

Friends with sometimes unexpected trajectories

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As high schoolers, kids always tend to form various groups, sometimes tight cliques and others loose confederations or fluid clusters. One of my groups, the one including my BFF, Susan Block, consisted of the two of us, the very gregarious Joann DeArmis, and sometimes Carol Mae Brown to complete the girls. Then there were the guys who tagged along when we weren't doing 'girl' things including Marty Miller, whose parents were lifelong friends of Susan's, 'Sonny' Stone, our resident musician who kept us happily singing the current show tunes as he played them on the piano and, sort of on the edge, Ron Markowitz, one of the 'AV' guys, always in demand by the teachers to help run equipment.

Looking back at this group, there were a few surprises as to how our lives evolved and, for some, very predictable trajectories as adults. None of us became famous or did things that were totally unpredictable.

I should explain that the whole group attended Syracuse University after HS and therefore could easily remain in touch. I was the odd one out in this as I went off to Boston University, mostly because I wanted to become a physical therapist and that was not an option offered at SU. Therefore I missed being with the group at college and saw them only in the summer. I heard that Susan and Marty often had lunch together. Although they were often together, they had always spent much of this time arguing over everything under the sun. Towards the end of our senior year I got a letter from Susan. She said "Sit down. You are not going to believe this. Marty and I are getting married." I guess I wasn't really all that surprised. They had a great deal in common and certainly worked through all of their issues. No secrets there! They remained married for the rest of their lives, raising two children. Marty was there for Susan when she developed dementia and kept her home through a very difficult downward course of the disease until he died suddenly of a heart attack. I counted both of them dear friends for our whole lives.

Everyone else carried on in a predictable way. Joann worked in admissions at Antioch College, became fluent in Portuguese as she recruited students from Brazil, and I'm sure was the center of any gathering. 'Jay' Stone, no longer 'Sonny', was a frustrated dancer. He had missed all of the needed early training thanks to the resistance of his parents. He acted in local productions but never really achieved the life on stage that he would have loved.

Then there was Ron, the quiet AV guy. It turns out he got his PhD, became a professor at SU and wrote a beautiful book on the Erie Canal, a copy of which he gave to all our classmates at our 50th reunion. He and I reconnected again recently at our 60th reunion. Of the old crowd, he and I are the only ones left. We immediately gravitated to one another and probably talked more together than we had in our whole 70 years of acquaintance. We mourned together our lost friends and sank into the enjoyment of our natural connection. That is the way of very long friendships. Those connections remain strong.