

DR. ROSALYN BENITEZ-BLOCH

Interviewed by Hannah Hamovitch

at Dr. Bloch's home

on August 25, 2001

ABSTRACT:

Dr. Bloch, with a master's degree from the University of California, Berkeley, School of Social Welfare and a doctorate from the University of Southern California School of Social Work, has a long and particularly distinguished career in various aspects of social work. She has held a variety of positions in the American Red Cross, Jewish Family Service of San Francisco, the Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles, and Vista Child Care Service of Los Angeles. She has taught at the UCLA School of Social Welfare and UCLA Extension, USC School of Social Work, Hebrew Union College, and the Andrus Gerontology Center at USC, University of Hawaii, and a number of other facilities. Her agency work and teaching have been characterized by innovations, about some of which she has written. She has lectured widely and conducted numerous workshops, served on a variety of advisory committees and boards, and has been an active participant in the work of a number of professional associations. Simultaneously with much of this work, she has conducted a private practice. The interview below describes her wide-ranging professional life, including some of the insights she has gained and shared with others.

HAMOVITCH: Dr. Rosalyn Benitez-Bloch is a clinician, educator, and writes professionally. Roz, we know each other, and I know that you have been in the field of social work for a very long time. One of the questions I would like to ask you is how did you get started in the field of social work?

BLOCH: That's an interesting thing to think about for me. When I was in college at Brandeis University, I majored in literature. I was thinking that at some point, I would teach literature. Then suddenly the impact of reality hit, and I realized that my chances of going on for enough education to end up teaching in a college were pretty slim at that point. I decided I needed to be more practical, and I changed my major in my last year to sociology. Then I decided, I had to leave home as most kids do at some point, and I picked the farthest point from Boston, which was Berkeley. That was an acceptable school.

When I got there, I had to do an extra year for required courses. That was not too bad, because I was very young. I had started college at 15 and by this time, I was only 19, so it didn't really make too much difference. I decided to go into social welfare. The reason I did that was because when I came to California, I met somebody who took me under her wing. When I was looking for a summer job, which I needed, I went to the Public Health Department and got a job as a typist in the Crippled Children's Services. There were two administrators: one was a medical person and the other one was a social worker. She sort of took me under her wing, and we talked a lot about social work. I was also beginning an analysis at that time, so that was another impetus for me to think about social work. I decided to go into psychiatric social work, although health education was also offered to me from the School of Public Health.

My first year, I was in public welfare, which was excellent training, as was my second year at the VA Psychiatric Clinic in San Francisco. When I was going into social work, I had an interview at the School of Social Welfare in Berkeley. The woman who interviewed me asked very inappropriate questions. She denied my application; she thought I was too young, and so forth. But I had a professor in social welfare by the name of Kermit Wiltse, who was a wonderful man. I went to talk to him and told him what the interview was like. He said, "That's ridiculous. I'm going to interview you." So, he did, and I got in, of course. Then, when I went for my first job, this woman was also working at the agency, and it was a little awkward. But we managed to get over it, and it gave me an idea that not all professionals are wonderful. It was a learning experience for me.

HAMOVITCH: How old were you? I know you were very young when you entered college. How old were you when you first went to Berkeley – no, when you first entered Brandeis?

BLOCH: I was fifteen.

HAMOVITCH: And when you first entered Berkeley?

BLOCH: When I first entered Berkeley, I was 18.

HAMOVITCH: That's why she thought you were so young.

BLOCH: But I was 20 by the time she interviewed me, because I had two years at Berkeley. In those days, I guess it was considered even younger. I think there's a different attitude about age now. Maybe there's more respect for younger people now, too. Agism can go both ways.

HAMOVITCH: They grow up faster.

BLOCH: Yes, they grow up faster, too.

HAMOVITCH: Will you give me a brief rundown of the positions that you have held since you graduated, and describe each of the places?

BLOCH: All right. My first job, when I left school, was with the American Red Cross. That was very interesting because it was 1956, and we worked with veterans and emergencies and all the kinds of aftermath problems still, from World War II. It was interesting for me because it gave me an insight into an agency, which is operated by professionals, but decision-making came from a volunteer board. I felt that the distance between these two groups was enormous and they never really came together. It's not that there weren't good service and good intention, but there was a different dialogue that needed to happen.

HAMOVITCH: They came from different backgrounds.

BLOCH: Different backgrounds and different motivations and different goals. But it was a very interesting job in many ways. I also had a very unpleasant experience with a supervisor, who was really somewhat pathological. I stayed there for two years and then, I had gone to a conference in Asilomar of Family Service Agencies. I met some people there from Jewish Family Services in San Francisco, and we hit it off very well. They were encouraging me to apply to Jewish Family Service, which I then did. After two years, I left Red Cross and went to Jewish Family Service. That was really a wonderful experience for me. I had wonderful supervision with psychiatric consultation and began to work with children and had a very good experience learning play therapy. After I'd been there a couple of years, I was asked if I would do a liaison position with the Jewish Community Center with some of the aged seniors who were coming to the center and needed to have a group. That was a marvelous experience for me. I had weekly meetings, and I still have notes of that group. In fact, I use little bits of it here and there when I write a paper.

HAMOVITCH: That was in San Francisco?

BLOCH: That was in San Francisco. I was also the liaison to the Jewish Community Center for other non-aged people, too, and I did some work with parents. But the highlight of that experience was that older group, which was just wonderful.

Then I was asked to be a field instructor for students from Berkeley, which I also enjoyed very much.

The other nice experience at – and there were many nice experiences at Jewish Family Service – I learned to work with Displaced Persons.

HAMOVITCH: Displaced Persons from the holocaust survivors.

BLOCH: There was a big emigre service there, and contact with HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) and the whole network of global immigration organizations. I also was asked to share some cases with people from Mt. Zion Psychiatric Clinic, because they had psychiatric residents, M.D.s who were doing their residence and would leave after a year. Some of those patients were left or had to be transferred. Some of them wanted to have someone who would ostensibly be available longer. So I saw a couple of patients. One little girl who was ten at the time – and that was in 1958, about 45 years ago – I still talk with her on the telephone. She's not in Los Angeles, she has been in therapy with other people, and her therapists always confer with me. It's a very interesting situation and I was the constant in her life. She was a very, very disturbed child when I saw her. She didn't talk for about a year. I've written a paper about her, which I'm still working on.

HAMOVITCH: How old is she now and is she still functioning?

BLOCH: Oh, she functions very well. She's not the brightest person, but she functions very well. She's had a marriage and children and now a business. But she will never be completely free of a disorganized ego function.

It was 1961, first – I became the business manager for the conferences of Family Service Association at Asilomar, which took place every year. The following year, I was asked to be chair. I invited Bruno Betelheim, and he was there. He was the only one who knew why the fire alarms went off, because he read the paper on the back of the room door. He was a survivor.

In the meantime, I had met and was going to get married to somebody who lived in Los Angeles. That was really quite a surprise to me. In the two times I visited Los Angeles, I was one of those people who dissed it. I never thought I would leave the Bay area. And so my conference in Asilomar was really on my way down to Los Angeles to begin a new life here, but I didn't know what I would do as far as work was concerned.

The only person that I knew professionally in Los Angeles was John Milner from a course I had taken from him at Asilomar in 1959. What I did was to write John Milner a letter. I didn't know if he would remember me, but John being John, of course did. I wrote him a letter – I'll never forget this – I wrote him a few days before the Memorial Day weekend and said I would be coming down to Los Angeles to live and that I was newly married. I said I was going to be looking for a job, did he have any ideas. The Monday after Memorial Day, I had a letter from John.....

HAMOVITCH: Sounds like John.

BLOCH .....saying that he knew of a job that might be very good for me at Vista Del Mar. There was a research project around unwed parents, and he gave my name to the Director and that I should call him. I went for an interview as soon as I got down here, and they were ready to have me start immediately. But I decided that I was newly married, I hadn't had a real vacation in a long time, and I said I wouldn't start before September. They waited for me, which was really very nice. I started on that project, which was the Illegitimacy Unwed Parents project with Rueben Panner and Annette Baran, Ruth Drucker, Bob Rufrano and Matille Rowan. There was one other person there – Mike – and I can't remember his last name. I'm having a senior moment. I may never remember it. We also did some adoption work, saw parents of girls who were

pregnant as well as the fathers, if we could get them. It was a most interesting project because we really did try to do some dynamic work with some of these women. The project was published.

HAMOVITCH: What year was that?

BLOCH: That was '62, '63. We did a lot of writing about that project. The project was under a U.S. Children's Bureau grant. The two people who were the most active in that were Ruebin Panner and Annette Baran, and they subsequently have written books and articles about adoption. Annette has also written a book about artificial insemination. She is retired now, but we're still in touch. We have that kind of bond of having worked together.

HAMOVITCH: She sounds like a good person to be interviewed.

BLOCH: Oh, she would be. I think she'd be excellent to be interviewed. She's a very important name in the field of adoption.

HAMOVITCH: Good.

BLOCH: While I was at Vista, there was a nurse there who was married to a man who was teaching at UCLA, Art Duning, and we became friends. As couples, we became friends too. In fact, we joined them in a play-reading group, which included Saul Brown and a lot of people who later on, I got to know professionally. Art was very much pushing me to teach. He thought I would be a good teacher, and he kept insisting that I try to talk with the Dean at UCLA. The Dean then was Eileen Blackey. Finally, I decided that I would; I was getting a little restless at Vista. Strange as it may seem, and I don't know if this is a natural rhythm of mine or not, but I've never been on a job more than five years.

HAMOVITCH: You keep growing. When you keep moving, you keep growing.

BLOCH: Maybe. Certainly circumstances intervened. I didn't plan not to stay at Jewish Family Service, but I got married and moved. So, I did go to see Eileen Blackey, and she and I had a mad love affair from the beginning. She was really a wonderful, wonderful person. What she was particularly interested in was that the School of Social Welfare – had applied for an NIMH grant, (National Institute of Mental Health) for work with older people. This was relatively new in the field of social work in terms of casework, though not so new in terms of community center work. Certainly, there was not much in the field of mental health in terms of working with the aged. She was very interested in all the experience I had had working with older people at Jewish Family Service in San Francisco. I had also done therapy with many older people. She said that she thought I would be very good for that project, and I would be a field instructor, which I also had experience in, and I could have some teaching experience on the faculty. So, I left Vista Del Mar at that point and went to UCLA in 1966.

HAMOVITCH: I thought you said 1968 was Vista Del Mar.

BLOCH: No, I went to Vista Del Mar in 1962, 1963, something like that. So, I started at UCLA and was among a group of five or six field instructors who were really wonderful. We became a very close-knit group. In fact, I'm still close friends with one of them whose husband just died. Fred and I are very close to them.

That was a great experience for me, a real growth experience. I loved teaching. The funny thing was my unit was placed from UCLA at Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles. They were still at the 590 North Vermont building in those days, and Freda Mohr was the Executive Director, the iron hand and not too velvet glove. It was quite an



experience to be there. The students were marvelous. I had wonderful experiences with students. I learned a lot about the whole Jewish Federation. The agency would have loved to have me fused with them, and part of what I had to do was keep my identity as a UCLA employee.

HAMOVITCH: How would they have liked you to become fused with them?

BLOCH: I think they would have liked me to participate more in their programs, carry cases, etc. There was a little bit of a power struggle going on with the person who I was liaison with. For example – this was the days of mini skirts, and I had a lovely student who wore mini skirts. We had some discussion around that. We worked it out, but there was a certain super-ego, critical quality to it that I've always been a little bit leery of. But it was a marvelous experience in general. When Freda Mohr retired, Ted Eisenstadt came to be the director. He liked me very much, mostly because I did keep my identity. He also liked my creativity. I had come up with different ideas about things to do. We had a very pleasant relationship. The staff at Jewish Family Service, I felt, up to that time, had not really been supported to grow as much as they could. Many of them were people who had been there for a very long time. They were fearful of doing things on their own. It was a very old-fashioned kind of social work in a way. I think Ted appreciated not wanting to have that continue. But I think he had a more sophisticated experience with the profession. He was from the East, and certainly the schools and agencies back East were, at that time, more sophisticated and more professional than we were here. They were also more tied-in with the schools of social work.

I had my field unit there until 1971 – no, I'm sorry. That was wrong – 1969. I came in '66, I left in, I think, '69. The reason that I left was that I felt that the agency

was excellent, and the services for the elderly were getting better all the time. But the population of the school of social work was becoming more and more minority: there were more blacks, there were more Latinos, there were more different kinds of students than had traditionally been in schools of social work. I didn't feel the Jewish Family Service was always the best place for students to develop an identity with their own communities. I decided that I wanted to look for another placement. I went into East L.A. At that time, my Spanish was pretty good. I began to look around, visited agencies and I found a place. I talked with a lot of professionals in children's work. There was a wonderful youth clinic.

I ended up talking with a man who came out of the black community from an organization called Stovall Foundation. It administered a HUD project in which there were elderly people living at reduced rents. It was a mixed group, ethnically. I thought that would be a very good place for the students, particularly in an aging program. They gave us an apartment on the first floor of the project, and that was our office. It was a tiny apartment. There was a kitchen, and one room was divided. We had a big table and some chairs. So the students had very little privacy there. We had to find places to interview. We had telephones and all the services that we needed.

HAMOVITCH: Who sponsored that? Did they hire you?

BLOCH: They didn't hire me – this was still UCLA and still under the NIMH grant.

HAMOVITCH: Oh, okay.

BLOCH: The Stovall Foundation administered the HUD project. I don't know whether they had applied for it or whether they had done other things, but Stovall is a very common name in the upper-middle class black community. There are a lot of Stovalls

around. I had wonderful mixed groups of students there. I was there for two years. One student was a black man from Belize who is now getting his Ph.D. There was a Chicana who was from Arizona, who not only got her Ph.D., but has been part of the drug administration in Washington. This was not so easy as it sounds; she was a difficult student and there were things that happened. When she called to tell me she was going for a Ph.D., she said, “Are you sitting down?” (laughter)

Then, there was a male Chicano from the local community who had a lot of difficulty having a woman in authority as a teacher. He questioned everything I did, and nothing I did was really great. Then there was a WASP student who was married to a Latino. There was a man who was as blonde and blue-eyed a WASP as you could ever find. There were other students there – oh, yes, there was another student who I know has become an analyst at PCC. We had a wonderful time, because it was really casework on the hoof. The students were remarkably creative and imaginative. I remember one of the students said she wanted to help some of the residents learn how to manage their money. Some of them had never done this before. She took Monopoly money and helped them act it out.

HAMOVITCH: How creative!

BLOCH: Yes, it was wonderful. They did marvelous things with that group. We got to know the community and we were known in the community. As a matter of fact, somebody that I once met told me we were always going to be safe in that community. We had nothing to worry about from gangs or anyone else. That was fun.

HAMOVITCH: That was because you were so respected.

BLOCH: The Gerontology School at USC had started, and while I was at UCLA, I was asked to teach during their extension summer programs. I taught several sessions on mental health with the aged. I met a lot of wonderful people on their faculty, too. People were going back for Ph.D.s. NIMH was funding many people for this in order to prime the pump for working with older people. I began to see that if I wanted to stay in that population and in the university area, I would have to do something about a higher degree. I think I was ready for it by that time. I had a great need to be fed. So, I applied to USC, because I certainly couldn't apply to UCLA, where I had been working. That was just not part of the game. I got into USC, which was also very interesting for me to see the difference in the schools. USC was much more a family, much closer. I did have friends on the faculty, because I had known some of them – I knew Maurie Hamovitch. One of my friends from UCLA was Helen Olander, who graduated from USC and who knew everybody. I had met faculty socially through her. By this time – and I think this also had something to do with it – Blackey had died, so she was no longer the dean, and Nathan Cohen became the dean. There were a lot of student uprisings at this point. That was not a comfortable place for me because I was considered a rebel for supporting the minority students.

HAMOVITCH: That was a bad time.

BLOCH: It was a difficult time. Actually, it was an important time, as one looks back on it, because it's always this way: if students don't protest, you don't know there's a problem. I think it was the students who started the protests in Viet Nam. I don't think it was a bad time.

I had one very interesting experience at UCLA, which taught me a lot. Some of the kids who came in – I mean, some of them were adults – from the Chicano community and other places were really not as geared to learning and hadn't had the kinds of study habits and help that some of the other students had. So, once a month or once every two weeks, at my house, I had a study group for them. I was trying to help them learn how to learn. I'd have coffee and dessert, and so forth, and they came and they liked it and actually did learn.

HAMOVITCH: I can understand that from the students.

BLOCH: It wasn't that they weren't bright: they just didn't know how to take a book and look at it and see what was important in it. Information has similar construction to the body: there's a spine and arms and limbs that are important and there are the little fingers and toes, and so forth. They began to look at it conceptually. I think it was very helpful. I had some criticism through this from some faculty members. In fact, somebody called me, "a teenage professional."

HAMOVITCH: What does that mean?

BLOCH: Well, that I was seen as rebellious and wasn't accepting. One of the people, who was a part-time faculty person, was Bernice Augenbraum from Thaliens Clinic, and she and I became friendly around this issue. She also believed helping students and was outspoken about it. We had one faculty meeting, which I will never forget. There was an elderly professor – I don't know whether I should name names on this.

HAMOVITCH: If it's not negative, I think it's all right.

BLOCH: Well, it is a little bit of a problem. Anyway, we had a mixed faculty at that point, there were more black people, though not so many Chicanos, some Japanese and

so forth. Harry Katano was there, Doug – I can't think of his last name - who went on to Howard University. They have very, very fine teachers and scholars. We had one faculty meeting where one of the elderly white faculty members, who was very renowned in her field, (research), made a comment during the faculty meeting: "this was the nigger in the woodpile."

HAMOVITCH: Oh, no!

BLOCK: I don't think that she really meant anything by it, but the faculty did – everything went dead and nobody would talk to her after that meeting. I began to think we've all done things in our lives to hurt people and say things we didn't understand. She was a very vulnerable person. That night I called her. She had been in tears: she was crying, she'd had much to drink, which was part of her problem. She was very upset. She was totally isolated by everyone. She said, "You're the only one who's called me. I really felt terrible about it. I didn't realize what I was saying. I didn't mean anything by it." If felt that it was very unsympathetic of people. Things like that happen. I would bet that any one of us on that faculty have done things that were unthinking and hurtful to people on that same level. These are the kinds of experiences that made me decide that I didn't want to be in this kind of an atmosphere, especially when the new dean was part of the faculty that isolated her rather than taking charge and saying, "Look, we have to deal with this and work it through. Let's talk about it." For social work professionals, it would seem natural.

HAMOVITCH: Let's talk about it.

BLOCH: Yes, and so I felt it wasn't a good place for me any longer. That's when I decided to apply to USC. There were eleven people in my class, one of whom was Dave

Freeman who now is up in Canada. He teaches at the University of British Columbia and has been there since he left 'SC. Dave and I became very close friends and still are. We see each other several times a year. We talk, we e-mail. We sort of became the mother and the father of the group. There were people in the group who had not had as much professional and certainly clinical experience as I had. We had some very interesting classes and some that were not so good. Barbara Solomon was the one who really taught me about statistics. Barbara and I had a history together. Barbara and I were at Berkeley at the School of Social Work together, so we knew each other. At that time, her name was Barbara Bryant.

HAMOVITCH: Right.

BLOCH: I had heard about Barbara Solomon for years. I had heard there was a Barbara Solomon at USC. I always thought it was somebody who was Jewish, with a name like Barbara Solomon. But when we met, we recognized each other, and that was really very lovely. Barbara and I had been two of the youngest people at Berkeley. If anybody would have asked where we would have ended up, it wouldn't have been in positions of any prominence. We were just the youngest people in the class. But Barbara is brilliant in her area. She's not a clinical person, but she has a great mind. She taught statistics in a way that really made it understandable for me.

Lola Selby was another person who was very dear to me. I had a tutorial with Lola, and I was the only person there. I read books. I read three books a day. She allowed me that kind of freedom, and she was wonderful. She was sort of a mentor to me. I know that Howard Parod had the office next door, and he was constantly interrupting without knocking. He would come in, and I grew to find him very annoying.

And who else was there? I never had Maurie for a class, but what happened was that the first year I was there, John Milner was acting dean, because Malcolm Stinson had retired.

HAMOVITCH: I thought that Maurie.....

BLOCH: Well, maybe I'm getting the years – I don't think so, though, because when I was getting ready to leave – well, maybe, because that was my third year. Yes, okay.

HAMOVITCH: I think he was there.

BLOCH: Well, you probably know better than I do. But John was acting dean for a time. Malcolm was teaching research. But, John was acting dean, and of course John brought to the acting deanship everything about him personally that was so good about his relationships with people. He was wonderful. I learned a lot from him about administration, not by his teaching, but by watching him and how one can use clinical skills in that way.

HAMOVITCH: You were speaking about what you learned from John Milner.

BLOCH: Then, I was doing some classes at the Gerontology Center.

HAMOVITCH: Oh, at Andrus.

BLOCH: Yes, at Andrus, which has since become a school, but it was still a center then. I was teaching there during the summer, too. I met some very interesting teachers there: Vern Bengtson and Eric Pauly, who was in architecture. He was a very big influence in my life, because he followed some of the intellectual tradition that I had at Brandeis. He was truly a wide-read and very interesting man, and tied, in architecture, conceptually to everything else in life. That was the way I had been taught to think. So that was a really marvelous experience, and I was very grateful to NIMH for that grant, because I could not have done without it. At the time, my marriage was breaking up, so school became a



wonderful haven for me. My first husband was a Latino, so that helped me a lot in the community and I become familiar with it. I had been married already for quite a number of years and have lived in Mexico at times. I was really comfortable there. But that ended, in a sense, when my marriage ended. School was then very important for me, particularly because I had very little financial help. I still had a private practice; I always had a private practice since 1969 when I was at Vista Del Mar – no, before that. I'm sorry, it was '64, '65. It was a tough time for me.

HAMOVITCH: I'm going to interrupt you. You said you'd been to Mexico. While you were living in Mexico, were you also working?

BLOCH: Not there. It was strictly because that's where my husband came from and his family was there and we were visiting. We spent quite a lot of time there in various parts of Mexico: Mexico City, Vera Cruz, Oayaca, just different cities.

HAMOVITCH: How long of a period was that?

BLOCH: About 11 years. USC became a really important place for me to anchor at that time. I lived closer to the University than I did to UCLA. It was really a good time for me. Then, when I was doing my dissertation, I had great trouble deciding what I wanted to do. I was also a TA for Frances Feldman. That was a nice experience, also. I learned quite a bit about social policy and so forth. Frances is an extremely informed person. She knows things I couldn't even remember. Al, her husband, decided that I would be a good student to be a chair for a dissertation. He chose me; I didn't have much to say about it. About half way through my dissertation, he told me he didn't understand what I was doing. It was kind of a blow to me, but I could see where he would think that way. Barbara Solomon agreed to take over, and when she did, she said to me, "I have to tell

you something.” I said, “What?” She said, “You’ve written two dissertations.” I got so angry at that point that I didn’t touch it for a month. I finally finished it. It had to do with retired women and their perception of where they were in terms of their work in their life. I don’t even remember too much of it. But I used a population of retired schoolteachers because they were accessible. It taught me a lot, because later on I served on dissertation committees. I’ll get to that later.

I finally finished my dissertation, and then, of course, I had to decide what I was going to do. I had gotten several offers from Hawaii and Colorado, and the VA was interested. Actually, that’s true, because then that led me to Maurie. The other person who got in touch with me was Ted Eisenstadt from Jewish Family Service. He wanted me to come down to the agency as director of professional services. I went to talk with Maurie and I said I didn’t know what to do. I really respected Maurie, and I watched him as an administrator. How he dealt with the faculty, the students, and the University was wonderful. He never lost his cool, he was soothing, he was calming, he was reasonable, and he always seemed to be in charge. That was very instructive for me. I learned a lot from observing him.

When I went to talk to him about not knowing what to do about where to go from here, he said to me, “What are your options?” I told him. I said I didn’t really want to leave L.A., because going through a divorce, I needed my supports and my friends and all the people that were here that meant something to me. The real issue was really the VA or Jewish Family Service. He said, “Well,” – this really surprised me, because I didn’t think he was as perceptive as he was – he said, “as I have seen you, you don’t do very well in bureaucratic situations. I don’t think the VA would be the best place for you.”

That made me think back about my second-year fieldwork placement at the VA and what that was like, and I thought Maurie had a good point. So I called Ted Eisenstadt the next day and told him I would take the job as director of professional services. However, I would not start until September, because I needed time off. I needed to get my life in order and I was going up to visit Dave Freeman in Vancouver. But, he suggested I come in and talk with the staff. So I came in. He looked very bad; he was not well. I didn't really know how ill he was; he didn't really level with me, nor did anybody.

He wanted me to come in and talk to the people on the administrative staff and executive staff. So I went in, and he looked really bad. Rose Klitzner, who was in charge of services to the aging, told me that she was planning to retire, but certainly would not retire within the next six months. She would help me and be there. There was also an assistant director, Harry told me that he was looking for another job, but that he would still be around. I blithely went off on vacation. When I came back to start working, I learned that Rose Klitzner had retired within the three weeks I was gone, that Harry had taken a job in St. Louis, and that Ted and I were the only people left on the executive staff.

HAMOVITCH: And he wasn't well.

BLOCH: No, he wasn't well, but he didn't tell me how not well he was, nor did anyone. I sensed that he wasn't okay, and that he was perhaps more ill than he said, but one can never be sure about these things. But, ten weeks after I was there, Ted died, and that left me as the only person in the executive administration of the agency, for which I had absolutely no preparation. I had never been an executive, I had never been a real administrator, and Federation is a rather complicated organization. So there I was, lost in

a way. But, I based what I did on what I knew and my intuition. Of course, I had a board of directors. I had some familiarity with this from the Red Cross, where I knew what boards were like, and I had been at Jewish Family Service with the students that had some contact with the board. But I was suddenly confronted with budgets and raising money, neither of which I really had any experience with or wanted to. It's not my forte. The person that was there, closest in proximity, as far as the building was concerned, was Ethel Taft, who I think had some resentment of me, coming in at this level. She is a rather practical concrete thinker, and I'm more conceptual

HAMOVITCH: What did she do?

BLOCH: She was a District Director and then was in charge of the Russian program.

I had some experiences there I would like to tell you about. One of my first encounters, there, was with the head of the Federation. I think I had been there maybe a week when he called me to ask about two of our employees. Now one of them was an employee whom Ted had hired at my recommendation. He was from Iran, originally, but had done a lot of work with immigration. Ted was very pleased with him and hired him for services to the Russians and other emigres. The other person was a young man who was an attorney. He was working there and also learning about immigration and was not planning to make a career out of Jewish Family Service. He was helping with resettlement, and so forth. He had a Spanish name. The Iranian man's name was Mohammed. Now, at that time, there was a trickle of Russians coming in and it was obvious that more would come. I had had a lot of experience working with emigres and DPs, so this wasn't so new to me. When the head of Federation asked me about the staff and whether they were Jewish and that their names didn't sound so, my antennae went up

because this was not a friendly encounter. I thought it was really provocative. I realized I was new, that I was a woman, and I was not really hired to be the executive director. But I also realized that if I didn't hold my own, the agency would not have its own autonomy. I was not about to allow that to happen. I knew enough about Federation and agencies and policies to keep the boundaries and to hold us from being invaded. I thought, "What can I do about this?" I have always been able to rely on my good clinical sense. I thought, "Well, if I let him do this, what would happen would happen again. If it happened again, it would be an erosion of the agency. The only people who can really be intimidated by someone are those who remain faceless. The only time that you can safely attack people if you are in authority is also when they're faceless. That means when they are not individuals, but a mob or a group or a stereotype." I called the Federal Director back and suggested that yes, we did have these two people working for us: one was Iranian named Mohammed, whom we called Mo, and the other person, Charles Aguado, who was actually Jewish of Sephardic background. I thought he ought to come and meet them and have coffee. There was a dead silence on the other end of the phone when I invited him to come down to the agency. He said, "Oh, no, no. You have to come up here."

HAMOVITCH: On his territory.

BLOCH: On his territory, right. I took the two guys, and we went upstairs and had coffee and started talking. As it turned out, he and Mohammed had worked with the Joint Distribution Committee at one time in Europe and the United States. They knew a lot of the same people, so it was sort of the old guys' network and backslapping. Charles, the other man, was an attorney. I think it was revealed during the course of that meeting that

he was Sephardic. I never heard from the Federal head again after that meeting, and I was very happy about that and felt that I had done the right thing in terms of the agency.

HAMOVITCH: Oh, absolutely.

BLOCH: I felt very protective of staff, maybe having come up through that route as a caseworker. I really wanted the staff to feel comfortable, and I knew enough that if your administrator is supportive and good, it trickles down. I learned that from Maurie and a lot of other people. There were a number of people on the staff who are like what sororities call legacies. We were left with a number of people that I would never have hired, even in my wildest imagination. There were many people who made it difficult for line staff and so forth, but I intended to make some changes. One of the things that I really learned, and I don't know quite how I learned this – maybe I learned this from Maurie, from watching him – that if you have the authority, you can use the authority. That's the kind of thing that I intended to do. I promoted Ethel to be in charge of emigres, of the Russian program. She knew a lot of people in the community and could handle and finagle and do what needed to be done.

One day I was visited by a woman who asked to have an appointment with me because her son had been in a cult. What cult it was, exactly, I don't remember now. I was not too aware of what was going on as far as cults at that time. I read about them in the paper like most people. She wanted me to do something about it through the agency, because she felt that there would be a lot of Jewish kids and families who would be impacted. So, here were two issues that presented themselves immediately to me: the influx of the Russians and the cults. This was in the midst of our beginning to think about moving from 590 Vermont to the new building at 6505 Wilshire Boulevard – 1974,

'75. At the same time that this woman came, I was visited by two young people who asked to see me, the director. They were from Reverend Moon's organization, the Moonies. They were visiting all agencies and were interested in inviting people to come to the meeting that Reverend Moon was hosting at the then Statler Hotel on 7<sup>th</sup> Street in downtown Los Angeles. They were very strange; they felt kind of schizoid. If I had passed my hands in front of their eyes, I don't know if they would have blinked. They said that there was going to be a banquet and we were invited guests. Reverend Moon was inviting all people from different parts of the community, and there would be hundreds of people. Would I come? Because this woman, whose son had been in a cult, had come to see me, I thought I would go to this program. So, I went by myself in the evening. I didn't know anybody. It was fascinating! I did run into two art dealers that I knew, which was very nice. When I came in, one of the hosts greeted me. It was a young man dressed in a Nehru-type jacket and a little cap. There was a large crowd; there must have been hundreds of people there. There was a banquet room. In fact, there was more than one room. I happened to have been seated in the room where the stage was. There was another room where people only saw this on television. You can imagine how big it was. No alcohol was served. I was placed at a table by one of these Nehru-uniformed young people. At each table there was a mixture of people from the community and from different ethnic groups, plus some of the Moonie young people. The way they arranged the seating, I thought was masterful with a Moonie in between each person. We were given a very lovely meal, banquet style, and after dinner, there was entertainment, so to speak. They had the Korean National Folk Ballet. It was quite a production; elaborate and beautiful. After that, Reverend Moon got up to speak. He

spoke in Korean and had a translator who would interrupt every few minutes. That lasted a couple of hours.

HAMOVITCH: Oh, my!

BLOCH: He was like Hitler. He was ranting, he was hysterical; the whole experience echoed, for me, the experience of the Hitler youth movement, and I realized how dangerous it could be.

When I went back to the agency, I did want to do something about it because I thought it could be a menace. I thought it would be a good idea to have something like a Cult Clinic where I invited people from the community. I invited Margaret Singer from Berkeley, who was a psychologist expert on brainwashing, and she agreed to come down and give a speech. Then, I invited attorneys, who were already involved in de-programming kids. I invited a number of psychiatrists, including my almost-new husband, and Dr. Heinrich Van Damm, a psychiatrist working with children, who was originally from the Netherlands and was very interested in this. There were a number of professionals and families who came. It was a great meeting. As a result of Margaret Singer describing what the neurological kinds of issues were about brainwashing, as well as the psychological, the decision that night was to form a committee. This was the start of the cult clinic.

Later on, I asked Mike Lightman to take it over. I understand, later, it received a spot on 60 Minutes. However, I have to say that everything that I did try to do was done as a result of a battle because the board didn't see the need for it. In a way it was like checks and balances in the federal government. The board was quite conservative, didn't want to spend the money, didn't want to hire anyone new, why not keep it the same as



it's been, etc. I thought that if something is the same as it's been, it's going to die, eventually.

HAMOVITCH: We need to keep up with the times.

BLOCH: Absolutely, and to be responsive to the community. This is really where I was a good influence. I'm creative and have ideas. I'm not a good detail person and I certainly don't like to look at budgets and probably couldn't do very well with them, although I'm doing better now. But I also had another talent, which was to delegate well. There were some people who had resentments about how I went about this, but I really felt I had to do what was good of the agency, not to please certain individuals who had been there for a long time not just around cults.

HAMOVITCH: It was a time, also, when there were many children joining cults, and cults were very prominent.

BLOCH: Yes. Another thing was the influx of the Russians: it was evident they were going to keep coming. I had been in Russia in 1971 and knew what was happening with the Refusenicks, the handwriting was on the wall. But, as I say, it was all an uphill battle. Everything that was started was started too small. It was sort of like Los Angeles, where they build a freeway for 10 cars and then there are 100,000 cars.

The third issue that I think was a big one for me at JFS had to do with where you apply for grants. When I came to Jewish Family Service, the budget was \$3,000,000 a year. When I left in 1966, it was \$11,000,000. Now, the difference really was in the grants. Because the Older Americans Act had passed in 1965, this was all operational money that came out of the Act to make a thrust into the community to help older people. That included meals, programs, counseling, all kinds of things.

HAMOVITCH: The MSSP Program.

BLOCH: Yes, the MSSP program. But that came later. And it was a battle. It was really Lyndon Johnson who did that and who really had an awareness of the social policy issues for the poor and for the elderly.

I liked the board members – many of them. Many of them didn't see me as a real administrator, a real executive. First of all, I wasn't a man, I wasn't that old, I wasn't that experienced. It was very interesting with the women board members. When I asked for an equal salary to some of the men executives, they would not fight for me. Some of them went on to their own careers and told me later that they were sorry they weren't able to do it then. It was an interesting time.

I did hire a lot of new people and made some changes in the agency. I was very good at hiring; I hired Sandy King.

HAMOVITCH: Which was brilliant.

BLOCH: I hired Dorie Gradwall.

HAMOVITCH: Wonderful.

BLOCH: There were a number of people I think I did well by. One of the things that I ought to mention is that there were some people – Barbara Kaplan was the one who started the Frieda Mohr Center as a storefront. She and Rose Klitzner got into a power struggle over that, and then Barbara left. That was too bad; Barbara had a lot of quirky characteristics, but so do we all. Things can be worked out if there isn't a power struggle. Barbara left a good legacy for the Frieda Mohr Center, the storefront. At that time, it was on the East side of the street and was a tiny place. Rose Klitzner wanted to close it.

HAMOVITCH: Why?

BLOCH: Because I believe that was part of the struggle she had with Barbara. She felt it wasn't professional enough, or I don't know what her reasons were. I think more than anything, it was a struggle for power. I was not about to close it, because I felt it was very important. That's when I hired Sandy to replace Barbara. I got a lot of flack for hiring Sandy, because she hadn't had that much experience.

HAMOVITCH: She had just graduated.

BLOCH: She had just graduated, but she had been a volunteer at the Center. But I felt Sandy was the right person for the job. As you can see, it was not the easiest time. I'm not sorry that I stood up for what I believed in.

The other aspect that was part of that job that was not so easy was firing people. I did a small share of that. I have a philosophy about that, anyway, and that is that people who are not doing well on their jobs really don't like them. They don't like themselves in the job. The skill becomes helping someone to leave, still feeling intact and not attacked as a person. I did that pretty well and my clinical skills helped in that.

When the move to 6505 took place, that was very nice. The building was luxurious compared to 590. I even had an office with a window and a view. It was just wonderful.

I think Barbara then went back to USC to get a doctorate, and that worked out well for her. I haven't heard from her; we didn't keep in touch and weren't particularly close. I think she had been a student of mine at UCLA at one time. I don't quite remember.

Sandy, I thought, was competent, good at administration, knew the storefront. She was a professional, even though she had started out as a teacher. She became a

social worker, and she did a very good job as executive director – a fabulous job, as a matter of fact.

HAMOVITCH: The two of you really made an impact on Jewish Family Service. I think the two people most responsible for the growth were you and Sandy King.

BLOCH: Probably. Sandy was more visible because Sandy wanted to be involved in the operational kinds of things. I was never very interested in that. I loved planning things and doing training and that kind of thing, but I really never wanted to spend a lot of time in meetings and doing all the detail work. But Sandy was very good at that.

HAMOVITCH: And going for grants. Grants were very important then.

BLOCH: And going for grants, right. The Board asked me whether I wanted to stay on as executive director, and I said, no, that was not what I really wanted. I liked doing programs and working with staff and supervising and improvising the kinds of things that were responsive to the community, but ..... Then they started the interviewing candidates for Executives, and Arnold Saltzman came to the agency. He liked doing all the things I didn't like doing, so it was a good combination.

HAMOVITCH: Oh, that's political.

BLOCH: Right. We made a good team. He came in '75, and I took a long vacation. I was really done in. I went to the International Gerontology Meetings in Jerusalem and to Greece and to Boston to see my family. In 1978, I married again, and my husband really wanted me not to be involved in administration and suggested that I go into full-time private practice. It scared me a little, because I'd always been in part-time practice, but I thought again of Maurie; maybe Maurie was right and I should get out of the bureaucracy. So I decided that I would. That was good.

There were some other things that happened before I left. At one of our board meetings, a woman by the name of Alma Lasher, whom I became friends with later, came to me and said that the storefront was getting to be too small and it ought to expand. She was a volunteer there. She said there was a building not too far away and she thought we ought to go and look at it and apply for a grant. We went with a group from Federation and from our board, and they decided not to purchase it. It was very short-sighted, because they bought the same building several years later for a higher amount of money. I'm not sure it was such a clean thing that happened. I'm not sure how it all happened, but... Another thing that I did that was helpful was that I started some psychiatric consultation for the clerical staff. That was something that helped them, because many of the clerical staff were burned out. They had the hardest jobs; they were on the front lines with clients and had the least preparation and the least training. I wrote a paper about that and it was published. It's still being used. People still call me and ask me for it. So, there were a lot of things that I am pleased that I did. I also liked working with professional staff, and I think I understood them very well.

I have another experience that was sort of interesting. There was a social worker who came to ask for a job, Jane Rubin, and she was pregnant. She needed a job. She was getting a divorce and things weren't going well in her life. She said nobody would hire a pregnant woman. I thought if a social agency won't hire her, who will?

HAMOVITCH: That's right.

BLOCH: Right? So, I took the job and split it between her and another woman. What's interesting is that Jane and I are now friends, and she became an analyst, and she is in my

study group now. It's sort of interesting. She still remembers the good experience it was for her to have that kind of thing given to her.

HAMOVITCH: You had such insight. You're very perceptive and you see such wonderful qualities in people, where somebody else may just gloss over it.

BLOCH: Really?

HAMOVITCH: You are wonderful, doing that.

BLOCH: Oh, good. A lot of people on the professional staff were not too happy. They thought they weren't respected enough. Many of them did go into private practice and left. That was okay.

HAMOVITCH: Don't you think salaries may have had something to do with that?

BLOCH: Oh, absolutely. It had something to do with it – not everything, but something.

HAMOVITCH: I know I worked with many of the social workers, and I didn't see them quite as unhappy with the work as I did with the salary.

BLOCH: I do think that the agency started a lot of programs like the Protection Program and the Drug and Alcohol Program. I always thought that if you hire good staff, they would develop their own ideas. Martha Newmark, you know, Meals on Wheels. People are always going to be controversial, and you have to take the good with the bad.

HAMOVITCH: But she did a wonderful job.

BLOCH: She did a wonderful job, and you and Ettie Bassan – I remember Ettie. There were a lot of people. Then, Tova Feder started the...and then Janet started the..

HAMOVITCH: Home Secure Program.

BLOCH: The Home Secure Program. I have a story about this. It's very interesting because, as you know, Fred and I are in this stroke support group now at UCLA.

HAMOVITCH: I didn't know.

BLOCH: Oh, we have been since he had a stroke. One of the men in the group, a couple of months ago, was very upset because he wanted some help with security bars. I said, "Well, have you called Jewish Family Service?" He said, "Yes." They told him they couldn't help him. I said, "I don't believe that." So, I called, and I found out that he lives in Beverly Hills, and they don't have a contract with Beverly Hills. So, I told him about that, and he was very grateful, because it made no sense. I don't like it when somebody says bad things about Jewish Family Service. I want to make sure that it's on the mark.

HAMOVITCH: Well, the Senior Programs offered many different programs like Aids to the Elderly.

BLOCH: Yes, they were very good. Another thing, while I was at Jewish Family Service, I was asked to teach a class at Hebrew Union College, which was like a practice class in a way. It was sort of a casework class. That was interesting too. These were students who were joint degree...

HAMOVITCH: Double masters.

BLOCH: Double masters degree and were going to – some of them – were going to become social workers, but not all of them. I did that for a couple of years. I also taught at the Wright Institute in the evening during that time. That was a very good program, too. They were very psychoanalytically oriented.

I had many nice experiences. I'm sure I left out a lot of things, but I did learn a lot. Sam Taylor was a teacher in community organization, and I really did learn a lot about community and boards from Sam. Sam and I still e-mail each other. There were a lot of things that came to me afterwards that I had picked up. Also, one of the things that I didn't mention was how wonderful Ruth Britten was as a librarian at USC. Even after I left, I could always call Ruth and ask her for a reference. She was just marvelous. She really cared.

HAMOVITCH: She was wonderful.

BLOCH: Right.

HAMOVITCH: Roz, you have a litany of all kinds of wonderful positions that you've held and you've made such an impact. I'm curious if there were things that you could change...

BLOCH: About me? (laughter)

HAMOVITCH: No, in the field of social work, like what advances you have or what are the down sides of social work and how can that be improved. I know that's a big question to ask.

BLOCH: That's a biggie. Well, you see, one of the things that I feel about social work is that it had a mixed-up identity. It's known for community organization, it's known for clinical work, it's known for research. I don't think it's enough for a profession in terms of dividing itself up.

HAMOVITCH: Specializing?



BLOCH: Specializing. There are a lot of weaknesses in the clinical training. I think there are a lot of weaknesses in the research training, and I think there a lot of weaknesses in community training.

HAMOVITCH: Let's go to some of the weaknesses in the clinical training. That may be easier to start with.

BLOCH: A lot of people go into social work to get a license to be able to become therapists. We know that. The schools were much more responsive to people who wanted to learn this. My training was earlier. When I was in school in Berkeley, getting my master's, I was in a sequence called the Psychiatric Sequence. My training was very heavily theoretical in the psychiatric arena. Some of my teachers were people from the Analytic Institute in San Francisco. We were very thoroughly trained, much more so than even people in psychology. So, I think that's been lost. I did teach – at UCLA, and I taught it at USC. But my class was in human behavior, and I did try to teach developmentally, teaching pathology and normal development. They don't do that anymore; it's all watered down. I think that the respect for students is much less, and the students, therefore, are not getting what they would get ...

HAMOVITCH: Do you think that now the expectations are less of the students?

BLOCH: I do, and I don't even know whether the faculty has their own expectations of themselves. I don't think there are many clinicians teaching at the universities. I know that there are at NYU. That's a big clinical program - and Smith. These are back East. Chicago has always been known for administration and education and policy. But I don't think that the schools are very much involved in clinical education.

HAMOVITCH: Do you think they have the experience? Have they experienced enough?

BLOCH: I don't know whether they don't want to...

HAMOVITCH: Or are the standards just lower now?

BLOCH: I don't think they hire people who know about it. There's a wealth of people in the community who are fine clinicians and could really add to the curriculum. But they are not asked, not invited.

HAMOVITCH: That's a pity.

BLOCH: Right.

HAMOVITCH: What about the research, the teaching of the research?

BLOCH: Well, I don't know as much about research. I've learned a lot more about research than when I was in school because that's just a beginning to tell you a little bit about it. But, I don't think I'm really qualified to talk about the research.

I do want to talk about some other experiences. I mentioned Sam Taylor, earlier. I don't want you to think that my interests in the agency were only clinical because that wasn't so. I had learned a lot about boards and advisory committees from Sam. While I was at Jewish Family Services, I was on a number of advisory boards. That was very educational for me. I feel that one of the things that I learned at Red Cross was that there needed to be a link between the people who were seeing the clients and the people who were making and setting the policy. That's what I really wanted to happen at JFS.

One was a committee that I was on for developmental disabilities for the aged. That really helped me to clarify something else that I did at Jewish Family Service, which was that there were a number of people in the community who were deaf, who were not

able to receive services in the same manner of people who speak. This goes back to something in my own life: I had my closest friend when I started college, who is still my friend, had a mother who was deaf. I learned how to speak with her, how to let her lip-read. I was very sensitive to the needs of the deaf from that experience in my life. When somebody came to me at Jewish Family Service and commented about the needs for the deaf, I was really receptive to it. I then hired somebody – it was Renee Feiger – who took off on the program with the TCY and got involved with the Temple for the Deaf. It was never lost on me. I think that policy - and I learned this from Frances Feldman, actually – policy is always set out of personal experiences in life. The Lanterman-Petriss-Short Act, for example, had a lot to do with the fact that Lanterman had a mentally ill daughter or somebody in his family. So, when I was on this committee for developmental disabilities for the aged, the deaf were part of that. Then I was on a committee at the time that was at the Center for the Training of Community Psychiatry. I was on their gerontology advisory committee. That was interesting, because that had to do with educating professionals further in certain areas: physicians, psychologists, and so forth. I was also on a committee that was advisory to the Board of Supervisors in L.A. that was on emergency kinds of things. There was another advisory committee that had to do with the Federal Behavioral Health Service on the Committee on Medical Misuse by the Elderly. That was a very important committee, because we began to identify how people were given prescriptions by one doctor who didn't know what the other doctor was doing. It was very illuminating. With the County Board of Supervisors Emergency Psychiatry Care, that was fun, in a way, because I had to ride with the police during a night to understand what their experiences were.

One night I rode with the sheriff of L.A. and one night with the Santa Monica Police Department. The sheriff's department was adequate, but the Santa Monica police officer was superb. He was a black man. I'll never forget this: I wrote a letter to the Chief of Police afterwards. I thought that his skills with people were amazing. I couldn't do as well with people, and it was fun. One time, I had to get down in the back of the car on the floor because there was shooting.

I was also on the Committee for the Southern California Psychiatric Institute Extension Program, because they were going into the community and wanted social workers to apply. I was on the governing board and executive committee of Thaliens Mental Health Clinic, Cedar-Sinai – that was an interesting experience, and made me realize how much Jewish Family Service had been out in the community and how little the hospitals had and how they really were scared to get there and really didn't know how. They're doing more now, of course. Then I was on the Editorial Board for *Social Casework*: that meant reading articles. I was on the board of the International Institute of Los Angeles. This was a very interesting agency, which is nation-wide. It dealt with newcomers: immigrants from Asian and European communities. They had a lot of caseworkers who themselves had come from other countries. I learned a lot about different populations, which helped me a lot at JFS and dealing with the whole resettlement program. Then I was asked to be on the board of Los Amigos at USC School of Social Work. That was a nice experience, but I couldn't do it for very long. I was a trustee for the Alternate Living for the Aged, which came out of Temple Isaia with Janet Witkin. That was also a good experience in terms of housing. I had some

experience after that, because my mother and father had gone into a kind of alternate living situation.

HAMOVITCH: That was a retirement community?

BLOCH: It still is, I think.

HAMOVITCH: A facility with shared housing.

BLOCH: And then I was on the Social Welfare Archives Committee, which I haven't been active in, and I'm sorry about that, but my life is so much more complicated now. I did a lot of other things, too. I did some consultation for the Veteran's Administration in their geriatrics program in Brentwood and got an idea of what happened to people traumatically, during the War and what happened when they got older and what happened with the psychotropic drugs, when they came out. I did some consultations with other Jewish Family agencies when they were being accredited or looking for new staff.

I've done some private consultation with business and law firms. There was a law firm where there was a murder of somebody on the staff, and they asked me to come and talk with staff. In fact, my husband and I did that together.

Then, I was at Airport Marina Counseling Services as a consultant for a time and did some supervision there for a few years. My most unusual consultation was for a Catholic order, which had a school in Camarillo. I don't remember the name – I think it was called St. Joseph's Seminary. I had been doing some consultation for some nuns at – I don't remember the name of the school. It's up on Franklin in Los Feliz.

HAMOVITCH: Mt. Saint Mary's.

BLOCH: It's not Mt. Saint Mary's. The nuns that I'm talking about were a teaching order. They did not wear uniforms, and they were very progressive. As a matter of fact,

they would go out on the street and do something called “guerrilla drama.” They were very revolutionary; they wanted to bring social issues to the public, and that’s how they did it. They felt that they were acceptable to do this. They had a lot of problems, because they didn’t agree with the priest who was in charge of them. They were very socially conscious. They wanted some consultation about what they were doing. There I met a nun who was originally from Ireland. I called her the “flying nun,” because she was peripatetic, she was always moving, and she was very feisty. She invited me, later on, to St. Joseph’s Seminary in Camarillo. She was teaching students there. They had an undergraduate social welfare program, and she felt they were very backward in their social work education. She wanted me to come and talk with the priests. So I went there twice: once for a consultation. It was very interesting, but it was like being thrown back into the mediaeval world, in a way. They had a bachelor’s program, and they were teaching some young seminarians about social work. They really didn’t know very much about it. I had to explain to them what it was all about. I remember sitting in this room with about six or seven priests, and one of them fell asleep across from me. Some of them did understand what I was getting at and probably used some of my ideas. The most interesting thing was that they were located in the most beautiful spot I’ve ever seen. It was in Camarillo, overlooking a valley, and it was absolutely one of the most wonderful settings. Then I went back when they wanted me to do an evaluation of some of the changes.

There were a lot of things that I did that were. I did a television program on siblings and what happens to adults in sibling relationships. Rabbi Wolf and I were the

two people on a panel on helping the community. Of course, I taught at USC while I was doing my doctorate there. I taught a part of a class with June Brown.

HAMOVITCH: What did you teach?

BLOCH: It was a practice class. June was teaching one section and I was teaching another. I had a young man who was Asian and was a pre-med student. He was the only pre-med student I've ever had who came in and said, "I want to learn how to relate to people."

HAMOVITCH: They should all do that.

BLOCH: I thought he would be a very successful doctor. Now I have some patients who are physicians, and it's very interesting how they say that they have learned a lot from their own therapy about how to deal with teaching situations and with their staffs. I taught Supervision at San Fernando State College, at UCLA, at UC. I did teach human behavior one semester at UCLA with Elsie Georgie, who was a physician. That was really fun. She was quite a character and very un-psychological, so we had sort of a battle for territory there. It was a good experience.

I did a series of workshops for the State of Hawaii, which was nice and for the Center for Training of Community Psychiatry. Then, when I got married again, after I left Jewish Family Service, with my husband, who is an analyst and a psychiatrist, his name is Godfrey Bloch (we call him Fred), I taught at California Graduate Institute for 20 years. We taught the introduction course to psychoanalysis, which was a 14-week course. We taught 3 semesters a year for almost 20 years, if not more. It might even have been more. We kept changing the course, and that was very interesting. It was a good course. Out of that, because I was on the faculty, I was asked to sit in on some of

their accreditation interviews with the State of California and also, often, on dissertation committees. I even chaired a couple of dissertation committees. These were students who were getting their Ph.D.s in psychology. Some of them were absolutely terrific and wonderful in lots of different ways as writers, as clinicians and so forth.

We did one program, Fred and I, on sexual relationships in the aging for the Jewish Home for the Aging. We did some couple workshop for Jewish Family Service on intergenerational issues for survivors and children of survivors.

I was, for two years, the chair for the study group for aging of the Orthopsychiatry Association, and gave a paper in Boston one year, which was subsequently published as a chapter of a book on group therapy for the elderly. It was published by International University Press.

Fred and I gave a talk in Dublin at a psychiatric hospital, which was primarily for children. It was the first time in my life that I saw anorexic boys. I think it was very culturally determined, because you don't hear about male anorexia very often. I think it's a good area for research, as a matter of fact. We spent some time in Ireland, and if I were to ever do another dissertation, I think I would do – no, not on the one on anorexics, but we stayed in farmhouses, and we got to know some of the owners - was really a woman's movement. This was the woman's movement of Ireland. These isolated farmhouses, the women were the only ones who were involved; their husbands were absolutely not interested and thought it beneath them to get involved with money-changing and tourists and so forth. The women thought this would be a way of bringing the world to their children so they wouldn't feel so isolated. Then they became organized and had meetings. They would meet at various parts of the country. So, I think it's a very



interesting movement, and, of course, in Ireland, it may have been researched – I don't know. But I think it's a good thing to be studied.

I also did a presentation in front of the Sacramento – the California State Government – on psychotherapy and definitions of social work. This was years ago, before – I think it had to do with how they were going to define things with the Board of Behavioral Science Examiners. That was interesting.

HAMOVITCH: Roz, I know that you were working on two papers the last time we met. Have you completed them?

BLOCH: One I completed, but I'm not happy with it, so it hasn't gone anywhere. But since then, I have done several papers. One, I presented here in Southern California at the Committee on Psychoanalysis at a meeting. It was called, "Women –" let's see, what was it called? It had to do with women and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and it had to do with clinical and treatment issues, and it was called "Menopause" – I think it was called "Women, Menopause, Myth and Metamorphoses." That paper is going to be published in a book, which is a book of social work articles, done by National Universities Press, again. It's edited by Jean Sanville and Ellen Ruderman. It's called "Women in the Millennium." A later version of that paper, which I've now called, and added a lot of material to, is called "Women on the Other Side of Fifty: an Opportunity for Change." I'm going to present that in Chicago in March, 2002, at the National Conference of the Committee on Psychoanalysis. I have another article, which is going to be in a journal; I think it's going to be in Psychoanalytic Inquiry. I gave a paper in New York in January of 2000, as part of a panel – a very interesting panel. Ellen Ruderman, Jean Sanville, Herb Strean, Martin Bergman, and Jeffrey Applegate, and we were on a panel called

“The Life-Cycle of the Therapist.” It was a very interesting panel, and that’s what’s going to be published. In fact, that’s what I’m getting ready to send to the editor right now. I have a couple more papers I want to write. I’m going to be giving a paper at the Clinical Society meeting in November in Palm Desert, and that will be technically on a term called “provision.”

Provision is a term that the psychoanalysts have come up with, which has to do with anything that you give a patient that’s not part of the talking therapy. They think they’ve discovered this. (laughter) I think it’s been in social work for a long time.

HAMOVITCH: A long time.

BLOCH: So, this is what I’m going to be tying together. Then, I have a couple of other things that I want to write, but so far, that’s really where I have been. I have a specialty in couple therapy and have seen hundreds of couples and still do. Now I want to write about this. Of course, I helped my husband for many years to edit and write his book.

HAMOVITCH: And the title?

BLOCH: *“Unfree Associations: a Psychoanalyst Recollects the Holocaust.”*

Interestingly enough, this coming Labor Day Weekend, we have been invited to the Area Mensa Conference up the coast, and we have been asked to present on the book and on other questions related to that. So, we’re going to be doing that.

HAMOVITCH: Oh, that’s exciting.

BLOCH: That is exciting. It should be fun.

HAMOVITCH: In addition to your writing, what else are you currently involved with?

BLOCH: I should tell you that almost – well, about a year-and-a-half ago, my husband had a stroke. He retired on December 22, 1999, and on Christmas Day, the 25<sup>th</sup>, he had

the stroke. He had had some previous symptoms, but this hit his legs. He didn't have any aphasia or any other symptoms – well, nor too many other symptoms – but he was in the hospital for a while and then in rehab. That changed life for both of us quite a bit. Now, after he came out of the hospital and recovered, which he has quite well – his balance is a little at-risk, but not too bad, the neurologist said that UCLA had a stroke support group. He didn't say it would be good for us, because I think he was too clever to say that, but what he said to my husband was, “You could be a lot of help in this group.” (laughter) So, he thought maybe we should go to that, and we did. That has, unfortunately, been at the same time as the California Social Welfare Archives meetings are held, and so I can't come to that because I have a commitment to this. Fred isn't driving, so it's important that I go. It takes up a lot of time, because twice a month, there is a meeting of the caregivers, which is mostly the wives or husbands. That's an hour-and-a-half group with the psychologist. The stroke patients have an hour with the psychologist. Fred doesn't go to that, because he doesn't think he needs that kind of therapy. Then, at two o'clock on Mondays and Tuesdays, there are meetings of the stroke group, which include families and stroke patients. Sometimes we have a speaker and sometimes it's a group discussion, which can get very involved and dynamic like all groups. In that group, Fred and I have become leaders, which also includes another therapist. It's a very high-functioning group. There are some very well-known people in the group and people who are really very interesting. There was a former chancellor in the group and people who have had very successful careers such as a number of Ph.D.s. we have become a very close group. We have become friends with some of the people in

that group. There's a former movie scriptwriter, who has a killing wit and she is terrific. We are very developed as a group.

HAMOVITCH: That sounds like a very cohesive group.

BLOCH: We became very cohesive, and it has become a very important part of our lives. Somebody in the group has died and there are a lot of emotional experiences that have gone on within the group. People develop cancer, people have been in the hospital. It's a very caring group. I have to say it's a very unusual experience to be on the other side of the table. I really didn't know if I could do it, but I also felt that if I were going to do it, I'd have to do it wholeheartedly. So I have, and I think that I've been very helped by the group. I think it's helped me a lot in not burdening my other relationships too much, although I have to say that my friends have been marvelous and colleagues, terrific. But, nobody really understands the situation until you're in it.

HAMOVITCH: But that's the way it is with everything. Until you've really experienced it. Have you considered writing about the group?

BLOCH: Not right now, but maybe at some point.

HAMOVITCH: Eventually?

BLOCH: Eventually, maybe, yes.

HAMOVITCH: Because it would be very interesting for many people.

BLOCH: Yes, I think that it's been very interesting, and also, interesting in another way. We are affiliated with UCLA, and so you learn a little bit about how politics affects everything – which I am familiar with in my past experience, but this is the medical side of it. I think that that group has been a very important piece of our lives.

HAMOVITCH: It's strange how you get involved in something, and the road that it takes you on. Getting back to your experiences, all of your work experiences as a social worker. You've seen many changes in the field. What are the most dramatic changes that you have seen take place since you began social work, to the present day?

BLOCH: In many ways, maybe one could consider this the success of social work, rather than it's failure, but other groups have taken over a lot of what social work has done or was doing.

HAMOVITCH: For example?

BLOCH: Well, some of the psychologists, some of the medical community and other groups as well. Social work has been diluted in some ways. I don't think it's been visible enough in the community or proud enough – maybe proud isn't the right word, but, confident enough of what it has to offer out there. We're not very politically savvy about ourselves. We may be for our clients in what's needed, but not about the profession.

HAMOVITCH: It hasn't been publicized the way other fields have been.

BLOCH: Right. Somehow, we don't really know how to do that well. The schools have been diluted in many ways; I think the curriculum has been diluted; I think it's not looked at as a highly academic field, which it could be more. I'm not sure – I think that sometimes social work has confused civil liberties and political issues with clinical issues. I'll give you one example: the whole issue of gays and homosexuality and so forth, have been issues that need both individual attention and group attention, but also community work. Psychiatrists and some of the medical people have done more about that than we have. I also think social workers are underpaid, work too hard, don't know

how to fight for themselves, and I also think it was a great mistake for NASW to include BSWs as professionals. That was a dumbing-down of the profession. I don't agree with that.

Let me say a little bit more about this, too. Some of the changes in social work were inevitable, in a way. I started in the Fifties. It was the aftermath of the War, still, and the War shook up a lot of people, professionally. That's when group therapy really got its start and social work was much more rigid then. It's had to become more adaptive to what's going on in the world and to different ways of doing things. We were always in awe of the psychiatrists and what they were doing, as if what they were doing was the only right thing.

HAMOVITCH: Or more important.

BLOCH: And more important, and that they didn't have anything to learn from us. For example, the whole concept of empathy was something I learned in my first year of graduate school and wasn't invented by psychiatry. We had some really wonderful people in the field: Bertha Reynolds, Jane Adams, Virginia Robinson, and Margaret Hamilton, and there were some marvelous people at Columbia. Lucille – I can't remember her last name now – it was wonderful, they were wonderful teachers, and they knew what they were doing and were strong, creative people. They weren't wild, but they were authentic. The family agencies could have been used in a different way. I do think the social work schools made a great mistake in not starting to give classes for people who were already working. If they had done more of that earlier, I think some of these private schools that grew up, even the one I've taught at, would not have had the need to develop. The universities missed out in a big way.

HAMOVITCH: Big time.

BLOCH: Big time, right. We've had to be more adaptive, and I don't think certain groups of social workers have been able to keep up. For example, in Public Welfare Child Protective Services, people are overworked, they're underpaid, they're not trained. I have a patient who was going through a divorce custody issue, and when she told me how she was interviewed, I was appalled. She, herself, was a marriage and family therapist, and we both knew that it was not very professional and not well done. Social work has brought to the fore a lot of things that other people have never thought about, like cultural issues and differences in ethnic populations. I went to a meeting at the Institute for Contemporary Psychoanalysis a couple of years ago that had to do with cultural differences. It was the least well attended of any meeting they've ever had and it was one of the best programs they've ever had. So, most of us who were there were social workers and that says something. Now, culture is becoming a big thing in psychoanalysis and people are paying more attention to it. We really were ahead of the pack, so to speak, on a lot of things, but we didn't strategize it enough to make good use of it.

HAMOVITCH: We didn't have a good P.R. person.

BLOCH: No, we didn't. We've undervalued a lot of things that we've done.

HAMOVITCH: In addition to all of the successes that you've had, what would you identify as being the most rewarding experience, if that's possible?

BLOCH: I don't think that's possible, because at different stages of my life, things were rewarding in a different way. Maybe one of the threads that go through it is that teaching has always been a very rewarding experience for me. But, so has clinical practice, but

even the time that I was administrating at JFS, it was not a happy time for me or the easiest thing for me, but it was very rewarding. It's not always the most joyous experiences that are the most rewarding. Everything has been satisfying. I look at it this way: everything I learn helps me in some way. I had a group the other night – it was very funny, because one of the members of the group was talking about a character, somebody that he had met who was just a fabulous person, who was named after a fictional character. I had watched something on television a couple of night before that had the name of this character, and I thought, “Now, why would somebody want to take this name?” We started talking about it, and my patient was really amazed that I knew about this literature and it came out. I thought that everything helps, even watching tv.

HAMOVITCH: Even when you don't think it will help.

BLOCH: Other things have changed in social work, by the way. The whole issue of adoptions has changed; things are much more open than they used to be. Everything was done in secret, people signing things in secret, and so forth. Now, it's more interesting that people are looking for their biological parents. I had a patient who had fathered an illegitimate child – a child. I shouldn't say “illegitimate” anymore, that's really old-fashioned.

HAMOVITCH: That's not typical anymore?

BLOCH: No, it's really dumb: he fathered a child.

HAMOVITCH: Though illegitimately.

BLOCH: Right. Anyway, this man was the husband of somebody else I had seen, and he came to see me because his now-grown son who was married and had children, had contacted him. He was a wreck; he didn't know what to do. He didn't know whether he



should see him, not see him, why would he want to see him, “I don’t want to see him.”

Well, we had a lot of sessions over that, and then he did meet with the son, who was successful, living in another state, had a big business and a family and so forth. He was able to have a different relationship – not that he ever wanted to be that close, because he couldn’t be close to too many people anyway. He wasn’t that kind of a person. But he was able to deal with it. So, that I’ve learned; the things that I did when I was in adoptions are not really what’s being done today. I’m sure that’s true of other areas of social work too.

HAMOVITCH: You’ve had a very rich career. I was wondering, Roz, how you would sum up your career as a social worker.

BLOCH: I’ve been very lucky. I think that I’ve had so many different experiences that have contributed to who I am and what makes me think the way I do, and so forth. I will never forget the social aspects of what happens to people. The person who cannot make it to a session, may not have the car fare to come – the old story. Or the person who is depressed – and this actually did happen to me – may not be neurologically okay, or may have a thyroid deficiency. Social work really helped me see the bio-psychic social involved in everybody. Also, I’ve been in almost every echelon of work: I’ve been a volunteer, I’ve been a caseworker, I’ve been a supervisor, field instructor, administrator, in private practice, and now I’m in a self-help group, so to speak. It’s partly self-help, I should say. I’ve been on committees. I’ve worked as a board member as well as on the professional side.

So, I feel I’ve been really lucky in all the experiences I’ve had. It’s made me feel very enriched, and I don’t intend to stop.

HAMOVITCH: Oh, good for you. Roz, I thank you very much for this very wonderful interview. I know for a fact, and through personal experience that you're very highly respected in the community, and I'm in awe of you. I mean it sincerely, because, of all your accomplishments – you're one person with so many accomplishments, it's commendable. I thank you very, very much. I hope our friendship continues.

BLOCH: But, Hannah, I have to say that I think almost anyone who is my age and has had the years of experience, you would find just as interesting and really awesome.

HAMOVITCH: There are many people who go to school, become a social worker, stay in one path, and they aren't divided in so many different areas.

BLOCH: But that doesn't make it better. I mean, just because you're on one path that it's bad.

HAMOVITCH: It's not bad, but I don't believe that you grow in the same way.

BLOCH: I don't agree with you: I think people grow differently. I've known people who have been in the same job or the same line of career who have grown a lot. I think it's just a matter of personality.

HAMOVITCH: An interest, maybe, is what you're saying – different interests. Well, see I've learned something right now. See what a good teacher you are?

Thank you very much.

