then in the wintertime I used to get paid to play Basketball games? I'd do it for nothing. I said, "Rich, you were one of the lucky ones". "Yes, he said, "and I'd do it for nothing". It was actually a sad day when I got promoted to be the supervisor of the playground that meant I couldn't play in the gym. I had to handle all the bookkeeping details and got to know what all those Administrators had been going through.

Did he remember what he got paid when he began in Brentwood? "That's an excellent question, said Richie. The other job never really paid much. It was mostly gasoline money, even though gasoline was only about twenty cents a gallon. I think the minimum wage was something like \$1.80 per hour or something like that.

The Brentwood job paid something like \$9,700. per/annum. They took out a couple of hundred dollars and then my parents had to sit me down and explain what real world economics was all about FICA, NYS, federal withholding, etc. This was also before Social Security was deducted until the minimum was reached.

At this juncture we got around to asking the important question about early retirement and the reasons for his timing of that decision. "Unfortunately" he said,

"Over the course of time, he began putting on a lot of weight " to a point where he grew oblivious to his actual weight gain. So, by February of 2000, he weighed well over 435 lbs. His friends organized a weight watchers team in the (East Middle School) building. The faculty, he told us, had become concerned that something was going to happen to him; that he could easily drop dead of a heart attack. I knew I had gotten big but the truth is when you are that big you're not really aware of what you look like or the risk you're taking. At the time I was still moving around okay. So, by Thanksgiving of that year I had come down to 360 lbs. that was great. Unfortunately, shortly after that he hit a wall, became impatient, and started putting the weight back on again. He grew once again to be over 400 lbs. Then, by 2004 when he would enter the building he was basically holding on to the wall in order to reach Room 123. He knew he was in trouble because if he was having that much trouble then how would he be moving in a year or two. He'd be in a wheelchair or maybe even dead. Though his blood work was always good it was acting in such a way as to provide a false sense of security. He knew he was headed in the wrong direction because given time he would not be able to move that well if he waited to get control. He wanted no part of having his stomach stapled or undergo a procedure that could provide him with a stomach bypass because he knew that there were usually too many post operative problems with either of those procedures. His wife had seen what they call stomach banding. She told him it was done arthroscopically in ninety minutes. It was the summer of 2004 but Rich still wasn't ready. He told us, you have to want to do it. He realized by the time school started he was already in trouble. His knees were sending a message to his brain. His brain wasn't figuring it out but there was a message. He told himself he had to do something. Joanne had told him about the procedure, so that was when he consulted a physician. He saw Dr. Alan Geiss at Syosset Hospital and was nervous that he hadn't the confidence in himself that he needed to get the weight off. Even though it had been done by other people, he didn't know if he could do it. There were probably foods he would have to give up and he really wasn't prepared but he thought, well, I don't have too many options left. He decided to do it and cooperated and played their game according to their rules. He went from 435 lbs. to where he was then at 307 lbs. He still had a way to go but he was able to move around. In 2004 he'd been on a 4-wheel drive: 2 canes, 2 legs, then to a three-wheel drive, back to two-

wheel drive. Even now he'd love to go out and be able to play tennis or golf but he intends to eventually get there. His focus was to keep heading in the right direction.

His decision to retire was based upon his decreased mobility and where he was headed. He submitted papers and left officially in June of 2006. His last day was June 23rd of 2006. He was still working 2 days per week at the Montessori School in the morning and the other 2 days mentoring in Brentwood. Friday he subs and is continually active. He can't sit around. His wife Joanne is still working. His son Danny, he says, leads the life of a Rock Star and is waking up at 1pm.

Rich is obviously proud of his son Danny who has his own band. He writes his own original music. He plays a combination of the hits of many successful groups of musicians and honors bands like The Rolling Stones, led zeppelin, Grateful Dead. His own band is a quartet with a vocalist who plays the harmonica. They've performed on TV and recently appeared at Hofstra University and are working on their first CD with enough completed cuts to release another CD in the near future. Music is his passion; writing, performing, in bars, at colleges. There's a lot of talent there and his father is 100 % on his side.

When I asked about his hero's growing up Rich immediately referenced his two Uncles, Andrew and Frank. Sports wise, the first was Tom Tresh, #15 outfielder for the Yankees. First year was 1962. He didn't gravitate to the superstars because he felt that everybody was gravitating toward Mickey Mantle, Roger Maris, Whitey Ford and Yogi Berra. Tresh was a new guy. Rich had followed his career and admired his performance. Thurman Munson, also # 15 and wearing the same uniform, was another new guy and when Danny played baseball his number was also 15. It became father and son's favorite number.

What will he miss the most? Even today, the interaction of working with staff and students' out on the field; helping them with their lab work, using the equipment, is still fun. What he won't miss is the paperwork that had become incredible by the time he left the district. His parting advice to beginning teachers and next year's students alike is - keep up with the advances in technology both technically and professionally to advance you in your career and life and to always surpass your competition.

Did he ever have a favorite year? The last three or four and maybe the first three or four, they were different but they were special; the beginning and the end. Every year was different; and that was the greatest thing about teaching. He had lived through the equivalent of thirty-three chapters and he could never say, "Gee, I wish this year was like last year. At the end maybe I had a greater appreciation for it all. You remembered things from the beginning and now a lot of those people are forty-five years old. The truth in another way is that it was only I who was getting older. While every New Year they were the same age, keeping me young but looking at it another way, I was the only one aging. Finally, he glowingly referenced our students, staff and the Brentwood community. "I cannot thank the people in the Brentwood community enough for their energy, their support and their loyalty. The unfortunate thing is that when you read a local newspaper you can't pick up on this at all. The picture that's painted neglects the reality that exists in this community totally. It really does exist in my eyes and in my reality I know it exists. Public school teaching is a public relations job and any professional who doesn't realize this, particularly here in Brentwood, is already in trouble. There has to be some sort of a relationship and a bond between you and your students, you and parents; within this triangular relationship, whatever you call it – I don't know if anyone has named it yet.

"I also want to credit the faculty in the buildings where I worked, particularly at East since my time was mostly spent there, where there was a tremendous amount of guidance, help, support that still exists today. It's just incredible and when I'm in other buildings mentoring I see this and I find it incredible, and I think it's unique. As I've said, I don't know what it's like to teach in a different district on Long Island, but here in Brentwood I believe what we have created is unique and I truly hope it never changes."