

REFLECTIONS:

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

FORGIVENESS

Volume 4, Number 4

Fall 1998

A Journal for the Helping Professions

REFLECTIONS:

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

EXECUTIVE BOARD, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH (CSULB)

Catherine Goodman, Department of Social Work
Mary Ann Jimenez, Department of Social Work
John Jung, Department of Psychology
Julie O'Donnell, Department of Social Work
Nancy Oliver, Department of Nursing
Marilyn Potts, Department of Social Work
Madeleine Rose, Department of Social Work
Sonia Leib Abels, Editor, Department of Social Work
Paul Abels, Associate Editor, Department of Social Work
John Oliver, Director, Department of Social Work

EDITORIAL BOARD

Chauncey Alexander, California State University, Long Beach, Department of Social Work
Mary Ann Amodeo, Boston University, School of Social Work
Beth Cagan, Cleveland State University, First College, Department of Social Work
Edward Canda, University of Kansas, School of Social Welfare
Kenneth Chau, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Department of Social Work
Suzanne Dworak-Peck, NCN, Los Angeles, CA
Paul H. Ephross, University of Maryland at Baltimore, School of Social Work
Suzanne England, Tulane University, School of Social Work
Charles Garvin, University of Michigan, School of Social Work
Sheldon R. Gelman, Yeshiva University, Wurzweiler School of Social Work
Alex Gitterman, Columbia University, School of Social Work
Gail Goldberg-Wood, University of Louisville, Kent School of Social Work
Howard Goldstein, Oakland, ME
Jane Gorman, New Mexico Highlands University, Department of Social Work
Aaron Gresson, Pennsylvania State University, School of Education
Maulana Karenga, California State University Long Beach, Department of Black Studies
John A. Kayser, University of Denver, School of Social Work
Martin Kohn, Northeastern Ohio University, College of Medicine
Joan Laird, Smith College, School for Social Work
Emilia E. Martinez-Brawley, Arizona State University, School of Social Work
William Meezan, University of Southern California, School of Social Work
Samuel I. Miles, Psychiatry and Neurology, Los Angeles, CA
Susan G. Nummedal, California State University, Long Beach, Department of Psychology
Julie O'Donnell, California State University, Long Beach, Department of Social Work
Wilma Peebles-Wilkins, Boston University, School of Social Work
Beatrice Saunders, Editor in Residence, Fordham University, School of Social Work
Dennis L. Saleebey, University of Kansas, School of Social Welfare, Lawrence, KS
David Scardino, Screen Writer, Los Angeles, CA
M. Christine Talmadge, California State University, Long Beach, Department of Nursing
John Wilson, Cleveland State University, Department of Psychology

Editor-in-chief, Sonia Leib Abels
Assistant Editor, Russell Rossetto

Associate Editor, Paul Abels
Copy Editor, Vilma Chemers

REFLECTIONS: NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING (015-295)
published quarterly by The Department of Social Work

at California State University Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Boulevard, Long Beach, California, 90804.

REFLECTIONS:

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

VOLUME 4

FALL 1998

NUMBER

4

SPECIAL ISSUE: FORGIVENESS

Special Editor: Charles Garvin

LETTER TO THE EDITOR		2
EDITORIALS		
Personal Reflections on Public Acts of Forgiveness	John Oliver	4
The Last of the Just	Paul Abels	6
Introduction to the Special Issue: Forgiveness	Charles Garvin	8
NARRATIVES		
The Story of Linda and Peter Biehl: Private Loss and Public Forgiveness	Peter and Linda Biehl	11
Faces of Forgiveness: Personal Struggles and Professional Observations	Michael Andes	23
(Un)Forgiveness: "To Be or Not To Be" . . . [Not] . . .	John E. Tropman	36
A Death in the Group Work Family	Paul H. Ephross	42
NARRATIVE POETRY		
Responsive Reading	Helen R. Weingarten	35
Wedding Day: The Fifth Blessing		
BRIEF REFLECTION		
A Narrative Interview with Ann Hartman Part Two: The Importance of Context	Joshua Miller	48
WRITING NARRATIVES		
Historically Significant Memories in Social Work: Two Perspectives on Oral History Research and the Helping Professions	John A. Kayser and Charles T. Morrissey	61
CRITICAL REVIEWS: ARTS, BOOKS, MEDIA		
Book Review: <i>Long Walk to Freedom</i> by Nelson Mandela	Agathi Glezakos	68
CALL FOR NARRATIVES	Thomas Bucaro	70
COVER	James F. Sullivan	
ORIGINAL ARTWORK	Beth Abels, Laetitia Burns, Maricris Mangohig, and Russell Rossetto	



Dear Editor:

I have enjoyed your journal from its inception and the opportunity it allows us to write from the heart and the soul—a place we must begin if we are to be there for our clients and students. Taking stock of one's life and work is often a painful process although it is a prerequisite for personal and professional growth. As I read the experiences of others in this journal, I take strength from the knowledge that I am not alone in seeking to understand and utilize my innermost conversations to benefit those with whom I work. Thank you for allowing a forum where we can share our humanness as well as our humaneness. I offer the following poem as an example of a personal reflection. Thank you.

UNTIL

I never realized how sad my life was
until I could not cry for the woman who slept on the
concrete and washed her face with the tears of a thousand losses—

until I could not touch the hand of another who was ravaged by the
personification of all he was told was sinful
until the old woman I passed in the corridor became the face of my
night time shadows and I could no longer run away
for my body could not catch the fleeing spirit.

when the unisons of rage against the infamies of tyrants no longer
evoke a whisper
when a child asks Why? and I answer—because...
when the stench of poverty is not strong enough to counteract the
hollowness of a life lived in abstentia.

I cry now for I am old and I have missed the essence and settled
For the dregs.

I have ignored the entreaties and cultivated the merciless.
And I am sad because I never knew
Until now.

Myra Marcus

*Assistant Professor in the School of
Social Work at Barry University in
Miami, FL.*

SEARCHING FOR: Letters to the Editor

As for most other editors, relief accompanies putting the journal to press. This is our fourth year of publication, and perhaps because of the currency and the meaningfulness of forgiveness, as exemplified by a campus wide event on forgiveness supported by the University, we have sprouted peacock feathers for our prescience. Yet there is unease, even within the joy of what we are doing. "Forgiveness," perhaps the most emblematic, has led us to think more about our purpose. We know *Reflections* has influenced other journals, and there appears to be an increase in biographies, oral histories, and autobiographies in the literature.

A significant purpose of the journal is to expand the discourse around the practice themes expressed in the journal's narratives, and autobiographies. We receive many commentaries about how much you like the journal—but as much as we like the praise, we encourage you to send us mail about your opinions of the practice described and explained in the narratives. For example, in the set of articles (narrative and commentaries) on "Ethics" [*Reflections* Vol. 2, No. 3]—the situation where Annie Houston allows dental dams (contraband in the prison) to be passed in her counseling room—we published several letters reflecting the many sides of the issue.

There are other practice controversies expressed by the various authors in the journal, that could benefit by your opinion. If you disagree/agree, take issue, or have something different to add, send a letter to the editor. Many narrative practice perspectives certainly warrant some conflict or, as my favorite philosopher suggests, initiate intellectual doubt. One of our purposes is to create a discourse within the helping professions. Participate—let us heat up the profession's discourse around its practice. In this current issue there are many themes that evoke professional/personal disagreement; there are many differences of opinion. What's yours? SLA



Corrections: In the last issue [*REFLECTIONS* Vol. 4, No. 3; Summer 1998], we neglected to note Art Nori for his "Talking Circle" which appeared on page 26. We also misspelled the name of contributing artist Maricris Mangohig on the table of contents page.

The CALIFORNIA CHAPTER of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

congratulates

**REFLECTIONS: Narratives of Professional Helping
and The Department of Social Work at California State
University Long Beach for their contribution to the helping
professions and the publication of this special issue:**

"Forgiveness."

**Join us in celebrating one hundred years of social work by
becoming a part of your local professional organization.**

**JAMES J. KELLY, PRESIDENT, NASW
JANLEE WONG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NASW**

IN CALIFORNIA CONTACT:

**National Association of Social Workers
California Chapter
1016 23rd Street
Sacramento, CA 95816
1-800-538-2565**

www.socialworkers.org

Personal Reflections on Public Acts of Forgiveness

by
John Oliver

John Oliver, Ph.D., Director,
Department of Social Work,
California State University
Long Beach, Long Beach,
California



I imagine that when most of us think of acts of forgiveness, images of modest indiscretions for which we have offered or sought recompense come to mind. In a general sense, we seldom associate forgiveness with externally initiated acts that result in irreparable loss. When loss exceeds personally acceptable thresholds, I believe that most individuals perceive such challenges as something that must be endured rather than forgiven. Examples of extreme loss that are likely to evoke thoughts and actions aimed at personal recovery rather than forgiveness include: death, gross disfigurement, and permanent psychological damage of loved ones due to acts of random violence; politically initiated or politically condoned acts of cultural/racial genocide, terrorism, and the use of weapons of mass destruction.

The reader should note the careful insertion of the word "most." I deliberately choose this term because I believe that there is a small and select number of individuals who are capable of forgiving the most unimaginable atrocity. However, I believe that those capable of achieving extraordinary feats of forgiveness tend to organize their pattern of expressing personal loss in a public arena around two theoretical possibilities that are interrelated.

As previously indicated, loss may trigger thoughts and actions aimed at recovery. According to Freire (1970), Fanon (1968), Weinstein and Platt (1973), the people who have suffered loss recognize that they must forgive those who have harmed them in order to free themselves from the pain of the experience. According to this conceptualization, forgiveness is a prerequisite for recovery. Significantly, embedded in this perception of recovery is the notion that the person who has absorbed the loss possesses the ability to assist the person who inflicted the harm in his/her own recovery.

The second pattern of expressing personal loss in a public manner involves forgiveness as a means by which the person(s) who suffered the loss strive to achieve a transcendent state. This idea is perhaps best explained by providing an example. I was born in Pulaski, Tennessee, the birthplace of the Klu Klux Klan. In addition to weekly politically sanctioned cross burnings, African American citizens were subjected to periodic violent acts as a means of maintaining control of social, political, and economic affairs.

When I was in junior high school, a classmate was drowned by the Klan. Knowledge of who killed Robert and how he died was a necessary el-

ement in maximizing the intended impact of the act on the Black community. The community was devastated. This loss touched the private lives of every Black man, woman, and child within our community. I remember going to church on the Sunday following his death. The minister echoed a theme of forgiveness. "It is not our Christian duty to judge these men, we are to forgive them, we are to pray for their souls." I still remember this admonishment. In the weeks that followed Robert's death, community leaders organized structured means of remembering his death... special ceremonies and other ways of honoring his life were developed. Most importantly, the leadership of the community met with public officials, issuing an ultimatum that never again would a Black life perish

in this manner. To this date, no other Black person has lost his or her life in the same way.

I consider this example of forgiveness as being transcendent. In that the act of private loss was publicly forgiven it helped the communities (Black and White) to overcome the event and to heal. Robert's life was renewed because his memory is forever associated with a significant social change. Indeed, Robert is still alive. Men and women of my own age, when we speak of this event, almost always use the present tense.

When forgiveness results in extending the memory of someone who is deceased, the forgiver most likely experiences that part of the self closely aligned with a creative force or God. For a moment in time, the

forgiver connects with the creative force and is capable of producing life. I believe that forgiveness is the dynamic that makes this improbable act possible. □

REFERENCES

- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Fanon, F. (1968). *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- Weinstein, Fred (1973). *Psychoanalytic sociology: an essay on the interpretation of historical data and the phenomena of collective behavior*. Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press.



The Last of The Just

by Paul Abels

There is a legend that says that in every generation, the world is supported on the shoulders of thirty-six "Just Men." The world is permitted to survive because they witness and take on the suffering of humanity, and because they behave righteously during their life span. As the legend goes, neither they, nor anyone else, knows who they are. They might be anyone. They might be you. They might be me. Any man, any woman. We have reluctantly chosen not to change the gender terms of the legend, which is ancient, from a time when language was used differently.

Andre Schwarz-Bart uses this legend as the basis for a wonderful novel that won the Prix Goncourt, France's most prestigious literary award. On the final page of this marvelous book, the last Just Man dies in flames in a concentration camp during the Holocaust (1959).

Please allow yourself to join me in a reflective creation of what might have happened in the next seconds of eternity following the last Just Man's death.

The last Just Man came slowly back to consciousness; surprisingly, he felt very light. At first all he could make out were voices, but no particular words. Then he made out the images of a number of people standing over him; they seemed to be welcoming him. He knew, somehow, that they, too, were Just Men. Before he had time to gather his senses and even ask a question, the voices hushed and they all turned their heads in the direction of the door, their eyes turned down as if not wanting to stare. Truthfully, it wasn't really a door, because they weren't really in a room. It was more like a space surrounded by thin curtains that seemed to be flowing, maybe blowing in the air, and in no particular direction. Yet he felt as if he were on solid ground. A form came through the door... well not re-

ally, because the form didn't really come through but engulfed the entire space. The last Just Man knew immediately that the form was the HOLIEST ONE. The last Just Man couldn't think or move. "Welcome, and come with me—I will show you around," a voice seemed to say in a muted, mellow, but certain tone.

He and the great form walked, no, it was more like a glide, in spaces between other gossamer-like curtains, the other Just Men now accompanying them. "We should start here," said the HOLIEST ONE, and the curtain seemed to part. The sight was impossible to encompass. There were countless people. It seemed they extended into the horizon, except that he knew there was no horizon. Many seemed to look like people he had known, strangely familiar, though no face was recognizable. They all appeared to be busy and looked satisfied, though the last Just Man could not see them doing anything in particular.



The other Just Men were observing the same scene, but they saw different people. Some saw Asians linked to various invasions, another saw Africans they knew were linked to slaves. One Just Man saw descendants of women who had been sterilized because they were not thought worthy of having children. Another saw Native Americans, Mexicans, and Canadians connected to the first people on the continent. Still another only saw people dressed in ancient caftons, chitons, togas, and djellabahs. Another saw Armenians. In essence the entire history of oppressed people in the Universe could be seen by all of the Just Men, and all the people seemed well and pleased with what they were doing. None of the Just Men knew that the other Just Men were seeing other persons from other times. None knew that they only saw those who had been victims of injustice during their own time on earth. Perhaps this was a well deserved reward, to spare them the additional pain of knowing that injustice had continued past their own times.

"Who are all these people?" asked the last Just Man.

"These are all People who never were, and never will be," answered the HOLIEST ONE.

The last Just Man was puzzled. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"They are all the people who were never born because of

injustices, such as slavery, the holocaust, or ethnic cleansing," was the reply.

"But they all look so happy," said the last Just Man.



"That is because a world has been created for all of them," was the response. "Each has a world in which all the wonders of life have been presented to them. For each, a world for them alone, although sometimes a few paths do cross as they might in real life. Of course, they are unaware of not being alive. To them the world is real, as is everything in it. Yes, it is true that they have problems to deal with, and sorrows, even death, but no slaughters; it is a world of Justice."

The remorse the last Just Man had first felt on hearing that these were *people who never were, and never will be* lessened as he understood how good the life could be they now had. He

raised no further questions, and they continued their walk. There were beautiful gardens and other groups seemed to be involved in activities the last Just Man could not make out.

They arrived at a space similar to the others, and as a breeze wisped the curtain aside, the last Just Man noted many people scurrying back and forth, not seeming to be getting anywhere, but eager in the search. They were each speaking, but not to each other. The scene engulfed him like a heavy perfume, leaving a discomforting presence. "Who are these people," he asked, "What are they doing?"

"They are the ones seeking people to forgive them for what they have done," was the almost immediate reply. "But of course they will never find them, because they are searching for the *people who never were, and never will be.*"

In a while, the last Just Man turned, with tears in his eyes, looking at the HOLIEST ONE. He murmured, "But you could forgive them." The other Just Men stood dazed, breathless.

The HOLIEST ONE was silent for a moment. Then, with a slight, warm smile, he slowly turned and walked away. □

REFERENCE

Schwarz-Bart, Andre. (1959) *The Last of the Just*. Bantam Books. New York, N.Y.

Exploring Forgiveness

By Charles Garvin, Editor for Special Issue on Forgiveness

Charles Garvin, Ph.D.,
Professor, School of Social
Work, University of Michigan,
Ann Arbor, Michigan

My interest in the topic of forgiveness began many years ago when Paul and Sonia Leib Abels still lived in Cleveland and I was staying with them while I offered a workshop at Case Western Reserve University. As was typical of our relationship, we would stay up late discussing and solving all the problems of social work and of the world! For reasons I can no longer remember, our talk moved to the issue of forgiveness. The three of us saw this as an important topic and one that was almost totally ignored at that time in social work writings.

The Abels and I discussed various occasions in our own lives, as well as in the lives of clients, students, and friends, that were associated with wrongs that had been inflicted. Some of these occasions had led to the parties involved seeking to "work it out" with each other and, whether it was called that or not, forgiveness was asked for and possibly granted. We also realized there were other situations in which no conversations to deal with grievances ever occurred. Sometimes the aggrieved party forgave the "other." Perhaps this was due to an understanding of the other or to a "letting go" of the burden of carrying around resentments or, to some, a spiritual state of mind in which forgive-

ness was seen as a virtue in itself.

As I reflect back on this discussion, I can think of many reasons why this topic had special meaning to me. As a child, I was one of the sensitive, somewhat fearful children who is often the target of teasers and bullies. I remember an occasion when I, a Jewish child, was held captive in a room at the local YMCA where my parents sent me to toughen me up. My captor insisted that I say something to indicate I adopted his Christian beliefs. I finally got him off my back by agreeing to recite after him "The Lord's Prayer." Even at about ten years old, I knew enough to know that the prayer, while created by Jesus, had no content that I thought I should suffer for if I refused to do what my captor demanded of me. It took me well into my teen years to let go of my resentments as I came to the conclusion that he thought that he was performing God's will and would probably be rewarded for his zeal. I learned from this that I could sometimes forgive others when I understood what was driving them.

In later years when I was already a social worker (and perhaps these efforts to deal with forgiveness had something to do with that occupational choice), I worked with a woman, now no longer living, who



was superior to me in the agency. We were the staff of a teen camping experience. On our return, I learned that she had gone to my immediate supervisor and had told her many stories of my presumed incompetent handling of events on that trip. To this day, I believe that she fabricated most of these stories. It was only when I, too, exaggerated the incompetence of fellow workers in order to bolster my own uncertain level of confidence through implying I had superior skills that I ultimately forgave her—although she never asked for this and probably didn't know I had heard of her denigration of me. I learned from this that my forgiving others had something to do with seeing in myself what I resented in the other.

On another occasion, the tables were turned on me when I complained to a superior that a colleague's wife was undermining me in her chats with a supervisee of mine when they were together socially. I never dreamed that the supervisor would take this matter up with the colleague who, to this day, several decades later, has never forgiven me. I understand now, better than I did then, that I was "triangulating" and should have taken my concerns up with the colleague and his wife directly. I learned a lot about triangula-

tion and have essentially forgiven myself, but have never really talked with these other people about it. Call it cowardice, but I do not believe that any of us will gain from opening up old issues now.

There is one situation about which I am still unforgiving and I haven't yet figured out what I want to do. I had learned that a colleague was spreading



a false set of damaging stories about me—I know not why. I contacted that person at the time and urged the individual either to confront me openly (such as by bringing charges against me) or to cease spreading the stories. That individual accepted the latter. Four or five years later we still greet each other when we meet, but I don't believe that person wishes to deal with the situation. I guess I am stuck on

this one. I have thought a lot, without resolution, about what I want to do.

As a Jew, I have the same feelings my people have about the Holocaust although I did not personally lose family members. My experiences with the Holocaust come from having been an American teen-ager throughout World War II. Unlike others in my family, I have no reluctance to buy German products or to travel in Germany and I even have close friends who were born in Germany. I think this means that there is a lot of forgiveness in me, but this may not count as forgiveness as my friends were not, themselves, Nazis. I am not troubled by the fact that I have no forgiveness for the actual Nazis, many of whom are dead.

The last personal story I will tell is of my youngest son. We adopted him when he was five and a product of a very destructive young childhood. He was the source of a lot of pain for me as he acted on his anger in his teen years. He now has worked out most of this in his adulthood and he is a very loving person. I don't think I ever thought of whether I should forgive him or not as I think I understood a lot of what he had gone through and was going through. This is another example of my tying forgive-

ness, at least in part, to understanding.

Now to resume the story of the Abels and me. We committed ourselves many years ago to think more about forgiveness and to come together again to collaborate on an article on the topic. As is so frequently the case, we did continue to see each other despite the distances that separated us and we often remembered our commitment to explore forgiveness together, but this never happened in the form we envisioned.

Meanwhile many things happened to underline the importance of this topic. First, a new field has emerged: forgiveness studies. Articles, books, colloquia have been devoted to this theme. Perhaps more important has been the connection of the issue of forgiveness to world and historical events. The president has asked for forgiveness on behalf of the white citizens of the United States for the many racist outrages that have been perpetrated upon African-Americans. A unique event in world history has been the process taking place in South Africa in which officials of all sorts have been given the opportunity to publicly admit their wrongs and to receive forgiveness in the form of amnesty. The President, in another widely discussed speech, has asked for forgiveness for his inappropriate sexual acts, although how adequate his statement was has been widely questioned. The Feminist movement has highlighted the centuries of oppression women have suffered through the ac-

tions of men. I also came to the conclusion through many years of struggling with this issue, through my participation in a men's group, that all men should seek forgiveness—at least for acts of omission on our part in the struggle for justice for women.

For many years the Jewish people, as well as many others, have debated whether or not some German people, or German society in general, should receive any form of forgiveness for the Holocaust. The issue of forgiveness enters into the interactions between Israel and the Palestinians, the Serbs and the Bosnians, the English and the Irish, the Greek and the Turkish societies, to name only a few of the peoples who have grievances between them.

Thus, it did not surprise me when Sonia Leib Abels called and proposed that I help bring about a special issue of this journal in which narratives on the subject of forgiveness are featured. She hoped that through narratives of people dealing with this issue, we could all better understand why and how people struggle with the issue of whether and when to forgive or ask for forgiveness. As I indicated above, I had also had my own efforts to cope with forgiveness and felt ready to do more work on this. I also appreciated the social context of how forgiveness has taken on large social meanings. The timeliness of this issue was also demonstrated by the ease with which

we were able to locate people who would be willing to share their forgiveness experiences.

I have learned a great deal that has helped me in my own struggles from the other papers we have included in this issue. Each of them illuminates one of the dimensions of forgiveness about which I still struggle. These include coming to terms with not forgiving someone; handling discussions when we or the other are asking for forgiveness; handling forgiveness issues of social work clients and seeing how these relate to our own lives; forgiving ourselves for things we tried to do and in which we failed; and forgiveness as it is dealt with at the end of life.

I hope that these brief introductory comments will lead you into reading and pondering on these narratives and that the readings will help you as you encounter similar feelings in yourself and in others. You may be inspired to share your experiences with other readers of this journal and to enable this ripple to continue to spread from your shores to the entire ocean. □



The Story of Linda and Peter Biehl: Private Loss and Public Forgiveness

Representing our daughter, Amy, we participated and gave testimony at the amnesty hearing for the four young men who murdered her. Recognizing the role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa's healing process, we did not oppose the Amnesty Committee's decision to grant them their freedom. We believe, as did our daughter, in the importance of democratic elections in South Africa. The amnesty hearings were but one condition in making them a reality. We grieve our loss, yet forgiveness has freed us. We can honor our daughter, we can remain true to her convictions, and we can carry on her work. Our narrative describes and explains our experience, the media and others' response to our decisions, and the meaning this has had to us and the members of our family: Kim, 31; Molly, 27; and Zach, 20.

by
Peter and Linda Biehl

Peter and Linda Biehl,
the Amy Biehl Foundation.



AMNESTY COMMITTEE
PO Box 3162
Cape Town

Prologue

We had expected the letter. From the day Amy's killers were sentenced to eighteen years in prison for murder and public violence, we had known amnesty applications were probable.

Still, the timing of the letter was interesting. Perhaps we

search each event for the ironies, but the fax arrived from Cape Town on April 22nd: one day after Linda's birthday and four days before what might have been Amy's thirtieth. But irony was quickly lost in the plain reality of the words. Below is the letter-fax from the Amnesty Committee of South Africa's truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Tel: (021) 24 5161
Fax: (021) 23 3280

Dear Mr and Mrs P. Biehl

The Amnesty Committee of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has received an application for amnesty from Mongesi Manquina in respect of the murder of your daughter, Amy Biehl.

The hearing will commence in the week of 19 May 1997 to 25 May 1997 in Cape Town. We are hereby informing of such dates to enable us to accommodate you should you wish to attend the hearing. Kindly advise us urgently as to a date suitable to yourselves within the aforementioned week to facilitate the necessary arrangements.

You shall be formally notified once we have heard from you by return facsimile.

We look forward to hearing from you.

With our kind wishes hereby extended.

Yours sincerely,

ROBIN BRINK
EVIDENCE LEADER

We knew Manquina's application would be joined by the other three. That was a foregone conclusion. But the others had until May 10, 1997, in which to apply. That was the official cut-off date for amnesty applications.

We were advised by John Allen of Archbishop Tutu's office that the four applicants would present themselves in a single hearing. Given the immediate proximity of the proposed May 19th hearing week, counsel for the applicants could easily appear and request a postponement to provide adequate preparation time. We could make a very long and expensive trip for nothing. This seemed unreasonable and unfair.

Upon consideration of our request that the hearing be re-scheduled to coincide with our planned visit to Cape Town in late June and July, the Amnesty Committee agreed to re-set the hearing for July 8-9, 1997. We were thankful to be spared the expense and probable frustration of an early trip and were grateful for some additional time in which to prepare our statement for the hearing.

There was no question of our participation in the hearing. Amy had informed us four years earlier that the Truth and Reconciliation process was a key pre-negotiated condition upon which free elections for all South Africans could be granted by the National Party—in power at the time. More importantly, a procedure for granting of amnesty in forgiveness of politically di-

rected crimes was essential to the pro-apartheid regime before it could open the ballot boxes to the certainty of Black majority rule.

Amy had said that Nelson Mandela and his African National Congress (ANC) colleagues had refused to accept a blanket amnesty provision and had compromised on case-by-case amnesty, earned on the merits of the evidence presented, against a rigorous standard for proof.



Given this background insight and Amy's passionate efforts to gain free and democratic elections for all South Africans, we could not ignore the Amnesty Committee process. Our failure to appear and participate in the hearing could be interpreted as displaying a lack of respect for a healing process, honorably negotiated and now publicly and unequivocally championed by President Mandella, Archbishop Tutu and other respected South Africans.

We knew we must participate in the process and, believing in it, that we could not oppose amnesty if it were granted on the merits. We were certain Amy would concur.

News of the hearing schedule spread quickly. So did our indication to the Amnesty Committee that we would not retain legal counsel or oppose amnesty, if granted.

Media representatives from South Africa and throughout the United States began telephoning us with their inevitable inquiries. On a small scale, it was reminiscent of the media blitz in the early hours and days following Amy's death.

Always, the questions: "... but, aren't you angry?" or "... you mean you are prepared to forgive your daughter's killers?" It reminded Linda of the days in 1993 when producers from the television tabloid news "magazines" and popular "talk" shows would telephone her looking for an indication that she might like to appear on camera and get "mad." Linda was always so calm, rational, and unsensational that the producers or "talent" people never called back.

Once again, we succeeded in boring the reporters with our peaceful resolve in our decision not to oppose the amnesty applications from Amy's killers. Generally, the reporters were not equipped with backgrounds which would enable them to understand our position. So they covered the story and went on to the next one.

The *Houston Chronicle*, however, sent South African reporter Tony Freemantle, who had written an award-winning feature piece on truth commissions in 1996. Tony spent an

entire day with us in our home. He understood our attitude and the basis for it—although he conceded that he might not be capable of it, himself. His front-page piece for the *Chronicle* ran on Sunday, May 11th—one day after the cut-off date for amnesty applications to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It was also Mother's Day (irony again), but Linda didn't seem to notice.

Freemantle's piece was informed and insightful. People told us they found it helpful in understanding our position because it was placed in a well-researched context. This is testimony to the utility of good journalism.

Our preparation for Cape Town really centered around our desire to arrange a meaningful experience for the Kendall family of St. Louis, who would be traveling with us for the first ten days of the trip. The Kendalls have become very important in the educational outreach activities of the Amy Biehl Foundation in the United States and—on their first visit to South Africa—we wanted them to experience vividly the joys and sorrows of life in the townships and informal settlements, to see the contrast with Cape Town's beaches and riches. We wanted them to see what Amy saw. Moreover, as friends, we wanted them to see some of the work we are doing in the Western Cape and to meet some of the people and organizations who are contributing to the building of the new South Africa.

We kept telling ourselves that we would prepare a written statement for presentation at the amnesty hearing. We wanted to be certain of our word choice. Every word must be just right.

Former Ambassador, Princeton Lyman, who had officially informed Linda of Amy's death from Pretoria in 1993, volunteered to review and comment on our prepared statement before our departure. He never had the opportunity to be of service.

When we boarded our flight on June 26, we had no written statement.

We knew our feelings—what was in our hearts and in our heads.

In so many ways, we had been prepared for this event. For years, we had taken our kids to Sunday school. For years, we had taught Sunday school classes in Christian ethics. Standing at the kitchen telephone, moments after learning of Amy's death, Linda recalls fielding a constant stream of telephone calls and visitors thinking the words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

While we have never been serious readers of the Bible, few words could be more appropriate in considering the circumstances of Amy's death. Her friends tried to tell Amy's killers that she was a "comrade" in their struggle. But try reasoning with an angry mob in the heat of battle. It was too late. Amy's killers saw only a white person.

Amy had prepared us for this. On the subject of black violence against White South Africans, Amy repeatedly admonished us to remember that the frustrated and angry Black youth "... are only doing what has been done to them by generations of white oppressors."

Moreover, Amy's admonition that "...when Black South Africans die in the struggle, only numbers are reported—but when white people die, they get complete obituaries with names, families, pets, and everything," was ringing in our ears.

Her dismay at this indignity had been prophetic in the case of her own death in South Africa's struggle. We knew how Amy would feel about the media blitz which had followed her death. After all, she had confided to friends that—in the event of her death—she wanted the same impersonal press treatment accorded her Black colleagues in the struggle.

So... prepared by our own personal background experiences and by our daughter's words in the years and days before her death, there were never any questions about our position. It was a time for humility—a time for forgiveness.

In the end, we knew the words would come. So, armed with Amy's words and a few related materials, we departed for Cape Town.

We were not expecting the international media attention which greeted our arrival in Cape Town. There were television cameras and newspaper reporters present when we

entered the international passenger terminal at the airport. While loading our luggage into a van, a man approached to say, simply, "... I am a resident of Cape Town and I want to thank you for what you are doing."

Within minutes of arrival in our hotel room, the telephone rang. It was a reporter for the *London Times* in the hotel lobby and requesting an interview—on the spot, if we didn't mind. We hadn't begun to unpack our bags.

Everywhere we went in Cape Town, the reporters followed us. It was the pending Amnesty Committee hearing that was fueling their engines. More than this, however, it was the fact that we were not opposing the amnesty applications which was the "story."

It was interesting to us that our acceptance of South Africa's truth and reconciliation process should be so curious—so "newsworthy." What should be so strange about this in a country where reconciliation and forgiving is national policy, rooted in centuries of southern African tradition?

Befitting the almost-comic character of all of this media attention, during a rooftop interview on July 7 for live broadcast to the U.S. for CBS television's morning news, Linda's answer to the first question posed to us was suddenly interrupted when some unknown technician introduced an Afrikaans cartoon show on-air in our place. The producer's shouting through our earphones from New York did nothing to restore our live hook-up. A

\$20,000 satellite booking was, therefore, unceremoniously ended.

We found ourselves wondering why a major news network would go through so much effort and expense to ask us why we would not oppose four amnesty applications in a hearing room the following morning.

On the morning of July 8, we were met at the hotel by our Amnesty Committee Briefer, Paul Haupt. A very professional young psychologist, Paul was assigned to us to be certain we understood the process, to help us anticipate the graphic testimony which would be given with respect to Amy's murder, and to ensure that we were holding up under the pressure.

Our calm seemed to surprise Haupt and—more than once—we teased him with offers to serve as *his* Briefer. He accompanied us as we walked the few blocks to the Amnesty Committee's hearing room—surrounded, as we walked, by television camera and sound crews.

The press of reporters on the sidewalk at 106 Adderty Street was fierce as we passed through lobby security and entered an elevator. We were fairly certain the reporters and camera crews would pin us against elevator walls and trample us.

Through it all, we kept our focus and assured the press that we would do our communicating in the hearing room and at a press conference when the hearing had concluded. During that elevator ride to the Amnesty Committee offices, I felt Amy

was close to us—understanding what we were experiencing and encouraging us to rise to the occasion.

In the months and years since Amy's death, we have reflected from time to time on the adage which suggests that "... a child shall lead you," and we can only say that our daughter has led us through some very challenging times—growing into young adulthood and, now, in a country half way around the world. But—in the midst of the lights, cameras, microphones, questions, jostling, and noise—we knew precisely where we were going and why we were there. Amy had prepared us well for this experience. Now... if we could just hold up our end of the equation.

The quiet of the judge's offices near the hearing room was welcome and we could see the three judges and two lawyers who comprised the Amnesty Committee wolfing down some tea and pastries during the recess which preceded our hearing. With a backlog of more than 5000 cases and an entire nation of hearing rooms to reach, these judges must have precious little time in life's small pleasures and many miles between sleeps.

The quiet freeze-frame was broken by a small and silent procession of eight figures who appeared suddenly in the corridor leading to the hearing room. In an instant, we shared a narrow hallway with four inconspicuously armed security men... and with four of Amy's killers.

They were in street clothes. No handcuffs. They

appeared a bit uneasy and surprised to encounter us. It was my first time encountering them. Linda had already experienced the Supreme Court trial and had watched three of them carefully on several occasions.

I was within inches of my daughter's killers and—somehow—I was in control of my emotions. In retrospect, I know Amy's hand was on my shoulder at that moment. Linda has said that she doesn't feel anger when she sees Amy's killers, only a sort of profound sadness—a void. I know now what she means. She has described the feeling exactly.

Media representatives were permitted in the crowded hearing room for fifteen minutes before we entered. The families of the four applicants were brought to us in a steady stream—one after another. "We're parents too ..." we said to them. We wanted the parents to know that we could understand a bit of what they might be thinking and that if their sons should be fortunate enough to win amnesty, we expected them to be responsible parents and to be accountable for the behavior of their sons. Accountability is an important aspect of forgiveness. Amnesty demands accountability in order to establish balance and equity in the equation.

The statements of the four amnesty applicants were read into the record by their two attorneys—retained as counsel by the Pan African Congress (PAC) on whose behalf the applicants claimed to be acting when

they attacked Amy. The statements were carefully prepared to meet the tests for amnesty: a political motive was established for the murder, a confession was made to the act of murder, and an apology was offered to Amy's parents and family.

To hear these statements read into the record by attorneys—rather than by the applicants—established distance be-



Peter and Linda Biehl

tween the applicants and us, even though they were seated barely ten feet away.

For me, it created an almost abstract quality to the statements. Although they were quite graphic in their recounting of the act, and although the words tore at me inside, I felt somehow removed and empty of emotion.

By contrast, the statements were very real to the parents and families of the applicants. At least one parent left the room when her son's confession to stabbing Amy in the

heart was read. The four applicants had denied participation in Amy's murder during their Supreme Court trial. I am certain that parents were hoping—somehow—that words of confession would not have to be spoken. Hearing the words must have been very difficult.

I believe the experience in the hearing room must have been more difficult for the applicants' parents than for us. We felt liberated in our position and free from guilt. We were confident that we were completely consistent with Amy's expectations of us.

We had spent part of a day in our hotel room drafting our statement. It came naturally and—in the end—it was really a matter of who would deliver which portions. It seemed right that Linda, as Amy's mother and the one most responsible for her character development, should present Amy to those in the hearing room, and I would articulate our support of the truth and reconciliation process and our rationale for not opposing amnesty.

Statement by Peter Biehl

"Thank you Mr. Chairman, members of the Amnesty Committee, for taking a few moments to hear our statement.

We come to South Africa as Amy came, in a spirit of committed friendship, and, make no mistake about it, extending a hand of friendship in a society which has been systematically polarized for decades is hard work at times. But Amy was al-

ways about friendship, about getting along, about the collective strength of caring individuals and their ability to pull together to make a difference, even to transform corrupt nation states.

In her valedictory high school graduation speech in 1985, Amy quoted biologist Lewis Thomas on the importance of collective thinking. Thomas said:

"The drive to be useful is encoded in our genes, but when we gather in very large numbers, as in the modern nation state, we seem capable of levels of folly and self-destruction to be found nowhere else in all of nature."

But he continues,

"...if we keep at it and keep alive we are in for one surprise after another. We can build structures for human society never seen before, thoughts never thought before, music never heard before."

This was Amy at age 18. This was Amy on the day she died. She wanted South Africans to join hands to sing music never heard before, and she knew this would be a difficult journey.

On 21 June 1993, just two months before she died, Amy wrote in a letter to the *Cape Times* Editor:

"Racism in South Africa has been a painful experience for Blacks and Whites and reconciliation may be equally painful. However,

the most important vehicle toward reconciliation is open and honest dialogue."

Amy would have embraced your truth and reconciliation process. We are present this morning to honour it and to offer our sincere friendship. We are all here in a sense to consider and to value a committed human life which was taken without opportunity for dialogue. When this process is concluded we must link arms and move forward together.



Amy Biehl

Who, then, is Amy Biehl? Amy was one of our four children. Her sisters are Kim, who is now 31, Molly 27, and her brother Zach, aged 20. We are very proud of all of our children and their accomplishments. But because Amy was killed in South Africa, because our lives have now become forever linked to South Africa, we are here to share a little of Amy with you.

Amy was a bright, attractive child. She loved competitive sports such as swimming, diving, gymnastics, among others. She played the flute, the guitar. She studied ballet. She

was a focused student from the very beginning, always striving for straight A's. I'm going to read a page from Amy's high school journal so in her own words you can get a glimpse of her. This is Monday, October 3rd, 1983. She was 16.

"I have had more homework this year than I have ever had before. In lots of ways this has helped me because I have been forced to get organized and really dig in. But I have also been forced to stay up until 11:30 or 12:00 each night making me very cranky during the day. One thing that worries me is whether or not I will be able to keep this rigorous schedule up and still keep straight A's. Every night after school I have some activity to attend be it diving, band, flute or something else and starting in November I'll be swimming every day. I hate it when people say you should cut down your schedule, you're too busy, because I have already cut out several other activities. I'm kind of addicted to exercise and get very bored if I am not constantly busy. School is very important to me but being active and well-rounded are necessary for me to be happy. I want to have a 4.0, but I also want to be an award-winning drum major, first chair flute, a State champion diver, as far as I am concerned why can't I. I think I will be able to make it through this year. I am a very hard worker at everything I

do, and as long as I know what I want I can get it. Besides, getting a 90% on a Chemistry test makes staying up all night worth it".

Upon high school graduation she went to Stanford University. It was her dream to do that. At Stanford she evolved as a serious student and she began to focus her academic work on the Southern Africa region. Her love of Nelson Mandela as a symbol of what was happening in South Africa grew.

After her 1989 Stanford graduation she made her first trip to Africa. I am going to read the Statement of Purpose she compiled for her Ph.D. programme to bring her forward to August 1993. And she wrote this the summer of 1993 shortly before her murder.

Statement of Purpose-Amy Biehl

My purpose in applying for graduate study is to complete a Ph.D. in Political Science. Within the field I intend to focus on recent democratic transitions in Southern Africa building on my previous research and practical working experience in this area.

In September 1989 I received a degree in International Relations emphasizing Third World development and Africa from Stanford University.

I completed a departmental Honours thesis on American Foreign Policy in South Africa entitled, "Ches-

ter Crocker and the Negotiations for Namibian Independence: the role of the individual in recent American Foreign Policy."

In May 1989, I subsequently received a Bowman Undergraduate scholarship to continue my research in Namibia from July to September 1989. My paper



Young Mandela

assessing the pre-election environment in Namibia was subsequently used at Stanford in its Modern African History course.

In September 1990, after a year of work for a Democratic Congressman on Capitol Hill, I began work at the Washington-based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, NDI. NDI represents the Democratic Party internationally and conducts political development programmes in emerging democracies. With NDI, I worked in Namibia, South Africa, Burundi, Congo, Guyana, Surinam, and Zambia along with former President Jimmy Carter.

I wrote briefing papers on six African countries for Democratic Party chairman Ron Brown and coordinated a visit by the Prime Minister of Namibia to the 1992 Democratic National Convention. I also wrote an article on NDI's approach to democratization in Africa published in an international journal.

Based on my undergraduate research experience and my work at NDI, I developed a proposal to research the participation of women in South Africa's transition for which I received a 1992/93 aFulbright Scholarship.

I am currently based in Cape Town affiliated with the Community Law Centre at the University of the Western Cape, directed by Advocate Abdullah Omar.

I am working with Bridget Mabandla, senior researcher at the Community Law Centre. At the Community Law Centre I have undertaken the following projects: researching comparative structures for women in decision-making, analyzing the constitutional proposals and technical committee reports currently being debated with regard to women and gender; locating women with various political organizations and coalitions, and assessing the impact of women within these organizations with respect to evolving transitional structures.

I have written an occasional paper for the Community Law Centre focusing on structure for women in political decision-making, and a chapter on women in the transition for an upcoming book to be published in the United States. I have co-authored articles published in the *Weekly Mail*, the *Argus*, *Democracy in Action* and *Femina*. At the completion of my grant, I will present a paper entitled *Women in a*

Democratic South Africa: from Transition to Transformation.

I could go on but this was basically what she was doing, and what she intended to do was to pursue a Ph.D. in Political Science, to teach and study about politics and particularly African politics.

Who is Amy to South Africa and what is her legacy here?

Linda and I were struck by photos which appeared immediately after Amy's death in the *Los Angeles Times* and other newspapers around the world which showed Amy as a freedom fighter, and in subsequently reading President Mandela's autobiography, *A Long Walk to Freedom*, and determining how President Mandela and his colleagues value the role of freedom fighting. We were struck when on June 1st, 1996, in Los Angeles, California, at a dinner to honour Chinese dissidents and freedom fighters from Tianamen Square, Amy was presented the Spirit of Tianamen Square Award, posthumously, for her reputation and track record as a freedom fighter in many countries on the continent of Africa.

We think in view of the importance of freedom fighting in our world, this is a precious legacy of Amy for us. We think Amy's legacy in South Africa, additionally, is as a catalyst and perhaps her death represented a turning point in things in this country with specific regard to the violence which was occurring at the time.

We received literally hundreds of letters from South

African citizens and I would read you just briefly from one which had to do with Amy as a catalyst in terms of the violence at the time.

This is from an Eric van Vyver of George, South Africa:

"Dear Mr and Mrs Biehl

Sometimes during one's lifetime something happens which is so unbelievably terrible and so very, very sad that one is left without words to convey the deep sympathy felt for family and loved ones. Your daughter's death has left millions of my country-people feeling this way.

I am, however, completely convinced that August 25th 1993 will always be remembered as the day on which South Africa came to realise that we are leaning into an abyss of total self-destruction. Then Amy died and an entire nation took a step back. I hope and know that this will comfort you and please believe that what I am saying is true."

Amy's legacy is also as an advocate of human rights, an empowerer of women and children. Our beautiful women of Mosaic who are seated here today and yesterday are tangible evidence of Amy's legacy in South Africa. These women of courage work round the clock every day in the townships and informal settlements empowering and counseling women and children and enabling them to assume roles in the prevention of violence in their communities. Linda and I are very proud

of Mosaic and we can think of no more beautiful evidence of Amy's continuing legacy in your beautiful country.

Additionally, Amy's friend and colleague, Rhoda Kadalie, has now assumed the post, an important post in the Human Rights Commission. Amy would be very proud of that and very proud of Rhoda's and the Commission's continuing work to preserve human rights.

I will read to you briefly from a letter we received from Minister Dullah Omar dated on the 25th of August 1993:

"Everyone who knew Amy will bear witness that she worked untiringly in the gender research project to ensure that the issue of women's rights was prioritized on the agenda for a political settlement in South Africa. She was thus also highly regarded by all her colleagues and peers, both in Cape Town and indeed everywhere in the country for her diligence and commitment to the issue of women's rights.

We want to say to you that your beloved Amy became one of us in her spirited commitment to justice and reconciliation in South Africa. Amy's passing is not just a loss to the Community Law Centre, or University community, it is a loss for all committed democrats in this country.

Despite the fact that Amy was often very busy, she managed to prepare a briefing paper or two for me. This

is how I got to know Amy, always willing to help. I will therefore personally miss her a great deal."

Finally, Amy's legacy to South Africa is as a friend. I will read just quickly from a letter we received dated August 27, 1993, from Randy Erentzen at the Centre for Development Studies.

"When Amy left my office on Wednesday she said to me, 'Hey, if I don't see you, thanks for everything.' The next time I saw her I was removing her jewelry from her dead body. I shuddered for a moment as I put the blood-stained bangles and rings into my pocket and I thanked her silently for being my friend.

I write to thank you and the rest of your family for giving Amy to us. I want you to know that she was a most sensitive and wonderful human being.

When I first encouraged her to come to South Africa to study and when I wrote the recommendations for Amy to receive the Fulbright Scholarship, and when I introduced her to my colleagues at the University, I knew I was doing so for somebody I really believed in.

Together we traveled through South Africa helping to prepare our people for the country's first ever democratic elections. She danced with us late

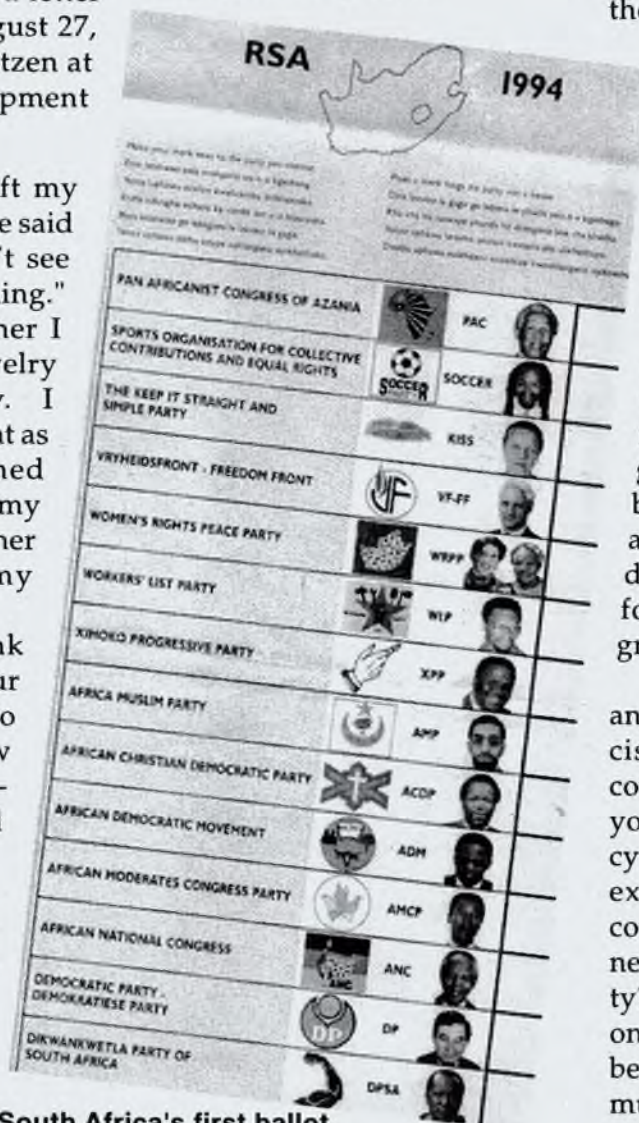
at night in the townships. Amy was so full of the rhythm of life. She danced better than many Africans and was greatly envied for her ability to imbibe so much of the culture, traditions and history of our people.

cess. We recognize that if this process had not been a pre-negotiated condition, your democratic free elections could not possibly have occurred. Therefore, and believing as Amy did in the absolute importance of those democratic elections occurring,

we unabashedly support the process which we recognize to be unprecedented in contemporary human history.

At the same time, we say to you that it's your process, not ours. We cannot, therefore, oppose amnesty if it is granted on the merits. In the truest sense it is for the community of South Africa to forgive its own and this has its basis in traditions of ubuntu and other principles of human dignity. Amnesty is clearly not for Linda and Peter Biehl to grant.

You face a challenging and extraordinarily difficult decision. How do you value a committed life? What value do you place on Amy and her legacy in South Africa? How do you exercise responsibility to the community in granting forgiveness in the granting of amnesty? How are we preparing prisoners, such as these young men before us, to re-enter the community as a benefit to the community, acknowledging that the vast majority of South Africa's prisoners are under 30 years of age? Acknowledging as we do that there's massive unemployment in the marginalized community; acknowledging that the recidivism rate is roughly 95%. So how do we, as friends, link arms and do something? There



South Africa's first ballot.

Amy's death has brought home once again the potential beauty of this country to which she eventually gave her life."

Now, in closing, a few comments. We have the highest respect for your Truth and Reconciliation Commission pro-

are clear needs for prisoner rehabilitation in our country as well as here. There are clear needs for literacy training and education, and there are clear needs for the development of targeted job skill training. We, as the Amy Biehl Foundation, are willing to do our part as catalysts for social progress. All anyone need do is ask.

Are you, the community of South Africa, prepared to do your part? In her 21 June 1993 letter to the *Cape Times* editor, Amy quoted the closing lines of a poem, "Victoria West," written by one of your local poets. We would close our statement with these incredible words:

"They told their story to the children. They taught their vows to the children, that we shall never do to them what they did to us."

Thank you for listening."

□ □ □

When we finished our presentation, Linda and I knew we had done the right thing. We had remembered Amy and her dreams for South Africa. We had spoken for her, in her absence, and we could hold our heads up and move on with life.

Epilogue

The call came at 1:00 in the morning. Tuesday, July 28, 1998. We had been home from Cape Town only one day.

Amnesty had been announced. It was 10:00 AM in Cape Town and Amy's four killers were walking from their prisons into the embraces of family and friends. While we were still on the telephone, our fax whirled to life and the Amnesty Committee's official pronouncement began to appear.

When we hung up the telephone, we were suddenly

CA" interview. That day, our voice mail collected 34 messages—most of them from media representatives and producers. That night, Linda and I walked the streets of New York and found a small, friendly French restaurant we remembered.

We were tired, but we were at peace with ourselves. We slept soundly—if briefly—that night.



After the trial with the young men's parents.

missing Amy very much. By 1:30 AM, telephone calls were coming in from South Africa's media. At 7:30 that evening, we closed our door behind the last American television crew. At some part in that long and frenetic day, we telephoned our children to inform and prepare them.

The next morning, a CNN live telephone interview at 6:25—and within an hour, on a flight from Palm Springs to New York for Thursday morning's "GOOD MORNING AMERI-

Many people have expressed disbelief and "amazement" at our support for the truth and reconciliation process and at our forgiving attitude.

To us, forgiveness is opening the door to a full and productive life. We can honor Amy, can be true to her convictions, and can carry on with her work and with ours. Forgiving is liberating. By contrast, it seems to us that hatred consumes tremendous energy—negative energy—and robs peo-

ple of their productivity. Hatred, in the end, is a totally self-ish behavior.

The real burden in forgiveness falls to those who are forgiven and to those who are closest to them. Our statement—released to the press on the morning amnesty was announced—speaks to this point, among others.

**Statement by
Linda and Peter Biehl:**

"Amy was drawn to South Africa as a student and she admired the vision of Nelson Mandela of a 'Rainbow Nation'. It is this vision of forgiveness and reconciliation that we have honored.

As Amy's parents, we have worked with and learned about many South Africans. We have shared South Africa's pain. We must never forget people who lost their lives in the struggle. We must honor them in discovering new approaches—non-violent partnerships—to create the South Africa with Nelson Mandela that Amy and those who perished dreamed of—a new, multi-racial, democratic nation.

We are concerned, therefore, about the violence which still exists and which surely will escalate as the 1999 elections approach. Amy was one of many killed in the violent political climate preceding the 1994 elections. Unfortunately, we are seeing today similar power struggles occurring throughout communities and the country. Violence remains the order of the day in promoting certain politi-

cal agendas. Violence and fear are never hallmarks of a democratic way of life.

We are keenly aware, as we work with people of disadvantaged communities, of the need for change in the lives of South Africa's marginalized people. We have experienced our own small struggles in trying to complete projects in partnership with many community groups. Obstacles abound. Community requests are made, partnerships are formed, but implementation is slow. Regardless of the roadblocks or the minefields, we shall continue, within our limits, to work in partnership with people who are wonderfully inspired to help themselves. We are working on violence prevention projects throughout the Cape Flats and hope to encourage and motivate other people to do the same thing. We have enjoyed many positive experiences with great partners and highly recommend this type of service to South Africa.

It is important to stress that *every* life is significant. Amy's life and death received much publicity. As Amy's parents, we have experienced great pain—but we are not alone. Working through the pain has not been easy, but we have learned so much about South Africa's pain while on our personal journey.

The amnesty process has been a unique experience for individuals and for South Africa as a nation. Decisions made are not to be taken lightly. If amnesty is granted to individuals who have been imprisoned, it is es-

sential for families and communities to support these individuals upon their release. In the cases of the four amnesty applicants in Amy's murder, we hope they will receive the support necessary to live productive lives in a non-violent atmosphere. In fact, we hope the spirits of Amy and of those like her will be a force in their new lives.

Again, we encourage all stakeholders to accelerate their pace toward cooperation; to be instruments of change in the marginalized communities; to advance holistic approaches to violence reduction and prevention.

We thank those partners who have helped and supported us thus far, and we pledge to work hard with the South African people to continue the all-important nation-building process. We will do all we can to help fulfill the vision of your free, rainbow nation—a vision which Amy shared with you.

We have been asked repeatedly whether the amnesty process has brought us "closure." We reply that we have never sought closure and have no desire to close the book on Amy.

The Chilean playwright/poet/human rights activist, Ariel Dorfman, responded profoundly to our question on closure in Cape Town in July, 1997:

I think closure happens when you have the body. When the person who hurt that body asks for forgiveness, repents for

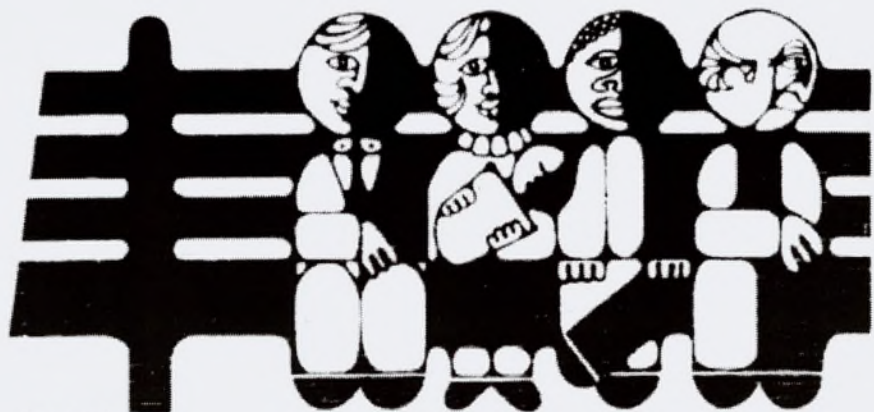
having done that and says they will not do it again. That is a form of closure. I think... I think... closure happens that because those bodies disappeared or were hurt because of all the damage done, the results rather than being held are a step towards paradise. In the sense that though every death is terrible, a death in vain is much more terrible than a death that led to a community resolving its problems. I would say closure particularly happens when every person in that community is able to take that person home with them

and make that person part of their home and part of their lives.

On the other hand, I feel we should not lie about closure—we should not see closure for its own sake or seek closure as the solution to all problems. Because I do believe there are pains we should not pretend do not exist. I'm sorry to put this as bluntly as I am doing, but even all the closure in the world cannot return Amy Biehl. I mourn for it, I grieve for it. I do think we have to deal with the ambiguity of existence. It is difficult to deal with. The

Truth and Reconciliation-Committee is being asked to deal with all those things—it is being asked to do more than it can possibly do. It cannot offer closure. Each person will find his own form of closure. Closure is satisfactory—it's a haven—but closure also means to close, and close is the opposite of life. Life opens. So, at times we have to live with those wounds and those openings and there is no alternative because we cannot save the basic mystery of life. And that life is entangled with death in a tremendous way.

To which we reply,
"AMEN!" □



John Morrell

Faces of Forgiveness: Personal Struggles and Professional Observations

This article is a review of the ways that forgiveness operates in the life of the author and his clients. It is a brief discussion of how the act of forgiveness can be an antidote to shame, blame, and guilt, and how it is generally a health-giving act. Andes also includes a discussion of ineffective forgiveness and phoney forgiveness and how these are not healthy.

by
Michael Andes

Michael Andes, MSW, Clinical
Social Worker, Ann Arbor, MI.

Introduction

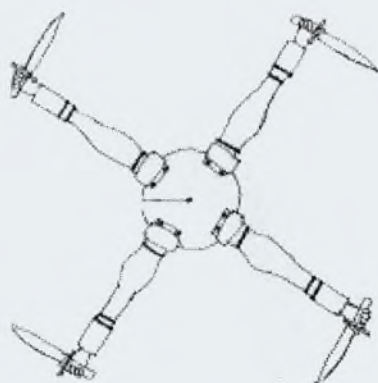
When I was a student at Ohio State University in the 1960's, I participated in a men's discussion group that met after classes on Friday afternoons. We always had plenty of food, beer, and curiosity. Each week we invited one of our male professors to be a guest, not only to go further into his field of expertise, but also to share something of his personal life experience. One of these men, a professor of psychology, said something that stuck. He told us that three of the most toxic forces operating in our culture were shame, blame, and guilt. Then he said that the best antidote to these was forgiveness. My experience shows me that there is much truth in what he said.

Personal Issues

I know I am unhappy during those times when I wish to forgive someone and cannot do so. Sometimes it takes awhile. Wounds are often long in the making, so it is no surprise that forgiveness can also take time. I am equally unhappy when I feel I have made a serious mis-

take and haven't yet been forgiven, for whatever reasons. I have traveled long distances with a garbage bag of grudges over my shoulder. I have blamed others all too often for my own oversights and refusal to take appropriate actions: parents who had their own problems, lovers for rejecting me, friends for letting me down, clients for making demands, children for being imperfect, teachers for being human. I regret that I sometimes held on to my grudges, and that sometimes others held on to theirs.

At times I've confused forgiveness with letting someone off the hook: I let go of my resentment even though you won't take responsibility for your part. Then you'll win, I'll feel foolish, I'll be wrong. At other times I've appeared forgiving, denying my ongoing unfinished business about something, only to be unexpectedly "exposed" at a later point through an outburst or internal recognition that I still have to deal with my feelings. At other times I've indulged in making others "wrong" so I wouldn't have to come to terms with my own embarrassment, shame, or guilt.



Difficult conflicts approach resolution when forgiveness appears. People begin to heal when they begin to forgive. From witnessing the positive spiritual and practical effects of forgiveness, I give importance to it as a therapeutic process. It is often *the* central issue in a person's healing. This has certainly been so at critical moments of my own ongoing healing.

I have worked in different formats: individuals, groups, workshops. I have often seen people begin a session or a piece of work from a position of anger, resentment, judgment, or vilification toward a perceived wrongdoer. Often these feelings eventually melt into acceptance and forgiveness. Following that, there may be descriptions of states of lightness, peacefulness, profound relief. Tears flow from grief about loss, regret about judging, remorse about being untruthful, whether with oneself or another.

In the Christian tradition, followers are instructed to forgive even their enemies, to "turn the other cheek," which in my view means not to subject oneself to repeated victimization, but rather to remain open, available, and in a continuing relationship with adversaries. Followers of this tradition are instructed to look for the log in one's own eye versus fussing about the mote in somebody else's. Perhaps one's perceptions (the eyes) could be recognized as the stronger force in determining the personal "reality" of a situation where problems have arisen. Therefore,

blaming the other is not the best course of action, for this tends to perpetuate our misperceptions, diminish self-awareness, and limit personal responsibility.

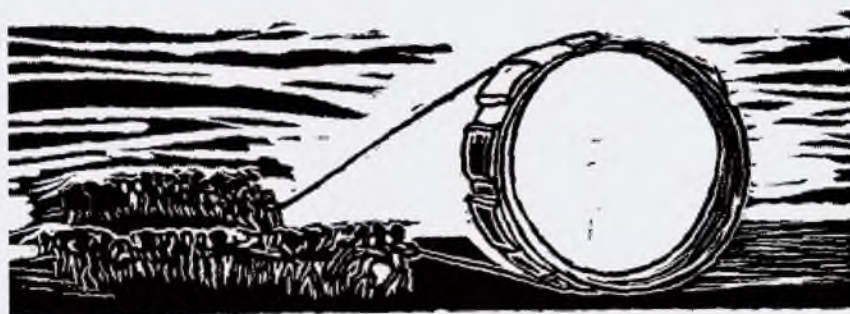
As with any therapist, I have often seen people struggle with their needs to forgive or be forgiven. These needs include forgiveness of perpetrators of various types of abuse: spouses who commit adultery, parents who were anything but perfect and whose mistakes from years ago still reverberate, others (bosses, friends, children, employees) whose offenses are perceived to be the cause of mental conflict, emotional anguish, or spiritual despair. There is the need for forgiveness of and by addicts for the messes that have been created. Finally, there is the particularly thorny issue of *self-forgiveness* for mistakes and wrongdoings committed by one's self.

Struggles around forgiveness have been present within me for as long as I can remember. My early church upbringing, along with other less visible pressures, has affect-

ed my attitudes and values about forgiveness. In both realms, personal and professional, I experience the process of forgiveness as having a special potency. I experience genuine forgiveness (either by myself or of myself) as expansive, liberating, and freeing. It's like taking off a shoe that's too tight, or getting out of wet clothes after being caught in a rainstorm.

False forgiveness, on the other hand, means continuing to bear the burden: obsessive thoughts about particular slights or mistakes, schemes and fantasies about justice or getting even, self-indulgent and partially accurate memories of what "really" happened, continued anger and resentment. There is usually an interplay between my clients' struggles around forgiveness and my own struggles. What follows is one set of reflections about that interplay.

For example, I may find myself "taking sides" with my clients when they are working out ways to forgive or to ask for forgiveness. I regret the occasions when, particularly in marital therapy, I aligned with one



partner in faulting (blaming) the other. I have also experienced strong self-doubt and self-criticism when I have been blamed by clients for one thing or another—such as not being sympathetic enough, being wrong in my interpretation of something, or expressing favoritism. As illustrated below, it is never easy (maybe not even possible) to be “objective” when this issue gets brought up in counseling work. The operations of shame, blame, and guilt force us to find another way, an antidote to the poison.

I have come to believe that one of the primary underpinnings of war, whether between nations or individuals, is the inability to forgive. I have come to believe that forgiveness is an especially human art, a uniquely human capacity, like playfulness and ritual, that can help to transform us.

Forgiveness and Clients

There are several dimensions to the process of forgiveness that I have seen in my counseling practice. One thing seems consistently clear: there is almost always a correlation between a person's sense of successful healing and his or her capacity to break away from the resentment, hurt, and fear that typically result when wounds have been received. I think this is because the resentment/hurt feelings/continuing fears operate in a way that is analogous to physical trauma: a break, bruise, or cut both can be painful in itself as well as have a contract-

ing, limiting, and distracting effect on the person. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to move with a normal range of motion or to fulfill tasks with a sense of efficiency or effectiveness.

At times the desire to forgive can impede the healing process. For example, victims of childhood sexual abuse who feel they were at fault for the abuse may attempt to overlook their residual fear/hurt/anger and attempt to prematurely forgive perpetrators. They may continue to take their anger out internally—nightmares, depression, self-hatred. Victims with strong religious values may pursue the ideal of forgiveness and attempt to bypass their actual feelings, their unfinished emotional business. I have seen these attempts fail much more often than not. True healing may require the direct experience and expression of rage, hurt, indignation, vindictiveness, and so on.

No attempt to “rise above” will work if the wounds are too raw. I know this from an early experience with my first therapist. I tried, unsuccessfully, to give the benefit of doubt, to be charitable, toward my father for several deeply hurtful behaviors he had exhibited toward my sister and me while he was in the worst stages of his alcohol addiction. No matter how hard I tried, I kept coming up against deep resentment, even disgust and revulsion. Eventually, I had to confront what I *was* feeling—about what happened, about what I

didn't receive from him, and about the consequent deep sense of loss. After that, it became possible to un-demonize him. Now, many years after his death, I continue to remember his goodness and no longer carry the bitterness I felt for so long. I was finally able to make room for compassion.

When the actual feelings are contacted and expressed (in whatever form the client can consciously integrate: writing, talking, beating a pillow, art, dance, song...), then the nightmares diminish and stop, the depression lifts, and shame can turn into self-nurturance and self-appreciation. Now, though I have not forgotten my father's behavior, I think of him also with fondness.

To forgive, in the way I'm using the term here, essentially means to “give” or release, rather than to hold onto. It means to renounce anger and resentment, to forswear clinging to or being attached to concepts, memories, images and/or feelings that are based on past events which can never be changed. To forgive means to let go of, to “give away,” to release all or most of the “charge” or energy around painful events and the people associated with them.

Forgiving, therefore, is so often a difficult, painful process, for we may recall and relive hurtful moments; we may have to face, again, the insults or wounds that are associated with our discomfort or unhappiness. This reflects the sha-



manic maxim: "a wound can only be healed by the blood of the wound itself."

In the stories and transcriptions that follow, five themes will be explored: 1) forgiveness as a means to increased freedom for oneself; 2) forgiveness as a means to increased freedom for others; 3) forgiveness as a weapon used against others, or as a shield against confronting unpleasant personal conflicts or feelings—"false" or "phony" forgiveness; 4) self-forgiveness; and, 5) when it's healthy to refrain from forgiveness.

1) FREEDOM FOR SELF: The Antidote to Shame

In 1987 I was counseling a young man who had been raised in an economically and emotionally deprived home. He had memories of competing with his three older siblings for food—often a can of uncooked creamed corn was dinner for all of them. He remembers going into the bathroom where feces was piled up in a non-functioning toilet. He had to steal clothes from the school's lost and found so he would have something to wear. Within his sibling group there was a case of schizophrenia and there were incestuous relationships between the oldest brother and two of his sisters. At the age of nine he was removed by the court from this home and placed in a foster home where there was financial abundance and emotional warmth and caring. He was bright and eventually became a doctor. At the time he entered treatment, at the age of

twenty-five, he was suffering from acute anxiety and panic attacks. He felt like he was betraying his biological family by being a success and becoming prosperous. Here is an excerpt from a therapy session:

Client: "I never knew how much I hated them until I got away. I was embarrassed and ashamed of them, my home, my crazy sister and smelly mother and father. Mostly, though, I was ashamed of myself. I wanted to crawl away. They couldn't even begin to see how disgusting they were, how much they seemed like a throwback to the days before hot water and soap. I wanted to run, and at times I even felt like I could kill them and get away with it, since they were so foul."

Therapist: "What stopped you?"

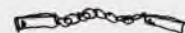
C: "I was able, after getting sent to the foster home, to see *them* more clearly. Maybe it was from knowing other kids whose lives were messed up. Maybe it was from just getting older and not being so helpless. Finally, one afternoon when I was raking leaves, of all things, it occurred to me that I could forgive them without having to 'love' them or even ever having to see them again. I began to wonder about how their childhood's were, how they were treated, what it was like in the Depression, and things like that..."

T: "When you say 'forgive,' I'm not sure what you mean."

C: "To me it means to stop dwelling on their awfulness, their carelessness, their heedlessness... I don't know, maybe it means I stopped carrying a grudge."

T: "What do you feel toward them now? It's been years since you've seen them."

C: "I think of them almost as characters from a movie—a bad movie to be sure—but from something that flickered into and out of my life, like a movie. I had a part, but my part is over and now I'm in a different movie, so to speak. I think I could face them now without being angry or ready to take some kind of revenge. It's just... it's just over [client weeps quietly]... I don't have to be that kid anymore, and I don't have to hate them anymore; and I have nothing to be ashamed of."



(I, on the other hand, had come to dislike his parents quite a bit. I was glad that my client was no longer burdened so much, but I felt like these kinds of parents should simply be put in chain gangs and required to carry rocks forever... maybe he could forgive them, but I had no wish to do so.)

In our final session, after I had not seen him for a month, he told me:

C: "I finally got off my sour puss attitude. I never knew how much fun I could have, even though it's quiet fun. I've begun

to date, not often, but it's happening. I think I finally got those monkeys off my back; I no longer blame my parents for messing up my life. I think—and you'll probably think I should come back into therapy now—I think they did the best they could, given who they were. Now I think I will do the best I can with my life—it is *my* life—and I can let go of my tendency to feel like the world is going to turn into a disaster if I relax for a few moments... I think I've sort of 'neutralized' them, and I even remember a few good things from those days. It wasn't 100% bad."

(I found myself feeling embarrassed at how he had forgiven them and I had not. I discovered that my own righteousness and desire to blame had made it impossible for me to see his parents as humans. I saw them as the enemy, and I wanted to see them humiliated in the way they humiliated him. It was, for me, a reminder-experience about how healing such forgiveness can be—he genuinely felt better and sustained his capacity for forgiveness.)

2) FORGIVENESS AND FREEDOM FOR OTHERS: An Antidote to Blame

In early 1996 I worked with a woman in her early thirties who had just discovered that her husband, while out of town attending a conference, had a weekend fling with an old girlfriend from his college days.

My client was more than upset. Her rage was searing hot.

Her coveted assumptions about married life, trust, men, love, and sex had been tarnished in one weekend. She was completely unwilling to speak with her husband, insisting that all communications about mutual concerns (paying the rent, taking the dog to the vet, etc.) be handled by third parties. She contacted an attorney and had pressed for a divorce "by 8:05 tomorrow morning, if that's possible!" She was convinced that, like Humpty Dumpty, all the King's horses and all the King's social workers could never repair the damage to her soul.



She entered treatment complaining of insomnia, stomach pain, and an obsession with getting revenge. She wanted to make him pay. She fantasized different ways to make him suffer, including such ideas as seducing another man and getting discovered or sending her husband video tapes of her "having sex with a hunk."

The therapy began with addressing the most obvious symptoms and focussing on ways to relax, even slightly, in order to begin functioning somewhat better in the work-

place and at home (her husband moved out after discovering all of his clothing strewn over the front lawn, having been freshly laundered with a garden hose).

After a few sessions, and after returning to a less angry state, this person began to move, like a pendulum, in the other direction. Her rage was replaced by weepiness and self-pity. Her indignation was supplanted by worry and concern for her husband. Her righteousness—i.e., her tendency to avoid taking any responsibility for underlying problems in the marriage and to entirely blame her husband—was overshadowed by self-blame and guilt. Like a pendulum, she moved to the opposite position.

(At this point, out of my desire to have her take some responsibility for the mess she was in, I found myself thinking, also rather righteously, about how men all too often get blamed and vilified. I felt relieved that he might possibly be getting a "second chance" with his spouse and felt that his "crime" was far less severe than others that I have seen. I had also been immediately reminded of my own struggles with forgiveness during an especially painful breakup with a college lover, whom I blamed entirely for our mutually created difficulties.)

The turning point, the first step toward reconciliation, occurred in the fifth session:

Client: "I suppose I'm partly to blame for what he did. I told

him once that he was a lousy lover because, I suppose, I was angry at him for something or other. I told him that his way of having sex was like a yard dog looking for a quick fix.

"I said some terrible things to him... terrible and cruel things... and I kept thinking he would someday pay me back by calling *me* names, or even leaving... but I never thought he'd get into bed with another woman. In fact, in the early days I remember how good we were in bed together. We'd make love for hours, and we'd have so much fun with it, teasing and laughing and having great orgasms—the kind, you know, when you think you probably registered on the Richter Scale (she is now laughing and crying at the same time)... Maybe he wasn't all wrong in what he did..."

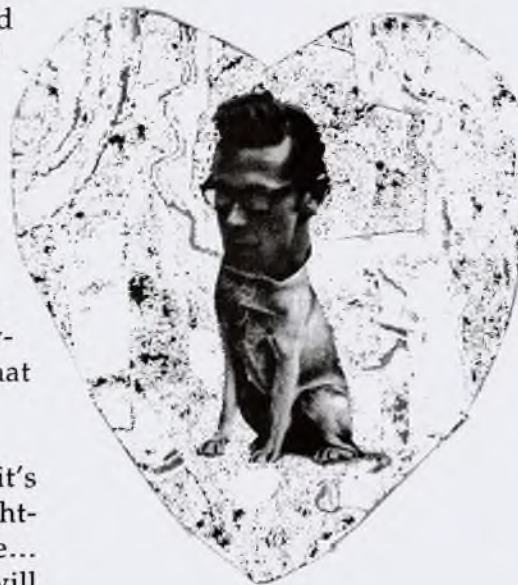
Therapist: "Well, maybe it's possible for you to find a slightly different point of view here... maybe you have some good will left, in spite of how hurt and angry you felt."

C: "Well, maybe I do... I feel like I was so far away from even thinking about him that he'd never be able to be in the same room with me again. He's probably gone for good, and I can't blame him. He probably would be happier with someone else, anyway, since I seem to be so out of control, so highly strung..."

T: "Maybe your being 'out of control' has...well, let's see a

good side to it. You know, when people get that mad, sometimes it's because they're defending something that's precious to them. Maybe he could even see it that way. I've seen stranger things happen. So... what is the next step here? Where do you go next?"

C: "I need to think this over. This is all new, all too crazy, all too scary. I need to think it over..."



By the time of the next session, the client was in a more relaxed state and had an impish look in her eye when she came into my office.

C: "Do you think you can handle a surprise? You know, you think you've seen everything, probably, but let me tell you that you haven't! Well, and I'm glad you're sitting down, I called him. I called him and asked him if I could meet him for coffee. At first he thought I

was joking (or was probably off my rocker), but I convinced him I wasn't."

The next development was that the errant husband accepted that his wife in fact had gotten through most of her rage and hurt. He saw that she was prepared to renew their relationship. He, in the meantime, had suffered from a good deal of remorse. In spite of the increased distance over the past several months, the verbal insults, etc., he wanted to maintain the marriage and address the difficulties that had been steadily increasing. He had been devoted to her for nearly ten years, and considered her to be his best friend and life companion. They had been through a battery of crises, including the deaths of both sets of parents within a five-year period, job changes, and a house fire. They had no children, by mutual consent, as they considered their professional lives to be the primary source of satisfaction and meaning.

After meeting his wife for coffee, the man reported the following exchange in a conjoint session:

Husband: "I didn't think you'd ever want to talk to me again. I know what I did hurt you and I felt like I deserved every bit of that anger. But I didn't ever think you would want to end our marriage over this. I know I messed up—big time—but I hoped it would work out anyway. After I did what I did, and before you

found out about it, I knew I could never do anything like that again... I felt too bad."

C: "Well, I won't forget what happened and don't think we could anyway. I probably will always be a little pissed off about it... probably always a little guilty about my part. But I thought, after ten years, nine of which have been pretty good, I'd be a fool to just walk away; I was afraid, after the scene I made, that you would never, ever trust me to be decent or civil to you again... and I wouldn't blame you for that. So I decided to call you. I see now that I have made my share of mistakes and that I just put this one in a category all by itself. I think this can be put behind us, and perhaps there are things we need to explore so that we can have the intimacy we had once, and still want to have... I forgive you, and I hope you'll forgive me. I really mean it. I still love you."

The husband reported:

"I just burst out crying right there in the restaurant. I didn't even care what people thought. I just remember thinking that I had my wife back, my lover, my pal. Somehow we made it through a test. If it took a mess like that to put us back on track, it *was* worth it. Mind you, I think I'd try another approach if things get rocky again. The funny thing is, I actually had forgiven myself, but it wasn't enough. I needed her to forgive me, and when she did, I felt like my life could start up again. It was such a relief!"

(I discovered a great deal of pride about this man's ability to remain vulnerable and transparent in his dealings with his spouse. I felt that she was lucky to have him, that many other men would have just ducked out of the relationship. I celebrated, internally, that men, so often feebly stereotyped as unsympathetic and unfeeling, can be so deeply moved.)

These clients had to encounter their internal "demons." They each had experienced, both in the life experiences requiring forgiveness and in the process of forgiving itself, those haunting, nagging, cruel inner voices that we all have heard inside ourselves. They had experienced the limitations that holding on to resentment inevitably produces—rigidity or wild emotionalism or devaluing one's most important relationship.

The husband, who was forgiven, was able to recognize, through his second chance, the underlying needs that catapulted him into actions (the affair) that ignited a smoldering problem into a blazing crisis. These needs included a desire for more emotional and sexual bonding, more time to just relax and hang out with his partner instead of the distractions of insanely demanding professional lives always taking priority. Significant recognitions in the conscious attitudes of each person in the marriage were made and the couple continued to thrive, in part, because of their crisis, not just in spite of it.

3) PHONY FORGIVENESS: Perpetuating Shame and Blame

I have at times encountered clients who are strongly identified with a religion-based assignment to "turn the other cheek" and to be forgiving, above all else. In many cases, there is a thin veneer between the external presentation of self (the persona) and an underlying unresolved anger, anger that manifests itself as anything from chronic irritability to a seething rage that can produce major somatic, and at times deadly, symptoms.

In one case that I worked with in 1994, a man appeared for therapy after being referred by the court. He had suddenly and surprisingly struck his daughter, then aged sixteen, across the face with his open hand for being a "smart-aleck" toward him. School personnel filed a report with protective services and the man was brought into court. He was given a year's probation and a one-year suspended sentence for assault. He was ordered to undergo treatment and came to my agency.

This man had been active all of his adult life in a local church and had, prior to this incident, been regarded as the archetypal "pillar of the community." He was a successful businessman, had lived in the same town all his life, and had fathered six children, all of whom were good students and eventually went to get further education in college or trade schools. His marriage was seen as stable and happy by others. For the couple, however, private expe-

rience was quite different, as it turned out.

About two years before the client came for treatment, he discovered that his wife had begun drinking to excess. She had managed to conceal this behavior through the usual devices of hiding bottles, sucking on breath mints, and so on. The discovery occurred in such a way as to cause severe embarrassment to my client. He had come home unexpectedly from an out-of-town trip (his flight had been cancelled) and discovered his wife, in a state of obvious tipsiness, flirting in their kitchen with a neighbor. Due to the "guilty behavior" and disheveled clothing of his wife, the husband deduced that "something had obviously been going on, though I don't think they got into bed." An open liquor bottle was standing on the kitchen table, along with two glasses. The husband, feeling the righteous indignation that so easily erupts from wounded pride, expressed his desire to keep up a front of respectability (a front equally maintained by his wife). He quietly got his wife to agree to stop drinking if he agreed not to mention the incident to certain people—such as the minister, her parents, and their children. In other words, emotional blackmail. She agreed. In exchange for this he told her, from one part of himself, that he knew that people make mistakes, that he was sure it wouldn't happen again, and that he "forgave her, the way our faith wanted me to."



(I had begun to have my doubts about whether he should forgive her, for I found myself identifying with him and his hurt about being sexually betrayed. I began to want him to be angry, to reject her, to stand up for himself—in a word, to be anything but forgiving. This particular situation was extra-highly charged, due to my childhood experience of living with an alcoholic father and the anything-but-secrets I was expected to keep.)

The therapy began with the client describing how he had a right to do what he had done to his daughter, and only later did the incident with his wife come to light.

Client: "I don't understand why a man can't discipline his children these days. She had been smarting off to me, and I just had to stop her. She gets the same look on her face that her mother gets when she's defying me. It's a smirk, like she's taunting me and knows she can get away with it. Well, I think she had it coming and I'm not changing my ideas about that, no matter what some court says."

(In an instant, my supportive attitude toward this man turned to a kind of irritation—I have a daughter, and I never smacked or even spanked her—if he wants to smack his kid around, he'd better plan on a long week-end in the pokey... I felt outraged while, at the same time, I was "on the job" and wanted to find some compassion.)

Therapist: "You must have been pretty angry... angry enough to smack somebody. That's an extreme way to show it, you know—you must have really been upset."

C: "Well, I've spent all my life being a good example, and I have even put up with some bad behavior on the part of some people, and I found it in my heart to forgive them. It wasn't easy, but I forgave them."

T: "Whose bad behavior are you talking about? What happened?"

C: "I haven't told anybody about this, you know. I haven't needed to because it all got settled two years ago. Let's just say it was a little spat with my wife."

T: "OK, it was 'a little spat.' But here you are two years later talking about it. Maybe it wasn't as little as you think."

[A long silence.]

C: "Well, I don't really want to talk about it. It's over and done with..."

[Another long silence.]

T: "I couldn't help notice that when you were describing the incident with your daughter, you compared her facial expression to what you've seen in your wife. Does your wife have anything to do with this?"

C: [Animated, flushed, in a loud tone of voice] "You bet she

does! That woman caused me more harm in one day than all my enemies combined in my whole life! She's why I moved into my own bedroom. She's why I got a transfer so I can work out of town more. She's why I hit my daughter. She's why... she's why I'm... I'm unhappy."

T: "No wonder you feel upset. Perhaps, when you're ready, she can come in here, too, and we can all talk about this. It must be complicated, you know, like a 500-piece puzzle."

C: "If she comes in here, she'll just lie about everything. She knows what happened. She just has to live with it; it serves her right."

The next session, one week later, with both husband and wife:

Therapist: "What do you both see as the problem here? How did things get so difficult, how did things get so frustrating?"

Wife: "Well, I know he had a right to be upset with me. But after a while I got tired of being reminded of what I did. I really mean it—nothing happened! I know I shouldn't have drunk and I did it because I was lonely and bored... he wouldn't let me work, and my kids were mostly grown up. But for two years he kept telling me that I was a slut, that I was disloyal,

and he couldn't ever trust me again. So I started calling him 'Mr. Christian' [she demonstrated the infamous sneer, seen also in the daughter] because he acts like he never made any mistakes, like..."

Husband:
[Interrupting] "I never made any like you did... I never even looked at anybody else!"

W: "Oh that's a lie! You love it when the women gather around you after church. You love it when my sisters call you those nicknames like 'Mr. Tarzan' and 'The Hulk.'"

H: "Well, I didn't do anything about it like you did!"

W: [Addressing the therapist] "See, there he goes: Mr. Perfect [sneering again]. This is what I have to live with... all just because I needed some companionship and some fun... [crying]... I'm getting punished because he won't admit that he needs the same things that I do..."

H: "Well, I don't think so. I never drank to make myself happy, and I never had another lover..."

[Long silence.]

W: "I wanted so much for us to be happy [weeping]. I wanted so much for you to be happy with me. And now everything's

so tarnished... It's too late... I... I don't think I can love you anymore..."

This is not a story with a happy ending. The husband eventually moved into his own apartment, refusing to deal in subsequent therapy sessions with his needs for his wife and the hurt that propelled his desire to punish her. He had behaviorally regarded her actions as unforgivable, though he used all the right words to satisfy his consciously held religious values. He remained bitter, though outwardly jovial, whenever he was at church or in social situations. He continued to blame his wife for their "downfall" and enlisted support for his position from other men who had been similarly "betrayed." He placed his primary focus on business and the requisite out-of-town travel that it required. Instead of expressing hurt and anger toward his wife, he repressed it until it manifested itself as a slap at his daughter. He continued to convert it into hyper activity and hard work.

The client's spouse, through her own therapy, was able to move past her resentment at him. She saw him again as human, as hurting, as flawed—as she did for many years before this crisis occurred. This produced an expanded sense of freedom and enjoyment, a more energized body, a more optimistic view of her future. She began to utilize her home as a daycare center. This yielded income and meaningful work for her.



(After it seemed obvious that he would not get off his position, I began to feel a lot of support and respect for her. She had done her best to include him in a change process. Perhaps my failure here was that I couldn't find a way for him to consider a different point of view. I also felt that she deserved credit for the risk she took in being vulnerable, while he remained "above" her, contenting himself with blame and shame.)

She remained active in church, as well, and attempted once or twice to reconcile with her husband, though he would have no part of it. He continued blaming and shaming his spouse.

He died of a heart attack at the age of fifty-four. She remarried three years later and is happy with her life.

4) SELF-FORGIVENESS: An Antidote to Guilt

Each of us carries, within, a harsh inner critic: a perceptive and relentless voice that, from time to time, reminds us of our past mistakes. It's as if the shame, blame, and guilt associated with our misdeeds have all distilled into poison that circulates in our bloodstream, gradually sapping our strength. This shaming/blaming/guilty "voice" seems to feed, like a hungry shark, on negativity and self-criticism. It seems never to get enough.

In my personal and clinical experience, self-forgiveness is the most difficult of all. This culture has its history of

guilt/shame and self-blame. Perhaps these mirror our attachment to crime and punishment and to our habits of social ostracism, emotional shunning, economic competition. To fall short is to fall victim. To fail is to fail; to fall is to fail. The price is guilt.

For anyone with even a partially developed conscience, mistakes can be costly—not just for the others who are affected, but for oneself—in the form of self-blame, self-criticism, self-hatred, or self-pity. Embarrassment and shame about our mistakes can slice through our self-esteem. No wonder sometimes we want to cover them up or deny them. Yet it seems mistakes are inevitable and are likely to occur throughout any human life.

In the case described below, there are some discrete steps and stages in the client's process of self-forgiveness that may apply to any process of forgiveness. This man appeared for treatment after having a series of nightmares in which he was being chased by a half-human, half-gorilla figure who carried a club in one hand and a flaming torch in the other. The client would awaken every night (during which this dream occurred three or four times) in a cold sweat, terrified and bewildered. He was a well-educated and sophisticated person, yet had been unable to make any sense out of his dreams. Since his disturbing dreams propelled him into treatment, it made sense to begin with the dreams and to go from there.

Therapist: [After the client described his dreams] "Which half of this figure carries the club... do you remember?"

Client: "...Yes, it was the human half, the man-like figure who carries it. This man looks a lot like me when I was young."

T: "Then the torch is carried by the other half, the one that resembles a gorilla...?"

C: "Yes... only he's not shaggy and rough, like a real gorilla. His coat is soft and he has a very delicate, soft hand... almost like a woman's hand. And the torch is made of some kind of shiny metal, like silver or gold."

T: "What if you let each side speak for itself... beginning with which ever one you choose? Sometimes a dream like this can represent two different parts of ourselves that are trying to somehow come together, to cooperate..."

C: "I would start with the gorilla. Why is he there? Why is he so unusual—not at all a real gorilla?"

T: "Close your eyes for a minute, OK? Ask him what he wants to tell you... what is it he wants you to know about him?"

C: [Eyes closed... near tears] "Hmm... it's not what I expected... He's telling me that he can shed some light on things, that he wants to light the way for me, that he can show me some things I need to know..."

T: "OK. Now, can you turn your attention to the other side, the human aspect of this image? Ask him what he wants you to know, or to understand."

C: "He has this club, like a baseball bat, but not polished. He just wants to swing it at me... he's telling me that I'm not good enough, that I'm a fuck-up, and that I deserve to be thrashed... he's telling me that [client begins to cry]... that it's my fault that my sister drowned, that if I hadn't gone to play baseball I could have seen her and saved her..."

[Note: The client's sister drowned at the age of nine; the client was twelve at the time, and knew she was a good swimmer.]

T: "Who told you that it was your fault? Did anyone do that?"

C: "Yes, my father... he grabbed me by the shoulders and shook me and told me that I was selfish and irresponsible for going away from the lake when I knew my sister was swimming... my father was yelling at me... angry... red-faced..."

(This was the most difficult point for me. I remember trying so hard to "do it right" or "be good enough." When I was a child, I would hope against hope for a crumb of recognition or approval from my alcoholic father. Even to this day, I can be instantly provoked if I feel perceived as not doing it right or not being good enough.)

T: "Yet you were twelve and wanted to be with your friends. You were invited to play baseball, and your sister was able to swim, and there was a lifeguard... isn't this what you told me...?"

C: "Yes. I knew she could swim, and I knew there was a lifeguard, and I had never been asked all summer to watch my sister..."

T: "Have you been 'clubbing' yourself for this accident ever since then; for the past twenty three years...?"

C: [Weeping] "Yes..."

Therapist: "Perhaps the gorilla has something to tell you... Why don't you ask him?"

C: [Eyes closed] "He...he's telling me that he's really my friend, that he knows how much I loved my sister, that it wasn't my fault, that my father was beside himself with grief and just took it out on me, but knew it wasn't my fault...[weeping]... The gorilla is showing me this big torch... he's telling me that it's OK for me to look ahead now, that I can turn that club into a torch... He's telling me that he [the gorilla] is soft and a lot of fun and really likes to play and wants to play with me... [laughing and crying]...that big old monster is just a teddy bear! He just wants to cuddle and play and have fun and stop being so serious and to show me that I can let my hair down and relax."

T: "What is going on with the guy who holds the club?"

C: "He's just sort of standing there gawking, sort of smiling, sort of giggling, sort of weeping... He's dropped the club, he's just hanging out with the gorilla, well..., now he is the gorilla, except he's himself too, but without the club... I don't know...[laughing, giggling]... They're both just... just themselves, but not scary... I'm confused! But who cares!"

After just two more sessions, this client was able to recognize that he had carried a tremendous burden of self-blame and self-punishment ever since the accidental drowning of his sister. His compensatory "mask" was to be smoothly efficient and attentive to everyone around him, at great cost to his spontaneity and ability to relax and enjoy himself. Interestingly, this client literally did let his hair down (he grew it long) and, without ever using the word, was able to forgive himself for something that he had been wrongly blamed for, but for which he still felt a wrenching sense of guilt and responsibility. He loved his father and had great compassion for him. He saw years before how anguished his father was, and actually forgave his father for the outburst long before he forgave himself for the imagined oversight that he unconsciously believed had cost his sister's life. Such is the power of blame when visited upon children, and such is the power of compassion when it is visited upon oneself as well as others.

5) WHEN FORGIVENESS IS NOT HEALTHY Moving Too Fast

It is idealistic to think that "everything" can be forgiven. To let go of resentment, distrust, or self-protective wariness that stems from actual behavior in another is not necessarily healthy. We know that victims of sexual or emotional abuse, in their desire to repair damage, to restore an idealized relationship, or to get the love they never got, might attempt to prematurely forgive perpetrators: He just did what he needed to do...; He didn't know he was hurting me...; The same thing happened to him... (as a child...); My minister says I should try to understand...; It only happened once...; It was probably my fault...; It wasn't as bad as it could have been...; If only I had mentioned it sooner...

In this final case example, a woman in her late twenties came for therapy after being physically assaulted at work by a jealous ex-lover. Shortly after the threat, she experienced nightmares and insomnia.

Therapist: [After getting background information] "Is it possible that you may have been physically or sexually abused when you were a child?"

Client: [Pausing... choosing her words carefully] "Yes, it is possible. In fact,... it happened. But I never told anybody."

T: "I appreciate your telling me. You can say as much or as little as you want..."

C: "I only want to get that motherfucker out of my mind... I have been angry with him ever since he touched me. I was eleven... I told him to stop and he didn't. I told my mother and she didn't believe me..."

The client attempted to forgive the perpetrator. She tried to think positive thoughts about him. She felt as if she must have caused him to assault her. She felt as if she "shouldn't get angry" because it was wrong to get angry. She felt as if she could "get over it" with the passage of time. She saw that these strategies weren't working for her. The symptoms continued.

At a subsequent session:

Client: "There was a funeral yesterday... He died and I'm glad he did. I'll never forgive him. I'm glad he's dead, and I'm glad he suffered. I feel safe for the first time since it happened. I think God gave him what he had coming... cancer... I'm glad he died slowly. He deserved to die that way, after what he did to me and my sister. I didn't go to the funeral. I went and got my hair done."

As harsh as this sounds, the relief exhibited by the client was obvious. She found, after expressing her deep rage toward the perpetrator and learning of his death, that her nightmares had diminished, then stopped. She finally felt released from her

secrets: both the assault and her desire for revenge, propelled by her unspeakable hurt and anger. Since his death, she's felt no need to forgive him. She feels it is better to remain angry. She continues to be a loving friend, mother, and spouse and has had no more nightmares. For her, there is no need to forgive the perpetrator. She seems to be happy, and she has not worried about how she's handled her feelings. In this case, the person's choice to refrain from forgiveness has helped her forgive herself, and for that reason alone it seems like a wise choice, one that

allows her to hold him responsible instead of blaming herself. She might, someday, find herself taking another step and forgiving the perpetrator for what he did.

Conclusion

So often we remain connected to those who hurt us—friends, lovers, spouses, family members, and so on. We remain "ourselves" even when we feel we have made a mistake. In my experience, genuine forgiveness of others and/or self deepens love and respect. It is perhaps a way of offering our blessing to others—we are saying to another: you and your feelings matter, you and your situation are worthy of regard. Forgiveness is, more often than not, a necessary condition for peace: in the heart, the home, and the world. □



Responsive Reading

When do bad things happen	Have you ever messed up a relationship
To good people?	
Yesterday evening,	That really mattered
At 10:00 this morning,	Or lost two breasts to cancer?
Wednesday at 5:00 PM.	My friend Annie has.
Bad things happen all the time.	And my father has held the hands
They happen when planes crash	Of two dying wives.
In Scotland.	He has seen one daughter go insane
When cars smash in Des Moines.	And the other go, nowhere.
When bullets fly at schoolyards	Yet he survives, at eighty four years young,
In Detroit.	To play golf everyday with his girlfriend
They happen when floods occur	
In Bangladesh.	Who escaped Hitler's ovens 50 years ago
They happen when rain doesn't fall	And remembers her cousins who did not.
In Ethiopia.	
They even happen in Palm Springs.	When do bad things happen
Bad things happen all the time.	To good people?
Beautiful daughters marry men who batter them.	Bad things happen all the time.
Brilliant sons are stricken with Aids.	God prepares, we do the cleanup.
I have a friend with four children	My secretary killed herself last week.
Who didn't get tenure;	My lover didn't.
And another, who did, was ostracized	And their actions speak less about their pain
For a decade by colleagues	Than their approach.
Threatened by his work.	

□ □ □

Wedding Day: The Fifth Blessing¹

*You might imagine that such an act
concerns only the immediate players.
A wedding of two, two alone,
paired off and out of the running.
But we, we too, all of us,
who come together
to celebrate this sacred day
know a very different story
is being told:
You are our collective wish for love
and continuance and joy—fulfilled
You are our promise of redemption.*

¹In the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony, seven blessings are recited over the couple. The fifth blessing is a prayer asking for redemption.

by Hellen R. Weingarten

Helen R. Weingarten, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor at the University of Michigan School of Social Work. Besides writing poetry, Dr. Weingarten currently writes, consults, and teaches about conflict and collaboration.

(Un)Forgiveness: "TO BE OR NOT TO BE"...[NOT...]

What is forgiveness anyway? Why do some conflicts go on and on, while others seem to pass away? And as for me... why am I among those who never forgive? The values, and perils, of "unforgiveness" (my term) are explored in this essay. Contained and focused—acetylene-like—unforgiveness may act as an energy source and hence have positive elements. Unrestrained unforgiveness may—does—cause problems down through the generations. One important generative element of unforgiveness is, I hypothesize, powerlessness.

by
John E. Tropman

John E. Tropman, Ph.D.,
Professor, School of Social Work,
the University of Michigan,
Ann Arbor, MI.

My Forgiveness Feeling

I do not forgive, and I do not forget. If I should forget, when I remember I also recall that I have not forgiven! My spouse feels this position is basically an improper one—it is somehow "wrong" to hold grudges. I do not really hold grudges—exactly—but I do not forget or excuse events I consider to be unfairness, serious slights, large inappropriateness, and the like, to me or to others. And, of course, there are more serious things: injustices, unethical actions, and so on merit even more earnest attention.

Let me give some examples. I recall a person named Tommy Farley—someone I grew up with (he lived down the street from us) in Kenmore, New York. Since we moved from Kenmore when I was eight, the time I am talking about is pre-school and school up to the 3rd grade. Tommy was a guy I have come to recognize as seriously disturbed. But to me, then, he was a bully. He liked to hurt

things—including me. He is on my list. Then there are the boys in the grade school Lindbergh—boys who would not let me play ball because I was small. In high school I recall "Gail" who dumped me, and "Maureen" who made me wait one hour in her living room for our date. To me, these events are "only yesterday" (Allen, 1931).

Then there were offenses at college. At Oberlin I will never forget "Bernard," my French Professor (I now realize he was not much of a professor) who delighted in taunting me in class. I had French from 8:00–9:00 am, five days a week. He used an objectionable "cold call" technique and would make fun of me when I did not know the answer.¹ That was the fall of 1957. To me it was only yesterday. I will never forgive that son of a bitch.

Then, of course, in graduate school, there was the Plagiarizing Professor. I wrote a

¹Cold calling is not bad. It is the taunting and humiliation that are objectionable.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THE IRISH ALZHEIMER'S PATIENT?
HE FORGETS EVERYTHING BUT THE GRUDGE
DON'T GET MAD, GET EVEN!
DON'T LIKE MY DRIVING?
DIAL 1-800-EAT-SHIT
"EMERGING FIELD OF FORGIVENESS STUDIES EXPLORES HOW WE LET GO OF GRUDGES: Research Examines Reactions to Everything From Personal Betrayals to National Disgraces" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 17, 1998

paper for his seminar focusing on a theory of his. I added a couple of key variables. He apparently did not like it because he gave me a B, and made no real comments. I say "apparently" because—*viola*—his next version of the theory had *exactly* those two variables. I confronted him about it. He denied ANY connection; when I showed him the paper I had written he allowed as how, well, there MIGHT be some connection but everything that is handed in to him is "his" anyway.

Then there was the Prevaricating Professor. I had called him to ask permission to use some of the research we had been working on for an article in a particular journal. I did not really need his permission. It had been a school project and the analysis was entirely my own. But as we had done the project as part of a research class and collected the data as a group, I thought it was appropriate to "clear" with him. He was very gracious and said "Fine... it sounds like a good idea." Apparently it was too good of an idea. I worked for about a month on my paper, sent it in, and got a quick reply: "We really like your piece; As it happens though, we have just accepted something quite similar from ____ ... [Guess who? You got it—my old gracious Prof]." I guess as he thought about it he decided he would write one. He just worked faster than I did, for whatever reason, and quickly sent his version to that magazine, depriving me of what would have been my first article.

Throughout the rest of my career there have been the usual array of dissembling administrators and hypocritical colleagues, bullies, and people who would sell you out for a free lunch, and not an expensive lunch at that! I remember every one.

Unforgiveness

"Unforgiveness"—the term I use for my orientation—comes from looking at "forgiveness" from the perspective of inanimate objects—if a "rock," for example, is "unforgiving" it means it makes no allowances for your errors. So I guess if I applied that definition to myself, I would be the kind of person who makes no allowances for the errors of others. But this is clearly untrue; I make lots of exceptions. When I don't, it is because:

- 1) The errors had a personal impact on me, directly or through something I care about;
- 2) I was unable to respond effectively because of cowardice;
- 3) The "perp" did not recognize/acknowledge her/his actions, remains in defensive denial;
- 4) The "perp" did not apologize;
- 5) It has happened more than once;
- 6) I feel that the motives of the

perpetrators are suspect (hostile, hateful) [though motive alone is not enough; clueless people hurt too] and the act itself is beyond comprehension (psychopathic/sociopathic acts—the outlaw drivers, Stalin, Hitler, Pol Pot).

These are the properties of acts that are "unforgivable" according to me. What is involved in the unforgiveness disposition? First, there is a wounding. Sometimes it is a physical assault—as when you get beat up. Sometimes it is a verbal assault. And sometimes it is through actions—things people do or do not do that are troubling. What is common to them all is the emotional component; over time, these assaults metamorphose into a bunch of wounded expectations—umbrage I feel... I know—is legitimate on my part. The wound remains unhealed. It becomes anger.

The physical element has long since passed. Only Farley really attacked me physically. Wounding words are as bad. There is that old saying:

*Sticks and stones can break your bones
but words will never hurt you.*

That always seemed wrong to me. Words are hurtful. I rewrote it thusly:

*Sticks and stones break only bones...
It's words that really hurt you.*

And then there are things that people do—or do not do, that are troubling. **Commission—**

actually hurting me—is one set of memories. **Omission** is another set. It involves those hurt through (often unconscious) failure to act. One particular group involves who fail to do what they promise. They are not people who “Stand And Deliver;” they are those people who “Slip Out and Do Not Deliver.” Most people do not actually *do* what they say they are going to do—so my list is getting long.

In some ways, though, I am an equal opportunity unforgiver. It does not, as the list above suggests, only have to deal with me personally or directly. There are a number of incidents involving my family and children that are unforgivable. I have a colleague who is a bully and a tease. (He will come up again in a minute.) He caused my spouse a great deal of pain one particular evening. I will never forgive him. Then there is "Randy." He made fun of one of my daughter's "tosis" (a drooping eyelid) when she was at school. Then there are some of her significant others—the "gadabout" and "Mr. Fear-of-Commitment." They hurt her. I will never forgive them.

And it does not have to be offenses against people either. Those who hurt others generally are on my list. Those who fail to exercise appropriate trusteeship of institutions in their care are other kinds of examples. And offenses need not be big—people who go fifty-five miles an hour in the left-hand lane occupy a special position. My spouse calls me the Minister of Justice. I do not give things up easily. (This may be a

personality trait—I keep physical things as well—family chairs, that sort of thing.)

Some of you readers might be thinking about now, "This guy has a lot of baggage." The author of *Repacking your Bags for the Rest of Your Life* would say my "trunk" is too full for easy travel (Leider and Shapiro, 1995). I look at it another way. I am more like a Volkswagen Beetle—my engine is in the rear! This "anger," if that is the right word (a pile of unforgiven incidents = anger), serves as a kind of nuclear engine—it gives me lots of energy.



Is Forgiveness Important?

One might define forgiveness as a settled social or psychological state free from the pressure of "rectification" (revenge). Others have called forgiveness the ability to generally overlook slights or harm done to you, and be at peace with it. But is forgiveness important? All this ink about forgiveness may

cause one to wonder “what difference does it make, anyway?” Who cares if you forgive, or do not? Scholars are beginning to look into “forgiveness” as a topic of scholarly inquiry (Heller, 1998). One scholar—Robert Enright at UW-Madison even has a list of “how” to forgive. It is instructive to consider what he suggests [the list is presented in Figure 1].

Clearly Enright feels it is "better" to forgive. But why would that be so? One reason seems to be that "unforgiveness" is bad for you. While he may not have read the list of suggestions in Figure 1, even President Clinton is getting into the forgiveness act. He recently commented:

And so it is important that we are able to forgive those we believe have wronged us, even as we ask for forgiveness from people we have wronged... The anger, the resentment, the bitterness, the desire for recrimination against people you believe have wronged you—they harden the heart and deaden the spirit and lead to self-inflicted wounds.²

Well, gosh. The President seems to feel it is important to forgive so that, A) you do not hurt yourself, and, B) others can forgive you.

That does not do me much good. I do not WANT to

²The complete text of the President's remarks can be found in *The New York Times*, Saturday, August 29, 1998. P. A10.

How to Forgive: One Scholar's Views

"To forgive is not to condone, to excuse, to accept, to reconcile, and certainly not to forget," says Robert D. Enright, a professor of educational psychology at the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

A person who has been hurt must consciously choose to forgive—a moral choice that is one step along a path that takes time to complete, he contends. He lays out these steps to true forgiveness.

1. Don't deny or repress anger, hurt or shame. Accept that it's there and commit yourself to doing something to help.
2. Don't identify the person who has hurt you and leave it at that. Pinpoint the behavior that hurt you.
3. Choose not to nurse a grudge or seek revenge. Make the choice to forgive. This "heart conversion" is the crucial step.
4. Explain to yourself why you have chosen this path. This need not be for lofty reasons. It can be, for example, that letting go of the grievance will allow you to enjoy the benefits of your marriage or better concentrate on your work.
5. Think differently about the person who committed the wrong. Think about his or her own vulnerabilities. Walk a bit in the other person's shoes.
6. Bear the pain but decide not to pass it on – including to the person who hurt you in the first place.
7. Decide instead to offer goodwill, generosity, mercy, "moral love." This can, but doesn't have to, include a reconciliation.
8. Reflect on how it feels to have given up the burden or grudge. Recognize emotional relief. Find meaning in the suffering you've faced and overcome.
9. Discover the paradox of forgiveness: As you give to others the gift of mercy, you are being healed.

-Scott Heller (1998, p.A20)

forgive. My answer to the question of "so what?" is different. For one thing I do not think that forgiving others increases your chances of experiencing forgiveness from the victims at all.

Nor—and this is a kind of forgiveness I think—does it increase your chances of getting an apology from the "perp." That approach assumes that the perps are **like us** and not clueless or sociopathic. Those who offend—and it happens all the time—own up and apologize right away. We do not even consider them "perps."

It is true, of course, that in forgiving, you might not expect the "perp" to apologize to you. You might be just generating "forgiveness capital" so that others will see you as a nice guy and forgive you. The President, therefore, forgives the special prosecutor in the hopes that, in the great game of forgiveness, his wife will forgive him. As an investment, I'd prefer the 1998 Russian Stock market.

On the other hand, the business of unforgiveness as self destructive is worth some thought. It can be harmful. My view, though, lies in what you do about the anger that drives the unforgiveness. If that anger drives you to rage then it is bad. Bad here, like a fire out of control, means *you* are out of control. Societies and persons must have an "anger management system." Forgiveness is one such system. It legitimizes "letting go" and at the same time, Aikido-like, tends to disarm the perpetrator. It's true that anger (the store of unforgiven incidents) may be the most expen-

Figure 1

sive emotion (Birdsall, 1998). But that may refer to inappropriate anger—rage. Slow burning, white-hot anger may serve—for some—as an engine of ambition. If, however, you control the anger (“refiner’s fire”), this anger—appropriate anger, as D. Goleman in his work *Emotional Intelligence* (1995) says—it may serve you well.

How can this be so? How can anger become an engine? For one thing, it can be the spur to competition; anger creates motivation. It need not always be directed at some perp. The saying “Living well is the best revenge” captures this element nicely. Also, anger can create alertness, an “edge,” that increases one’s ability to adapt.

Thoughts and Acts of Forgiveness

Thoughts of forgiveness involve self-realization and the internal processes of “letting go.” Acts of forgiveness involve communicating that to the perpetrator. But so often “perps” do not know or care. So telling them you forgive them brings out comments like “For what?” You just feel foolish. False forgiveness means engaging in an

act of forgiveness that is a lie. The act of forgiveness is perhaps the “action” opposite of retaliation. The forgiveness cycle stops the retaliatory cycle.³ Of course sometimes, as in cases like mine, acts of forgiveness do not occur. We wait for revenge.

Anger/Unforgiveness: Some Pass, Some Do Not

It may be unusual—remember Iing slights and offenses over years and years. But, unusual or not, I am not alone. Bill Gamson in his paper “Rancorous Conflict in Community Politics” (1966) asked the question about why some “conflicts” are resolved and others are not. Let me define “conflict” as a disagreement over interests where the results are meaningful or fateful; that is, the outcome matters. Rancorous conflict, on the other hand, is difference in interests, fatefulness, and narcissistic wounding. This is my definition, not Gamson’s. It seems apropos because rancorous conflict cannot be “mediated.” Rancorous conflicts imply—require—retribution often thought of as rectification. But why should some “offenses” become so closely held anyway? I won-

der this about myself. Why do I remember all this stuff with outraged feeling that is ever fresh?

One reason could be that controlled anger is my energy source of choice. It could be a style, a habit—but I think there is more.

As I reviewed my “list,” one striking commonality emerged for me—forming a kind of hypothesis. The people I will not forgive are those who caused me pain when I was powerless to deal with the situation. This is the first point. I was sort of a “prisoner.” Farley was bigger than I. “Bernard” was my professor. And so on. But was I really powerless? I think not, really. In the case of the plagiarizing Professor, I could have done something—but the cost of retaliation, of “whistle blowing,” would have been large. So in some ways I was a coward. And that perhaps is what I really cannot forgive me! Focusing on others, not forgiving them, is a sort of projection, one that deflects the feeling away from me—to them. So, my conclusion is that to forgive others you have to start with yourself! And in the cases I mentioned, that is hard because, in a sense, I chose not to act. Perhaps it was the right deci-

³Forgiveness is one “social rule” for stopping the endless cycle of offense and retribution, a cycle of which society and community must tire. The rule of law is another way that this cycle may be stopped. It was this idea that Aeschylus dealt with in his trilogy *Oresteia*. After a series of seductions, murders, treacheries, the sacrificing of one’s own children and cannibalism (also involving one’s own children) the plot comes to an even more dramatic head in *The Eumenides*. Orestes is pursued by the Furies (who will not forgive him) for having killed Aegisthus and Cassandra. He appeals to Athene. “... and she, thinking the case too difficult to be judged by a single person, even her divine self-appointed court of Athenian jurors to hear the arguments and judge the case. When the votes of these resulted in a tie, Athene herself casts the deciding ballot in favor of Orestes...” The law court of Aareiopagus which had judged the case was perpetrated as a just tribunal for homicide down throughout the history of man: Lattimore, 1953. pp. 6-7.

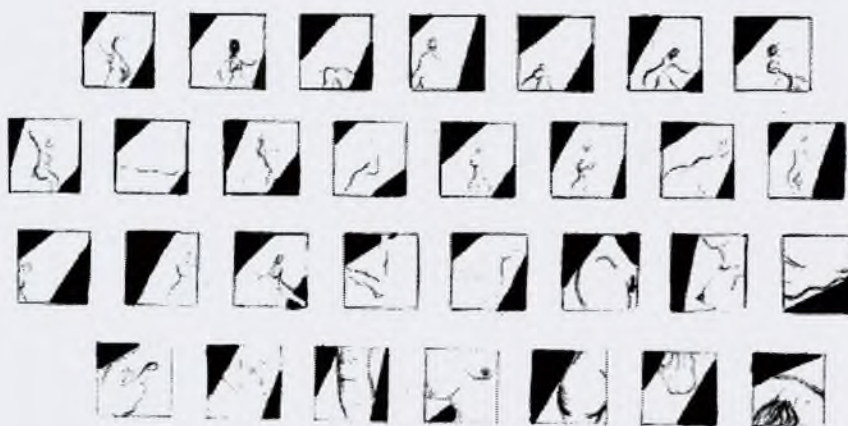
sion, or a good decision, but, because it was coerced, it felt, and still feels, wrong. So I felt "deeply wronged, and deeply right about feeling deeply wronged."

lems in retribution, as I have just said. That is why, no doubt, the ancients had curses pass down from generation to generation. I suppose I could teach my kids to "avenge" me, but that seems

that "time heals all wounds." Perhaps, but I prefer my alternative—"Time wounds all heels." I will wait. □

REFERENCES

- Allen, F. L., (1931) *Only yesterday: an informal history of the nineteen-twenties*. New York and London: Harper and Brothers.
- Birdsall, W., (1988) *Personal Communication*.
- Goleman, D., (1995) *Emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Gamson, W. (1966) "Rancorous conflict in community politics" *American Sociological Review*, 31.
- Heller, S., (1998). "Emerging field of forgiveness studies explores how we let go of grudges" *Chronicle of Higher Education*. July 17, 1998 pp.A18-20.
- Leider, R. J. and Shapiro, D. A., (1995) *Repacking your bags: lighten your load for the rest of your life*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Seelye, K. Q., (1998). "Clinton speaks of forgiving and also of being forgiven" *New York Times*, August 29, 1998, p.1.



That feeling (or basket of feelings, or cluster of feelings), the insulting, hurting, wronging event, and my relative powerlessness (read cowardice) became encapsulated. I think I have put it to good use. But it is still there, pulsing, waiting.

The practical problem with long lists, of course, is that the moment passes. In this respect, life's interactions are like freeway exits—you gotta go when and where you gotta go, and if you pass a "rectification exit" it may be too late. Certainly for things that happened years ago, it is. I have no idea whether Tommy Farley is even living. If he is, and I meet him, what, reasonably speaking, could I do? Would he even remember? I doubt it.

That means that I need to consider "displacement" as an answer to the question "what do you do when there is nothing you can do?" Time creates prob-

a bit extreme (for one thing, it wastes energy). So unless one turns unforgiveness into energy and consumes it, one will be consumed *by* it.

There is another problem. This one involves "the perp" and the cluelessness that perps sometimes present. Those who offend are, sometimes, quite unaware of it—being over-involved with themselves and their needs. (Often, people have told me, "I (or s/he) did not mean it." Motive to hurt, meaning to hurt, is irrelevant to me—the result is the same either way.) This cluelessness means either that, a) the "retribution" will be unconnected by the perp to her/his "contribution" and thus wasted, or, b) "getting through" the defenses will take so much more of my resource that it becomes not worth it.

So what to do? Time and again, colleagues counsel me

A Death In The Group Work Family

This paper is dedicated to the memory of Norman Goroff. At the time of his death in October 1989, he was a Professor at the School of Social Work, University of Connecticut in West Hartford. He also tried to practice, teach, and live according to his social work values and he died in the midst of a sentence explaining them.¹

by
Paul H. Ephross

Paul H. Ephross, Ph.D.,
Professor, University of
Maryland, School of Social
Work Baltimore, MD.

Introduction: The AASWG Symposia

Ever since I braved my own cold and the freezing winter winds of Cleveland's lakefront in 1979, I've looked forward to the Annual Symposium of the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups (AASWG) each October. The Cleveland program honored the late Grace Longwell Coyle, an investigator of the relation between social science and social work, and an intellectual leader in the goals perspective in social work with groups. She was so warmly greeted by such an unexpectedly large response from the several hundred people present that a desire was voiced for follow-up in the form of an annual symposium, which has continued to this day. It is now sponsored by the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups, an International Professional Association.

By the time this reminiscence and reflection is published and made available to readers of *Reflections*, I hope to be able to take pleasure in having missed only one of the first twenty symposia. A wealth of memories, all the important ones pleasant, crowd my mind

as I think back over the experiences which are associated with the nineteen I did get to. The memories are about equally divided between the programs of the symposia themselves—sessions attended and led, workshops and institutes participated in and directed, solo or with a partner—and breakfasts, lunches, and dinners with old and new friends, a geographical spread from San Diego to Chicago to Toronto to Québec Cité to Miami to Arlington, TX; in 1999, I hope, Denver, as scheduled, and in 2000, for the second time, the unique stresses, strains, rewards, and joys of hosting as the symposium returns to Baltimore.

On Being a "Group Worker"

For many of us, of three distinct generations, to identify oneself as a "group worker," or its more contemporary but duller relative, "a social worker with groups," means acknowledging and testifying to a deeply meaningful but somewhat complex identity. Easiest to understand is an identity with the profession and, for the most part, the organizational forms of social work. This is necessary but not sufficient. Next—some

¹Norman was also known to his colleagues as the founder, editor, and promoter of *Sociology and Social Welfare* at every professional meeting. After he asked if you had renewed your subscription, he would be hawking the journal to another. Norman set a wonderful example for this journal's editor. -ed.

would argue, first—comes a commitment to democratic process, a belief that groups, organizations, and societies operate best when those who participate in them have the authority and the responsibility for decision making about them. Included is a belief in nonviolence as a fundamental principle of human affairs, and the opposite of discrimination: celebration of and belief in the value of all forms of human diversity. Being a group worker requires a reluctance, if not a refusal, to categorize people based on static diagnoses, brief acquaintance, ignorance of structural causes of behavior, and rigid characterizations of health and illness. One should add to this incomplete list a belief in the values of group activities over a wide range of activity media and purposes.

Political ideology plays an important, though sometimes ambivalent, part in group work ideology and identity. At one time progressive, i.e., left politics of one variety or another were virtually *de rigueur*; today, as it becomes less and less clear which politics are what, or what politics are, respectively, 'progressive' or 'conservative,' political stances vary more than they used to.

One shouldn't stereotype group workers. Even many leaders in the field do not fit the mold of guitar-strummers, lovers of camping though the mosquitoes be fierce and the food half-cooked, jolly extroverts, street gang workers, or

workaholics who enjoy their jobs more the greater the challenge and the less adequate the facilities and budgets. Many are shy, sometimes painfully so.

Others come to their work from deeply religious backgrounds, sometimes expressed through membership in one or another clergy. Others are refugees from one or another of the inhumanities and persecutions which seem to characterize each inhabited continent. Group workers are of all races and ethnicities, both sexes, all sexual orientations; they cover a very wide range of ages and vary in all other human attributes.

Characteristically, however, we share identity and membership; to put it most simply, we recognize each other and we generally enjoy each other's company. There are similarities between identifying as a group worker and as a member of an ethnic group.

Many of us went to graduate school together, or at least are fellow alumni of the same school, worked together at one point in our respective careers, were classmates in doctoral programs, served on boards or committees of professional organizations, co-authored articles or books together, or have had other points of contact over the years.

Professor Norman Goroff

None of these overlaps connected me with Norman Goroff. He was about ten years

older than I, had gone to a different Master's program, he to Case Western Reserve's in Cleveland, I to Boston University's, and he had taught for many years at the School of Social Work at the University of Connecticut, with which I have had no connection though I do know several its faculty members.

Norman was and I am Jewish. I think we would have agreed in part and disagreed in part had we ever talked about Jewish issues or Jewish identity. We never did. He was one of just a few people in my life who called me "boychik," a Slavized form of "boy" which has an affectionate connotation which the English severely lacks. Norman had been friends, many years before the event which is central to this narrative, with a close colleague of mine. Except for this last, our relationship had developed almost exclusively from our interactions at AASWG Symposia.

Norman had a deep identity with the Association; at one point, he held membership card #1 and was quite proud of this fact. Somehow or other, whether by accident or by design, Norman would appear as soon as I completed registering, indeed, sometimes before I had registered and once as soon as I got on the shuttle bus from the airport to the hotel in which the symposium took place. Wearing his characteristic gray suit, sometimes with a sweater vest, sometimes not, and possessor of a rather undisciplined gray beard which had once been much darker, Norman gave me,



as he did others, the impression that meeting me had both "made his day" and given him an opportunity to share his most recent thought, aphorism, observation about current news, or evaluation of what someone had said at last year's symposium fresh off his drawing board.

Norman generally appeared at a Symposium with a group of graduate students, especially when the symposium was within a radius of several hundred miles from West Hartford, CT. He had also founded the Practitioners' Press, located in Hebron, CT, and had filled an important need by issuing reprint editions of several group work and social work classics, which were on display at the annual symposia. He thought that everyone who attended should at least buy copies for their personal, professional libraries, while everyone who taught social work ought to use at least one of the books as texts.

Although he was known not to be in the best of health, he was indefatigable. Each annual encounter with Norman included, in some form, yet another refutation by him of an influential speech delivered by a University of Michigan professor of social work at a national meeting in 1962. At that meeting, the speaker had argued that

group work needed to redeploy its personnel so that more

would work with truly needy people—e.g., patients, institutionalized people, children in foster care, adjudicated offend-

ers—and not so disproportionate a share with ordinary citizens, such as people coming to neighborhood houses and community centers for leisure-time activities or children attending summer camps. The speaker had also argued that, to claim its share of professional status and recognition, group work needed to reallocate its efforts and its limited personnel to work for therapeutic purposes as part of a clinical team and share in the prestige and resources which accrued to clinical team members.

Norman knew my position on this issue. I think the 1962 speech, which still made him livid more than 25 years after it had been delivered, made some valid points. I certainly do not believe that group work belongs only in a clinical

context, only in any one context, for that matter. But no matter how many times I had stated my position, no meeting with Norman of any length was complete without a panegyric, long or short, about why, how, and to what extent the 1962 speaker had been wrong. One could no more stop this than one could prevent clouds from bringing rain.

Starting a few years before the Montréal symposium, I would receive tape cassettes in the mail from Norman in which he expounded on his views on topics ranging from articles in professional journals to the future of the galaxy. It was always a pleasure to receive them. An

answer in the form of a tape cassette was requested, and it never occurred to me not to respond. Why? Because one just didn't do that to Norman. His evident sincerity, his absolute belief in his principles, and his eloquence, combined with the intensity with which he was committed to each of these, made him forceful in a usually quiet way. One didn't want to hurt him—at least, I didn't—and each felt that Norman would interpret our not listening to him or responding to his request to send him back a tape cassette them as a personal rejection, as a refusal to be loving, to a person who taught the importance of love in helping both individuals and groups.

11e SYMPOSIUM ANNUEL L'ASSOCIATION POUR L'AVANCEMENT DU SERVICE SOCIAL DES GROUPE

11th Annual Symposium, The Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups

I particularly looked forward to this symposium for a number of reasons. As a native New Englander, I have good feelings towards Montréal and Québec, in fact, towards Canada in general, and I've had pleasant and rewarding experiences from Vancouver Island to Nova Scotia. As co-chair of the previous symposium, I was still a member of the Board of Directors and rather looked forward to its meeting in Montréal, at which meeting I knew my three years' term on the Board would



come to an end. This was, I think, the first symposium which would be thoroughly bilingual throughout, with more than a token number of sessions in both languages and considerable provisions for translation. It thus marked a step in the internationalization of the Association. I thought that the food at the opening banquet was a step above what's often characterized as "rubber chicken" hotel food. It was good to see old friends again, and to make my annual date with one of my oldest friends to have lunch together and 'get caught up.' The opening speeches were very much *à propos* the changing social and economic environments of both Canada and the United States. The attendees seemed many in number and high in spirit. In fact, there was some sense of the *joie de vivre* which the host city likes to attribute to itself.

After the opening speeches and some brief discussion, I walked over to Norman. He had come late to the session, having driven up from Connecticut with a car full of social work students. His face looked dark, and he had noticeable circles around his eyes, both signs that he was tired. He greeted me with great warmth and his usual bear-hug. We exchanged small talk as to which of us was teaching what, how we had been, and so on. Somehow, the conversation, which in toto lasted five minutes, if that, got around to a group of psychiatric residents whom I had worked with as their facilitator throughout two and 3/4 years of

their three-year residencies. I said that part of the group process had been an ongoing discussion as what to call themselves; whether this group was a didactic group, a support group, or a group therapy group. Norman said, as I could have anticipated, that he didn't like the terms "therapy group" or "treatment group," but rather preferred the term "healing group." Having said this, his eyes rolled back into their sockets, and he fell. One moment I was having a rational conversation on terminology with an old friend, and the next moment he was... gone. The words "healing group" were his last.

Three sets of images flashed through my mind. The first was my training in first aid ("make sure the airway is clear," "loosen or cut away any restrictive clothing," etc.). The second was a composite of all the sermons, homilies, and eulogies I had heard about the fragility of life. The third was a sense of unreality and disbelief. The event lacked what literary critics call "verisimilitude." It wasn't like "real life." If one saw it in a movie one would consider it contrived. Yet, it was happening.

Norman was not a lightweight, and I knew I couldn't catch him in mid-air, but I was afraid that he would hit his head on the supports of the pedestal on which stood the table beside which we had been talking. I stuck out my leg and he fell on it rather than on the table leg. About 80 percent of the attendees at the dinner and opening

session had left the auditorium; the others were milling about or moving towards the doors. I remember thinking that some people didn't "see" what had happened though they weren't far away. A number of people did come over to form a sort of circle. Someone volunteered to go get Norman's wife, Charlotte, who had left and gone upstairs to their hotel room. I asked someone else to notify the hotel and get emergency personnel.

When Charlotte Goroff arrived, it turned out that Norman's heart condition was so dicey that they had made it a practice to carry his X-rays and ECT tracings with them when they traveled. She was understandably very upset, but relatively controlled. Such an event was not entirely unexpected, she later said. However, she said, he wouldn't have heard of not coming to

the Symposium, bringing students with him, and driving straight through so that the students and he could attend the opening session.

I'll spare the reader the details of the first aid which I attempted, I being a one-time first aid instructor and Boy Scout merit badge instructor in first aid (this in relation to my first year placement in group work) though the summer camp staff primers in first aid I used to give to counselors all took place many years ago. After about 20 minutes, it seemed to me that it was unlikely that Norman would revive. At that point, the lifeguard from the hotel's swimming pool arrived, and very



quickly thereafter, the obviously well-trained and very efficient Emergency Medical Technicians from the city of Montréal. All was to no avail. He was not responding to CPR, as he had not at any time since he collapsed. I remember thinking it kind of the EMTs that they said that I had done what I should have and what they would have done had they been there earlier. Perhaps an hour had elapsed before the EMT crew departed with what we all felt in our hearts was a dead body. Norman's death was confirmed by the hospital immediately upon his arrival and the news brought back to us by a member of the hotel's staff.

As the officers and other leadership of the Association and the local symposium sponsoring committee heard the news, many of them came back to the banquet hall, asked whether they could help, were helpful and supportive to Charlotte, and made clear their upset and their sadness at what had happened. A memorial meeting for Norman was quickly planned. (My memory is that it happened the next day, late in the afternoon, but I'm still a bit foggy about the rest of the symposium and it's possible that the memorial meeting was a day later.)

It was well attended, solemn, participatory, and I think that all of us who attended found it helpful. With a member of the Association who had known Norman for many years acting as chairperson, people were enabled to share memories, express regrets and positive

feelings about various accomplishments and meaningful contributions he had made to others. Some of his faculty colleagues were present and spoke warmly about their years of working together with Norman. His students, as was to be expected, seemed shaken by the experience. At the same time, several did talk quite eloquently at the memorial meeting about their perceptions of his teaching, mentioning reactions which Norman would dearly have enjoyed and appreciated hearing. Some of the Connecticut faculty were understandably concerned about arrangements for everyone who needed to get back to Connecticut.

Aftermath: Who Needed to Forgive Whom?

The symposium proceeded as planned. Everyone went where they were supposed to go, including me. The people from the University of Connecticut were involved in making arrangements for returning home. I don't remember very much of the content of the symposium, certainly less than I remember those that came before and since.

I agreed to serve as Secretary of the Association, a role which at the time was filled by vote of the Board of Directors. I felt good about this because it made me a member of the Board of Directors for what turned out to be five years. If I had known how much work was involved in taking and distributing the minutes of a good many meet-

ings, though, I might not have been so pleased. But the Montréal symposium is permanently associated in my innards with Norman's death.

My feelings at the time that Norman collapsed were partly muted, as my feelings tend to be in emergencies. Though I sometimes overreact to minor issues, I generally do well in emergencies. My inner sensation at such times is one of clarity, and I feel as though I'm looking through the "wrong" end of a pair of opera glasses. Things look very clear and sharp, but also quite far away.

I felt a great deal of sadness, some of which has recurred in the course of writing this article, remembering a most dramatic and unexpected lesson in the fragility of life, not only day to day but even minute to minute. I will admit to a bit of unease about having jumped into the first-aid-provider role, literally without thinking about it at all, that I remember. Perhaps this is a reflection of the "if only" kind of thinking which so often accompanies sorrow as, for example, "if only my grandfather had consented to have surgery at the time it was recommended, perhaps he would still be alive." My version would be: "If only someone really skilled in the latest wrinkles on CPR had been working on Norman, perhaps he would have revived."

To the best of my knowledge, though, my behavior filled a void that needed to be filled. I certainly wished then and wish now, from the heart, that my emergency first aid had been ef-

fective. Charlotte Goroff thanked me warmly when we talked some weeks later. I felt that was very kind of her and that it showed her nobility of spirit that she was concerned with my feelings at a time of her own grief and mourning.

I gave a presentation from notes about the death of Norman Goroff at a subsequent symposium in Hartford. The program co-chairs who had been, respectively, colleague and student of Norman's thought it quite appropriate for this to be on the program. The presentation was well attended, and I thought both the level of participation and the responses to my initial presentation were quite sound. At that meeting, I was asked by the regular Editor of this journal to write an article for publication. Though I have been known to procrastinate, there are more reasons, I think, why I have not been able to do so until now (the time of writing this reflection), just a few months under nine years since the Montréal symposium. Nor, while I share some of the taboos about death which characterize our society, are death or the fear of death particularly traumatizing to me. Nor, though I was fond of Norman Goroff in several ways, were either of us very important people in the other's life.

Why, then, do my introspections dredge up vague

senses of guilt? I didn't do anything wrong, after all, in relation to his death. In fact, I tried, however ineffectively, to reverse what had happened and to revive him. I think that in part, the ineffectiveness of the first aid I administered is part of the story for me. The one person with whom I have shared this unease on my part, a physician on the faculty of a Baltimore medical school, understood instantly and related what I was saying to feelings that he finds common among medical residents and other young physicians. So, I need to forgive myself for not having been able to do something which I was not able to do and perhaps no one would have been able to do at that time. Somehow, this self-forgiveness should come more easily than forgiving myself for having misunderstood a student, or a client, or a group member, or a colleague and

ers, including many, if not all, of the founders of the Association, feel like family to me. Identifying oneself as a group worker has some commonality with identifying oneself as a member of an ethnic group. This is one reason that what happens in this Association has, from time to time, been a source of strong feelings for me. Membership in a family does that.

Norman Goroff's death felt like the death of a family member, someone related to me and I to him. Maybe his calling me "boychik" had more meaning than I realized at the time. In this context, I need to forgive myself in the same way that one needs to when a relative dies and one struggles to avoid the "if only he..." or "if only I..." forms of blaming and self-flagellation, respectively.

Most years, in the Fall semester, I teach a course for second-year graduate students in group treatment. I do use the terms "group treatment" and "group therapy." Periodically, I "hear" Norman saying that he prefers the term "healing group." I know what he means, and there is much to think about in trying to specify and measure healing in groups.

There is warmth and perhaps even love in the term, "healing," which is absent in the colder words "therapy" and "treatment." But I think, after all this time, he would forgive me for using the more common terms. □



therefore having been ineffective. In fact, it's been harder and has taken longer.

Why? I think part of the answer is in the title of this piece. Social workers who identify themselves as group work-

A Narrative Interview with Ann Hartman

Part Two: The Importance of Context

This is the second part of a narrative interview with Ann Hartman. In it she discusses her work in child welfare and family-centered social work practice as a social worker and social work administrator. She also reflects on her career as a social work educator and as a writer, discussing some of her major influences and ideas. The third and final installment of this interview will appear in the next issue [Reflections: Winter 1999].

by
Joshua Miller, Ph.D.

Joshua Miller, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Chair of the Social Policy Sequence, School for Social Work, Smith College.

Introduction

This interview covers Ann's professional experience as a social worker, social service administrator, professor, and scholar.

Although she worked as a child welfare worker for only a few years before attending Smith College for her MSW, child welfare became an important professional area of interest and expertise. Ann became the first executive director of the Southeast Nassau Guidance Center, the faculty director of the National Child Welfare Training Center, and the co-editor with Joan Laird of *A Handbook of Child Welfare*.

The interview explores her work with families and her involvement in the family therapy movement. In addition to her work at the Southeast Nassau Guidance Center and Mid-Nassau Community Mental Health Center, Ann was the co-founder of the Ann Arbor Center for the Family and co-authored, again with Joan Laird, *Family Centered Social Work Practice*. Ann's exposure to major figures in family therapy and her involvement as a charter member of the American Family Therapy Academy, particu-

larly her work with other leading women family therapists within the organization, are covered in the interview.

Ann's doctoral studies at Columbia University and her teaching career at Fordham University and The University of Michigan are discussed. She reflects on her academic innovations while serving as the head of the practice sequence at Michigan.

Ann discusses her career as a writer and also her professional partnership with Joan Laird. As well as writing for professional journals, Ann was also a columnist for *True Love* magazine.

Ann describes the importance of Caryl Chessman as a professional influence and shares her admiration for Michael White. She comments on the significance of constructionism in her current thinking and work.

Although this interview does not cover Ann's entire career, it does illustrate the range of her interests and her many areas of expertise. Ann's tremendous energy and her capacity to provide leadership (both administratively and intellectually) in a variety of settings and contexts are important themes in the interview. Many of Ann's ideas

and much of her work are connected by her profound respect for the importance of context, which stems from her own experiences as a child (see part one in *Reflections*, Summer 1998). Ann expresses her gratitude to her clients for having taught her so much.

Part three of this interview will be published in the next issue, Winter 1999 [Reflections Volume 5, Number 1]: Ann Hartman discusses her recent work and reflects upon the meaning of her career.

□ □ □

The Interview

Joshua Miller: I would like to go over with you what your experience was like as both a social worker and a social work educator.

Ann Hartman: Well, I was in social work before I went to social work school. I was in public child welfare as a foster care worker for almost three years and had a very good experience with good supervision and learned a lot about real social social work. It was in a rural district in Ohio. We had an institution and I had kids in the institution on my caseload and had a lot of contact with them. And then I went to Smith College School for Social Work. That preprofessional experience was the last time I worked in child welfare, but I ended up very much involved with child welfare. Later in my career I was the faculty director of the National Child Welfare Training Center at the University of Michigan, which was a marvelous opportunity, and Joan Laird and I put together the *Handbook on Child Welfare*, which turned out to be sort of a teacher's compendium. (It didn't sell a lot but I think it was widely used by faculties teaching in child welfare and in child and family services.)

When I first went to Michigan (by then, of course, I was very much a family person and had been for years), they got a grant from the Clark Foundation to develop training materials for special-needs adoption and for more modern adoption practice. They asked me to be the faculty director and I said, "Well, you know child welfare is not my area of expertise—family is, and if



Ann Hartman

you put me in this job it is going to be family-centered child welfare." I have always felt that child welfare was too child centered and I think it should be family centered and child focused. They said fine and I began to do a lot of training on family assessment. It was a wonderful project. It was called Project Craft and there were three centers around the country training workers, supervisors, and agency administrators. We even began training judges and attorneys to really make a major shift in the adoption field in the country in order to bring about special-needs adoptions. It was financed by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. They put a great deal of money into child welfare. I did lectures and training sessions on family assessment and the project staff wanted to publish the materials, so they recorded my workshop and then typed it out and gave it to me. I revised it and put it together and that was the first book I published, *Family Assessment and Adoption*.

Then the staff and I at Project Craft applied for the National Child Welfare Training Center grant from the federal government and we got it. Under Jimmy Carter, federal money became available for training centers through the Children's Bureau to develop training in schools of social work across the country. We developed training materials on child welfare with a particular focus on different racial and ethnic families. That was a grant of something like a million dollars, which at that time was a lot of money. We had a wonderful time.

Another thing that happened was [that] when the Child Welfare Reform Act was passed, the Children's Bureau wanted to sponsor a big seminar in Washington and get the House of Representatives on board to vote funds for it. They asked us to organize and plan it and to bring in the top child welfare people. They gave us \$25,000 to do this. It was so much fun because child welfare had been at the bottom professionally, in terms of status, for so long and here we were being wined and dined. So we ran a seminar for staff from Congress and Rosalyn Carter had us over for tea at the White House where we walked around everywhere and looked at everything. And then we had dinner at the home of one of the cabinet secretaries, I think of Energy. It was great to have that experience.

The National Child Welfare Training Center was the flagship training center that coordinated twelve other centers at schools of social work around the country. It was an enormous project. We did a lot of research on what was happening in training. Too much! I think we spent too much energy on research and we would have done more on product development if we hadn't done so much research.

J: Was this the research that led to the *Handbook of Child Welfare*?

A: No, that was something that Joan and I did on our own. I developed so many contacts in the child welfare field, and Joan had worked in child welfare for years. We had so much conviction about a family focus in child welfare and knew other people that felt that way, so we were able to design the book from beginning to end. We didn't just ask for chapters; we gave everyone chapter outlines so that it would be a coherent project.

So I had this early child welfare experience which later, combined with my interest in families, turned out to be a very important part of my career.

J: What do you make of the fact that child welfare continued to be such a professional theme for you?

A: It was serendipitous. Michigan just came and asked me to do this. Phil Fellin was the Dean at Michigan and he had a philosophy that whatever the faculty wanted to do they should do. He was very supportive and hands off. That is what I wanted to do and I got release time and the projects bought out some of my teaching time.

As a matter of fact, after my first two years at Michigan, I never had time to do field advising because I always had some project going. Some part of my time was always being bought out by these projects in child welfare.

J: And was that a good professional development?

A: It was a wonderful opportunity. I met wonderful people and I had a great staff.

J: From what you are saying it sounds like there were three themes that started to converge for you as you progressed, which were child welfare, a family orientation, and a focus on ethnicity.

A: Ethnicity was very, very important in the child welfare work because adoption had been white. We did one publication, a book, describing all of the outreach programs that had been developed around the country to reach out to potential adoptive parents of color. Then we did training materials on different ethnic groups. We did one on Black families and children, Native American families and children, Hispanic, etc. We went across the board gathering training and teaching materials. Then we had a wonderful seminar. We brought in Carol Stack and Elaine Pinderhughes and some other people and we sat around the table and just talked about the issues. That was published as a conversation in a book, a lovely little book.

It was a crazy time for me. I was teaching a full load at the University of Michigan and then we had founded the Ann Arbor Center for the Family, which was an extremely important part of my life. It was all lined up on one street: the Ann Arbor Center for the Family, where we were doing practice and training; the University of Michigan, where I was employed full-time; and down the road was the National Child Welfare

Training Center. It was pretty exciting.

J: How did you manage to do three things like that at the same time?

A: Workaholism, and I inherited a tremendous amount of energy.

J: It sounds like it is a lot to keep track of—just the administration of the three things. What did you do at the Ann Arbor Center for the Family?

A: I saw clients and did training. I saw lots of families. There was a wonderful group of colleagues at the Center and they really were like an extended family. I was there about 15 to 20 hours a week—nights and Saturdays—plus writing the two books.

J: So really, it was like having four jobs.

A: It was a wild time.

J: Let me back up a little bit because there is a lot in between that we didn't cover.

A: Yes, I graduated from Smith and I went to New York in 1954 and I told you about being on the train and deciding I would cancel my interview at Jewish Board of Guardians (JBG) because I didn't think they were doing social work. And I went to Community Service Society (CSS). I ended up in the Queens District Office. I was there for four years. I think a family agency offers a marvelous experience in terms of the clients that they see.

J: What did you mainly do at CSS?

A: We were seeing people—doing casework ala Gordon Hamilton. After two years they gave me a unit of Columbia students. So I had two years of supervising Columbia students. At the same time, Joe Vigilante, Bob Sunley, and I began to see clients at night (I have always worked two jobs) at Mid-Nassau Community Mental Health Center. They were starting a little mental health clinic. This was the very beginning of the com-

munity mental health movement. We used to see people down in the basement of the Lutheran Church in Hicksville. I think we charged \$5.00 a session and I used to get \$3.00. And we would sit at these little tables on children's chairs because we were in the Sunday school.

I was living out on Long Island and commuting into Queens and then I heard that another clinic was starting in the Southern part of Nassau County in Seaford, so I applied for the job of Chief Social Worker and, unbelievably, I got it. I was only four years out of school but I just lucked out. So I began working there, started the first day it opened. I was very involved in the community mental health movement then for the next eight years. I became the Executive Director, and the center grew and we had units of students from Columbia and had a very big program. At the beginning there were just four of us—a part-time psychiatrist, a part-time psychologist, and two social workers—with a population of about 250,000 to serve, with no other services available. We had five hundred applications for service our first year.

J: At this stage of your career, what would you say were some of your key ideas? Were they the same or different then as they are now?

A: We developed a crisis intervention program, not for psychiatric crises but for event crises. We mean we had publicity for our program all over in funeral homes, police stations—we really did crisis intervention. And that became a very important part of my professional life. I began to do workshops all over on crisis intervention because we had so much experience of doing this at the center. Lydia Rappaport had written about it and it was wonderful, but we actually did it in a community clinic. And that was in the 1950's or early 60's.

Then we invited Sanford Sherman of the Jewish Family Service of New York, who was very close to Nathan Ackerman and one of the founders of family therapy, to consult. Sherman lived in our community and was on our advisory board and we asked him to train us in family work. And that was about 1961 or 62, so very early in the development of family work.

J: Was that your first exposure to formal training in family work?

A: Yes, to formal family work.

J: But it sounds like you already had a very strong feeling about the importance of the family, going back to your first job.

A: Absolutely, always. I think the valuable concept is the importance of context in people's lives and the family is one of the contexts. So, therefore, the family is important.

J: Where did you develop that idea, that context is important?

A: Oh, I think I told you I scolded my mother about doing work without paying sufficient attention to the context—the environment is so important.

J: It sounds like that is something that has been with you since you can remember.

A: Always. I think I told you the story about my school experience, that I was a terrible school problem and all I had to do was go to another school and that was the end of my school problem, overnight. If I think about how my life has changed and my thinking has changed, I think I am still into context. I just think that over my career I have had a more sophisticated concept of the nature of context. And now with social constructionism, there is the next layer of a sophisticated notion about the nature of context and the relationship between people and context. I remember Carel Germain and I used to talk about getting the hyphen out of person-in-situation because individuals are not separate from their environment.

I was extremely involved in the Southeast Nassau Guidance Center for eight years. We had five hundred volunteers, we were raising money, we had the County Mental Health Board that we were dealing with, we were growing, we had a building and the staff, and that is when I got my administrative experience.

J: And did you learn on the job?

A: I learned things like budgeting on the job, and oh it was funny the way we started out, but we survived.

J: Not skills that you learned at Smith when you were getting your MSW.

A: No. Interestingly enough that clinic is still going strong.

J: Really. That must be satisfying.

A: It was 1958 when we started. And this year, it will be its fortieth anniversary. It has become very big and elaborate.

J: What is it called now?

A: It is still called Southeast Nassau Guidance Center and the man who replaced me is still there. I was there eight years and he has been there for thirty-two.

J: That is longevity. I am curious about the training you had with Sanford Sherman. What was the type of family therapy that you learned?

A: It was all Ackerman. It was sort of psychoanalysis pulled into the family. I don't know really what I learned. I just picked up family practice wherever I went. As I always tell my students, I was fortunate. I never went to one of the "mother houses" of family therapy so that I never had to become a loyal advocate of any one approach to family work. I kind of set foot in all of the family therapy schools and absorbed them all.

J: So what happened after this job? What led you to leave and where did you go after that?

A: When I took that job I was 32, and when I was approaching my fortieth birthday, I said to myself, "If you don't get out of here by the time you are forty you never will." It was so comfortable. It was so nice. I was having such a good time. I just figured I would retire out of it. Look what happened to the current director—he went

there and he is still there. So, I resigned on my fortieth birthday. And I went to Columbia to get my doctorate.

J: Did you have an idea of what your career plan would be at that time?

A: I always wanted to teach. That is what I was going to go do before I became a social worker—I was going to go teach philosophy.

J: So that never left you?

A: No. And I loved doing training. I loved students, and I did a lot of workshops.

J: So, here you were forty years old and you realized that you could have stayed indefinitely in this groove but you chose to go to Columbia. Looking back on it now, was that kind of like a mid-life shift in career?

A: Well, it is interesting. My mother did the same thing when she was forty. She went to Smith to get her Master's. I think that when I get comfortable and I think I am not growing, I put myself in a crisis situation by inducing a great deal of change.

J: Did you know that then or is this something you know now?

A: Well, I have seen myself do it. I have done it several times in my life. I did it when I was forty. I certainly did it when I was sixty and I took the job at Smith. I mean who wants to leave a full professorship at Michigan—it was crazy. I seem to celebrate birthdays that way. Now, Joan and I are committed to walking the Milford Track in New Zealand in February, another kind of challenge.

J: So, what made you decide to go to Columbia?

A: I wouldn't go to Smith, because I had my Master's from Smith. I was settled in the New York area. So, Columbia, being a top program, was just an obvious choice. I didn't have any

ambivalence about that at all. And I had worked with them over the years, having students from Columbia. So I went to Columbia in 1966 and Carel Germain was just a year ahead of me. And Larry Lister, who is at the University of Hawaii.

J: Is that where you met Carel?

A: Carel and I became good friends through the doctoral program. Even though she was a year ahead of me, she stayed on a year after she finished her course work as a "career teacher." (NIMH payed your salary and you learned how to be a teacher.) And then Larry and I did the same thing the next year. It was very nice because I could work on my dissertation.

J: What was your dissertation on?

A: It was entitled "Casework in Crisis." (See that—crisis intervention again.) From 1930 to 1941 was a major watershed period for social work. The functional/diagnostic split—the people that were writing and thinking and meeting and talking in that period were something else: Florence Hollis, Charlotte Towle, Gordon Hamilton, Jesse Taft, Virginia Robinson, Bertha Reynolds...

J: Did you meet any of them?

A: I knew Hollis quite well, and I met Reynolds. I saw Gordon Hamilton but I didn't really meet her. I saw her at Columbia only once because I got to Columbia after she retired. And Lucille Austin I knew. I had Hollis as a teacher in my doctoral program. I had Carol Meyer my first year and Hollis the second year and Ben Orcutt for the third course.

I took some fairly interesting courses at Columbia. I had Robert Merton for sociology, which was quite an experience. I had William Goode, one of the founders of family sociology. I had Sigmund Diamond, who is a social historian. He is a methodologist on doing social history. It was wonderful for the dissertation. I became very close friends with Carol Meyer during my doctoral period, which continued after I left.

The Columbia experience was interesting.

What I mainly learned from it, and I think this is always true with older students in an advanced degree program, was having the opportunity to read and to think and to dialogue with the other students. I mean those are the real sources of learning with the faculty sort of providing a space where that was possible. I learned most from Caryl Germain through her introduction of an ecological perspective into social work.

J: Can you remember anything that you learned from her in particular?

A: Oh! [Laughter] She was a person that took me another step in thinking about the meaning of context. A giant step.

J: It must have been exciting for both of you.

A: Yes, we had a wonderful time together. We both did historical dissertations. She did from the founding of the National Conference to 1920. We had a gap of 10 years, and then I did the 30's. We had a contract to put it into a book, but we never did it. We had so much going on, both of us. When I finished Columbia I got a job teaching at Fordham. I was there for five years.

J: So, when you went to Fordham, what did you go to teach?

A: Practice. I had a wonderful time at Fordham. It was one of the nicest faculty groups. That was the best experience I ever had with a group of young faculty. A couple of my closest friends came out of that period at Fordham.

I had a good time. They made me the head of the beginning practice course to develop a generic practice sequence. They were beginning to push generic for the first year.

J: Was that the forerunner of generalist practice?

A: Yes. It was trying to put casework, groupwork, and CO together.

And then I went to Michigan. Joan and I were very eager to get out of New York. And we had been unable to because in her divorce agree-

ment she had to stay within 50 miles of her son's father who lived in New York. So, it was not possible to move. And suddenly her ex-husband moved to the West Coast. And the day he left for the West Coast was the day Phil Fellin called. My phone rang and he said "How would you like to come to Michigan?" I called up Joan and said, "How about Ann Arbor, Michigan?" She said, "Sure, let's go." We made our decision, like we usually do, in about ten minutes.

So I went out for interviews and when I came back, I was walking down the hall at Fordham and on the faculty bulletin board there was an ad for a teaching vacancy at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, which is five miles from Ann Arbor. So I took it off the bulletin board and brought it home and gave it to Joan. She called, made an appointment, and went out to Michigan, was interviewed at Eastern, and got the job on their faculty in their Bachelor's program. So we both went out with jobs starting in September 1974.

J: How has your professional relationship with Joan worked?

A: It has always been a partnership. But it has been like two for the see-saw. Although I was ahead of her in the early years because I had more experience, it shifted over time. When we went out to Michigan she began to do doctoral work at the University of Michigan in anthropology and social work, but with an emphasis on the anthropology. That was so enriching for both of us. She has continued to take a lot of leadership in our joint intellectual development. I was involved in administration and she got involved in ideas. I was running and doing, which is what I tend to do, and she was reading and thinking. So I am always running to keep up with her now.

The family book was published in 83. We worked on it for five years, 78 to 83. And we did the child welfare handbook concurrently, which was too much. And we got that out the next year. Each of them slowed down the other in a sense. But we did get them both out finally.

J: What were you and Joan trying to accomplish with *Family Centered Social Work Practice*?

A: We were trying to bring the ideas of practice that were going on in family therapy and make them available to social workers.

J: So from the beginning it sounds as if you were collaborating.

A: Joan and I also did a group, an adult group in Mineola at the Family Agency. That was the first time we actually did practice together and later at Ann Arbor Center for the Family we worked together, getting behind the mirror for each other. And we did family of origin groups together at Ann Arbor Center for the Family.

J: It was really fortuitous that you were both able to get teaching jobs at the same time.

A: It was very lucky. And she was at Eastern Michigan and I was at Michigan for twelve years. She took a two years' leave in the middle to do all her course work for her Ph.D.

J: So, you have told me a bit about all the things that you were doing when you were at Michigan. What was it like being on the faculty at Michigan?

A: Sheila Feld, the Associate Dean, called me up over the summer after they had hired me and asked me if I would chair practice. They were just moving from separate casework and groupwork and social treatment, and they were struggling. You know how faculty politics are—they didn't want to put anybody that was identified with one of those groups in charge of practice. So they called me up and said would I take it on, would I be in charge of practice. Well, Daniel walking into the lion's den. [Laughter] They don't fool around in Michigan. So, naive me, I came out and chaired practice. But we had a wonderful time.

I did it for five years. That was another one of my projects. We had seven hundred students and we developed a whole curriculum and it was so much fun. And I wrote an article about it called the "Systems Approach to Curriculum Development," or something like that.

J: Where was that published?

A: The *Journal of Education for Social Work*. First we developed the course called the 747, named after the big airplane. We developed this huge course the students took their whole first year that combined casework, groupwork, social treatment. But then the second year we were supposed to have concentrations. So I said to the faculty, "Anybody who wants to develop a concentration is free to do so. A concentration will consist of a policy course; one or two practice courses; and one or two human behavior (HB) courses and can be in any area." And the faculty was thrilled. It was a marvelous strategy for faculty development. They developed twelve or fifteen concentrations; it was apples and oranges.

J: So give me an example of one of the concentrations.

A: One was medical, one was child welfare, one was family, I think, and also, group work. One was behavioral—social behavioral practice—so it was even based on epistemology.

They put together a package and the students could sign up and that would be their package, their concentration, and of course they could add other stuff to support it. And it was the wildest looking curriculum you ever saw. Because some of the concentrations were by method, some were by population, like we had one on aging, and some were of fields of practice. It was marvelous and the students found their way through it.

J: So it absorbed everybody?

A: Everybody. Everybody got to do their thing.

J: And it sounds like everybody was on equal terms.

A: Absolutely. And they developed all these courses and course outlines and some of the faculty that had felt oppressed and unappreciated came forth with these courses and were able to do their thing and have it be appreciated and stu-

dents would sign up for it. Those were the ones that I was most pleased about. So that went on for about for five years, and it continued a little bit after that, but then of course, it had to be re-done.

J: According to CSWE, or was it was just time to change it?

A: No, it was just that people who needed it to be tidier took over. They couldn't stand it that we had these concentrations that could be models, field of practice, epistemology, system size, population, etc.

J: Too many different categorical types?

A: Yes. They had to tidy it up. That's all right. I mean, I didn't need to be in control after I did it. I did it. I had a lot of fun. I think it was a wonderful faculty involvement strategy.

J: Right.

A: It resolved these conflicts of different models and approaches that had developed over the years and it gave everybody a chance to do their thing. Phil Fellin told me when I went there, and I will never forget this, he said "The University of Michigan is a market place of ideas." And I took that very seriously and used a market strategy. You develop your wares and you sell them and if the students buy, you are in business [Laughter].

J: So after you stepped down as Chair, what did you do within Michigan?

A: Well, then the Child Welfare Training Center was going and I taught.

J: Did you continue to teach practice courses?

A: Well, it is one of my things, like when I left my job and entered the doctoral program, I used to teach a new course every year. That is how I kept learning and growing. So I ended up teaching several different courses in Human Be-

havior in the Social Environment (HBSE), social policy, and practice on several levels. So, I have taught a lot of different things.

J: It sounds like you taught everything except research.

A: I never taught research, but I was on a lot of dissertation committees in different university departments and, of course, in social work.

J: And so, you were doing this and it sounds like your writing activity increased.

A: Yes.

J: And you were working in the Family Center and working in the Child Welfare Training Center, and you were a parent.

A: Well, Joan and I never saw each other because we both worked at Ann Arbor Center for the Family and one of us had to be home in the evening. She worked two nights a week and I worked two nights a week. We were both home on Friday and we both worked on Saturday morning.

J: How old was your son, Duncan, when you moved to Michigan?

A: He was ten when we moved to Michigan.

J: Did you really enjoy this level of activity? For some people this would have been a killer.

A: That's the way I am, hyperactive, I guess.

J: No, just active. Take out the hyper.

A: Well, I tell you both my parents were the same way. Very active people.

J: I guess one of the tracks I wanted to explore before we get to Smith is what led you to start writing and how did that separate career evolve?

A: Well, it is funny. I always was interested

in writing. When I was at Community Service Society (CSS), I wrote my first article, I think two years out of school: "The Use of the Worker's Vacation in Casework Treatment." And it was published in *Social Casework*.

J: That is an interesting topic.

A: And it has been widely used. It is very funny because there was so little on termination and it was really about termination in a sense. And then I began to write for *True Love* magazine.

J: No?

A: I wrote an advice column for *True Love* magazine. I wrote an article on "Do you need help?" for teenagers. If you feel upset, how to get help.

J: For *True Love* magazine?

A: For *True Love* magazine. And then they liked it so much, they asked me to do an advice column. So I did that for quite a while.

Also, my two papers for casework my first year at Columbia were published. One of them was "Anomie in Social Casework." That was my paper for Carol Meyer's class. And my paper for Florence Hollis' class was "To think about the unthinkable" on systems theory. They were both published in *Casework* the next year. So, clearly, I started thinking about writing and publishing right away.

J: You were publishing before you came to Columbia and then while you were there, taking class papers and turning them into articles. Do you feel that writing came easily to you?

A: You get better the more you do it. I always write by hand.

J: Still?

A: Still. I am trying to learn to write on the computer, but I really sketch it out by hand before I put it in the computer.

J: It is almost like it is in a different part of the brain.

A: It is. I have always done a fair amount of writing, even when I was at Smith, but then the other huge job in my life was being editor of *Social Work*. And that curtailed my writing to a certain extent, except for doing the editorials.

J: Well, that is when you told me that you had switched from writing articles to essays.

A: Writing those essays was a wonderful experience.

J: So when you and Joan collaborate together on a writing project, how do you approach it?

A: When we were doing the family book, each had certain chapters. There are some chapters I write the draft of and some that she drafts. And then we switch them.

J: And has that flowed easily?

A: Joan is a wonderful writer. She is a much longer writer and I am a much shorter writer. I tend to be very clear, organized, rather brief and to the point, and not very artistic. And she is a very artistic writer, a very creative writer.

J: Sounds like in some ways that's a good balance.

A: It is a good balance. She flowers me up and I trim her down.

J: It sounds like an ideal combination.

A: It is. She uses wonderful language and wonderful metaphors, and I do the outline.

J: Is there a difference for you when you are writing with someone as opposed to writing on your own?

A: I haven't really written with other people that much, except Joan and one piece with Carel Germain. I like to work collaboratively, but in

terms of writing, I think I prefer to do my own thing.

J: Are there any people you haven't mentioned that were particular influences on you during this stage of your career?

A: I think not in a mentorship position. I became the mentor in a sense by then. But of enormous influence on me have been my clients. I would say Joan and my clients have been the greatest influence since I left Columbia. And Caryl Germain was the other one, probably in my whole intellectual life, I would say.

J: At one time you became very involved in the family therapy movement, also in the feminist wing within that movement. Do you want to talk briefly about what that was like and who were some of the people you had contact with?

A: I went to workshops everywhere and that is how I learned. I just kept going to different workshops, and I had everybody at one time or another. One stands out particularly, when we went out to Toronto and spent three days with Mara Selvini-Palizzoli. And we brought people out to the Ann Arbor Center for the Family to spend time with us. Lynn Hoffman, Peggy Papp, David Reiss, the Framos—I got to know them. That was in my earlier days. I was a charter member of AFTA (American Family Therapy Academy). When I first went to AFTA, I felt pretty out of it. I was a social worker and a social work educator and although we had Ann Arbor Center for the Family, in the early years AFTA was not exactly a welcoming organization. It was very hierarchical and all the gurus were still alive and running it. And I was very far from the gurus.

J: And they were mostly male?

A: All males. Really all male, or just about. And then Monica McGoldrick and Carol Anderson and Froma Walsh organized a conference for women in leadership positions in family therapy at Stonehenge in Connecticut and they invited Joan and me. I guess there were about 45 there and we spent three days together. We met Peggy

Papp, Marianne Walters, Betty Carter. I mean, everybody was there. I think the only leading family therapist that wasn't there was Lynn Hoffman. We spent three days together and like women do (you know, this is the way women organize), we developed relationships. We met again two years later with a slightly expanded group. A tremendous amount of publishing came out of that and a whole new structure, a friendship structure and a political structure, that began to be very influential at AFTA. Carol Anderson was elected president and Froma Walsh was elected president after that.

J: You feel this, in a sense, was an epistemology that was challenging the existing paradigm?

A: Well, it was certainly challenging the very hierarchical and Parsonian vision of the family. And, of course, then McGoldrick, Walsh, and Anderson published *Women and Families in Family Therapy*. Most of the people in that book were people at that conference. It was very exciting.

J: When was that?

A: 84 or 85. That has been a wonderful social network, that group of women. When I think about the family theorists, Murray Bowen, whom I have seen several times, was very influential for me although mainly through his writing. And now, Michael White, whom I adore. Every time I can, I attend his workshops and seminars.

J: What do you adore about him?

A: I became, via Joan, very interested in social constructionism and he, I think, has done the best work of translating that into practice. But, mostly, I love the kind of person he is. He is a remarkable person. He is so modest and he practices what he preaches all the time. He is always reaching for positives. He is always connecting with people. He is always crediting others. As an example, I was in a big workshop of his in Boston, this last year. There were 300 people in the room. He gets up and he starts talking about me and what I meant to him when he was a young social work student reading my stuff and how

important it was now that we had become friends. And he said, "And I miss Joan. She is not here today because she has pneumonia and I am worried about her."

J: He sounds like a very gracious person.

A: Well, it is more than graciousness. It is connecting with other people in a way that is locating himself and being transparent. It is doing all the things that he talks about doing. He does them in his life.

J: And he also learns a lot from his clients as you say you have, too.

A: Absolutely, and I've learned so much from him. But, I think probably most of all, I like his political position. And I've been doing a lot of thinking and writing about that.

J: Can you summarize what it is about his political position?

A: Well, he really deals with the power issues in therapy, really faces what that is about. I did an editorial about that some time ago. He is a 60's-early 70's radical. He just practices what he preaches about his ideas. There is not an ounce of him that is guru or authoritarian or hierarchical; he is just there with you. He corresponds with everybody. I don't know how he keeps it up.

J: He sounds like a very special person.

A: He is a very special person. Everybody who knows him, I think, feels that way about him.

J: When did you get into social constructionism?

A: Well, it has been coming right along. It came right out of Joan's work in anthropology.

J: She imported that?

A: Absolutely. And my thing about context was so congruent with that. I majored in philosophy in college. I studied Whitehead for a whole

semester and I studied Kant, so this is not new. These ideas are not new; they are reformulated. I remember one of the first things I wrote was an article on diagnosis or on assessment or something, and I said, "We have always said that we start where the client is, but that's not true, we start where the worker is." Which is a social constructionist idea long before I ever heard of social constructionism, but I was always asking those kind of questions, so it just felt so comfortable. And I think my background in philosophy had a lot to do with my comfort with it.

J: So actually it must have felt very validating and familiar when this became popular.

A: I've always been worried about politics. I've always been worried about issues of power. I've always been uncomfortable with the power relationship with clients.

J: Where do you think that came from?

A: I don't know. I always talked about collaborative and egalitarian relationships. I am not saying that I preceded all this, but I have always had a bent in that direction.

J: So it sounds like this was more affirming rather than a change in direction.

A: No, it was a change, too, because it was just so much more sophisticated than my thoughts were. It is just that it felt comfortable with my values and gave them a framework.

J: It sounds like in a sense you had instincts in that direction and this became a more coherent framework.

A: I have always been rather radical politically. Of course, social constructionism doesn't have to be a radical position. It can be a conservative position. It depends on how much attention you pay to Foucault. But, I would never be a constructionist without Foucault because he brought in the issues of power and the political nature of knowledge.

J: He has been a major influence, hasn't he?

A: Yes, and a lot of it being via Michael White, who treats clients with such respect. When I was in Michigan, I was either writing, seeing clients, teaching, or working with students. We had some nice friends, but the people I spent the most time with on an intimate level were my clients. In fact, everybody said when I was moving to Northampton: "Ann, if you are not going to have any clients you are going to have to develop some friends."

I learned so much and got so much from my clients. And now Michael says, "You should give it back." And I've been thinking of writing them and telling them all I've learned from them.

J: That would be a neat thing to do.

A: Well, with a couple of them I might do it.

J: I did a similar thing like that; it's a very special thing to do.

A: Yes, I have a painting downstairs that one of my clients, an artist, gave me when I left Michigan, and I'd like to write her and tell her that I just never walk by that without enjoying it.

J: I hope you do it. It could mean a lot to that person to hear that and to you.

A: Maybe I will do it. And I think about her. She was Scottish and her father came over from Scotland, and I was doing family-of-origin work with her and her father came in, this elderly Scottish man in his little cap. I will never forget that interview with him and how much that meant to me and how much I learned. What a lovely man with such inner dignity. And the way he participated in that session to help his daughter and shared things about himself, which is so contrary to his culture, and yet his caring enabled him to do it. I'll never forget that session. And then he went back to Scotland and did some family-of-origin work himself! I just loved seeing clients. It is the one thing I miss.

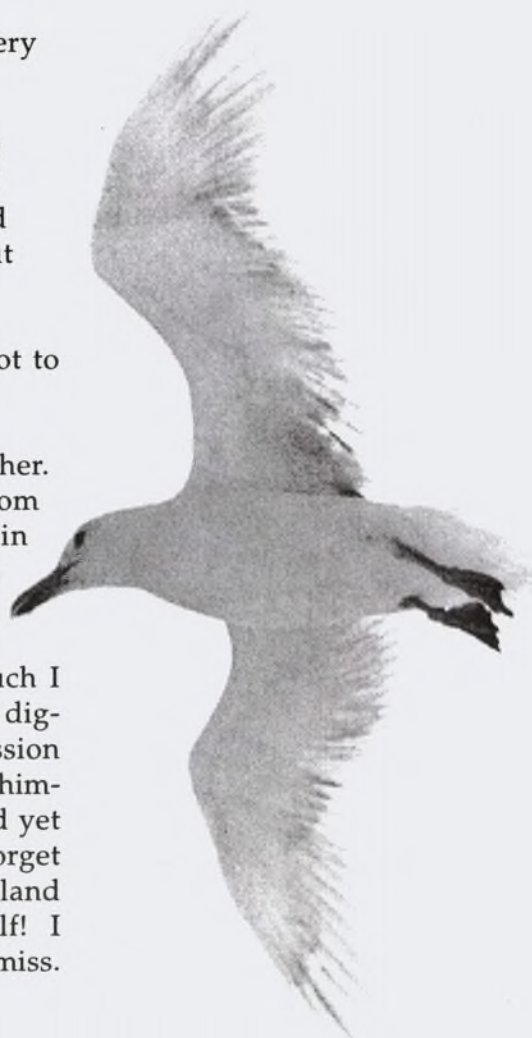
J: Do you think you might do that again?

A: I don't think so. I don't want the responsibility. Joan and I did volunteer last year and ran a family reflecting team in Greenfield. We did it all year and it was lots of fun. And I suppose that if I could find some place I could volunteer to see families, I would do it.

J: Well, it is nice to have such fond recollections of your clients.

A: Of course, my mother went back into practice in her mid 70s. □

To be continued...



Historically Significant Memories in Social Work: Two Perspectives on Oral History Research and the Helping Professions

This article describes two perspectives about the powerful appeal oral history research projects exert on members of the helping professions. Charles T. Morrissey is an oral history practitioner and consultant who has taught intensive oral history workshops throughout the country as well as oral history courses at several universities. He has conducted oral history research projects for many major organizations, including the Ford Foundation, the presidential libraries of Harry Truman and John Kennedy, and a Washington-based association called Former Members of Congress. John Kayser is a social work educator with a personal and professional interest in narratives and oral histories. Using the experience of attending an oral history workshop at Vermont College in 1996 as a "case example," Kayser describes the application of Morrissey's guidelines in conducting subsequent oral history research on the life stories of retired women social work professionals in Colorado. The importance of using oral history interviews to capture previously undocumented, historically significant memories is illustrated. In the concluding section, the authors reflect on the enduring attraction and value oral history research has for helping professionals. Beneficial outcomes of the attraction appear to be increased self-awareness both for informants who share memories about their life experiences and for professionals conducting oral history research

Our joint authorship of this narrative essay arose from our previous contact in a 1996 summer oral history workshop held at Vermont College in Montpelier, a unit of Norwich University. John Kayser (JK) was the student and Charles Morrissey (CM) was the teacher. JK was one of many students from the helping professions (broadly defined here to include mental health and social service professionals, clergy members, and lay archivists, educators, historians, librarians, and theologians) who have sought specific training in oral history methods. Over the years, helping professionals have comprised the largest group of participants attending workshops. This essay is a joint reflection on the powerful appeal oral history apparently exerts for such professionals, and how oral history interviews capture important, previously undocumented information about individuals and events in the life of the profession.

by
John A. Kayser
and
Charles T. Morrissey

John A. Kayser, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Social Work, University of Denver, Denver, CO.

Charles T. Morrissey, Ph.D., Oral History Practitioner and Consultant, Houston, TX.

From Charles T. Morrissey:

Since 1975, I have been professionally self-employed as an oral history practitioner and consultant. Currently, my clients include Baylor College of Medicine, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Oregon Health Sciences University. In addition to the annual Vermont College workshops, I offer yearly workshops in San Francisco and at Portland State University. Occasionally, I have taught oral history courses at other institutions, such as University of California—Santa Bar-

bara, Wayne State University, and Clark-Atlanta University. Although not holding a conventional academic position, I frequently instruct faculty members such as John Kayser as well as a wide range of helping professionals in oral history methods. The workshops usually are taught in an intensive one-week format, involving between five and twenty-five participants. The workshops cover both theoretical perspectives about oral history within the larger context of historical research as well as practical concerns, such as how actually to conduct an oral history interview (e.g., phrasing

Information on oral history training can be obtained from Charles T. Morrissey, Baylor College of Medicine, Oral History Project, Office of the Chancellor, One Baylor Plaza, Houston, TX, 77030. Phone: (713)-798-5130.

questions, confronting sensitivities, etc.) and how to design, structure, manage, and seek funding for oral history research projects.

In the workshop, I emphasize that people, unfortunately, often wait a generation before they begin to think about capturing oral histories. Usually this occurs when there is a recognition of "history being lost"—that is, knowledgeable informants' memories have begun to fail, or key informants have died, or important documentation may be lost and unrecoverable unless prompt action is taken. However, using the "History Now" rubric, I emphasize that if you move quickly on the heels of events, you can double the quality of an oral history at half the cost. If you wait a generation before beginning, it is much more difficult and expensive work.

From John A. Kayser:

My interest in narratives and oral histories has many beginnings. As a child, for example, I remember pestering my mother often to tell her autobiographical history. Her experience in growing up in a large extended farming family in the rural Midwest was so different from the small, urban-situated, nuclear family I was growing up in that I was constantly amazed at hearing the differences. The most recent impetus for learning about oral histories began several years ago when I composed a biographical tribute for the alumni newsletter of my MSW program

describing Betty Hutchinson, a social work teacher and mentor who recently had died (Kayser, 1992). I recounted the impact she exerted on me as a young graduate student, feeling displaced and far from home, uncertain about whether I was a good fit for the field of social work. I shared the advice she



subsequently gave me as I moved into my post-master's practice career, and then later, the help she gave when I was contemplating going on for doctoral education.

What I did not write about in that biographical sketch, however, has become the more significant force propelling my interest in oral history research. Betty died my first year on faculty. I knew she was ill. I kept meaning to call. I had every intention of visiting. But, I kept putting it off. I had preparation to do for upcoming classes. Then, it was too late. She died. All of the questions I had wanted to ask her about her experiences as a teacher, all of the things I wanted to share

about my own educational beginnings as a faculty member, would remain forever unspoken. The sense of loss and disconnectedness to my professional roots was profound and overwhelming. I began to realize that—first and foremost—oral history is an urgent activity.

"Paper Trail First, Memory Trail Second"

From CM:

When JK came to the 1996 Vermont College workshop, he was representative of the dominant cohort of participants who previously had attended my workshops. What brings these mental health and social service practitioners and educators to seek oral history training? Why them, as opposed to—say—members of the business community? I still am waiting for the first representative from a Fortune 500 company to register for one of my oral history workshops. Significantly, businesses executives do not experience the same felt imperatives about recording and preserving their own careers or organizational histories as do individuals from ostensibly more humanistic organizations and/or altruistic career preferences.

What I remember most about JK from that week in Montpelier was his constant note taking during the daily sessions. When we first discussed collaborating on this article, I was pleased to learn that after the workshop he subsequently had followed one of the key oral

history principles stressed in the workshop—using the paper trail as a parallel or tandem approach to gathering oral history recollections. In this case, JK had created his own paper trail by taking the time to transform his handwritten notes about workshop sessions into an extended typewritten field memorandum. In the section which follows, JK draws from these notes and summary to share one person's experience of how oral history can be beneficial for the helping professions.

From JK:

What brought me to the Vermont College oral history workshop was my own research interest in gathering the lived experience of contemporary social workers regarding their personal and professional development. One of my main questions concerned how narrative theory might connect with oral history research methods. I had just completed a set of oral history interviews with social work practitioners currently in the field and was hoping to extend that work further by interviewing a set of retired women social workers who were alumnae or faculty members from the University of Denver. I knew I needed more formal training in conducting oral history interviews.

One of the things I quickly discovered is that attending an oral history workshop promotes the sharing of stories. As CM facilitated the initial introductions and interactions among participants throughout the week, partici-

pants shared information about their backgrounds and interests in oral histories. There were six of us at this particular workshop—four women and two men. One person was African-American and the rest Caucasian. Workshop members were employed variously as urban ethnographer, historian-archivist, history teacher, MA student in history, librarian, and social worker. Most lived in the eastern United States; I was the lone representative from west of the Mississippi River. Two participants were interested in the oral histories of women in the military during WW II; one was interested in the oral histories of people who lived in the "Ruffled Shirt District" in Rochester, New York (where all of the old buildings and structures had been razed and former residents dispersed as part of "urban renewal" in the 1970s); one person was interested in teaching oral history methods to college students as part of an environmental history course; one person was conducting an ethnographic study about the "underground economy" in a historically black neighborhood near Chicago and was interested in comparing ethnographic interview approaches with oral history interviewing.

CM began the workshop by defining oral history as "recorded interviews which preserve historically significant memories for future use." These interviews are recorded dialogues between knowledgeable informants and oral interviewers/historians. Also helpful as part of the oral history method

is a recorded memorandum that an interviewer can dictate shortly after the completion of an interview in which the interviewer details the environment in which the interview was conducted and notes aspects of the dialogue that might warrant subsequent clarification. Oral history researchers act as surrogates for future scholars who will reference oral history interviews along with other materials and evidence in their forthcoming investigations.

The question of what constitutes "historically significant memories" was particularly intriguing to me. As a narrator (and before that, a clinical social worker), I was accustomed to exploring informants' lived experiences—seeing their life story as being important in and of itself. However, I had not given much thought to whether an individual had recollections which could be considered "historically significant." Nor had I thought at all about "starting with the paper trail" (e.g., researching relevant written documentation including public records, grade sheets, yearbooks, daily news accounts, personal correspondence, curriculum vitae, college bulletins, photographs, etc.) prior to conducting the oral history interview. As CM instructed, some reluctant interviewees may be more forthcoming when they appreciate the extent to which you have diligently done your homework. In addition, being familiar with written documentation may assist interviewers in eliciting more accurate memories from interviewees. This

helps to increase credibility and trustworthiness as opposed to spontaneous, unstructured, unpursued recall.

The value of these workshop lessons was realized immediately upon my return to Colorado. Prior to beginning the second oral history project with the retired social work alumni and women faculty members, I reviewed several written documents, including the school's course bulletins for the years they were enrolled or taught, both for my own preparation and as a prompt for their recollections. As a result, I was able to explore specific details of informants' lived experiences in greater depth, thereby acting on CM's tenet that broad generalizations are the curse of oral history, and "pursuing for details" is one of its best strategies.

"Oral histories are essential for documenting the undocumented"

From CM:

One of the points I stress in workshops is the idea that oral histories restore the sense of uncertainty to history. If historians rely only on written documentation in examining the past, we may learn only about the outcomes that were made or decisions that were recorded. The outcomes, in fact, may determine the recollections. As a result, we may get a skewed view that the outcome somehow was inevitable or preordained. Unfortunately, this approach reveals little or nothing about the ambiguity facing people at the

time choices are confronted. Thus, oral histories are essential for documenting what heretofore had been undocumented—that is, knowledge which earlier had been omitted, marginalized, suppressed, subjugated, or repressed. This is especially true if the person providing the oral history is representative of others whose memories of similar experiences have been neglected.

As the following segment illustrates, JK discovered the importance of how an oral history can unexpectedly capture historically significant events that had been undocumented or ignored.

From JK:

One of my oral history interviews was with a hesitant informant. This retired social worker—a person of color—had backed out of several scheduled appointments and, at times, seemed uncertain about the purpose of the project. Following CM's emphasis on the importance of collaborative rapport-building (i.e., anticipating the tensions which silently might divide an interviewer and informant), I began to suspect that one source of the reluctance might be rooted in the cultural differences between us. We differed not only in gender, race, and age, but also in the geographic location and historical time in which we grew up. (In the earlier set of oral history interviews, another social worker of color had told me how wary he had become in sharing his story because of how his personal information had been distorted. He strongly objected to

members of the dominant culture who treated his unique story as if he was the universal spokesperson for the "African-American experience.") Thus, I could appreciate her caution with an unfamiliar White male and did not personalize it.



Hoping to show myself as a trustworthy individual genuinely interested in hearing her story, I raised the issue directly of the cultural differences between us, asking whether she had questions about whether I would be able to understand what her life was like. Quoting CM's words from the workshop, I said: "No one knows your life like you do. If you don't tell your story, no one will. History belongs to the articulate." Without acknowledging my question about cultural differences, she began to show greater interest in this project. She asked me how I got started on this project. I answered by sharing some of my own personal and professional life journey. This further appeared to strengthen our rapport and her willingness to participate in the project.

Once I turned the tape recorder on, she told me several important episodes about her experiences of being discriminated against as a woman and an African-American. What made her account noteworthy

was the fact that, in the stories she selected to tell, the racism and oppression involved the actions of other helping professionals. She recalled, for example, applying to a graduate social work school in the deep south, only to discover that at the time (late 1950s and early 1960s) the university did not admit people of color. As I listened to her account, I realized I was hearing a "historically significant memory." Here was an apparently hidden piece of the history of social work—an earlier time in which some students of color were denied equal entry to the profession because of their race. It suddenly became much clearer why this student eventually decided to apply to schools outside of the south. I began to see her journey to Colorado in a completely different fashion.

Some months later, I did an oral history interview with another retired African-American social worker and then, a few weeks afterwards, had informal contact with a third retired social worker, also African-American. Both of these sources confirmed that the experience of suffering discrimination by schools of social work was not unique to the respondent I had interviewed previously. These individuals also reported similar experiences. While the numbers of this sample are too small and non-random to claim that these accounts are representative of a larger population, nonetheless their oral histories are instructive. They disclose an ugly chapter in our profession's history—one apparently not ad-

dressed in contemporary histories of social welfare or social work education (Austin, 1986; Axinn & Levin, 1992; Hollis & Taylor, 1951, Trolander, 1997). Perhaps, we would rather not know about this grim side since it does not fit the fabric of social justice with which social workers usually adorn their professional identities and self-images. Nonetheless, incorporating this history into our institutional narrative about the development of a profession may help us appreciate the courage it took for individuals (in and out of the profession), schools, and professional associations to eventually confront and dismantle these barriers. Using oral history methods suggests that the history of racial and ethnic minorities seeking civil rights may not solely be their struggle against narrow-minded, bigoted "others." We may have to look honestly in the mirror and recognize, however painfully, that prejudice and discrimination also have been part and parcel of our own profession's history.



Conclusions

From CM:

Oral history and the helping professions clearly have a remarkable affinity for each other. One need look no further than previous issues of *Reflections*, which have contained oral history interviews with key historical figures in the develop-

ment of social work practice as well as several articles which feature reminiscences about professional development and practice. This symbiosis deserves to be strengthened and broadened because a self-reflective profession is one always mindful of how it has shaped itself over time and been shaped through interaction with the world it inhabits. Times may change for social work professionals, but affirming identity through oral history interviews can serve as a continuing source of cross-generational rejuvenation.

From JK:

At the conclusion of oral history interviews, I ask respondents what it was like for them to tell their life stories. Thus far, reactions have ranged from pleasure to enlightenment. Most of the social workers interviewed actively enjoyed telling their life stories and seemed pleased that their personal and professional histories were being recorded and preserved. Some individuals, possibly more action-oriented than reflective, discovered that the oral history interviews afforded welcome opportunities to examine their lives as a whole. In sharing their memories, they appeared to see formative aspects of their development more clearly than before.

There have been numerous changes to me as well resulting from my work as an oral history interviewer. Attending CM's workshop has allowed me to explore the connections between narrative theory and oral history research methods. I no

longer see history as something that happened "long ago and far away" to someone else. Rather, I have come to view it as an unfolding, often untidy, set of individual and collective experiences and events which continually shape and reshape the contours and contexts of life, constantly altering the meanings ascribed to the past, present, and future. As Howard (1989) notes, one way to conceptualize history is as the "meta-story" which we live in, live with, and are lived by. Gathering oral histories has allowed me to understand the vicissitudes of how individual life stories contribute to building the meta-story. Each person I have interviewed has added to my understanding of what it means—and has meant—to be a social worker. It allows me to see my profession, other practitioners, and myself in an expanded, richer, and deeper stream of experience. □

REFERENCES

- Austin, D. (1986). *A history of social work education*. Austin (TX): School of Social Work, University of Texas at Austin.
- Axinn, J. & Levin, H. (1992). *Social welfare: A history of the American response to need* (third edition). NY: Longman.
- Hollis, E., & Taylor, A. (1951). *Social work education in the United States*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Howard, G. (1989). Culture tales: A narrative approach to thinking, cross-cultural psychology, and psychotherapy. *American Psychologist*, 46, 187-197.
- Kayser, J. (1992, Spring). In appreciation: A tribute to Betty Hutchinson. *The Reporter*. Denver: University of Denver, Graduate School of Social Work (Alumni Newsletter).
- Trolander, J. (1997). Fighting racism and sexism: The Council on Social Work Education. *Social Service Review*, 71, 112-134.





Book Review: *Long Walk to Freedom* by Nelson Mandela

Little, Brown, and Company ©1994, 625 pp., \$13.95 paperback.

by
Agathi Glezakos

Agathi Glezakos, Ph.D., LCSW,
Lecturer, Department of Social
Work, California State

When the votes had been counted at the end of the four-day, one-person, one-vote multiracial election in South Africa, the white minority conceded defeat. Nelson Mandela, the black boy who had been identified as a "good prospect for education while minding sheep," who had gone on to become a freedom fighter and a Nobel Peace Prize-winner, had been elected President of a new government of national unity. In the same year, Mandela's autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, was published; it became an international best seller.

Long Walk to Freedom is a fascinating memoir in which Mandela chronicles his life as a member of South Africa's oppressed majority. He recounts his experiences as a student of law and a practicing attorney in the apartheid society, and the emergence of his political consciousness. There is passion in his poignant description of how his engagement in and leadership of a liberation movement led to his being imprisoned for more than 27 years.

An epic of an individual's and a nation's struggle to bring an end to the discriminatory and dehumanizing practices of the apartheid regime, the book should be of interest to persons in diverse fields. I ventured into it slowly, drawing from the author's intricate de-

scriptions content that related to social work; more specifically, I found information in the areas of human diversity, human behavior and the social environment, and micro-social work practice. There is abundant material for those interested in social policy, legislation, and community organization as well.

Mandela's presentation of his life story highlights the efficacy of the ecological perspective and offers support for the humanistic theory that argues the presence of an innate goodness in all of us. The descriptions of his personal experiences convince the reader of the powerful effects of education and of cultural practices on shaping personality, behavior, value, and belief systems. The gender-based differential treatment in tribal societies and the inter-ethnic group conflict among the nation's non-European majority as they struggle to unite and liberate themselves from the rule of the white minority compel the reader to explore the possible reasons for such universal practices.

The aforementioned, along with the victory of resilience and desire for self-determination over the oppressor's attempts to crush body and spirit and the use of survival techniques characteristic of Victor Frankl's logotherapy approach

to treatment, have relevance to social work educators, students, and practitioners alike.

The book begins with a description of the author's childhood in the rural Transkei province in the southeastern region of South Africa. The reader quickly becomes magnetized by the evolutionary process of Mandela's conception of and feelings about race-based discriminatory practices. His experiences in the white-sponsored, for-blacks-only, high school and college that he attends transform him. Reading, meeting with fellow students from different tribal and socioeconomic groups, and observations of the interactions between white and black faculty lead to the young Mandela's increased awareness that a black man's limitations are the result of lack of opportunity rather than lack of ability. His view of the white man as a benefactor becomes a view of the white man as an oppressor. Progressively, and with greater clarity, Mandela comes to understand that "an educated man cannot be oppressed because he can think for himself."

It is with these new insights and with an element of anger that, at the age of 19, Mandela makes the journey to Johannesburg in search of more promising life opportunities. In this multiracial but geographically, legally, and relationally segregated urban society, he experiences hunger. He discovers that in every aspect of life, blacks must make do with a pittance, while whites enjoy one of the highest standards of living in

the world. Apartheid makes race the single most important arbiter of individuals. Professional and economic advancement are founded on and protected by the color of one's skin. The attempts of the non-whites—Indians, 'coloureds', and blacks—to unite and challenge the oppressive government are hindered, however, by counterproductive intra- and inter-group discriminatory practices.

During his years in Johannesburg, Mandela pursues a law degree, practices law, forms



alliances with multiracial groups, and begins to earn the title of a freedom fighter. The accumulation of a thousand and one slights and indignities produces in him "anger, rebelliousness and a desire to fight an immoral unjust system which bred contempt for its laws and regulations." Mandela describes the transformations that change him from a chronicler of injustice to a fighter for justice, and from a non-violent protester to one who selectively uses violence in order to dismantle "the harshest society that the world has ever known."

Mandela provides a vivid account of his numerous arrests, court appearances, and detentions. He acquaints the

reader with the brutal tactics of South Africa's police force, the subjective interpretation and application of apartheid laws by white prosecutors and judges, and the way in which the regime even manages to discriminate against "non-Europeans" while they are imprisoned—black prisoners are given short trousers to emphasize the fact that they are considered "boys" by the authorities.

At the end of his final trial, for sabotage and conspiracy, Mandela is sentenced to life imprisonment. In 1964, at the age of 46, he is taken to Robben Island prison, where the non-European prisoners spend their days in primitive living conditions and are subjected to both brutal and pettily nasty treatment by the white guards. As described by Mandela, however, we come to see how, even in such conditions, exceptional human ingenuity can develop survival skills and how oppressed and deeply wounded men reach "heights of character," feel compassion for, and even come to grant forgiveness to, their oppressor. "No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love" are the words that Mandela uses to express forgiveness and to instill hope.

The final section of the book focuses on the process of bringing apartheid in South Africa to an end—the negotiations with the white ruling party, Mandela's release from prison

on February 11, 1990, the one-person, one-vote election of 1994, and the formation of an interim multiracial government under Mandela's leadership. It points to the plans for national elections in 1999 to form a multi-party democracy.

Throughout the book, Mandela discusses the rapidly changing, Westernized South Africa, as well as the traditional tribal cultural practices that he continues to uphold. After finishing the book, readers are left with a sense of having completed an ethnographic interview that has given them the opportunity to raise global questions and to understand the meaning of cover terms. Thus, one comes to learn about tribal marriage arrangements and ceremonies, birth and death rituals, rites of passage, relational hierarchies, and expectations for inter-generational behavior. This is information that is relevant, and can be useful, to any social worker who is concerned about culturally sensitive practice.

In the end, what is most deeply stirring to the reader is Mandela's unshaken faith in man's ultimate goodness. He expresses this faith abundantly, while at the same time describing a system whose goal was to make his life as wretched as possible. With impressive objectivity, he draws a distinction between the person—the white police officer, the prosecutor, the judge, the prison warden—and the system, and reaches the conclusion that these people's "in-humanity" is something that was foisted upon them by an evil social and political system.

Thus, his anger towards individual white men slowly dissipates, while his hatred for the apartheid system that turns the nation's people against each other grows.

Reflecting upon a sympathetic comment from the "most callous and barbaric" officer on Robben Island, Mandela writes: "...he revealed another side to his nature; a side that had been obscured but still existed...



ultimately, he was not evil... he behaved like a brute because he was rewarded for brutish behavior."

The conclusion that Mandela reaches after observing and analyzing the behavior of those who have control over his fate is that: "There is a streak of goodness in man that can be buried or hidden and it emerges unexpectedly... man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished... Deep down in every human heart there is mercy and generosity... Love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

Mandela's interpretation of his oppressor's behavior and his fundamental belief in the goodness in each one of us have deep affect on the reader, as they come from a man subjected to hardship and cruelty by his fellow men that is barely imaginable. This orientation rescued him from giving up in despair and, as President Clinton stated during his recent trip to South Africa, from allowing "his heart to turn to stone." Such an orientation can serve to instill hope in the reader during moments of personal or societal crises.

I have returned to *Long Walk to Freedom* more than once. Reading of how Mandela bore with and drew strength from his epic trials lends a steadying influence in difficult moments (though those moments could not remotely approximate the obstacles and difficulties that he faced). What I have taken from this book has served me; it has strengthened my belief that a streak of goodness must be a part of human nature. Nourishment from readings like this sustains us in our efforts to help our clients and our communities. This reading gives a sense of hope that we should wish to transmit to the generation that will follow our—and Mandela's—footprints. □

REFLECTIONS: SPECIAL ISSUE RECOGNIZING DISABILITY AS DIVERSITY

SPECIAL EDITOR: THOMAS BUCARO

A special issue on the experience of "disability" and its recognition as an area of human differences along the axis of ability. The earliest cultural representations associated disability with sin and evil. Later, the representation of disability became associated with illness and deficit and function. This association, based on a medical model, assumed impairment and dominated the representation of disability in the education and training of academics and practitioners. Over recent decades, initiated by persons with disabilities, the cultural shift has been toward a social construction of disability, a minority group model that has in common with other minority collectives, themes of oppression and discrimination. This conceptualization of disability presents new visions for positive identification and opportunities for human actions. Disability as diversity is a cultural transformation not fully understood or accepted by academics and practitioners.

The images of persons with disabilities as social participators challenge long-held assumptions of practitioners. And, as the disabled have found their voice, their call for collaborative partnerships with practitioners and their demand for self determination are just beginning to be heard. In effect, practitioners are "at risk" of exercising acts of oppression and discrimination, even if intended to follow standards of practice or acts of kindness. It is an issue of critical importance for the helping professions as the population becomes aged, technology expands the prolongation of life, and the visibility of persons with disabilities expands as part of a worldwide disability-rights movement. We seek narratives about all levels of practice—service, social change, academics, and research—that helps us to understand, appreciate, and celebrate disability as diversity: Narratives about practice; about experiences that describe work that either failed or succeeded in informing and challenging negative images of the disabled; and existing modes of practice. The recognition of disability as diversity where it intersects with the helping professions brings us to a new level of discourse and the possibilities for narratives seem endless.

NARRATIVES:

- That portray practice (families, groups, communities, program/policy development with or for persons with disabilities).
- About the commonalty/ differences in practice across disabilities; and workers that experience disabilities.
- That show practice at different levels that contribute(d) to one's or to others' understanding of the experiences of discrimination because of disability.
- That focus on working, teaching, organizing, participating in, and collaborating with the disability culture: issues of language, pride and identification, choice and self advocacy.
- Practice narratives that depict experiences associated with "coming out" or "hiding out," and the meaning of the experience for persons with 'invisible' disabilities.
- About practice in affecting environmental and attitudinal barriers faced by persons with disability; their families; and technology that liberates/harms persons with disabilities.
- About direct/indirect practice issues of cumulative discrimination to persons with disabilities and members of other minority groups that portray the complexities that disability bring to families.

It is our belief that the present discourse on disability, as it cuts across all classes, sexes, races and ethnic groups, will serve to alter some of our basic conceptions of human concerns like gender, competency, power, dependency toward better understanding of all human relationships.

Manuscripts due March 31, 1999. Send to:

Tom Bucaro, D.S.W. Director. Social Work Program, College of Staten Island, CUNY
2800 Victory Blvd. Staten Island, NY 10314 Phone: 718-982-3767 Fax: 718-982-3794
E-mail: Bucaro@postbox.csi.cuny.edu

all human rights for all

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

1948 - 1998

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948

On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the full text of which appears in the following pages. Following this historic act the Assembly called upon all Member countries to publicize the text of the Declaration and "to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories."

PREAMBLE

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world;

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people;

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law;

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations;

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom;

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms;

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge;

Now, therefore, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and, by progressive measures national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

REFLECTIONS:

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping (ISSN 1080-0220) is published quarterly by the University Press at California State University, Long Beach under the auspices of the Department of Social Work. Annual Subscription Rate: individuals, \$25.00; libraries and institutions, \$35.00; outside USA, add \$15.00. Single copies: \$10.00. Payment: check, money order, or credit card (Visa or MasterCard, please include number and expiration date). Please send to **REFLECTIONS: CSULB; Long Beach, CA 90804-0902**. We remind subscribers to please immediately notify Reflections of address changes, providing both new and old addresses. Please allow six weeks for address changes to take effect.

COPYRIGHT 1998. REFLECTIONS: NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING—ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The purpose of *Reflections* is to publish narratives, personal accounts that describe and explain the process of helping others and shaping social change over time. The journal seeks to build a literary tradition and a record of wisdom for critical study and fruitful discovery. It encourages stories that convey a sense of immediacy, portray practice across diverse populations and capture the range and variety of strategies and systems within the helping professions. Priority is given to articles that provide a new understanding of practice. The journal publishes stories of professional helpers such as ethicists, psychotherapists, community organizers, case and group workers, policy makers, family and child practitioners, health and mental healthcare providers; educators, researchers, and administrators in the helping professions.

The central theme of *Reflections* is narrative inquiry of professional practice. It publishes personal accounts of professional action designed to aid and support human and social development. The stories have a literary presence, offer new perspectives on practice, and demonstrate the conceit of failure as well as success. The narrator explains the reasons for the action and freely identifies the mistakes made in the practice. The purpose of the narrative is not to demonstrate achievement; rather, it is to capture the experience.

The Narrative Structure: A narrative is a story worth telling. Narratives are personal stories that give readers a fresh perspective about the practice of change. Written in a temporal sequence and or within a thematic structure; narratives recount the helping process. Narratives are explored within a contextual frame and supply a rich textural description of the experience, taking into account time, place, action, persons, behavior, and interaction. Narratives explain and describe event; results; conflicts; complicating actions; and how, why, and what was done. In narratives the writer evaluates the experience, whether or not there is a resolution, and explores the meaning of the experiences. Some narratives end with a coda, that is, a perspective on what occurred.

Writing Instructions and Submission: Manuscripts are peer reviewed. Articles appropriate to the journal's purpose are reviewed anonymously by members of the Executive and Editorial Board. Articles are accepted based on their contribution to practice knowledge. Publication decisions require about four months.

1. Authors are expected to use the most recent APA publication format.
2. The manuscript length depends upon the temporal sequence of the event.
3. Include, on a separate page, a brief abstract written in the same style as the narrative.
4. Place identifying information such as name, affiliation(s), title(s), address, and phone/fax numbers only on cover page.
5. Send three (3) printed double spaced hard copies of the manuscript to the editor.

Upon Acceptance of the article for publication, one (1) copy on disk in Rich Text Format (RTF) for IBM based or Mac PCs and one (1) additional hard copy will be requested. Submission of narrative poetry and photography or artwork is strongly encouraged.

Names of persons and organizations mentioned in the articles published in Reflections have been changed to protect their privacy. Reflections disclaims responsibility for statements, either fact or opinion, made by contributors.

REFLECTIONS: Narratives of Professional Helping

California State University Long Beach
Department of Social Work
1200 Bellflower Boulevard
Long Beach, CA 90813-0904

REFLECTIONS: NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH

Department of Social Work - 111194

1250 Bellflower Boulevard

Long Beach, California 90840-0902

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Periodicals postage paid at Long Beach, CA.

CSULB, in compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI and Title VII), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, sex, handicap, or age in any of its policies, procedures or practices; nor does CSULB discriminate on the basis of marital status or sexual orientation. This nondiscrimination policy covers all CSULB programs and activities, including employment.

In addition to meeting fully its obligations of nondiscrimination under federal and state law, CSULB is committed to creating a community in which a diverse population can live and work in an atmosphere of tolerance, civility and respect for the rights and sensibilities of each individual, without regard to economic status, ethnic background, political views, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics or beliefs.

Copyright of Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping is the property of Cleveland State University and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.