

HOW IT WAS: A NARRATIVE ESSAY

Howard Goldstein's narrative essay describes the affirmation of hope and optimism that characterized social work thought in its mid-century; and his sense of the profession as it shifted perspectives from diagnostic and functional systems of practice and education to "consensus" and "the need to speak in one voice." Goldstein's narrative is more than autobiographical. It recaptures a time, at least in narrative, when social work was nominally a profession but more vitally, a way of life, a perspective on the world, perhaps an ideology, certainly a source of hope and vision. The clarity of the portrait of those middle years is filtered by the narrower, more utilitarian outlook of the present, the failures that followed noble social experiments, and the flood of current social miseries. Whether things were better or worse in that era is not the point; then, we were inspired by beliefs that we could make a difference, that the world would be somewhat better if we learned right and did right.

By Howard Goldstein

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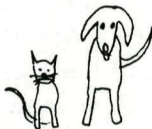
1.

It was the early 1950s, a few years after we won the war—World War II, that is—when I first discovered social work. The discovery was pure chance: the hitchhiker, a fellow veteran, I picked up one afternoon was on his way to something he called "field instruction." Asking him to explain, I got a quick but inspired account of the making of a social worker. It was timely information. Married, a parent, and at the sad ending of a failed business venture, the idea of starting college and finding a career seemed to be a good idea. I was twenty-seven.

I was a child of the Great Depression. Why then wasn't I already aware of the good works of social workers? And since I had witnessed and experienced the hardships and deprivation of that grim decade, why hadn't I already been drawn — at least in my thinking — to some kind of altruistic career? The answer to the first question was that our tightly bound and self-reliant immigrant community took care of our own. As to the second question, hardship and deprivation are terms used in the present to describe the past. Then we thought that's the way life was; everyone was poor.

As it turned out, when I finally decided what I wanted to do with the rest of my working life, becoming a veterinarian was my most appealing choice. Was it a mistake (who can know?) that I sought expert advice? The Veterans Administration offered vocational guidance, and after completing a battery of aptitude and other psychological tests, my psychologist expert persuaded me otherwise: "Try history," he advised. No wonder that I became cynical about something called "measures of reliability and validity."

I did as I was told and went on to "try history" which I must admit excited ways of thinking that drew me to biography, the nature of memory, the many ways it is possible to reconstruct other times. The now popular theories of the narrative mode completed a circle that began over forty years ago: my history professor, a true humanist, taught then what now is respectably called the field of "narrative history," that understands yester-years as a composite of lives and stories. I plunged into the social and behavioral sciences, and tried most everything except the natural sciences that my vocational psychologist predicted would be





my ruin.

With BA in hand, social work — or for that matter, advanced education of any kind — never was a considered option; getting my degree in three years was enough already. Perhaps because I couldn't do much about saving stricken dogs, cats, and other creatures, I was captured by the romantic idea of saving kids. The possibility of some day working for the acclaimed, newly founded Model California Youth Authority was my shining goal. Ironically, it was my inquiry about what I needed to do to fulfill that hope — perhaps some experience as a rural probation officer — that created the detour that, inadvertently, led me into social work. "Get your MSW first," I was advised. I did.

I cannot say for sure how my now elderly colleagues, also Depression survivors, stumbled into social work. It seemed to me, however, that we comprised a cultural cohort — a shared identity as poor, first generation immigrant children — who, as social workers, were forever — almost instinctively — trying to safeguard and often defend the humanistic principles of our profession. I recall an instance when one of my faculty colleagues who

could be counted on to protest any inequity was charged by his Dean with being "too moral." Individually and collectively, we "knew" something about what really counted as far as having a decent place in the world was concerned. It made no difference whether our first neighborhoods were in Newark, Cleveland, or Chicago; the values of our immigrant communities were strikingly similar. I, like others I know, grew up imbued with the integrity, the intellect, of pure Socialism — not so much its politics as its humanity and ideology. My father, again like others, always voted for Norman Thomas — always in principle, knowing that the possibility of his Presidency was nonexistent.

The absence of material pleasures — if they were indeed noted — was outweighed by our neighborhoods and communities that abounded with activities and programs. "Grassroots" was an unknown concept but a real-life process. Community centers, clubs, Young Men and Women Associations, summer camps, Boy Scouts, were initiated by an informal council, a men's or women's religious committee, or other groups without need of studies or funding proposals. It occurs to me that if our collective early lives

prepared us for anything, it was old-fashioned, democratic group work and community organization rooted in the settlement movement and in the philosophies of Grace Coyle and Wilber Newstetter. We knew in our hearts what "community" — now such a vapid term — meant as far as pride, identity, character, and self-worth were concerned. My recent book, a study of elders and their recollections of their early years in the harsh, regimented, austere orphanage life, persuasively shows how community — created among themselves and within the enveloping Jewish neighborhood — made for much more than mere survival (Goldstein, 1996).

I am bemused by the facile ways the current buzzword, "diversity," is now employed. Then, among the mosaic of immigrant nationalities, rich community life was shaped not only by respective identities, customs, idioms, and integrity. Now, we use the abstraction, "ethnic," to refer to certain groups; then, you knew the origins of the neighborhood people by the marvelous aromas arising out of their markets and kitchens, by their accents, dialects, and the energies of paisans, lanzleit, and other countrymen

and women.

2.

My story of how I stumbled into social work is more than autobiographical. It intends to recapture a time, at least in narrative, when social work was nominally a profession but more vitally, a way of life, a perspective on the world, perhaps an ideology, certainly a source of hope and vision. All stories are held together by the glue of illusion, by what we want the story to convey. This is not a disclaimer: The eighteenth century English novelist, George Eliot, herself no friend of convention, said, "for what we call illusions are often, in truth, a wider vision of past and present realities — a willing movement of a man's soul with a larger sweep of the world's forces..." The times are different now, perhaps in greater need of a few more hopeful illusions to soften the kinds of "objectivity" and materialism that paper over the ironies, the wisdom, the tragic and comedic sense of life.

Nostalgia does not engulf me: "hope and vision" would be incidental if those weren't times when discrimination and segregation were rampant; when good lives and careers were destroyed by our democratic, constitutionally based, officially sanctioned House Un-American Activities Committee; when one had to sign loyalty oaths to get or hold a job; when children had to practice atom bomb drills. It wasn't the best of times; but one could be part of the spirit that wouldn't settle for being the worst of times. As well, through song and story

and history, the Fifties are recalled as a caricature or collage of Hula Hoops, Leave It To Beaver, Ozzie and Harriet, and the passive generation.

These inanities aside, there were few other periods in the history of social work than the 1950s that marked so many changes in the profession's structure and, to some extent, substance. Now that we are approaching the end of the century when, at its outset, social work first began to take on the trappings of a profession, the decade of the 1950s, chronologically, intellectually, and ideologically, marks the midpoint of the profession. A few examples of the innovations of that period: In 1952, the Council on Social Work Education was formed out of the American Association of Schools of Social Work and the National Association of Schools of Social Administration. In 1955, a single professional organization was formed out of seven "specialized" membership bodies. In 1958, the document, "A Working Definition of Social Work Practice," was produced by the National Association of Social Workers.

I have roughed out the route of how I got there and where social work was at this special turning point in time and thought. Now, in accord with Roberta Imre's (1996: 63-65) advice that we "plumb the depths of wisdom that is available through narratives . . ." I want to recall the character, culture, and quality of theory and practice, of learning and doing. The culture and ideologies of our early years became part of the weave of the text and texture of our professional lives.

My story will entwine two additional threads to the historical fiber of our chosen profession: one, the substance of those times; two, its spirit.

3.

It has been said that the ability or comfort to live with ambiguity is the talent required to be an able social worker. Such ambiguity — more so, paradox — marked the profession in that era. As is still the case, it was committed to a singular mission and purpose, yet easily entertained at least two discrete and contradictory philosophies about human nature, and change. Diagnostic and Functional systems had been flourishing as the exclusive schools of practice before clumsy attempts at integration were attempted. One's identity as a social worker that sometimes carried over as self-identity was pure and simple: you were either one or the other almost as, "Hi, I'm Mary Jones and I'm a Functionalist."

I have considered that perhaps the reason why I have never settled into one mold of thought and practice, why I have explored the many possible perspectives on the human state — social systems, cognitive, humanistic, narrative and more — is my brief experience in an awkward, Catch-22 plight. My casework professor, was a pure, unalloyed member of the Diagnostic School; my field instructor was a devout Functionalist. The Diagnostic School, a precursor of models of practice that require the social worker to be an expert, a diagnostician, and a methodologist was based on

rigid Freudian psychoanalytic theory. The Functional School, in contrast (and in opposition) to Freudian psychology was the forerunner of a client-centered, existential, collegial model of practice. It stressed the importance of relationship, the here-and-now, and challenged the notion that the fluidity of human nature could be bottled and labeled. Caught between the two magnetic poles, the dynamic persuasions of my mentors, I learned, adaptively, what it was like being a dual personality, and developmentally, self-confidence and ease with ambiguity.

As social work restructured and, to some extent, redefined itself, the common wall separating the two Schools crumbled: the allure and promises of the flowering social and behavioral sciences, were just one of a few influences. As I see it — and in more symbolic than substantive terms — a certain passion and spirit were lost as the distinctions between the two schools faded and were compromised.

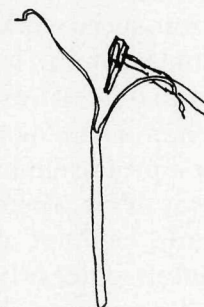
Other than the sporadic and fitful exchanges between empiricist and humanist researchers, the kinds of debate and position-taking that was spurred by the two disparate philosophies of human nature, behavior, and change is scarcely in evidence. "Consensus" and "the need to speak in one voice" are watchwords of the profession and the aim of committees on everything; announcements of forthcoming annual meetings sound like invitations to celebrations of unity and togetherness; letters to editors that contend or take a stand are rare; the position statements of

candidates for national offices are virtually isomorphic; consequently, a small minority of members takes the moment to check and return their ballots.

I remember tiny but fiery Rose Green, one of my professors and a devout Functionalist. She unhesitatingly refused an invitation to be part of a panel discussion on private practice unless the organizers changed the name of the event to "Social Workers without Agencies." You see, "Function" was not, as one would think, a sociological term; it referred to an agency's function and the client's attitude toward it, a critical factor of the helping process. Thus, the question: were private practitioners unhitched from an agency really "complete" social workers? — at least according to Functionalist tenets.

In the same period, Marion Sanders (1957) wrote a lovely satire, a critical commentary called "Social Work: A Profession Chasing Its Tail." Among other observations that chided social workers' eagerness for dignity and status, she described the "Great Ideological Schism" by telling about the dilemma of Hester, an experienced social worker. Hester sought a particular position that would enhance her professional development; it turned out that the director of the agency "had studied at the University of Pennsylvania and was Rankian (following Dr. Otto Rank) and Functional. Hester, being Freudian and Diagnostic could not risk the continuing peril of contamination by a deviationist." Someone said that academics are always ready and eager to join in ferocious, hair-splitting

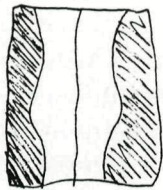
controversy since usually there is nothing at stake. Much was at stake in the "Schism" referred to by Sanders.



There was yet another loss in the conjugation of the two schools: the opportunity for students to depart their education with a fairly thorough and working knowledge of a foundational theory — whether Functional or Diagnostic. Paradoxically, it was not that one or the other protocol was especially relevant to everyday practice; there has never been much evidence that there is any meaningful connection between theory and practice. Important was the idea that the graduating social worker practitioner "owned" a theoretical frame of reference, a conceptual sounding board against which other theories still over the horizon could be measured.

Aside from my mongrel Diagnostic-Functional semester, my graduate education was pure-bred, orthodox Freudianism. The scholasticism of psychoanalytic thought could not be trusted in those days to such laity as social work academics; an ordained psychoanalyst — preferably one who had studied in Vienna — was employed to teach the course: this he did with great carnal gusto. A fascinating scene was played out in-

volving the good doctor and the few nuns and the priest who were members of the class: as his lectures became more erotic in content, the members of the faith would study their missals with even more unflinching concentration. This, of course, did not escape notice of the lecturer who, with an almost perceptible grin, would venture a few more lascivious Freudian gems.



Like my innocent fellow learners, I enlisted in professional education with the anticipation of arming myself with psychological truths, if not THE truth about behavior and change. Freudianism promised to fit the bill. Although on one level, I felt well-armed with notions of "transference," "defense mechanisms" and other articles of faith, this glibness did not seem to be particularly pertinent to my work with clients; for one thing, I was always violating Sigmund's law of scientific objective detachment by, when it seemed to feel right, sharing with my clients a story about my life experiences.

Relevant or otherwise, that I "knew" or, better, "owned," this ideological perspective from inside out equipped me with the critical thinking needed to compare its principles with those of burgeoning post — and even anti-Freudian theories. It was another matter, however, when I tried to make the conversion to or try out

these fresh ideas: like many other "isms," Freudianism is a closed system that dictates that any attempt at deviation or disagreement is itself proof of the validity of the system. Thus, my Freudian mentors tried to convince me that my interest in other theories showed that I was guilty of such unconscious mechanisms as "resistance," "defensiveness," and "denial."

These absurdities notwithstanding, the extinction of the two contrary perspectives on the human condition was as woeful as the cheapening of the rigors of scholarship and learning when the study of the Classics ceased to be a requirement for advanced liberal education. Is the jumble of "eclecticism" that has amassed over the years, the expedient stew of this and that theory, an improvement over what might be considered "elitist" theories?

This leads me to the point that is at the heart of this disquisition: there is no evidence — or for that matter, any way of measuring — whether one curriculum, theory, or method is "more effective" (whatever that means) than any other. What, then, does count? Then and certainly now, I believe that the probative test of an educational program is whether it provides the opportunity and encouragement for the development of the learner's ability to reason, reflect, create, and imagine. Such talents are essential since every moment in one's work with problems of living is novel and usually involved with enigmatic questions of moral choice.

A "what if" question comes to mind. What if early social work had taken the path set

by the alliance of Jane Addams, John Dewey, and the settlement movement instead of casework's pursuit (identified with Mary Richmond) of a scientific foundation? Would the commitment of the settlement movement ideology to the "here-and-now" needs and incentives of clients have promoted a more humanistic approach to practice?

Almost sixty years ago, Dewey (1938: 48-49), who learned from and contributed to the settlement movement — Hull House specifically — wrote about the "pedagogical fallacy," the erroneous assumption that previously acquired knowledge and theory (classroom content) will prepare the learner for eventual practice in the field, in the real world. In recent years, Donald Schon's (1983) well-known book, *The Reflective Practitioner*, indirectly expressed Dewey's ideas. Schon recommended that professionals need to develop "reflection-in-action" in practice with human problems rather than what he calls Technical Rationality, the formal act of applying theory or scientific knowledge to a problem. As the settlement movement diminished, so did Dewey's influence on learning and problem solving. And although Schon's book stirred considerable interest, education for professional practice continues its conventional march, the didactic classroom leading the way with the real life experiential practicum trying to follow in step.

Nonetheless, the argument won't go away: the rational and systematic organization of knowledge taught in the classroom cannot prepare the learner

for the unforeseen contingencies and irrational demands of actual practice. It is the immediate narrative experience that calls for reflective and critical thinking, the ability to "be with," to understand more than the client's story tells, to break the constricting bonds of conventional theory and knowledge. Perhaps an example, the gist of a more complex case, will help make this point. Admittedly, Bob is not your every day client; that fact alone, however, argues for the talent to meet the unexpected.

Bob, middle-aged, was desperate: his wife had incurable cancer; they had two young daughters dependent on his care; he had returned to college to find a new career since his previous activities as a labor organizer made him unemployable. Early on, he very hesitantly trusted me with his revelation: he was taking a course on Herman Melville and he, Bob, believed he had stumbled on, made a discovery about, a certain code in Melville's novels that carried a hidden message. For him, a bright fellow indeed, the finding was momentous. My classroom and my reading had prepared me for any of a number of "treatment plans": all I had to do was decide whether he was "delusional," "dysfunctional" because of "poor reality-testing," or simply "in denial."

Any one of such "assessments" would have been professionally appropriate but, as I was coming to understand Bob and his life circumstances, I considered them self-serving

and wrongheaded. First, I could not know whether his discovery was valid. Second, it would be hubristic for me, one human being, to judge another's state of being. Last, such terms, if they are approximate, only atomize that which is complex. Besides, I was most intrigued by his theory that certainly had its own legs and romance.

Over the months, the anguished demands of life and death did not go unregarded; but he and I also eagerly looked forward to our time together to talk about his latest discoveries about "the code." When he finished the complete list of Melville's work, he frequented old book stores for other novels that he was sure Melville had written under a pen name.

When the time came, he helped put his wife to rest, with loving care helped his daughters cope with their loss, and lined up a part-time position as an English teacher. As always, I was in wait for the latest results of his literary adventure but, in one of our last interviews, Bob said he hated to disappoint me but "I've kinda given it up. Got other things to do."

The extent to which I gained the ability to be a "reflective practitioner" was a happy but coincidental result of the paradoxes in my professional education. Inductive or experiential learning, the ability to reason from the particular reality to the general that encourages reflective practice, had ample space in our graduate classroom and curricu-

lum — but by default rather than by plan. Deductive or didactic learning was of course the unquestioned model of education: lectures and readings provided by the "information" classes (e.g., human behavior and the social environment, medical information, social welfare) comprised — as in the present — what educators believed social workers needed to know to become professionalized. But our practice classes — casework, in my instance — didn't have much theoretical or methodological information to offer. Gordon Hamilton's Diagnostic textbook (1951) had just been published and Helen Harris Perlman's work (1957) that was to become the standard was not yet available. It was also well before the time that commercial publishers created an industry of practice textbooks.

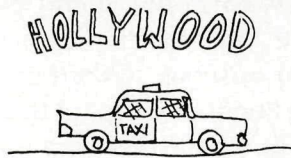
How we learned our skills, knowledge, and values to become practicing social workers was through the case method or case study. We had available a rich and extensive collection of "canned cases," each supposedly typifying one kind or another of circumstances and questions that a social worker was likely to encounter. The classroom welcomed the real-life cases we brought from field instruction. Starting with the elemental question, "What's going on here?" and drawing on inference, speculation, assumption, and often heated controversy, we would, with the keen guidance of our mentor, try to ferret out the meaning buried in the case. We sought to gain some vicarious awareness of how things came to be, how they were, and what we inferred might lay ahead in rela-

tion to what we might do or how we would "intervene." To be sure, we used the sometimes unwieldy language of theory and method to discuss the case; I recall how enlightened I felt when I asked my good professor, John Milner, why my client kept trying to be so friendly and he said, quite simply, "transference." The theoretical jargon allowed us some conceptual pegs on which we could hang our experiences. But the theoretical stuff was very secondary to our learning "how to be" and "how to think" with our clients, not as replaceable experts but as distinct and vital human beings.

Altogether, I do not believe that, with or without "definitive" practice texts, there was anything second rate or less effective about this mode of teaching and learning. The case has always been the core of the profession's interest and inquiry. Despite the ever increasing sophistication of practice theory, the good teacher knows that, without the existential case, you are left with only an assortment of abstractions that are of more help to the intellect than to the helping relationship. And, of course, the case offers exactly the kind of inductive learning that Dewey and Schon considered the pathway to sensitive, reflective practice.

4.

I am not sure — nor does it really matter — how the humanistic content of learning and maturing central to becoming a social worker blended with the humanistic spirit of the times, at least as far as how some of us experienced it. The structural



changes that were being worked out within the profession in that mid-century decade represented a profession in the process of re-inventing itself. At the same time, the temperament and substance of professional education mirrored the inspiring mood of that period, a time when the society we were preparing ourselves to serve certainly was less complex than now, and perhaps more receptive to change.

The optimistic confidence that I would soon become, as my degree would attest, a master social worker who would make a real difference in people's lives compensated for the hardship of having to drive a weekend taxi to support my family. Besides, driving the night shift on the streets of Los Angeles in some ways provided learning experiences that my field practicum could not. I think I made some points with my professors when a local columnist reported on how I had talked a youngster out of running away from home. Of course, a teenager who can afford a taxi is not your average runaway.

My optimism was inspired by a number of factors. I was, let me remind you, a member of a generation that lived through and survived the calamities of the Great Depression and then parlayed this feat into the fortitude (fortified by the summons of Selective Service) needed

to serve and again survive — this time the Second World War. Then, the nation as a whole was still savoring the pride, patriotism, and success of winning that great war. Now, the remains of that curious, vintage notion of American heroism and valor are the themes of old movie channels on cable television, portrayed by the wartime exploits of such worthies as John Wayne and Ronald Reagan.

Then was the time of sweet liberal idealism. Those of us who were so inspired about social change could find a place among comrades who also believed that social injustice could be solved without having to change the nation's basic values and institutions (Brinkley, 1994: 44-46). Although short-lived, this prerogative induced many of my friends and fellows, mostly veterans, to try the radical path. Some danced around the skirts of the American Communist Party; others were marching picket lines, protesting against the bigots of the time, Father Coughlin and Gerald L. K. Smith, for example, or the corporate union busters. We were aware of the evils of discrimination and segregation and, in fact, created a veterans' organization (American Veterans' Committee) that invited minorities otherwise excluded from the established veterans' associations.

Likewise, we were clear-eyed about our objectives. We felt not at all naive about the desire, if not the plan, to wipe out segregation and other social ills, expressions of the renewed idea that person and society were inseparable. In general, we were more cheerful about helping our clients grow and achieve more reward-

ing lives. David Riesman's popular book, *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), celebrated the emergence of the "autonomous self," the expressive individualist style of post-war America that contrasted with the "other-directed," conformist character.

The idea of "self" that guided understanding in practice was based on the assumption that one is capable of making choices and acting responsibly: "self-determination" is a precept that seemed to carry more weight then than now. Again, Freud's trinity of id, ego, and superego had some presence during the prominent years of the Diagnostic school of practice. But as I mentioned, it seemed to me that jargon was incidental to function. We were cautioned never to probe beyond (or below) wherever the ego was located and to stick with the positive and avoid the negative when transference surfaced; in other words, we could play with notions of unconscious, defenses, and the rest in our minds but in practice, we should stick with the "ego," the realities of the client's life.

It took time — and a more confident appraisal of our practice — to overcome the belief that, because we weren't engrossed in doing "deep therapy," our helping efforts within the critical borders of relationship and immediate life circumstances were second rate.

It bears saying at this point that such retrospection takes on a nostalgic, utopian patina layered by the passing of time. The clarity of the portrait of those middle years is also filtered by the narrower, more utilitarian outlook

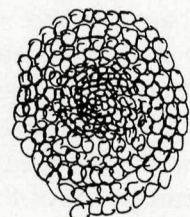
of the present, the failures that followed noble social experiments, and the flood of current social miseries. Whether things were better or worse in that era is not the point; then, we were inspired by beliefs that we could make a difference, that the world would be somewhat better if we learned right and did right. Becoming a social worker was not just a full-time commitment — overtime was also common. As students, clear restrictions limited our extracurricular employment; even the suggestion of accelerated programs, intensive programs, classes held only on occasional weekends that are becoming common would have violated expressed standards for proper professional education.

A footnote to those times deserves mention since it, too, reflects the optimism that inspired our work with clients. Eduard Lindeman in referring to the ideal of "democratic discipline" captured in more elegant phrases what implicitly guided our active philosophy of practice. The recent defeat of totalitarianism was fresh in our minds, naturally engraving the sharp image of the doctrine of democratic thought (Konopka, 1958). Democratic discipline was the goal of practice: a client's mental health, according to democratic discipline, was the acceptance of personal responsibility, a willingness to experiment with new ideas and make personal choices, and a capability for ethical dissent without harm to or resentment of the other person. Sadly, Lindeman's philosophy has dimmed: over the next half century, democratic individualism was displaced by rights —

based individualism, rights to specific entitlement without shared obligation (Elshtain, 1994).

It bears mentioning that such principles were not based solely on the wish for an ideal world. If liberal ideologies and activism of the time did not assure us that our rose-colored glasses were firmly perched on our professional noses, our optimism was also certified by the guardians of knowledge — the academic theorists, the researchers and scholars. These pioneers of truth in the budding post-war social sciences gave reason to believe that out there on society's bright horizons were signals of hope for solutions to the problems of social strife and disorder — with the obligatory caveat, of course, that there was still a lot to be worked out and more research was needed.

Such warnings did little to (nor did they intend to) discourage confidence. In 1949, for example, Gordon Hamilton, an esteemed educator and scholar, hailed and welcomed these promises in a manner that in the cynical present would be judged as ingenuous or naive. Seemingly convinced, she promised that problems even as severe as juvenile delinquency would soon be controlled if not entirely prevented (Hamilton, 1949a: 3-19).



5.

This affirmation of hope and optimism that characterized social work thought in its mid-century is as good as any to bring this essay to rest. Narratives are by definition always unfinished; they are personal expressions of life's work still in progress. The short story, the novel, the play, the research report, or the scholarly article are designed to produce a specific ending — a denouement, information, facts, instruction and so on. The closing of a narrative, like ending a conversation, is arbitrary; based on the discussion thus far. I could continue on in any of a number of directions: How this optimism led to activism, the War on Poverty of the Sixties; how emerging positivistic ideologies led to the developing shift toward reverence for research and a scientific base for practice; how the flood of fads and cults of practice involving primal screams, the turning of Freudianism on its head in transactional and reality therapies, or benign behaviorism characterized the Seventies. Or I might draw a comparison between the hope and optimism of those earlier days and the present sense of haplessness resulting from the profession's loss of autonomy in managed care, with public and political apathy toward the disfranchised, or with what Specht and Courtney (1994) call social work's abandonment of its mission. But I could also refer to the continuity of the grand ideals of that earlier decade, the recent humanistic rediscovery of spirituality, values, moral philosophy, and narrative mode in our work with

problems of living. I could, of course, explain how my professional origins in the 1950s carried over into and affected the next forty years of my career. This, however, is already documented in my publications.

Even without conclusion, the narrative can be persuasive. The narrator's story, after all, is personally and intentionally selective, containing messages that are both explicit (what I wish to

convey) and implicit (what you may wish to take from them). With even greater poignancy, it is medium of thought and recollection that, for myself, imaginatively links a sequence of singular episodes and creates a story, a pattern of existence, that says, "there was meaning." Edmund Sherman ends his keenly wise and perceptive book, *Reminiscence*, with the suggestion that there is creative pleasure and fascination



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in recreating the story of one's destiny and one's self through reminiscence (1991:245). The narrative is, in its final analysis, an invitation to discourse and dialogue: I hope this account invites your reminiscences, your narrative, of how it was, what it meant, to add more varied textures to the always vital nature of social work. □

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