

ABSTRACT

Dr. June Brown, interviewed by Professor John Milner

At his home in Los Angeles

On 6/13/02

This interview describes Dr. Brown's entry into the field of social work, and the various positions she held prior to becoming a member of the faculty of the School of Social Work at the University of Southern California in September 1, 1969. She retired from USC in June, 1992.

Dr Brown's primary interest in practice and in teaching has been child welfare, a field in which she has written and also been involved in volunteer activities. Her intimate knowledge of the problems of administering child welfare programs in Los Angeles County and in California is displayed in this interview, particularly issues those touching what was known as the Division of Child Welfare Services, and then the Department of Children's Services, within which was placed the Department of Adoptions and the impact of federal and state regulations on these, as well as other influences affecting administration and operation of these programs.

Interview for the California Social Welfare Archives

Interviewer: John Milner

Interviewed: June Brown

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The Interview

Milner: June, can you tell me how you became interested in becoming a social worker?

Brown: There is a long story about that and a short one. I think I will tell you a bit of the long story.

I was aware of social work as an occupation long before I decided to become a social worker. The idea that one could be a social worker may have had its beginning for me when I was seven or eight. I grew up in Los Angeles during the Depression years. After New Deal programs were enacted, many were operating and quite visible throughout the city--including the neighborhood where I lived. I remember that adults talked a lot about those activities. At various locations, men worked on construction projects. Women were assigned to work on a variety of "women's work" type projects, including sewing projects and helping in the neighborhood schools. WPA art projects were visible as artists worked on murals for the downtown, Central Library; and performers, usually musicians, brought programs to schools. One highlight of my young years, that I remember well, was going with my mother to the Los Angeles Philharmonic to see and hear the then new musical, "Showboat". Paul Robson was a member of the cast, singing his famous rendition of "Old Man River"; the Hall Johnson choir, which was a WPA arts project, sang and performed as the chorus. I believe I remember that admission was 50

cents. So, as a youngster, I grew up seeing many New Deal programs in operation, sensing their vitality as well as the interest and optimism they seemed to create among the grown-ups.

I also remember social workers, newly employed by the county public welfare agency--and called *visitors*. In those days, it was quite common for “help wanted” ads to stipulate: *Colored need not apply*. Therefore, it is probably fair to say that social welfare and social work came early to the notion of *fair employment*, because among the new social workers, there was a group of young, African-American women—some of whom I knew, because my mother knew them. They were college graduates, probably in their twenties and thirties, and I remember how excited they were about their new jobs. To be hired, and be able to make the required visits, one had to own an automobile. Over time, I saw them “tooling” about in their cars, and I thought that was just wonderful! These new, social work jobs were expected to be long-term; the salary was better than for usual employment; and the young social workers talked about their work with pleasure. In describing their interest in what they were doing, the tone of their discussions was different from descriptions that came from women whose jobs did not offer the security of permanent employment, paid low wages and might involve unpleasant work.

No doubt there were others, but of Los Angeles’ African-American pioneers in social work during the mid-to late 1930s, those I remember were: Lucy Eason, Lucille Gibbs, Irma Hopkins, Helen Hudson, Juanita Miller, Etta Mae Pearl, Maurine Perkinson, Alma Thomas and Carmelita White. In the 1970s, social work students checked alumni records and discovered that in the early 1930s, Carmelita White was the first African-American to graduate from USC with a BA and a Certificate in Social Work. With that discovery, students and alumni entertained and honored her on several occasions.

In addition to the young African-Americans who were employed by the county welfare agency, a few worked in juvenile probation services. The Probation Department divided the countywide caseload of African-American boys between a Mr. Hurd, whose first name I don’t know, and Louis Tenette, whose daughter Lorraine Tenette Harris has been my close friend for years. Mrs. Hebe Mack Robinson was the probation officer for African-American girls. In the same period, Floyd Covington began his long, distinguished career as executive director of the Los Angeles Urban League

So, to summarize a long story: from these pioneers--some of whom I knew of as a child--I got the idea that they did important work; that they valued their jobs and enjoyed the work they did. But, those early impressions do not mark the point time when I decided that I wanted to be social worker.

My parents were from Oklahoma where schools were segregated. Before moving to California, my mother had been a teacher, and later was the supervising-teacher for schools for Negro children in a place called Wagoner County, in Oklahoma. So, in our house, there was sort of an unspoken assumption that I would grow up to do the same thing; and I went through elementary school, junior high and high school, and on to UCLA, expecting to become a teacher. At UCLA, I majored in Spanish with a minor in

history, and I planned to get a secondary credential and teach either in junior high or high school. However, when I graduated, the secondary credential required a year of post-graduate study; but I was ready to go to work.

Immediately after graduation, I started to look for a job; and the first thing I did was check all of the civil service offices to see what examinations were scheduled and which I was qualified to take. I sat for several exams, including one for *caseworker* for the Los Angeles County Department of Charities, Bureau of Public Assistance—the requirement being a BA degree, and no major was specified. In those days the Department of Charities was responsible for operations of the county hospitals, Rancho Los Amigos—then the county *poor farm*, and the Bureau of Public Assistance (BPA). The BPA comprised several district offices which were defined geographically, and collectively encompassed the whole county. The districts administered county General Relief assistance and varying combinations of the Social Security Act programs: Old Age Security, Aid to the Blind, Aid to Needy Children and Title V, Child Welfare Services.

I graduated in June 1948 and took the Bureau of Public Assistance (BPA) examination later that summer. Several weeks after the exam a post card came telling me that I passed; my name was on their *eligible list* and I could expect to be called for interviews by District Directors who might be hiring. In early October, a letter came by Frances Lomas, Director of the Belvedere District, asking me to confirm an appointment for an interview. Her office was located in East Los Angeles where I--Los Angeles native that I was--had never been before. But, I found my way there and appeared as scheduled. I don't remember our conversation, but I do recall that Miss. Lomas was an impressive person; cordial but non-committal. I had no sense of how she evaluated the interview when she ended by saying that there were others to be interviewed, and I would hear from her later.

Time passed! There was no word from Frances Lomas, and no other director contacted me. After more than a month, I had heard nothing and had given up on that prospect. But, on November 5th, a telegram came from Frances Lomas, saying that I had been selected to come to work at Belvedere, and that I should report on a given date, which I don't remember now. After what seemed like many months of unsuccessful job searching, I was relieved. The telegram came on my birthday, and I was delighted with the "*present*". I had always thought it was coincidental that the telegram came on my birthday; but years later Frances explained that she did not contact me sooner, because she had to wait until my birthday, when I would be 21, so I could be sworn in as Deputy County Clerk, as the job required.

When I took the exam for *caseworker*, passed it and went for the interview, I am sure I was influenced to explore that path by some recall of my impressions of the young social workers I had known as a child. When I was hired as a caseworker, without training, it was, in retrospect, my first step toward the ultimate decision to become a social worker. My starting salary was \$211, and there would be annual increments for five years to a high of \$255. It seemed like a great deal of money!

Belvedere District served the area in Los Angeles County that begins at Indiana Avenue on the west and extends east to include East Los Angeles, Montebello, Los Nietos, Norwalk and Whittier to the Orange County line. When I went to work there, the district carried the largest family caseload of all the districts and a significant segment of the clientele was Spanish speaking. So, while my Spanish major had not been of much value during my summer job search, it was the best I had to recommend me for this job

Belvedere was part of the county's public welfare system, but from the beginning I saw professional social work values and methods at work there. I soon learned from co-workers that Miss Lomas was an MSW; and that before coming to the district, she had been administrator of a Family Services Agency. As I became acquainted with my new place of employment, I saw that it operated much like a family-centered, social services agency. Among the districts, Belvedere had a unique reputation for its respectful treatment of clients and for providing more than minimal services. When clients moved out of the district, and had to deal with other districts, we noticed that they often moved back. The program at Belvedere included a Title V Child Welfare Services unit, and Miss Lomas required the supervisor and all of the workers to have MSWs. So, from the beginning I saw the work of professional social workers close at hand.

I was at Belvedere for a little more than five years, and my time there turned out to be one of the most interesting and enjoyable parts of my work life--and the foundation for my career in social work. I worked with two supervisors: Kurt Theis and Lucy Black Eason. Mr. Theis, my first supervisor, was the son of Sophie van Theis, a pioneer social work educator and researcher at the Columbia/New York School of Social Work. Mrs. Eason--by then coming to the end of her career--had been among the group of young social workers I had known of as child. Both were excellent teachers and guides for my apprentice years. I have always appreciated my good fortune in having the chance to work with them; and I remember them fondly.

As I look back, I began my work life in an uncommon public welfare agency, ably administered by Frances Lomas, whom we now know as Frances Lomas Feldman--then and now the quintessential social worker. I learned from good supervisors, and I soon found that I was sharing this new life with good colleagues. On my first day at work, I met Hannah Gildea whose desk would be right next mine. She was a graduate of Immaculate Heart College--with a BA and a Certificate in Social Work, and she had been at Belvedere for about 10 years when I came. So, with her experience and good company, she quickly became a reliable source of information, a role model and a friend. Belvedere provided a good beginning.

Milner: Could you tell me some of the positions that you held in social work after you left Belvedere?

Brown: About a year after I started to work, Frances Lomas left Belvedere for another assignment; and the District eventually lost the professionalism that had been the mark of her administration. Mrs. Eason was my second supervisor, and after we worked together for about five years, she announced that she planned to retire. Right away, she urged me

to take the supervisor's exam for promotion and to "move on". I remember, she said: "Don't just sit here until "*somebody dumb*" becomes your supervisor". Eventually, I took the exam, qualified and transferred, probably in 1955 or '56, to be a supervising caseworker at the Metropolitan South District.

As the name implies, the district office was located just south of downtown Los Angeles in a newly constructed, multi-story building, disparagingly called the *pink palace*. Metro South had a large staff, and it served a large clientele of General Relief recipients, including a considerable number of single men, and families who received Aid to Dependent Children. The District had two Child Welfare units and a Training and Staff-Development section. I knew that MSW degrees were required of the social workers in those sections and that both groups consulted with USC School of Social Work faculty members. Metro South, however, made no commitment to provide *enabling services* for its clients such as I had seen during my first years at Belvedere. In other words, it was a typical public welfare agency, and I worked there, supervising a unit of six caseworkers, until January 1960.

I did not like being a supervisor; and after a few years of it, I decided to look into the particulars of enrolling in an MSW program. In those days a grand mystique surrounded the business of applying and being admitted to schools of social work; but, when I compared what I had seen and appreciated about the model of service that applied during my early years in Belvedere with my work as a supervisor, I was sure I wanted a change.

Josephine Jordan Yelder, a friend from our UCLA days, by that time was an MSW from USC and a Training/Staff Development Supervisor at Metro South. She was an active alumna who made it abundantly clear that she valued her education, experience and on-going connections at USC, and she encouraged and helped many of us who were *not trained* to go back to school. When I told Jo that I might apply for USC's MSW program, she urged me to do it. She was my excellent consultant throughout the process; and when I learned that I was admitted, and would receive a U.S. Children's Bureau grant for tuition and maintenance, we celebrated.

In February 1960, our group of fifteen started MSW studies. We had been admitted into what was called the *Accelerated Program*. It was the first time offer of a program designed specifically for applicants with work experience in social services. We began classes and field instruction in the spring semester, and would complete first year requirements at the end of that school year's second summer session. Elizabeth McBroom taught several of our practice and behavior courses, and before long, we proudly began to describe ourselves as: "Dr. Mc Broom Social Workers". My field placement was with the American Red Cross, Family Service Division; Mrs. Craycraft, whose first name I don't remember, was the field instructor.

In the second year, our accelerated class joined the regular second year class. As recipient of a Children's Bureau stipend, I chose the casework/child welfare track. By then all of us had learned that the name *John Milner* and *excellence and progress in practice and education in child welfare* were synonymous. We also came to know that

your mark in both the field of child welfare services and juvenile corrections extended beyond USC to other schools of social work and to the practice community--in Los Angeles, statewide and beyond. Students always looked forward to the opportunity to study with you. You may not remember, but I do; in my second year of the program, you were my academic adviser; you supervised my field placement; you taught our practice classes in child welfare and child placement; and you were a member of my thesis committee. Here, at this interview, is my chance to say what a pleasure it is to have known you, now for more than forty years, first as a teacher, later a colleague but always a friend. Thank you for so many kindnesses.

For our second year field placement, one other student, Jean Hart, and I were at the California Youth Authority (CYA), Diagnostic Center in Norwalk. At the time, the Youth Authority was a California innovation in corrections, established for the purpose of rehabilitating juvenile offenders. The plan was for the Department to operate, throughout the state, several correctional facilities that were differentiated by program and the ages of wards they could receive. There were two diagnostic centers where wards, coming into the Youth Authority were sent first for six weeks study, diagnosis and assignment to the facility best suited to carry out the rehabilitation plan for each ward. The Norwalk Center received youngsters coming from California's southern counties.

Our field instructor was Ben Granger, who later followed a distinguished career--becoming dean of schools of social work at the universities of Kentucky, Tennessee and Colorado. With the cooperation of staff psychiatrists and psychologists as co-teachers, Ben provided us an excellent learning experience, which centered on the issues of adolescence, delinquency and rehabilitation. The instructors, however, also taught us to draw from those issues and consider the broader implications for family and child welfare services as practiced in other settings.

At the end of the placement, I left with a good opinion of the Youth Authority. The Norwalk Center had a promising although new and still developing program; and there was a good staff of, psychiatrists, psychologists, resident counselors, social workers and state credentialed teachers who seemed committed to the program's focus on rehabilitation.

Milner: Were you pleased with the USC School?

Brown: As I mentioned before, in those days, it was implied that you would see "*changes*" in your beliefs and behaviors when you went to social work school. Having heard that, I started the program with some misgivings, but before long, I saw value in what I was learning. I appreciated the logic and progression of the curriculum as well as the faculty's competence and the integrity of the instruction. The faculty's pride in the profession and their commitment to guide and help students acquire the knowledge and skills needed for good practice were evident. They seemed congenial and collegial; and we knew that they collaborated, among themselves and with agencies in the community, on special tasks and projects, always somehow concerned with improving practice.

Two years in the program required a lot of work! But, all along I considered it a productive experience, and I thought that the good reputation that attached to USC's MSW was deserved. However, the real value became evident when I started work. It was a pleasure, **and a relief**, to find that what I had learned at school was, indeed, what I was expected to know, to understand the implications and to apply at my new job

Milner: So, after you had practiced, you found the school useful to you?

Brown: Yes, I did.

Milner: Was Arlien Johnson the Dean of the school at the time you entered?

Brown: No. Dean Johnson retired at the end of the school year before our accelerated class was accepted and started to attend classes in February 1960. We came during Dean Stinson's first year and got to know him right off, because he was our instructor for the class in Social Work Ethics.

Milner: You missed a great lady!

Brown: I am sure that is true. However, the legacy that she left was right there when we arrived. It was apparent that the faculty, whom Dean Johnson had assembled and left in place, would preserve the school's long-standing reputation for commitment to the profession, to high standards for practice and to their role and responsibilities as social work educators. Nationally, their work was well known, respected, and influential. USC social work graduates were well regarded—and in demand.

Many of us who joined the faculty later were committed to that same model of social work education.

Milner: June, what was your thesis topic?

Brown: The question reminds me of what I have not remembered for a very long time, and that is, when I was a MSW student, a thesis was required to graduate. In the second year, each of us chose a topic from which we were to design, develop and complete a thesis; or course, with guidance, supervision and final approval, of a faculty committee. I did my study at my field placement agency, the Norwalk Diagnostic Center, which I already mentioned. My topic was "*The Young Offender's Perception of His Day in Juvenile Court*", and my faculty committee was: Norris Class, chairman and you, John, and Marvin Freedman were the members.

Milner: Following your Masters Degree in social work, what did you do?

Brown: The Children's Bureau required recipients of its stipends to commit to work, one year for each year of funded study, in a Title V, public, child welfare services agency; and my commitment was to work for L A. County's, still relatively new, Division of Child Welfare Services.

Of all things, I was assigned to the unit in Belvedere District. Lucile Beebe was the supervisor; and again, I had fortune's favor. Miss Beebe was an MSW from USC with many years of experience in child welfare. She too was a model professional; a skillful mid-level administrator and supervisor and a good person. She had been a child welfare supervisor for many years in the county's old, decentralized plan. When the new Division of Child Welfare Services was formed in 1957, she and a unit of six child welfare workers were located in the Belvedere district. She was responsible for managing all child welfare services in that sizeable geographic area and for providing consultation and supervision pertinent to the work of six social workers, as we provided the direct services. It was a pleasure to work with her and the staff who, for the most part, were good colleagues. And, I was pleased to be back in the district, because its communities were modest in scale, the client-population was smaller than in the metropolitan districts; and the work, although complex, sometimes disappointing and always demanding, seemed manageable.

I worked there for four years—more or less.

Milner: Then, how long was it before you decided to go for an advanced degree?

Brown: I had worked for the Division for about four years when I took a leave to work for the State Department of Social Welfare in their Child Welfare Services Bureau in Sacramento. I worked there for about a year and a half; but the job was deadly, with little purpose—a real example of bureaucratic over staffing.

I resigned, returned to Los Angeles and went back to Child Welfare Services. Instead of returning to Belvedere, however, I went to MacLaren Hall in El Monte. MacLaren was the site for a unit of workers designated by the Division to plan and provide shelter-care for children who, in crisis situations, had been picked up by the police and brought to MacLaren Hall for protective care. The rule was, however, that those children had to be replaced within 72 hours. Our job was to make the initial assessment. Unless it was clear that a child could return home safely, the staff at MacLaren would arrange shelter care in licensed, foster homes, designated that purpose only. The children would be in shelter care while the case was being transferred to the appropriate district, as determined by the family's residence, and assigned to a regular placement worker who, in turn, would make appropriate assessments and longer-term plans.

I worked at MacLaren about a year before I applied to the doctoral program.

Milner: What encouraged you to go on for an advanced degree?

Brown: Probably, I should be able to say that I thought about it, considered it carefully and decided that I was ready to leave practice and prepare to go into social work education; but that is not what happened. What happened was: One afternoon I was at USC for alumni business. I was in the reception area, waiting for a committee to gather, when Norris Class walked out of his office. He saw me and said: Oh, hello. And, with

no further ado—as we remember was his way--he said: “I am very glad to see you. I have a Children’s Bureau fellowship for doctoral study in Child Welfare, and I think you should take it.

Milner: Very good.

Brown: My first response was: What? Then, he said he thought I should consider it and get back to him—soon. I thought about it and finally decided: Why not? So, you see, the notion of my going into the doctoral program was not the result of long-time inquiry and decision-making on my part to leave practice and prepare to teach. However, I did apply and was accepted into USC’s DSW program to begin studies in Fall 1966. By then, child welfare had been the focus of my MSW studies; and all of my work experience—even before the MSW--had been with families and children; so I was pleased to receive the Children’s Bureau’s fellowship for two years study and research in the field.

When Norrie Class taught his first year, social policy classes in the masters program, he always was at pains to appraise his students of the significance of the 1912 statute that created the U.S. Children’s Bureau with the charge: “...*to investigate and report on all matters pertaining to the life and welfare of children and child life among all classes of our people*” and to introduce students to the literature that would show the Bureau’s methods, advocacy skills, persistence and notable successes in achieving very significant reforms for children. We should remember that the 20th century--at least through the 1960s-- was often referred to as the “Century of the Child”; and the work and accomplishments of the Children’s Bureau had a lot to do with that.

From learning those things, I came to admire the Children’s Bureau, its small staff of women and their more than half-century of achievement for children and youth which included such major reforms as: nationwide expansion of the juvenile court; universal, compulsory, free public education; child labor reforms, mother’s aid; maternal and children’s health services and provision and regulation of social services for dependent children. So, when I was accepted into the doctoral program to study the child welfare field and its practices, with the support of a Children’s Bureau fellowship, I knew I had come upon a very special opportunity, and I was grateful for it. The doctoral program gave me time, place and structure to study the history and traditions of the field; to trace new trends, proposals, policies, programs and practice; and to observe the many contributions that California’s child welfare community, including the child welfare faculty at USC, was making to the national effort.

Once classes began and I was on campus again, I discovered that Norrie--and you John—were consultants for the Children’s Bureau. At the time, Annie Lee Sandusky, who was a member of the Bureau staff, and Norris Class were working together on a project; and she came to the campus periodically to meet with him. A few years before, Jo Yelder and I took a Greyhound bus to San Diego to attend a Child Welfare League conference where Mrs. Sandusky would be the featured speaker. We were eager to hear her presentation and to see her, because in our minds she was a model of professionalism. When she

came to campus to consult with Norris, I was surprised and impressed; and, eventually, I had the pleasure of meeting her, and talking with her..

Mrs. Sandusky was the only African-American member of the Bureau's staff, and likely the first to work there. She went to the Bureau from the *Atlanta School*—and, therefore brought both her expertise in child welfare and a social work educator's point of view. In later years, I have wondered if she might have been the one to propose that the Bureau, which traditionally gave stipends to prepare practitioners, might also designate stipends, like the one I received, for doctoral study in order to expand the resource for schools of social work to develop curricula and teach, specifically for the field of child welfare. I don't know if that was the case, but I did learn from her writings, that Mrs. Sandusky was among the first to call on the child welfare establishment to extend its reach to provide protection and services to children of color whom the field traditionally had not served. Later, as the Bureau's *Consultant for Services to Children in Their Own Homes*, she identified the potential of Title V, public child welfare programs--if developed to provide comprehensive family/child welfare services, in line with professional standards—to be a ready resource that could be tapped to extend help to children theretofore not served.

Milner: Were you pleased with your doctoral training?

Brown: At the beginning, the experience was not as I expected. But once I was oriented to the process--while the work seemed all time-consuming, and there were ups and downs--I came to appreciate the experience and to see the value and potential application of what I was learning. I liked the curriculum, the faculty's obvious enthusiasm for the program and their investment in the teaching/learning processes and outcomes.

We were a class of 10, and in the first year we took the same required classes, which introduced us to the generic base of social work knowledge from which each of us studied, made inferences and sought implications relative to our various specializations. As we proceeded in the program, Helen Northen, whose scholarship and writing on theories of group process and social work practice are often cited and continue to be influential nationally and abroad, would tell us that the objective of a doctoral program was to teach the skills of scholarship. To that end, the faculty designed and delivered a good doctoral curriculum for our class, and supported each of us as we learned and, from that foundation, developed our skills in relation to our own purposes. In my opinion, the content of Northen's doctoral class, *Theories of Social Work Practice*, provided a valuable perspective, on the incremental yet progressive development of the knowledge base for professional practice, which still might offer a framework to order and enable progress in social work education and research--now and into the future.

Early **in the first year**, Norrie Class suggested that I might want to do a *field placement* (certainly, not typical in doctoral study) at the Frostig Center for Educational Therapy. I did, and it proved to be a good complement to the heavy dose of class and library work. It was time well spent. Mary Oi, a USC alumna, was Chief Social Worker at the center, and she generously planned and supervised my work there. **In the second year**, the unanticipated benefit from the research for my dissertation was that I gained what I still

think of as a valuable view of the history and evolution of the child welfare field in the U.S. and in California—major issues, controversies, and evolving trends in caring for dependent children--from initial developments in the 1870s up to 1970, when I finished my work. **In the third and last year**, thanks to a National Institute of Mental Health, Career Teacher grant, I was more than fortunate to undertake my first teaching assignment as a learner, with Norrie as mentor; rather than as a member of a faculty.

As our class was finishing last tasks for graduation, Maurice Hamovitch, long-time member of USC's, faculty, became the new Dean. In my opinion, the hallmark of his deanship was twofold: first, he always honored and promoted the School's best traditions. He also brought vision, innovation and a deft hand in leading the School—faculty and students--to recognize, acknowledge and respond, pro-actively and constructively, to the needs of a new era.

I was clearing up loose ends for the dissertation; I was into my second semester of *career teaching*, and planning for employment. At the time, schools of social work were experiencing a “*new teachers*” market; and from several offers, I had decided I would go to the University of Pennsylvania. However, before final arrangements and commitments were made, Dean Hamovitch invited three members of our doctoral class—Bertha Simos, Sam Taylor and me—to stay on at USC. The invitation came as a surprise, but it was welcome! It meant I could continue to live in Los Angeles; and instead of facing a world of unknowns, I would join a faculty that I knew, whose work I had experienced and that I admired. And, as you know, that was my last career choice, because I taught at USC for 24 years until I retired in 1992.

So, back to answer your question: Yes, I was pleased with my doctoral studies, and I am forever grateful for Norrie Class's scholarly, wise, always timely and generous mentoring through my doctoral study and during my early teaching years. And from all of that, I enjoyed, and I still value, my many good years in social worked education at USC.

Milner: What was your dissertation subject?

Brown: The title was, “*Safeguarding Adoption in California—1870-1969: A Study in Public Policy Formulation*”. My method was library/documents research, not statistical analysis. In January 1970, the faculty committee approved and signed my dissertation. In case you don't remember, the committee changed from my MSW thesis days, but only a little. Again, Norrie, was the chairman; and you, John, and Frances Feldman were the members.

The study's objective was to account for the enactment and changes in the law and policy that prescribed adoption in California from the initial statute, as enacted in 1870, thru its major changes, over the span of a century, when I finished my work in 1969. Within the framework of notable, national and state trends in child welfare, my research of documents and literature, 1) traced the 100 years evolution of: California's adoption law, interpretive policies and social services; 2) accounted for the then current status of the law and related social services; 3) identified the *unfinished business*.

Perhaps California's most important achievement in adoption policy was the statute, enacted in 1947, that allocated state funds to enable the counties to provide *public* adoption services.

Milner: It seems unbelievable that California was so slow in changing their adoption practices.

Brown: Yes, it does. Actually, by 1946 it was learned that adoption, for all of California, was in the hands of one private agency, the Children's Home Society. In the years immediately after World War II, demand in the state for adoption services grew notably as did illegal "adoption markets", and lay criticism of the rigidity of adoption agencies' practices—all of which created a sense of crisis. As a result, a statewide survey was commissioned and the report, which was released in 1946, confirmed a near void in adoption services. The legislature acted quickly and in, 1947, approved state funding for public adoption services that would be administered by the counties

Los Angeles was the third county to take the option, and the Bureau of Adoptions—later, the Department of Adoptions--was established in 1949, purposefully apart from the county's long established child welfare services. Alma Jean Worly Hill, from the Chicago School of Social Work, and Elizabeth Kimbro, from USC, both young, African-American women, were members of the original staff. They still live in Los Angeles; and the Archives Committee for Oral Histories may want to ask them for interviews.

Milner: Are there any other differences between the early adoption practices and present? Not in the way that practice may be particular to a specific agency but present practice in the generic sense.

Brown: In 1911 the California Legislature enacted the law that would require the Board of Charities and Corrections to license and supervise the work of all *child-caring societies* in the state. The requirement quickly narrowed the field, as the infamous "*baby-farms*" disappeared, and the operations of several *societies* simply did not come up to standard for licensing. Among those that were licensed, only two--the Children's Home Society and the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West: Central Committee—provided adoption services.

Like all proper adoption agencies, the two California societies chose to develop as social service agencies, and the practice model included such guidelines as: 1) *Relinquishment with caution*: to prevent unnecessary or unwise separation of a child from its own family, although mores of the times put tremendous pressure on unmarried mothers to relinquish; 2) *In depth investigation*: to prevent placing *undesirable children* in *inferior homes*--principles that favored economically advantaged applicants and put agencies always in search of "*blue ribbon babies*"; thereby, precluding adoption opportunities for children described as: *older, unattractive, handicapped* or *difficult*. Minority children simply were not served; 3) *Matching*: to emphasized similarity of physical characteristics between applicants and the child they would adopt.

After mid-century, given the shortcomings of past practices, the emergence of new knowledge and mounting lay criticism, the Children's Bureau, and other leaders in the field, had begun to re-think traditional practice and proposed a new goal for child welfare services, including adoption, which was: "*For every child, a family of his own*". Ultimately, old practices were left behind, and a new model emerged in which an adoptable child was redefined as: *any child who needed a permanent family*; and suitable adoptive applicants were *persons who, on the basis study and assessment, show potential to be good parents*.

I don't know current practice in adoptions, but I hope it is safe to assume that the inclusive model still holds. I also assume that public adoption agencies are the primary means of accessing agency-based services. Otherwise, *independent adoptions*, arranged by attorneys and physicians, are legal in California

Milner: Very good. I know that in addition to your dissertation you have written a number of articles. Can you tell me what these were?

Brown: I had learned from my dissertation work that prevailing thought favored a redesign of child welfare services. Leaders in the field were saying that services needed to broaden their reach in to include all children who might need protection, care and a stable family-life.

Traditionally, protective services, if available; placement and out-of-home care services; and adoption were discrete programs operating within the boundaries of separate agencies. The new proposal was that the field could better serve dependent children and their families if agencies were organized and prepared to offer family services and protective services; placement and out-of-homecare; and adoptions as a continuum. With this model, applicants would be served according to assessed need rather than having the *case plan* determined by an agency's only service—with all of the difficulties involved in negotiating across agency lines when an assessment would indicate the need to move from one level of service to the next. I was persuaded that the proposals for consolidating services were valid, so I only wrote one article on adoptions, and it was written from that point of view. The title was, "Adoption: Its Place and Purpose in a Contemporary Concept of Child Welfare Services", published in Social Work Papers--well after I finished the dissertation.

The second category of my writing reflected the impact of the Civil Rights Movement and the Women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In that context, universities were urged, often pressured, to change traditional hiring, recruitment and admissions practices so that higher education—faculty, students, curricula, teaching and research—would come to reflect and respond to the racial/ethnic/gender make-up of the population. By the time I joined the USC faculty, in 1969-1970, the issue of *diversity*—precursor of today's concerns about *culturally competent, social work practice*--had become a major issue for the profession; and over the years I wrote some in that area.

In fact, very soon after I started to teach, the Council on Social Work Education established, within the organization, a section to address the implications of *diversity* for the profession in general and for social work education in particular, and to make recommendations. Carl Scott, from metropolitan New York's, social work community, was appointed to head the Council's new unit; and with his leadership, the program developed quite equitably, relative to the interests and perspectives of the various constituent racial/ethnic groups. In the long term, their contributions influenced the work of the Council and the profession through the 1970s and into the early 1980s, when Scott retired. Arcelis Francis succeeded him.

Scott began by organizing a task force of each constituent group. James Leigh of the University of Washington and I were among the original members of the Black Task Force and both of us were pleased to affiliate with the group, and its changing membership, until our respective retirements in the 1990s.. The Task Force met for the first time in June 1970, in Cleveland, at Case Western Reserve. Patricia Morisey, of Fordham University, was the first chair. Genevieve Hill, Dean of the Atlanta School, was the long-term chair, serving from the early 1970s until she retired in the early 1980s. During those years, I wrote articles for the publication, Black Task Force Reports. On the same subject—*diversity from the black, or African-American, perspective*--I also wrote articles and book reviews and presented at conferences—often from a child welfare perspective.

My primary writing, however, was in child welfare. Soon after Maurie Hamovitch became Dean, the school decided to redesign the MSW curriculum. Over time, the practice community had indicated that graduates would be best prepared for work at their first jobs not only with knowledge and skills for integrated methods practice **but also** they should come with perspective, knowledge and skills that are particular to the agency's field of practice. The new curriculum was planned, therefore, to offer second year "*concentrations*" in: Community Organization, Planning and Administration; Family and Children's Services; Health Services; Industrial Social Work and Mental Health Services. In-coming students would take first year, foundation courses in all sequences; in the second year they would choose a concentration according to their career interests.

Dean Hamovitch asked me to chair the Family and Children's Services concentration. The curriculum that our faculty developed derived from our *family practice* model and was the basis for two publications that, in my opinion, were my best contribution to the literature. *Family practice*, with its service continuum, combined traditional child welfare methods for placement services, including adoptions, with theories and methods for family centered interventions, in the range from preventive and developmental services to family rehabilitation which are applicable when working with children in their own homes, in foster-family care or in an adoptive home. The model also requires community organization and planned research—distinguished from unrelated inquiries—to be integral parts of the program in all family and children's service agencies. *Family practice* is a comprehensive model and was the product of extensive collaboration. The publications were:

1. June Brown, Wilbur Finch, Helen Northen, Samuel Taylor, Marie Weil, Child, Family, Neighborhood: A Master Plan for Social Service Delivery, New York: Child Welfare League of America, 1982.
2. June Brown and Marie Weil, eds., Family Practice: A curriculum Plan for Social Services, Washington, D.C.: Child Welfare League of America, 1992.

Milner: Have you written any books since then?

Brown: No. The second book, Family Practice was published in 1992. I retired in June 1992, and since I retired, I have not written in the field. My project in retirement was to research, compile and write a history of my mother's family. I finished it last year and distributed it among my surviving relatives. I called it, The Coopers: A Family Record. The search made for quite an adventure.

Milner: June, do you feel that the services that the system provides to families today has improved or has it declined?

Brown: In my opinion, **the best years for public child welfare services in Los Angeles were from April 1957 until sometime in 1967, or soon after.** Some background information should explain how I come by that opinion.

Before the Depression, dependent children in the United States were cared for primarily by private agencies, but with the New Deal, the Social Security Act, Title V provided federal funds to help the states develop *public services for dependent children in rural areas*. Since then, public child welfare in Los Angeles County seems to have developed in three phases, and a brief account of each phase may give some insight into the program's present state.

It is hard to imagine now, but I remember reading somewhere that once Title V grants were available, Los Angeles easily qualified, because there still were many rural communities in the county. Title V, however, provide funds only if the Children Bureau approved the *county plan* for services. **Some time after 1935, the Los Angeles county plan obviously was approved; federal funds granted; and the program for public child welfare services established.** Apparently, the early plan provided for at least one such unit in each county welfare district. For years after, administration was decentralized, and the operation, and quality of Los Angeles' public child welfare services varied from district to district, according to each director's preference.

The second phase began in April 1957, when the Division of Child Welfare Services was created as a discrete agency within the Bureau of Public Assistance (BPA), one of three parts of the overall Department of Charities. Harriet Erickson, MSW from the University of Chicago, was appointed Director of the new agency; and Marian Peterson, MSW from USC, was named Assistant Director. A change from decades of decentralized administration, Erickson/Peterson became the single administrative authority for the new Division, with responsibility: 1) to decide standards for personnel,

program and the use of placement facilities; 2) to plan, implement and oversee the delivery of services for Los Angeles County's dependent children, in or in need of, out-of-home placement and care.

Again, at least one child welfare services unit would be located in each of the county welfare districts; and, as needed, there would be two or more units in the metropolitan districts. From the beginning, the staff of the Division was diverse. Two African-Americans, Elizabeth Hampton Robinson, MSW from USC, 1949 and long time child welfare worker in the old system; and Florence Duncan, MSW from UCLA, were among the new agency's first supervisors. Over the years, the direct service staff, my self included, comprise the range of racial/ethnic groups.

The Division was created in April 1957. Erickson/Peterson first consulted with the Children's Bureau; and by June 1957, they had applied to begin the process for the agency to become an accredited, member-agency of the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA). In October 1957, the League's field consultant, Edna Hughes, conducted the first on site field study and made recommendations for personnel and program changes that would be required for the agency to meet accreditation requirements. Ms Hughes submitted the report and recommendations to the League, and on June 30, 1958, the agency was voted a provisional member. After the recommended changes were accomplished, Erickson/Peterson asked for the second site visit. Ms Hughes returned January 3-13, 1961; and based on her findings and final report, the agency was voted an accredited member of CWLA in early 1961.

From the start, Erickson and Peterson allied the new agency with the professional community, thus assuring that as the program developed, administrators and staff would have on-going access to knowledge and standards that defined good practice. Within three years, the new Division of Child Welfare Services was an accredited member of the Child Welfare League—a certification rarely sought by a public agency (note, however: from the late 1980s, into the '90s and perhaps still, Stanislaus County's CWS agency was accredited; the director/administrator was Marcina Buck, MSW from USC). This is not to imply that the Division had resolved all of the problems of family breakdown and child dependency nor that accreditation assured that staff would always achieve perfect, or hoped for, outcomes for all children in care. However, among the administrators and staff, there was a prevailing sense of responsibility to know and honor the requirements of good practice; and so far as I ever knew, or read, during the agency's ten year tenure, there was not a single case of tragic endangerment or death of a child in its care.

The Division of Child Welfare Services began with promise. It maintained a professional staff; honored its commitment to professional standards for practice and service delivery; developed its program in a planned and measured way; and, operated as a CWLA accredited agency until the late 1960s. However, in 1967 embezzlement by an agency secretary, of OASDHI funds that the Division was allowed to hold in savings accounts for children in care, was discovered and extensively reported in the media. The scandal was not of Erickson/Peterson's making, but it occurred on their watch; and administrative changes followed. Ultimately, the Division was phased out; the staff and services were

returned to the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). Soon, DPSS announced that social work education would no longer be held as a “rigid” requirement of child welfare services personnel; and soon again, CWLA accreditation was withdrawn.

Perhaps the Division of Child Welfare Services, its administrators and staff’s real contribution was that a foundation was set from which Los Angeles County might have developed and maintained a program of services for dependent children in line with professional standards--as stipulated then but surely would change with time. Instead, after Erickson/Peterson left and the agency was dismantled, operations changed, accreditation was lost; and given the changes that followed, child welfare services in Los Angeles has been on a down-path ever since.

The third phase began in 1983 or ‘84, when a reporter at the Los Angeles Times revealed in the news that grievous harm had come to a child in DPSS care. I don’t remember the facts of the case, but I do recall that it was reported that the Department had been negligent. First revelations were followed by an extended investigation from which the Times published a series of articles which, in effect, censured the Department for providing unreliable protection and poor services to children entrusted to its care.

At the initiative of Board member Ed Edelman, the County Board of Supervisors appointed a task force to investigate child welfare operations. Task force members were administrators of county departments responsible for various public services for children, (adoptions, health, mental health, probation, schools, etc.); professionals from private, child welfare service agencies; community leaders concerned with various aspects of child advocacy; and a member of the social work faculty at UCLA and I were the social work educators on the panel..

I won’t go into a long account of the Task Force; suffice to say, that in the end, the majority recommended that the Board of Supervisors create a separate Department of Children’s Services to encompass: protective services, placement services and adoptions. The recommendation was supported by the full text of the *Task Force Report* that included the rationale for a separate department and specific recommendations, from the perspectives, experience and expertise of Task Force members, for the structure and operations of the new Department, (albeit, over the years, none of the Department’s administrators appear to have read it or found it useful). The Board of Supervisors voted to approve the Task Force’s recommendation and created the Department of Children’s Services (DCS) in 1984. In the years since, the L.A. Times has been a notably consistent monitor and reporter of the Department’s work and the voice for the community’s dependent children.

Soon after the Department of Children’s Services was created, and the Department of Adoptions incorporated into it, CWLA accreditation for adoption services was withdrawn. Now going into its 20th year of operation, the Department has never been accredited; and the picture that emerges, from reports by the Grand Jury and the media, is that the program and quality of services at DCS fall far short of acceptable standards.

It should be said, however, that **DCS, later called the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), was created and has operated in difficult times.**

A crucial setback for child welfare occurred at the onset of the Nixon administration, into the **1970s**, as the U.S. Children's Bureau, with its then aging staff, lost its place as research center and advocate for the nation's children; lost its role as arbiter of standards for the national network of child welfare services programs; and, for all intents and purposes, disappeared from the national scene. The loss of leadership and presence of this arm of the federal government, which over six decades achieved so much for the nation's children is surely an example of what author, Adam Hochschild, has called: "...one of the great, fragile triumphs of the 20th century."

In the **1980s**, the old Title V plan for funding and oversight of public child welfare services was replaced by new federal legislation--PL 96-272: Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980. The new law would provide grants to the states--75% federal monies/25% state matching funds—if they, and their counties, would replace traditional child welfare services, i.e. child placement and out of home care services, with expanded programs that must include: 1) *family preservation services to prevent unnecessary separation of families*; 2) *child placement, out of home care and family reunification services*; and when family reunification is not accomplished; 3) *permanency planning services, either for adoption or for planned, long-term foster care.*

Under Title V, states and counties were accountable for responsible use of federal funds and for the quality of their programs. With PL 96-272, the states were only fiscally accountable. Once *state plans* under the new law were in and approved, there was a dramatic increase in the flow of federal funds to the states, and *public child welfare services became big business!* Absent the U.S. Children's Bureau, and with no comparable replacement, there would be no federal leadership, expertise other assistance to the states and counties in developing the newly prescribed social services; nor would there be prescribed standards, supervision and consultation to assure and improve the quality of the programs.

Soon after PL 96-272 passed, a small group of Department of Social Welfare staff and congressional aids, called a meeting to brief California's county welfare administrators on the provisions and requirements of the new law. I attended the meeting; and in the course of the discussions, I remember a SDSW staff person gleefully stating: "Now, we will be trading state quarters for federal dollars!" Later in the meeting, staff people read and commented on the services the counties would be required to provide in order to qualify for the new funds; but no one mentioned, or seemed to understand--or to care about--the scope and implications of the *services task*.

In time, concern grew, nationwide, for what seemed to be *increasing troubles* in child welfare services; and by the end of the decade several surveys had confirmed the misgivings. In 1989, a publication of the House of Representatives sub-committee on Children and Youth said: "...*Our children are un-served, underserved, and inappropriately served.*" The following year, a publication of the Association of Public

Welfare Administrators (APWA) said: “...*America’s CWS system is under stress and in crisis!*”

That was the context in which Los Angeles Department of Children’s (DCS) services was created in 1984. Adding mightily to the woes, there a dramatic increase in the Los Angeles County caseload from 3,475 in 1961, when the Division of Child Welfare Services was first accredited, to 60,000 or more by the early 1990s. In addition, those hired as administrators for the Department, brought education and experience that may have prepared them to access maximum PL 96-272 funds, manage and account for large budgets and run a sizeable bureaucracy. But, nothing in their declared backgrounds, prepared them to plan, develop and oversee PL 96-272’s mandated services; and no one ever made use of the child welfare field’s traditional administrative position: the Associate or Assistant Director for Program. It followed, that the Department has seen the dismissal of a series of administrators, because investigations and reports, over the years, reveal patterns of services and procedures that have left many children in harm’s way. In effect, Los Angeles County’s Department of Children’s Services has served many children poorly and has disappointed the hopes and expectations that some of us had for it.

Milner: So, with quality service sidetracked, what do you see any future that is hopeful?

Brown: Any move to bring DCS services up to standard will reckon with loss. Next to the harm that has come to many children in the Department’s care, I think the greatest loss has been the disengagement from the professional community and consequently from accepted standards of practice. Disengagement, in effect, has separated the Department’s administration, staff, and the children in its care from child welfare’s substantial knowledge base and, therefore, from the requirements and standards of practice that derive from it.

Any hope for improvement would derive from the *long-view* that tells us that American society, in its historical span, has experienced many negative circumstances. However, the human mind and will, at some point in time, seem to move to correct unacceptable conditions. I certainly hope that soon there will be a reaction against American society’s terrible, progressive neglect, over the last three decades, of: family life; the health, safety, education, and development of our children and youth; and the social systems that should support and enhance them. *Good, public child welfare services* would be one of the systems.

Milner: I hope you are right.

Your early experiences were in the correctional field, but social work seems to have moved away from their interests in corrections. Would you like to comment on that?

Brown: Given the influence of the Juvenile Court over time, juvenile corrections, in some locales, adopted rehabilitation, rather than mere punishment, as a purpose of detention and as the proper objective of programs in juvenile, correctional institutions. In

the early 1960s, when I was at the Youth Authority, I soon learned that theoreticians, in various parts of the country, were working to identify and remedy the developmental problems of adolescence that seemed to manifest in delinquent behavior. The focus was to identify probable causes of delinquency, with particular interest in the dynamics of gang affiliation, and to search for effective corrective strategies—especially ways of redirecting gang activity to constructive attitudes and behaviors. A number of nationally publicized studies and projects were in progress. Important work was being done at the University of Chicago and in other parts of the country--including the Los Angeles County, Juvenile Probation Department's Group Guidance Project and the work of a Los Angeles social agency called Special Services for Groups.

Social workers were leaders and participants in several of these studies. I really don't know where the separation began; whether corrections no longer wanted the social work influence in its operations or if social workers less and less wanted careers in that field. By current accounts, the effort has ended, and punishment has replaced rehabilitation as the purpose in juvenile corrections. Again, my sources are news accounts--because I have not been close that practice since the early '60s—but there have been several reports of troubles at California Youth Authority facilities, and those articles describe a system that has deteriorated to just terrible conditions. The reports suggest that in less than a half-century, the California Youth Authority has gone from being a Department with a program that was new, innovative, and a model for other states--to become a system that operates now with some of the worst characteristics of old prisons. It is a terrible loss.

Milner: It certainly is.

Milner: Do you have any comments to make about the institutionalization of children and ways that it might have changed?

Brown: In what I think of as the *better days for child welfare services in Los Angeles*, indefinite institutional placement was **not** an acceptable plan. Most often, the choice of an institutional placement would be to provide a therapeutic experience as a first step in progressing with a plan to return a child to his/her own home, or to move into a foster family placement or into adoption. While family-care as the ultimate plan was not always achieved, we worked with that objective in mind; and with very few exceptions the objective was met. Exceptions tended to be adolescents, particularly boys, who either came in to care, or required replacement, when they already were teenagers. Always, our most difficult recruitment task was to find foster families who would be suitable, and would agree, to care for adolescents, especially boys.

Then, child-care institutions in Los Angeles were such old-line agencies as: the Episcopal Home, Five Acres, Maryvale, Pacific Lodge, Rosemary Cottage, Vista del Mar, and some others. Their programs were multifaceted; they were professionally administered and staffed, and the Division of Child Welfare Services staff was well acquainted with the character and quality of their services. The Division **purchased group care services, it did not contract out**; the difference being that the Division's social workers were responsible for making the service plan; visited regularly; monitored for progress and

were party to any important decisions that pertained to children in institutional care. In fact, Edna Hughes' 1961 report to CWLA, recommending the Division's accreditation, said: "Where out-of-home care is purchased in this county, it is more responsibly setup and carried out by both the public and private agencies than is generally the case elsewhere."

Now a days, the Grand Jury, media, and concerned citizens have expressed alarm as the Department **contracts out** for institutional or small group care of children; and the same sources have reported occurrences of poor care, injury and even the death of children in such placements. But by force of *parens patriae*, the Department is obligated to do its own work in that regard.

It is likely that there always will be a need for the specialized services of children's institutions. However, as a part of child welfare's move into *big business*, there have been dramatic increases in payment rates to child-care institutions, in the number of new institutions, and movement in and out of the system. All of these make accurate assessments of group settings and their services a more difficult but still essential task.

Milner: What year did you retire?

Brown: I retired June 1992. It's hard to believe, but it has been more than ten years.

Milner: You told me once that when time came for you to retire, you were going to find yourself a tree and sit under it. Did you ever find that tree?

Brown: Well, where I live now there are lots of trees but none in the immediate area of my house. There is a small patio, but I rarely sit there.

Milner: Are you enjoying your retirement?

Brown: Yes indeed! It is hard to imagine that ten years could have gone by so quickly. It has been a pleasant time, marred only by losses of family, friends and colleagues, as the generation begins to come to its end; and by my disappointment at seeing Child Welfare Services, the field of practice to which my work life was committed, forgo opportunities and lose ground.

Milner: June, do you have anything to add that you would like to say?

Brown: No John, I don't. I have talked a lot, and you have had to hear quite enough.

Milner: Thank you very much, June; let's pray that it is all on tape.