

Remembering My First Year at UMDSSW

By Harris Chaiklin

Since I am one of the early faculty members at the University of Maryland School of Social Work who is still around, I have often been asked if I will write a history of the school. I have resisted this. I have few



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records and the School has no archives.

I hope that someday someone undertakes the arduous task of searching out primary sources and writing this history for it is an important part of the profession's, the University's, and Maryland's history. In the meantime I contribute this reminiscence of my first year in the School. When put together with other reports from this era a historian who triangulates these reports may arrive at the way it really was.

In March of 1962, I landed at a rather bleak Friendship Airport. I had some apprehension about the idea of coming to Maryland. To me it was a deep South state. This impression was based on my brief prior contacts with the area. In January 1945 I spent a week at Ft. Meade preparing to go to the ETO. My main memories of this time are a few trips through a hole in the fence to Boomtown and one night on the Block when it was in all its glory. In the summer of 1949 I spent six weeks at Ft. Meade in ROTC training. My main memories of this time were heat and chiggers. There was also a glorious

swooping catch made on the grass behind second base by Joe DiMaggio at the Senators' ball park.

While I went through the usual faculty interview process there were some unusual additions. Perhaps because the school was new I was interviewed by the leadership of the University, Albin O. Kuhn, R. Lee Hornbake, and Wilson H. Elkins. For the most part the interviews were not long. I spent only a few minutes in president Elkin's office. I was awed by its grandeur. From him I learned that Baltimore was known as a "nickel" town. He explained that when people received change the preferred coin was a nickel. I spent the most time with Dr. Hornbake. One thing he asked me was why I would choose a school of social work when I could go to a sociology department. I explained to him that because of having to make up defects in my education, army time, and the need to work I was getting a late start. In addition, I said that I preferred the activity of social work and that since this was a new school I might have a chance to remedy some of what I saw as the defects of social work education. He smiled and said that before the University decided to open a school they did a survey of Universities with schools. He said that there was almost universal agreement with the idea that schools of social work were good for universities because they gave them a good image but, as he politely put it, there was some question about their academic standards.

In due course I was hired. Before

coming I spent the summer doing a research project for the Community Research Associates. Verl Lewis wanted to bring their approach to working with families into the school because it reflected his commitment to the public services (Buell, 1952; Voiland, 1962). The School's initial accreditation document reflects the heavy influence of these ideas. Once Verl left the deanship their influence quickly waned.

That first year was extremely busy in general and for me in particular. Everyone on the faculty was involved in preparing the first accreditation document. Since this was the beginning of the second year we needed course materials for courses that would be taught for the first time in the spring. The full-time faculty was few in number. In addition to Dean Lewis there was Manon McGinnis, Shirley Buttrick, and myself.

The part-time faculty, who taught courses or were associated with field work, included Yehuda Rosenman, Irma Mohr, Joyce Gale Klein, and doctors Joseph D. Lichtenberg, Ephraim T. Lisansky, and Genieann Patton.

The agency field instructors included Donald Blumberg, Alice B. Cassidy, Annie C. Dashiell, Williams Davidson, Elizabeth Dowling, Irma May Fritschman, Carel B. Germain, Mayme T. Goines, Richard E. Hartt, Mary H. Kendrew, Ruth H. Lebovitz, Lois B. Lewis, Caroline C. Martin, Gretchen E. Mohlhenrich, Pearl Moulton, Elsie M. Seff, Winifred Smith, Margaret L. Strom, Albert S. J. Tarka, Doris M. Thrower, Maude Williams, and Louise C. Youn⁹man.

I list these names and those of the first class of students later because not only do they deserve to be remembered but also because I hope they strike a memory chord with readers and it inspires them to write a column. Some of them later became full-time faculty members. Some of them went on to distinguished careers. Most direct practice students who graduated from the

school have read something written by Carel Germain. Few know she was a field instructor or later a full-time faculty member. A reminiscence by someone who worked with her in those early days would be a contribution.

My basic job was to be concerned with research instruction. In the fall that meant working with the first class on a group research project. Those original students were Henry D. Braun, Katherine E. Cochran, Rosalie O. Grant, Dorothy W. Lumpkin, Marion M. Malone, Janice D. Richmond, Ramona V. Seegers, Morris Sherman, Mary Jane Simpson, Rosalind H. Spalter, Peter G. Streett, Helen S. Vernay, Franchetta L. Wright, and Eleanor Zimmerman. The project they worked on concerned domestic relations offenders. Their report, *The Domestic Relations Offender: An Exploratory Study*, was an important study of a problem that continues to plague this area. It is one that was worthy of publication.

Circumstances combined to get me involved in more than accreditation, research, and liaison to two agencies. Due to illness Prof. Klein was unable to teach her course on The Behavior of Human Groups and I took that over. Shirley Buttrick and I co-developed

and taught a course on Community Social Welfare Services. This course reflected an important part of Verl's educational philosophy. He wanted students to understand those people in the most desperate conditions in our society. During this year the institutions selected for study and visiting were a state mental hospital, a chronic illness unit in a city hospital, and the living conditions of families who faced being moved because of urban renewal. After a formal visit students went back two or three times for unstructured observation. Where possible they were to develop a continuing friendly relationship with someone in the setting. One of the aims of this was to help the student understand the difference between

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a friendly and a professional relationship. Students had to record their observations and prepare a paper at the end of the term. Classroom instruction focused on reviewing the reading, instruction in observation techniques, the nature of social problems, the comparative method of analysis, and the nature of social problems. This was not an easy course and it was time consuming for faculty and students. When Verl left the deanship so did the course. The commitment to public services that Verl expressed through putting this course in the curriculum is something that the profession could use today.

Dean Lewis was not an armchair advocate. When he was in Connecticut he played a major role in improving child welfare services in the state. While there he also worked with a man who was institutionalized. By chance he found that when he got here this man had been transferred to a Maryland institution. As long as he was here Verl visited him regularly.

In some sense that first year passed in a blur because there was so much to do. All the courses I taught had to be created from scratch. I also gave a few lectures in the professions course. While there were only 14 students in the class that entered in 1961 there were 23 in the class that entered in 1962. I shall save those names for another time but it was also a notable group of people.

To top this off a full time research associate on the faculty and Verl and I had to take over a project whos

ort was called *A Census Tract Analysis of Crime in Baltimore City, 1963*. Our thrust was that if reported crimes and residence of offenders could be recorded in census tract units it would be possible to compare this information with census bureau data and other data sets that use these units. We were fortunate in that the Health and Welfare Council was planning for the war on poverty at that time and they were using census tract units. We traded data with them. At that time the police were reporting their data in terms of bailiwicks and posts. This compared to nothing. As it was every city agency was reporting data in terms of different geographical units. Some progress was made when some agencies moved to reporting in terms of zip codes. But this cuts off access to the treasure trove of the Census Bureau.

It is not easy to describe the atmosphere that existed in creating a school in an environment where segregation was still legal and there was strong feeling in much of the community that someone from the University of Pennsylvania should have been appointed. Because so many of the workers in this area had been educated at Pennsylvania the influence of their mode of practice was strong. From the beginning Verl insisted that student units and caseloads be integrated. I remember going with him to meet Esther Lazarus because of a peculiar problem. The student supervisors had no problem with integrating students in the agency but objected to integrating the caseloads. Verl stuck to his principles and the caseloads were integrated.

It took courage to do this because initially it was not easy to develop field placements because many functionally oriented agencies rejected the educational philosophy. In his usual politic but unyielding way Verl put it this way at the end of the first volume of the accreditation report:

"Some agencies and some practitioners have expressed reservations about some of the School's objectives and some of its methods. For the greater part these reflect a recognition of differences between the School's program—particularly the stress on student learning rather than on agency service in field instruction—and the accustomed practice of more distant schools in substantially delegating field instruction to experienced staff members."

My first year at the School was glorious. All the work did not matter because I had a sense that I was disproving Lee Hornbake's prediction and we were building a school that had standards and was turning out first-rate practitioners. The fate of these early principles is a matter for another reminiscence. Meanwhile I hope others who have memories of the first two years of the school, or later, will make their own contributions.

References

- Buell, B. (1952). *Community planning for human services*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Voiland, A.L. (1962). *Family casework diagnosis*. New York: Columbia University Press.