

## A Narrative Interview with Ann Hartman

### Part Three: Keeping the Social in Social Work

*Ann Hartman has been a leader in the social work profession through her practice, administration, scholarship and service to the profession. In this third part of a narrative interview she recalls her tenure as Dean of Smith College School for Social Work, her work as Editor-in-Chief of Social Work, and her many speaking engagements throughout the country. She describes her teaching and writing projects during her "retirement." She reflects back over her rich and distinguished career and looks ahead to challenges facing the profession.*

by  
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#### Introduction

This final interview with Ann Hartman covers her tenure at Smith College School for Social Work as Dean (from 1986 to 1994), her retirement, and her reflections on her career. Ann also served as Editor-in-Chief of *Social Work* from 1989 to 1994, and in this interview comments on the paradigmatic shifts that occurred during her editorship. During this period Ann also did a great deal of speaking across the country at agencies and at state NASW conferences. She also organized an annual meeting for women deans and directors of social work programs.

Ann describes her teaching and scholarship during her "retirement" as well as her philosophy about letting go and moving on. She reflects back on what has been most meaningful in her career, her many sources of pleasure, and her one regret. She offers some thoughts about managed care, private practice, power and egalitarianism, and future challenges for the social work profession. Ann shares an anecdote about her relationship with Harry Specht that exemplifies her humor, grace, tolerance, and integrity. □



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## The Interview

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**J**oshua Miller: What led you to leave Michigan and go to Smith?

**A**nn Hartman: Michigan was fine. I didn't leave Michigan because I wanted to leave Michigan. In fact, I found it very hard to leave Michigan and The Ann Arbor Center for the Family. But we really wanted to move back East where we had so many friends.

**J:** So was it people?

**A:** People and geography and we just began to think that we would like to move back. I had some inquiries from various schools and then I received a letter from Smith inviting me to apply. Joan [Laird] was on sabbatical and down in Florida writing. We talked back and forth over the phone and it really was not good because we only had these phone conversations while all this was going on. In a funny way, I got swept up into it and it got out of hand.

**J:** Momentum?

**A:** Momentum. Partly because of the way that they did it—three members of the search committee came to Ann Arbor.

**J:** Was that unusual?

**A:** I thought it was pretty unusual. Mary Dunn [the President of Smith College] felt this was an important thing to do. It's a good idea. They sure found out everything about me and they knew exactly what they were getting before I came. They walked around the University of Michigan and talked to people and met with the staff at The Ann Arbor Center for the Family.

**J:** Did you have to give a release before they could talk to people?

**A:** No, I knew they were going to and they told me they wanted to do it and I said "o.k.," but what it did was make the whole business public. So I had to tell all of my clients that I was thinking about this and of course everyone at Michigan knew. It almost became a *fait accompli* before I had decided what I wanted to do.

**J:** You start to look into something and then it is somewhat out of control.

**A:** I could have said no at any time, but it wouldn't be easy. If Joan had been home we would have talked more about it and we might have realized this move really wasn't good for her: One she was working on her doctorate; two there wasn't anything in Northampton for her in terms of jobs. I am sure that my affection for Smith and my long intergenerational connection with the School was very important in making this decision. Also, it was very advantageous financially—I didn't have that many more years to work and it made an enormous difference in terms of my retirement.

**J:** Did you actively want to become Dean?

**A:** No, never. Schools, including Columbia, pursued me. The only reason that I considered this was that it was a small school and in the winter you do other kinds of work. I never wanted to administer a great big place. Smith turned out to be a great big place in terms of the administrative demands, but I wasn't aware of that.

**J:** Was there something you wanted to avoid or were concerned you would lose by becoming a Dean?

**A:** Full-time administration was not what I wanted to do. When I came to Smith it was pretty exciting because a lot of people, such as some alumni, were very unhappy about me coming.

**J:** How did you become aware of this?



A: There were rumblings. I think underneath they thought that I was going to change the School away from being psychodynamic. A close friend of mine was one of the leaders of the fight. We had been good friends but she became very anti-me and published a letter in the Clinical Society's magazine or newsletter about all I was doing to Smith and I how I was changing the bibliographies.

J: This is when you had already arrived?

A: Yes, I had been there a couple of years. I thought, "can you imagine not changing the bibliographies since 1954?" They knew exactly who I was when they hired me. Everything I thought I had published. A second thing was I had absolutely no desire to undermine their perspective, but I did have a very strong need to put the social back into social work. I told them that—that I was a social worker and I thought the school for social work should not be a training institute for psychotherapy and that I felt the social content was extremely important and that was what I was invested in.

J: You said this when you were being interviewed?

A: Yes, absolutely. And that our historic strength was person-in-situation, people in their environment, and that we simply had to maintain that or we didn't offer anything special as a profession. I had a lot of conviction about that. Some people were afraid that I was going to turn it into a family therapy training institute or something. I simply hoped to strengthen the family and have that as one of the options available to students. But that wasn't my primary goal. I don't believe you can do that to institutions. Institutions aren't like that. Anybody who tries to decide to unilaterally change an institution is going to be in deep trouble. Institutions have a life of their own, and an old venerable, people institution like Smith has a life of its own and any change process is slow and is going to have to involve a lot of people. I think there were a lot of changes made while I was at Smith but they were slow and hard to come by.

J: What was it like being a Dean?

A: I had a good time. I loved the summers—the students and all of the adjunct faculty coming in, the seminars—the whole business.

J: You liked having the students around?

A: Oh, yes. I would have never come to Smith to teach because there was not enough student contact. I never would have been satisfied with it. A few people continued to be very upset but most people in the community, agencies and alumni, were reassured and by the time we had the 75th anniversary celebration things were going very well. We were in very good shape financially and had very high applications. When I think about contributions that I made that I feel good about, one was the whole issue around race. My first year at Smith there were maybe four or five students of color on campus. There was one African American person in the first-year class. I was desperate when I saw that because you cannot have a white school of social work. You can't teach social work in this world in that context.

J: So Michigan was not like that?

A: No. One of the most exciting things that we did at Smith, I think it was my second summer, was invite all of the graduates of color back to campus. I guess because I am a family therapist I thought that for an intervention you bring everybody together, everybody in the family. Harlene Anderson and Harry Golooshian would say everybody who is in conversation about the problem. Well, the people that would be in concerned conversation about this problem would be all of our alums of color, plus all of our faculty. So they came in and it was a watershed. You can't imagine how powerful it was. Sixty-five people, over half, came from all over the country. We brought them to ask for their help and we talked about curriculum and we talked about recruitment. They spent a lot of time with our faculty of color. Without any white faculty they could really talk. It was very intense for them. I don't know the details of the meetings that I didn't go to but I learned from talking to people individu-



ally that people who attended at different periods or from different walks of life had very different experiences at Smith. Some were feeling that they were very privileged and grateful while others felt very resentful about the way they were treated at Smith. I can't remember all the figures but in a couple years we had forty students of color at Smith. Jerry Sachs, new on the faculty, headed admissions and helped tremendously with the recruitment.

I think the other thing I did that had a major impact on the School was strengthening of social content in the curriculum. The racism and socio-cultural concepts courses had all the students in one large lecture section. What it communicated was that this material was less important. I changed both of these courses to small sections, eventually with a bi-racial teaching team in each section of racism. The other thing was that what little social theory there was, was in social policy. So I moved this content over to HBSE and we developed courses and increased the number of requirements.

J: So you had to restructure, change requirements, and actually change the curriculum.

A: Yes. Of course the reaccreditation process was enormously helpful. There was a rumor out on the grapevine that I was using accreditation to change the curriculum and they were absolutely right. Because that is one advantage of the accreditation process—is that it really makes you look at all of these things. The faculty had never been involved in reaccreditation before; previously they had brought in an outside person who wrote the reaccreditation.

J: So you devised a process that brought the faculty in?

A: Absolutely. There was no question about it. We worked hard and had huge committees of students, alums, and field people—everybody was involved. And they knew they had to do it. Joan Laird had taken her previous school through three reaccreditations so she knew the process, knew how to go about this, and I had done the Michigan report. Columbia, BU, a whole bunch

of schools were being reaccredited the same year and were put on probation. We came through with a glowing report—not one criticism. We had a tough reaccreditation team and I wanted a tough one, people that would be so respected by the commission that the commission would not challenge their work.

J: It sounds like one of the themes that you kept stressing throughout was ownership at all levels.

A: At all levels and another thing that I was determined to do was rotate the chairs. The custom had developed that chairships belonged to a person for perpetuity and I thought that chairs should rotate and it was in the faculty code that they rotate. I felt it was essential that everybody had an opportunity to occupy some of these positions, but also that people should not be burdened forever with all the administrative work so they could do other things. That was really the biggest battle that I had with the faculty. It took the whole time I was there, but by the time I left everybody had begun to rotate.

J: So these were your major priorities.

A: Another was to develop a closer relationship between the College and the School. I was very active with the College.

J: Why did you feel that it was important to do?

A: I think being the poor stepchild that isn't even invited to the table is not a good place to be in an institution. However, getting too close is risky because if you aren't very careful you give up autonomy. Mary Dunn and I worked very closely together and she used me a great deal in relation to the college. I found that fabulous—one of the things that I enjoyed the most was learning all about how a college runs and being a part of that. It was fascinating and a very close-working group of colleagues. It really was wonderful because otherwise a Dean would be very much alone.



J: It sounds like you systematically dealt with the composition of the student body and the faculty and the staff; you dealt with the mission, goals, nature of the courses, what was in the courses; looked at the whole administrative structure, who was running it. Did you know that this is what you would end up working on from the beginning?

A: It was doing the job. I didn't have any idea of what I was really walking into. I just had a memory of 35 years ago when I had been a student.

J: How long did it take you to realize what you needed to do?

A: I recognized the situation about the composition of the student body right away. Almost as soon as I walked in and looked around. And then I think you just go slowly, take one thing at a time as it comes. I didn't have some grand plan at all.

J: Did it ever coalesce as a kind of grand vision after you had been there for a few years?

A: No, I don't think I had any grand vision. I work close to the ground, developmentally. My only grand vision was to get the social back into social work, that was my grand vision. And that included more varied agencies available for our student placements. One of the things that some of the alums were upset about was when they heard we had placed a student in a settlement house. They were so upset because "how can students learn treatment in a settlement house?"

There was another thing that I wanted to do. Smith had always been located in Northampton but it wasn't very connected with its local community. I think there was one student placed at Austin Riggs and that was it. People were worried that Smith was too psychodynamic, or whatever, to bother with Ware, Greenfield, and Athol. So that was one of my top agendas, to get connected with our local community. It was good for the College and for the School. The College was delighted to get these connections because the College is always looked

to to do community service and we were the obvious people to be doing it. I also had one dream that partially came to fruition and that was bringing in students from Alaska, hopefully Native Alaskans or people working with Native Alaskans, and Native Americans from Albuquerque [where we also opened placements].

J: It sounds as if your wanting the College and the School to be connected to the community was similar to you wanting the School to become connected to the College so the School would be grounded as an institution. What were the things that you found most difficult about being a Dean?

A: I suppose dealing with some of the faculty. I think most of the Deans I know would say the same thing. There were a few people on the faculty that were very unhappy with me and wanted to undermine me. It was foolish on their part because it wasn't going to happen, not as long as Mary Dunn and the trustees were solidly behind me. It caused some pain and made it quite miserable between them and me. But it wasn't as stressful as it could have been because I knew I wasn't going to lose my job, and I didn't care if I did lose my job. I was eligible for Social Security by then. I sometimes think you shouldn't take one of these jobs unless you don't need it. You are absolutely free—there is nothing that anybody can do.

J: Were there things that you wanted to do that you found you couldn't do?

A: Sure, and everything was slower, everything was harder than I wish it could have been, but I'm sure that is always the case.

J: Have you ever run into anything like this in your previous jobs?

A: No—I administered the agency in Long Island as long as I ran Smith, exactly the same number of years [8] and that was a comparative breeze. I think academic situations are fraught with difficulty structurally in terms of peer review, tenure, and competition. I think that all these things structure in painful political realities



that are very destructive to relationships. I also don't think that Smith is a good place for faculty. It is a wonderful place for students but I think the block plan is very hard on faculty. You have this intense period of hard work, when the whole world is on vacation, and then this long winter without students but lots of administrative work. The faculty sort of turned in on itself in a way. That is one reason I put a whole lot of money into faculty travel budgets. Now let me say another thing. I did take advantage of the Smith system by doing a lot of interesting things in the winter. I worked all the time—day and night—but not just on Smith. I didn't find that it was a job that would occupy me all day, every night, every weekend, except in the summer. During this period I was secretary of NASW, then I was head of publications at NASW, and then I was editor of *Social Work* for 4 1/2 years during my tenure at Smith, which was very exciting. I loved it.

J: What did you love about it?

A: Being editor of *Social Work* is such a privilege, to be able to address the profession every two months, to write editorials, say what you think and get it into 160,000 homes. I liked working with the staff at NASW and I liked working with the writers. It was a wonderful job but it meant I read 400-450 articles a year.

J: Did you read all the articles that were submitted?

A: I read an awful lot of them—everything that was accepted. But I also read an awful lot of stuff that was rejected because I was changing the direction of the journal and a lot of stuff that I would want to publish would be rejected.

J: So what direction were you trying to change to?

A: The journal was not supportive of qualitative research. They would not publish case materials. They were really modeling themselves after a hard science journal. I felt that was not the way a social work journal ought to be, so early on I wrote an editorial called "Many ways of

knowing," which really encouraged people to send in different kinds of materials. But I had an editorial board that had been appointed during the previous philosophy, so they would reject things in line with the previous policies. Not that they were not honest and thoughtful, but they had a different paradigm and I wouldn't have gotten to publish the kind of thing I wanted to publish. So I had to read the rejections. And then I had to read all of the reviewers' comments.

J: That's a phenomenal amount of things to have to read each year.

A: It was enormous but was enjoyable. I wouldn't read every word carefully, but I knew what was in them all. I was driving the staff crazy because I was always behind and then I had to write these editorials. That was an enormous job. I would decide every two months what the topic was going to be and then read in that area, study, and prepare to write. I certainly wasn't an expert on all of the topics I chose.

J: So every time you wrote an essay or editorial you had to do research for it?

A: Sure, there were such a range of topics, often not about social work and not necessarily in my field. I don't think I wrote more than one or two things about an area in which I have expertise. I wrote one on the definition of family after Dan Quayle's Murphy Brown speech.

J: Was this your main writing during that period of time?

A: Yes, it certainly was. I did a lot of writing in social policy, such as a big chapter in Froma Walsh's *Normal Family Processes on Family Policy*. But I think that was probably the main piece of work I did aside from all the writing for NASW.

J: Were you still doing conferences and workshops?

A: Yes a lot. I think I've done a keynote or a conference presentation in almost every state for NASW state conferences.



J: Do you put a lot of time and effort in preparing for these or is there a kind of template that you use?

A: No, I don't have a template but I do it fairly easily. I will have a speech that I'm working on, like a keynote, and I'll put a day in and the time on the plane and then I will always write things on 5x8 cards, and I'll rethink and change it, add more, subtract something. I never did the same thing twice.

J: Do you find that when you are giving a talk that you do like to have a very careful outline as opposed to speaking off the cuff?

A: Oh, I never speak off the cuff, but I also never read. I have very detailed notes on cards. I loved going around the country. I had lunch and dinner with people and would hear what was going on around the country. I used to do something once or twice a month.

J: So you really must know people from all over the country.

A: The thing I feel so badly about is that I didn't keep a journal. I did so much traveling that I would lose track of people and forget where I'd met them. It began to all go together. You know, if it's Tuesday, it must be Belgium.

The other extra-curricular activity that I did that I got a big kick out of was starting a summer camp for women deans.

J: You held this at Smith?

A: We held it at Smith and all the women deans were invited to come.

J: What led you to do that?

A: The National Association of Deans and Directors held meetings twice a year but women were so silenced in those days. I felt we all needed networking and support. We had between 20 and 25 women deans come to summer camp.

J: What were those get-togethers like?

A: They were great. We had no agenda, no plan whatsoever. We developed our agenda out of the group collaboratively at the first meeting. We did it the way women do things. I would have loved to have done that at Smith and very idealistically tried, but it doesn't work. But in this situation it worked. There was no competition; we were just there to help each other. And we would meet the first night when they came in and plan what we were going to do, what we were going to talk about for that next two days. And of course we stayed in the dorms and had a great time together. And we built a meaningful network. We would call each other up—a lot of the women were having very painful times, being challenged. It's very tough for women in positions of authority.

J: What were some of the types of things that came up?

A: Oh, the same kind of things I was going through, and worse. People who had the paint on their cars keyed and nasty telephone calls. I mean I never had anything like that. Really nasty stuff.

J: Was the network of connections the most important outcome of this

A: Yes, it was the network. It wasn't ideas or initiatives, it was the network and helping each other resolve problems. People would present a problem they were having and we would all share ideas and think about it together.

J: Was it difficult for you when you set up things if they weren't continued?

A: No. When I left Smith, I said I am not going to sit here and agitate about what's going to happen to "my Smith." It's not my Smith anymore. My Smith was for eight years and what happened during those eight years. I graduated probably close to 1,000 students who had a different kind of experience for those years. I could also carry on about is social work looking like I want it to look like. You don't do that. You do what you do and then you say, "that was my turn



and now it's somebody else's turn and I am not going to worry – sufficient unto the day was the contribution thereof."

J: That sounds like a very good philosophy.

A: And I have been able to hang on to it. I've left a lot of things I have built. I built that clinic in Long Island and left it after eight years and just walked out, said "goodbye" and never have been back. And I put my heart in that place. The Ann Arbor Center for the Family, we started that and put our hearts into that for ten years. The same with the curriculum at Michigan. When it's over, it's over.

J: That sounds like it frees you up to do other things.

A: Well, of course it does. It's not generosity on my part, it's survival. You can't let those things drag you down. I want Smith to do well. I care a lot about the institution and I am very pleased with how things are going. I am not going to worry that my imprint gets rubbed out, because it will. Other imprints will be put on. By the way my retirement was absolutely spectacular.

J: Why don't you tell me about that.

A: It was such a nice ending for my time there. People came from all parts of my life. As for the program, I had only two instructions: no asking for money and no memorial service. I didn't want them to get up and talk about me. It was just great, because they had historian Blanche Cook and feminist professor Carolyn Heilbrun do a seminar on writing a woman's life. They had a conversation. It was wonderful. And then this lovely outdoor reception afterwards with all the food and wine and everything and 70 of my closest friends and colleagues went to the President's house for dinner.

J: So that launched you into your so-called retirement.

A: Into my so-called retirement. Which is a laugh.

J: What is it like?

A: Well it's extremely busy. I am working very hard, but I am just doing what I want to do. I love teaching at Fordham. Next to seeing clients I love to teach or they are tied, maybe. I pretty much can develop courses as I want to. I'm having the best teaching experience of my life.

J: Why is this the best?

A: I don't have any other demands (other than some writing and reading) in my work life except teaching those two courses. I really can focus and work on it. I love the Fordham students. They are an interesting New York metropolitan-area group. A lot of people of color, a lot of first generation college students: dads who were policemen and civil servants; firemen; Irish, Italian, Hispanics. And the doctoral students are super—people who have carried a lot of responsibility out in the real world in social work and now they are back getting their doctorate and they bring in so much. And then I go to the opera and the theater. It's the perfect retirement job. It is only in the fall.

J: And then do you travel?

A: A lot of travel and writing. We are working on revising the family book. It's what I am doing now. I also have some chapters, three big pieces of writing to do. Then we have a contract, Joan and I together, to write a first-year practice book after we finish the family book. I could write full time, all the time. I try to say no, but I still have too much to do.

J: Tell me about your travel plans?

A: We are traveling to Sidney for a few days and then to Adelaide, Australia, where Michael White's family therapy center, the Dulwich Center, is having a narrative family conference. Joan and I will be doing a one day workshop on the social construction of gender and sexuality before the conference and then repeating an abbreviated version of this at the conference. We are also leading a brief discussion with other educators and



supervisors on the pros and cons of the teacher in the classroom adopting a transparent position. After that we are going to Kangaroo Island for three days and then we will be in a one-week, intensive small group with Michael White.

J: What do you find meaningful about your work with Michael White?

A: He certainly has been the person in family therapy who has been most influential for me in the last six or seven years. I think the de-pathologizing, empowerment, and respect for clients, and the recognition of their truths—all of these things are very congruent with my values and very exciting in terms of working with people. I have already been to three workshops with him in Cambridge and we have gotten to be quite good friends, so I really look forward to spending some time with him. And he is a social worker.

J: Do you really think you are less active than you were before? I mean, it sounds to me like you are doing a full-time job.

A: No. I am less active now. But I am still active. I regularly baby-sit the grandchildren. Last year it was two afternoons a week; this year it's just one because we are trying to get the book out. I wear blue jeans all the time. There is a lot I don't have to do because I don't go to work, except for the two days in New York.

J: That's what I am hearing is the major difference—that you are only doing what you want to do.

A: Only doing what I want to do.

J: Aren't you part of some on-going groups?

A: Yes. One group is the Fortune Cookies. And that group has been going about nine or ten years. We meet once a month on Saturday afternoon and are all family therapists, women of varied age and ethnicity. We all share an interest in women issues and in family therapy and family issues. And then the other group we just started

is a reading group—not reading social work, they are not social workers—reading for pleasure. I love to read. Now this is going to make me read novels. So it will be good.

J: Do you still do a lot of professional reading?

A: In the context of projects I do all the time. As soon as I retired, the first thing I did was this monograph for the National Center on Social Welfare Policy and the Law which was to counter Gingrich's recommendations about putting kids in orphanages. So I had to get into that literature and all the research about what has happened to kids in congregate care and then write it all up.

J: Do you have any future projects that are in different directions from what you have already done?

A: One of the things I think about is doing a history of the Smith School of Social Work. I could do it up to my deanship, maybe. The other thing I thought about doing is putting together this course I'm teaching at Fordham in a book.

J: And what is the nature of the course?

A: It's really what Carel Germain and I had a contract for writing a book: the development of social work practice theory from day one until today. I have these two volumes of readings for the students—they read all original sources, things like the correspondence of Mary Richmond.

J: You have had such a rich, long, and varied career. When you look back over it, which parts stand out for you as having been the most meaningful?

A: I think working with clients. And I think the second thing is starting things. Like starting the Southeast Nassau Guidance Center, the Ann Arbor Center for the Family, the National Child Welfare Training Center. And the students. And I loved scholarly work. So I don't know, I liked it all. I even liked administration....



J: It sounds like even though you integrated it all, that these things drew on different parts of yourself.

A: I don't experience moving from one realm to another; it's always me.

J: You are saying that these are all connected.

A: Yes. For example, we did a family book and I was seeing families and I was teaching the material in my family classes at Michigan—total feedback loops.

J: I guess one of the reasons I am asking you this is that so many people don't do it all. Many people are really good teachers or really good clinicians, but they aren't writing. Or people who are writing have stopped practicing and are less invested in their teaching. And I am just trying to get a sense of how come you were able to do all of these things with such energy.

A: I think it's the energy and also, I liked variety. I liked to be active.

J: It seems that you had positive feedback and you got satisfaction.

A: Absolutely, all the time. I've had and enjoyed all of it. I couldn't complain for a minute about my career. How could I? If anyone could describe it, it's like a perfect career. What else could I have wanted to have happen?

J: Do you ever have any regrets? Any thing that you wish you had done differently?

A: Well, Joan's experience was very difficult at Smith. The one thing I regret, from that perspective, is our move to Western Massachusetts, although we love the area and are delighted to be retiring here. But it was not good for her and I'm regretful of that.

J: So, if you were talking to someone starting out in social work right now, what advice would you give them about entering the profes-

sion and pursuing a career?

A: Well, I would say to them, "if you are thinking about opening up an office and doing psychotherapy, or going into some clinic and doing psychotherapy, forget it—if you want to be a social worker, come on in." There is an enormous need for social work, as there will continue to be in protective services or child welfare, as well as in the development of programs in schools and our aging population... we are going to need more and more. I mean, it's just endless. But the flight of our profession into entrepreneurial psychotherapy, I think, is over.

J: Do you echo what Harry Specht said in his book *Unfaithful Angels*?

A: No. I don't think we were unfaithful at all. I don't feel at all critical of that route we took. People can use the training that we gave in schools of social work to do all kinds of things. And I am not going to say they shouldn't have done what they were doing. But I am just saying it isn't going to be possible anymore with managed care; the world has changed. And I always say that one of the reasons that people went into private practice was to be able to do the kind of work they wanted to do. That's why I started the Ann Arbor Center for the Family. Not to make money, I had a job, I didn't need the money. I think many people go into private practice because they want to do the kind of work they want to do. They want to see clients and they want to be able to see them the way they want to see them. So I am not critical of people that went into private practice, because many of them went in to be able to be of more service than they were able to be in agencies, where they felt so frustrated and controlled. So I don't feel like Harry Specht at all.

I had a funny experience with Harry Specht on this very topic. He was a reviewer for *Social Work* and there was an article that was very psychodynamic and he rejected it. I thought it was very well done, and I wrote my comment to the staff, "Harry wouldn't accept a psychodynamic article if it was written by Freud himself." It was supposed to go to the office but they made



a mistake and Xeroxed it and sent it to Harry. So he was furious and he called the President of NASW. Then I wrote him a very apologetic letter and he was very sweet afterwards. He came off it right away and was very gracious. I really agree with Harry and his colleagues in lots of ways about where we ought to go, but I don't feel negative about people when they take another route. That's their route.

And they made a contribution too. The one thing about private practice that I loved is it's your client and you had a deal and they paid the bill, and if you weren't giving the service they weren't going to pay their bill and they walked out. It was much more egalitarian, in a sense, and accountability was clear. I loved my practice and I didn't charge much, but I was being hired by people to give them a service and I liked that relationship. Agencies tended to be where people got lost in bureaucracies. Remember, Bertha Reynolds went to the Maritime Workers Union so she would be hired by and accountable to her clients.

J: So it sounds like you would encourage someone to consider social work as a career.

A: Sure, but they would have to think about what its going to be like.

J: And I guess the other side of this question is if you were advising our professional organizations about what social work should be doing and what it will look like, what might you say to people at NASW or CSWE or any of our major professional organizations?

A: Stay close to the ground. I think NASW has had to fight for our place among the helping professions and I think it's terribly important for them to fight for us. I just think we have to keep our ear very close to the ground. We have to maintain our historic values and our historical focus on social function and people and their environments. And all those old terms we have always used. But, be more and more sophisticated about the meaning of those environments. The last few years I've been very interested in social constructionism, which is just another layer of

understanding the meaning of the environment. So I think we have to maintain our stance and be very alert to see where we can move to be of service, but not relinquish our stance in order to do that, because we would lose out in the long run.

J: It sounds like enrich our stance or retain our stance but also not just keep it as it is.

A: Oh yes, never. We have to keep responding to the need out there and also to new ways of thinking. I am very interested in social constructionism and in different ideas about our political relationships with our clients.

J: It sounds like almost an elliptical quality, doing something and then coming back.

A: Oh, I keep re-visiting. I keep re-visiting the social issue, what is the nature of the social reality and its impact on people? I have been re-visiting that from Mary Richmond to Michael Foucault. And the other thing I keep re-visiting is, fundamentally, the political nature of our work. And I really mean our relationship with power. I've always had the ideal of establishing relationships that were egalitarian with clients—a truly level playing field. Very hard to do. How to divest ourselves of power. Because I don't think we can empower clients as long as we are in the position of powerful professionals. I'm an old radical.

J: A radical. I wouldn't say old.

A: Yes, I am. I am just as radical as Harry Specht, probably in some ways more so, but I just don't have such strong feelings about what other people are doing. □

*This was the last of a three part series.*

*"A Narrative Interview with Ann Hartman"*

*Part One: Becoming a Social Worker- Vol. 4, No. 3  
Summer 1998*

*Part Two: The Importance of Context- Vol. 4, No. 4  
Fall 1998*



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