

## Recap of 6-22-10 SFF Evening with Susan B. Parker

Dear Senior Fellows and Friends,

Three weeks ago, a diverse group precipitated out of our network to talk with Susan B. Parker over dinner. Susan's entertaining take on that later was that "It was such a treat to visit with such diverse people engaged in many aspects of public service (not "servitude")! Go to <http://www.ifdm2010.com/advisory-committee.html> and scroll down to her biographical sketch; the experience described in the second paragraph was the source of much of the evening's discussion.

Tip Fallon, Evans Incorporated (also the founder of Speaking for Change, and former advisor of students on topics such as "How to Have Meetings That Don't Suck") very generously sent me his notes immediately after the dinner. Here's a selection of his notes and mine from Susan's talk and the ensuing discussion:

- "I acknowledge hierarchy but I don't let it rule my life."
- "You can't let the adversity part get up your nose; you just do it."
- What does "stewardship" mean and how does it apply to your job?
- What makes you say, "Not on my watch"?
- 4 C's, knit together by communication:
  - Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration (labor together), Co-optation
- Many small deeds equal a major accomplishment.
- Change always means you have to let something go.
- Resilience is key to leading change.
- When you're lower in the totem pole, it comes down to taking ownership of the change, starting with your self. You lead from where you are.
- "Build support for your ideas by convincing others that it was their idea. Then shut up." --Ralph Chatham, ARPA Consultant
- "The most effective followers are those who exercise self leadership." --Bob Tobias, American University, Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implementation
- "Sometimes the little picture can trump the big picture." --Geoff Abbott, U.S. Coast Guard/Retired, now at Homeland Security Institute

As you can see, we had a wide-ranging discussion. Stories and truths were told, and not just by Susan. We were introduced to [ekistics](#), the science of human settlements. There was quite a bit of discussion about how she regains balance and preserves resilience in the face of suffering, uncertainty, and political machination. How does that work? A sense of urgency. Being challenged by the immediacy of suffering – I can't fix everything, but what can I do with this 8-year-old in the next 2 minutes? – while maintaining clinical distance. Forgetting oneself and focusing on the agenda. Having a safe place to escape to for reframing, and then returning to the work ("I always know where home is.").

Participant affiliations were as follows:

American University/ISPPI  
ARPA Consultant  
Booz Allen Hamilton  
Consultant, National Journal  
Department of Education  
Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Department of Labor  
Department of Navy

DHS/Retired, Consultant  
Evans Incorporated  
Health and Human Services  
Homeland Security Institute  
Management Concepts  
Storyteller  
Syracuse University, GovLoop Fellow  
The Center for Radical Improvement

Until we meet again, best wishes.

Sincerely,

Kitty Wooley  
U.S. Department of Education