

INTRODUCTION: THE WORKER WITH THE GROUP

Paul Abels, Special Issue editor

Welcome to this special issue of *Reflections*. It highlights social workers' practice and teaching related to work with groups for varied purposes such as social change, individual growth, community action, and policy development.

By an interesting coincidence, this past year celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups (AASWG). And an even more interesting coincidence, I was the chairperson of their first association symposium twenty-five years ago in Cleveland. In addition, my spouse, Sonia L. Abels, the Founding Editor of *Reflections*, was active on the planning committee. Taking coincidence a step further, recently I was elected national president of the AASWG. That's an awful "much" for one paragraph.

The articles in this issue present a varying approach to work with groups, supporting workers and aiding students to understand the value of the group as a helping mechanism.

Professor Alex Gitterman discusses colleagues important in shaping his own career and their contributions to the field. Alex, an exceptional educator, is the author of many books on group work, a marvelous leader in social work, and a person I learned a great deal from.

Professor Emeritus Murray Gruber's article offers his reflections on the impact of clinical practice (individual and group): how it influenced the direction of the profession and the consequences. Ready for another coincidence? Murray and I worked together at a Children's Psychiatric Hospital on a project to train nurses to work with groups. He was active in community organizing and chaired a committee for the Cleveland NASW on Dis-

crimination in Public Housing, of which I was a member.

Janice R. Gagerman, a professor at California State University Sacramento, writes of how a teacher can use the group to aid students. She helps us look at the process from idea to fulfillment. In it we see the electrifying results of a group worker at her best.

In "The Death of a Hero," professor Janice Andrews-Schenk of the University of St. Thomas, presents a moving, poetical, and candid tribute to the person she saw as a leading hero: group worker Gisela Konopka, who died this year. It is an exceptional glimpse of this pioneer in the profession.

I have included my article as well. It examines some of my experiences with groups in which activities play an important part in the process of working to help the group achieve its purposes. The range of groups includes children, public housing, residents, a summer camp experience of adults with disabilities, and police officers.

The finale of the issue is an oral history of Chauncey Alexander interviewed by Professor Joshua Miller of Smith College. Chauncey was the former Executive Director of the National Association of Social Work. He is an active member of AASWG and worked with countless groups and committees over the years. The oral history celebrates the work of this outstanding social worker and citizen.

As an encore the issue concludes with Professor Agathi Glezakos' address to the graduating MSW Students at California State University at Hayward in June of this year.

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