

John Milner Interview

Conducted by Elizabeth McBroom in February 1988, at the home of Professor McBroom. Subject: experiences in the military and in teaching (1946 – 1972)

MCBROOM: Would you say something about the social work community and the general community in San Francisco in those early war years?

MILNER: At the time I arrived in San Francisco they were very short of men in human services agencies because of the war. There were two or three quite good agencies; the Public Welfare Agency I think was doing a very good job at the time. Family Service of America Association, headed by a woman named Nellie Woodward, was also doing a good job. She had recruited a staff that was well qualified, and finally, the Children's Protective Agency, where I affiliated, was good and developing into a major agency.

One agency that was questionable was San Francisco's Children Agency; I cannot remember the exact title. A woman named Kitty Feldman, who very much like Mother Ryther in Seattle, had headed it. She had ruled child welfare in the whole Bay-area with a high hand. She had raised money and built quite a beautiful physical plant for the agency. She had it all decorated like a nursery with little bitsy elves and so forth around it. She was a cat lover and kept several cats in the agency. Kitty had died just before I came to San Francisco. There was a rumor that there had been three funerals held for her, one in San Francisco, one in Oakland and one in Berkeley – whether that is true or not I do not know. I do know, however, that when I visited the agency, I was amazed to find a black wreath hanging in the reception room with dried flowers on it. This was the kind of reception that families bringing in their children would meet. It was rather amusingly referred to as "Kitty's Cathouse". The cats still lived in the agency long after she was gone. While Kitty lived, she really felt the Children's Protective Agency was her enemy because it did not comply with her way of thinking about how child welfare should be done.

The interesting thing for me there was that I got to know many of the leading citizens of San Francisco who volunteered their time on boards and community organizations.

They took a very serious and responsible interest in promoting good social services in that city. Out of this I learned a great deal about administration. I would meet with Board committees and had opportunity to get to know many of them personally. Some of them became long term friends of mine, including Billie Chichester, who later was a member of the National Board of the Child Welfare League and active in social services throughout California. In many ways I hated to leave San Francisco because it was an enjoyable experience. To go to war from that city I felt a great loss.

MCBROOM: You were drafted into the Army in 1942?

MILNER: Yes, I was.

MCBROOM: John, you were sent to Pearl Harbor?

MILNER: That is right.

MCBROOM: Tell me about your entry into the Army and how you got into a social work assignment in the Army.

MILNER: I was drafted in San Francisco and immediately sent by truck to the Presidio just outside of Carmel. I was there for a number of days until I was fully inducted. I remember going through the line and being interviewed by a corporal who had the job of giving you a classification number. When I told him that I was a social worker he had the strangest expression on his face. He then turned to his sergeant and said, "Jesus Christ, we even have one of them! Where do you put them?" That statement was indicative, I thought, of the status of social work in the military at that time. From San Francisco, I was sent by train to Abilene, Texas for basic training at an enormous Army camp there. They too had difficulty in knowing where to place me.

MCBROOM: Was this induction experience into the Army a shock experience in some ways?

MILNER: Yes, particularly at my age because most of the men coming in with me were 18 – 20 and I was 29, so I was the 'old man' in the group being inducted. I found it interesting and was curious about the whole Army procedure. I think I did not resent it and thought I might learn from it – which I did. In Texas we were kept in tents in a godforsaken camp.

They thought that perhaps I would make a good motor pool officer until they found that I did not know an exhaust pipe from a spark plug. Then they thought they would make me a clerk and put me into a typing class. I had not volunteered that I had military training as an undergraduate in the university because I did not feel that I had gained much from that experience.

MCBROOM: You had been in ROTC?

MILNER: I had been in ROTC, which was compulsory, but I did not report this. I was kept in basic training for about a three-month period, then I was sent to a camp outside of San Francisco to await shipment overseas. Most of the time was spent loading and unloading cookies. I remember that one time I got into trouble for eating one as did some of the other men.

We were then told that we were 'on alert' to be shipped out by a troopship to an unknown destination. One day they called us and we were taken to a port in Oakland but the troopship was overloaded, so instead they put about 60 of us onto a Liberty ship instead.

On this ship there were no provisions for troops; they had put up cots in the hold for us to sleep on. Mostly the ship carried torpedoes and some other supplies for the military. This ship was run by the Merchant Marines and it was quite an experience for the 21 days we were at sea; zigzagging all the way to New Caledonia. We only had fresh water on the ship to drink; none was provided for showering. Our food was largely C-

rations and a few fresh fruits. It was the first experience I ever had where there might be a mutiny on a ship. The Merchant Marines were running the ship and had lavish fare for their meals, which we could look in the windows and see them eat while we did not. The agitation of the men was increasingly great; some of them played tricks on the captain. It was really a miserable experience for everybody.

When we arrived in New Caledonia they made us strip on deck and then turned the fire hoses on us to make us presentable. In New Caledonia we were taken by truck to a camp about 20 miles from the nearest town and lived in tents in quite a primitive area. We were there awaiting reassignment to combat zones] in the South Pacific, I think there were about 40 – 45,000 men. The Japanese had been run off the island of New Caledonia, although there were many of their gun emplacements still intact there. There were always rumors that there were Japanese hiding out in the islands which I believe were later proven to be true. The situation was uncomfortable because there were also Vichy French on the islands that were not sympathetic to Americans. There were several incidents of sabotage by the Vichy French.

I was very fortunate because the officer in charge of classification of men in preparation for their shipment elsewhere turned out to be a man named Lieutenant James Partika, who was a clinical psychologist from New York. He was a very bright and capable man. When he saw my papers he asked for me to be assigned to him temporarily, because he was not allowed to keep anyone permanently on his staff. They assigned me an office and I was given the responsibility of administering psychological tests to the men.

From this I learned a great deal; for example, there were a large number of men shipped overseas who were illiterate, this in spite of the regulation that no man was to be sent overseas if he was illiterate. We had to return a number of men to the US who had not had the benefit of a formal education.

We also saw men who very emotionally disturbed; this all underlined the importance of having social work in the military to me, although I had already experienced it to some

degree at the camp in Texas. As an example, on the train ride to basic training there was a young man who was a law graduate from Stanford on the train who was obviously psychotic. He had thrown all of his equipment away and filled his duffel bags with law books instead. He refused to bathe; he was disheveled and obviously upset. At the camp in Texas they had stripped him and scrubbed him down with hard brushes as a punishment. Later I heard he had gone into a full-blown psychotic state. I had reported this to the Headquarters and was told to mind my own business. There was some abuse of mentally ill men, I felt, even in the camps overseas.

In addition to doing psychological tests, we did some counseling of the men and found that many would really respond to a social worker interviewing them. Fortunately, Lt. Partika had taken me off the shipment list and I learned that the men that I had come with had all been assigned to active combat duty. He kept me in New Caledonia until he could place me where he thought I could do appropriate work. He finally discovered the 142nd Army General Hospital, which was situated in the Fiji Islands. He found out that they had a position open, but could not specify what the job might be because he had no authority to do this. I was sent by boat to Fiji and placed in charge of a group of men, some of whom I have known now for several years.

MCBROOM: Were they patients?

MILNER: No, they were just transferred with me.

MCBROOM: Then you took up work at the hospital in Fiji?

MILNER: Yes, when I first arrived they decided they would give me an assignment as a clerk in the Payroll Department. Here again I lacked competency because I really was not interested in it. To avoid boredom I asked for an appointment with the chief psychiatrist of the hospital; his name was Colonel Newell, who later became President of the Board of Psychiatry after the war. He was the head of the Child Guidance Clinic in Baltimore and after the war he offered me a job as his chief social worker there. He

was a very nice man who had served in World War I, as well as World War II; he had been a volunteer. I went in to see him to see if I could volunteer evenings in the psychiatric unit. At first he seemed suspicious of me and questioned my motives. I explained that I had social work training and he then confessed that his wife was a social worker, which helped me. He said one requirement was that I had to take a Rorschach test, which I agreed to do, he did not know that I knew something about the Rorschach, so I had a lot of fun with him in my responses. After the first two or three cards, he said that I could come and do some volunteer work. Within about a month he had me permanently transferred to his department.

MCBROOM: Was that when you were commissioned?

MILNER: No, I was a corporal at that time. After I was assigned to him, I was asked to do the intakes for his department. Out of that experience he determined that the person who did the intakes was the one who established the relationship with the patients. He had difficulty relating to the patients after they had seen me, so he simply assigned cases to me. This was a great learning experience for me; we dealt with both neurotic and psychotic men and women because we had nurses as patients as well. The office I was in was on a locked ward; my desk was right next to Colonel Newell's. I learned a lot through osmosis by listening to him interview patients, as well as sharing knowledge about cases with him.

We were getting quite a number of patients back from the battlefield and also those who were from ships that had been torpedoed; it was a very rich experience to have. The problem of loneliness of men, separation from their families was a very great one. There was a high incidence of depression; some men I think had been mentally ill before they were ever sent overseas to battle. It was not just the military experience that had caused the problems.

My time there gave me a chance to learn about Fijian culture; toward the end of my experience in Fiji the war had moved away from the area we were in.

MCBROOM: How long were you in Fiji?

MILNER: I believe it was a year and a half. Dr. Newell and I shared an interest in cultural anthropology, so we worked out a plan together where I would do research in the Fijian museum on the culture of the Fijians. In the morning I would hitchhike into town and usually get picked up by the police patrol car and given a ride in. I got to know the curator at the museum who very helpful to me in getting materials. We had lots of material gathered on Fijian folktales and so forth.

In addition, there was a native medical school in Suva where they trained doctors from all of the South Seas islands. It was about a two-year course so they learned basic things about medicine. Dr. Hoodless headed this school; he was an Englishman who had lived in Fiji for many years. He had lots of knowledge of the Fijian culture, some of which he kept secret and would not share. He liked the mysterious aspect of his knowledge, I think. He was very helpful and we did Rorschach tests on all of the students in this native school and found the differences that culture makes in responses to the Rorschach. It gave me a chance to get to know some of the natives from all over. There were two or three who were sons of witch doctors from other islands. They felt that it was dangerous for them to return to their native islands because their fathers opposed modern medicine and had opposed their coming to the medical school. They had, however, received scholarships from church organizations and had set out on their own to do this. They were most cooperative in everything they did with us.

I remember that before we left the islands, that Dr. Hoodless had a party for Dr. Newell and me, which was a lavish affair. They had worked for days to make leis and flower wreaths; they had rehearsed their music for days before the party. It was an interesting evening and most enjoyable.

MCBROOM: It must have been hard to leave Fiji.

MILNER: It was in many ways, but there is certain boredom with island life.

MCBROOM: You always get ready for the stage beyond.

MILNER: Yes, they also made me a member of the Fijian medical school so I had a little certificate when I left.

MCBROOM: After leaving Fiji, your unit went on to Calcutta directly?

Milner: Yes, the whole unit moved because, although the war had moved away from that particular area, we were still needed elsewhere. Once again I was not sure where I was headed, only that we would be taken by ship.

MCBROOM: Well it must have been very good for all of you to go as a unit and stay with your co-workers as a network.

MILNER: Yes, it was. When we arrived in Bombay, India it was a shock as it would be to anyone first coming to India. The poverty was so evident on the streets . . . it really caused many men to be depressed. You would see mothers literally selling their babies on the street and once in a while, a drunken soldier would buy one and bring it back to the barracks. Of course the Army had no way of finding the mother again. Since these children were essentially abandoned, they were put into religious orphanages somewhere. Also, the living and the dead were hard to distinguish at night because of the blackout periods during wartime. Many of the poor died at night on the sidewalks where they were sleeping - this was a downer for all of us.

We were then shipped from Bombay to Calcutta, where the hospital was to be established. There was another hospital unit on the island that was the University of Maryland's hospital about three miles from ours. We had some interchange with that hospital. I was assigned to a psychotic ward.

MCBROOM: You were on an island in Calcutta?

MILNER: No, not in Calcutta, but back on Fiji. The hospital was housed in temporary buildings on religious property in the heart of Calcutta. Their religious practices were carried on right in the midst of our grounds all night long. They were also burning corpses on the grounds at the edge of the Ganges River, which ran by this depressing place.

MCBROOM: They were burning bodies?

MILNER: They burned bodies there. The facilities of the hospital were much better than we had in Fiji. Better equipped, better structures – that part of it was an advantage for us. The patients that we got were largely coming from Burma - the Air Corps. The patients were brought in from long distances to the hospital. The incidence of psychosis was quite high.

MCBROOM: You were in a psychiatric unit in a general hospital?

MILNER: Yes that is right. My responsibility was to be on the ward and interview the patients. The caseload assignments of the doctors were pretty heavy because there was not a sufficient number really to serve the hospital well. The Army did however bring in two more psychiatrists. One of them was Dr. Irving Beeper, a psychoanalyst from New York, and an excellent person. Another one was Dr. Donald Peterson, who was an Army doctor that had specialized training in psychiatry, but was really very incompetent.

MCBROOM: A 60-day wonder?

MILNER: A 60-day wonder, but he was regular Army. Dr. Newell was in charge of the unit, and then another doctor was brought in who was a general practitioner from Watertown, New York. He was an exceptionally nice man who was put in charge of the particular ward where I served – Ward 13. He needed my help as much as I needed

his, so we made a good team. We had very seriously disturbed patients on that ward, many of whom were violent patients. I had a rich experience dealing with psychosis.

MCBROOM: It was a real school for learning about psychosis and treatment?

MILNER: That is right. I used to spend my evenings often writing letters for the soldiers who could not write and wanted to keep in contact with their families. I learned a lot about their relationships at home and so forth from this. Being in Calcutta was again a cultural experience that was vastly rewarding to me.

MCBROOM: As well as shocking?

MILNER: As well as shocking. I got to know some of the Indian doctors in the community and some of the university people. I spoke at two or three meetings of the Medical Society in Calcutta, as they were interested in knowing what social work was.

Dr. Newell wanted to get me a commission and applied to have me commissioned in the field; by this time I was a sergeant. The commission came through several months before he left the unit and I was made a second lieutenant.

MCBROOM: Being commissioned in the field is unusual and a great honor I understand.

MILNER: I am not sure, but I was glad in a way to have it. I found it very difficult to be an officer in the same outfit where I had previously been an enlisted man. I had a different kind of relationship with the Army; it created such divisions between commissioned officers and enlisted men.

MCBROOM: Did this commission distance you from your patients in any way?

MILNER: I do not think so; I think it could have but I tried not to let it. The first experience of 'drilling' men, which was part of the job, was probably more amusing than not. The men would all cheer and so forth when I would take command.

I needed to be commissioned as a clinical psychologist because there was no 'spec' number in the Army either for enlisted men or for officers. So I was commissioned under the guise of being a clinical psychologist, although I always made a point of telling the doctors on the different wards that I was a social worker not a psychologist. I remember one doctor saying, "Why do you go about insisting that you are not what you are supposed to be?" I essentially said that I believed that social work belonged in the Army.

MCBROOM: That was very prophetic of you.

MILNER: Yes, but I did not think it would be at the time. A number of us from different theatres of war around the world who were social workers in the military wrote letters to the Surgeon General reporting what type of work we were doing. There was a social worker assigned to the Surgeon General from Topeka, Kansas where she had been associated with the Menninger brothers - I cannot remember her name, Elizabeth something. She worked very hard to get social work established in the military and succeeded in doing this, but not until after the war. Today social work has a place in the military.

MCBROOM: I know that various branches of the military send us their personnel for formal training.

MILNER: That is right; I think that social work is in the Air Corps, but not in the Marines or Navy as of yet. It has certainly become a valuable service to many including the Veteran's Administration.

I think I should also say something about the Menningers, because when I was in New Caledonia I had gotten a hold of one of the Menninger's books that was in paperback at the Red Cross. In it he had a little statement about social work asserting that social workers are "the handmaidens of psychiatry." I wrote him a letter that I did not feel like a 'handmaiden' living the way I was and thought that he should reconsider his statement. I did not get a response from him, but many years later I met him at a dinner party and told him that I was the one who had written the letter. He apologized and said that he had learned a great deal about social work since those earlier days. It was an uphill battle in the military to try to get social work established.

MCBROOM: Really for recognition of whom social workers are and what they can do.

MILNER: That is right.

MCBROOM: How did peace come to Calcutta - the end of the war?

MILNER: The war was over before I was sent home because there was still a need to take care of men who were left behind - it takes a long time to evacuate men from war zones. I really stayed on longer than I needed to, but not by my choice, rather by Army standards. Partly I was held over because I had accepted a commission, otherwise I would have been sent home much earlier.

The social services which were recognized as such in the military were essentially those of the Red Cross. I respected what the Red Cross had done in basic training in Texas, but I was very disappointed in what they had done overseas.

MCBROOM: What was the difference?

MILNER: Although this was not true of all workers, I felt that a great many of the Red Cross workers were really indifferent to their job there. Essentially, they were partying with high-ranking officers.

MCBROOM: They were there for the adventure?

MILNER: That is right. An example of this was that I found that a lot of the recreational equipment, which had been sent to the Red Cross for their centers had never been unpacked or used. At the time we left Fiji, we went to them and asked that rather than having this equipment destroyed, which was policy of the military, could it instead be donated to an Indian school located there for girls. The East Indians did not believe in education for women and had burned down the school but somehow the school had started again in a very poor building. I had difficulty in getting permission to do this, but I finally received approval and got trucks to take the equipment to the school. The school did not have any equipment left after the fire, which amounted to much of anything. Also, some of the books from the Red Cross library were given to the school. In many ways I did not believe the Red Cross lived up to what was expected of them.

MCBROOM: In your experience, those Red Cross personnel stationed domestically carried out their work more responsibly than those stationed overseas?

MILNER: Yes, I felt so. I felt partly that it was due to the fact that they were being supervised more from their national offices in the US than locally. Another thing, which was very bothersome to me, was that the military did not fuse the black soldiers and the white soldiers together in any kind of program. The blacks lived separately.

MCBROOM: Integration pretty much came after the war.

MILNER: That is right. As an example in New Caledonia, at the replacement depot the blacks and whites all used the same streams to bathe. It was divided off at top where the high-ranking officers showered; below them were the lesser-ranking officers; below them the noncommissioned officers; below them the enlisted men and then the black troops; essentially, all the dirty water from above went to the black troops.

In Fiji there was a separate Red Cross for the blacks from that of the whites. I remember one evening; a ship had come into port and on board was also a band who came to play for a dance. Most of the girls who came to dance with the soldiers were half-castes; that is, they were half-Fijian and half-Caucasian, some of them were East Indian. The Navy arrived for the dance and with them were two black sailors who were the cooks aboard this troopship. The head of the Red Cross said that these cooks could not be there at the dance. The Navy said, "They either stay with us as our mates, our buddies or there will be no dance." This created almost a riot within the Red Cross; finally the band walked out and there was no party. I remember writing to Red Cross headquarters in the United States about this but had no response. I felt that here social work was really playing into the prejudice that the Army had; this was a sad mistake.

McBroom: It sounds as though there has been some progress. It also sounds as though you were a very faithful letter-writer to report on some of these injustices that you saw.

MILNER: It was the only way I had to do anything because I had no authority. The authoritarianism of that whole system of the Army was very limiting – it was anything but a democracy.

MCBROOM: You came out of the military to the University of Southern California; what was the route that led you there?

MILNER: I came by ship to New York and brought a load of patients at the same time. I found the accommodations on my ship much better than the ones I had been on before. We were sent to a camp in New Jersey to spend two or three days until we could be sent back to our home states. Somehow Arlien Johnson, who was then the Dean of the School of Social Work at USC, wired me to say that she wanted to see me when I arrived.

MCBROOM: She must have had her antennae very well out.

MILNER: Yes, I do not know how she got the information.

MCBROOM: But she connected with you.

MILNER: I flew in a military plane to San Pedro and was discharged from the Army there at Fort McArthur. After a day or two I went to see Dean Johnson; she said that she would like me to come onto the faculty. I had never really thought about teaching, although I had lectured at the University of California, Berkeley when I lived in San Francisco and also at the University of Washington when I was at Ryther Center. I had also done some lecturing in the Army at one of the rehabilitation camps across from our hospital. I gave courses on human growth and development there.

MCBROOM: Which later became a major focus of your teaching career.

MILNER: Yes. I told her that I would have to think about this. She propositioned me, offering me a position as a supervisor of students for a semester at Family Service in Los Angeles, thus giving me time to think about what I wanted to do. In this semester of supervising at Family Service I had all male students, some of whom have been connected to the School since then. These former students included Carl Shafer, who was a member of our faculty for a number of years; Richard Medhurst, who became Dean at the University of Ohio; and a number of other students who went on to work at local agencies over the years. They were all discharged from military service and were some of the first men who wanted to come in to social work. I remember how hesitant Carl was about what he wanted to do in the future, he had become quite fascinated with social work at Family Service and so he continued his education.

MCBROOM: The GI Bill really changed the face of social work, didn't it? A lot of the GI's were young parents, as well as having had combat experience.

MILNER: That is right. I do not think that it was ever anticipated that many men would come into the social work field, because it was not a high-paying field.

MCBROOM: It was 51% male students though, was it not?

MILNER: That is right; at one time we had 51% male students. I think the Army experience or the military experience made them want to do something for humanity.

MCBROOM: You did that for a semester and there was some difficulty that semester, which I think you were going to mention.

MILNER: Yes, the staff of the agency were all women, I felt that they really were not aware of the reality of problems related directly to the war. Grace Coombs was the casework director and she was insistent that every decision needed to be approved by her so that you had to discuss each case with her before any direct decision was made. I objected to this because I felt that it was not fair to the student's learning. She agreed finally that I could work independently with them. Irene Hobbs, who later went into school social work – she was an active member, quite an organizer of labor groups at that time.

MCBROOM: She was one of your students?

MILNER: No, she was on the regular staff at Family Service. They were a nice group of people actually. I remember that after I left the agency Grace Coombs offered me a job as a supervisor in one of the district offices, but it was not for me.

MCBROOM: You left then for a semester at Columbia University?

MILNER: Yes, I wanted to get the MS degree from Columbia University, so I went back and found that a large majority of the people in the classroom were men, most of them

having returned from war service. Here again, the faculty were kind of unaware of the special needs of this group.

I remember one class, where there was a young female psychiatrist who, after about three sessions, called me in to her office and said, "Please help me. I know that I am not going over well, I am too theoretical. I do not know how to respond to the questions that the men are asking or the problems that they are bringing up." I suggested to her that she leave the class more open to discussion and questions, which she did and it turned out to be a very good class.

MCBROOM: You helped her in the direction of bringing in more content from the veteran students?

MILNER: Yes, what their experiences had been, what their attitudes were and so forth.

MCBROOM: Do you look back and see some kind of progression from year to year in your teaching?

MILNER: Yes, I have taught a variety of courses, which I think, is good for faculty: it makes you do away with some of your old notes and not use them from year to year. It also broadens your own perspective and interests a great deal. For example, I taught a course in community organization, which I never intended to do. I had taken a course from Arlien, which I thought was a good one at that time. I think that you do change from year to year in the way you approach things; some things you hold on to that seem to work well - but there is progression.

MCBROOM: You build on your core curriculum. Do you think that there is a characteristic spirit about USC generally and our school?

MILNER: Yes, I have always felt that USC has been a well-liked school, not just locally but nationally. I think the response of our graduates show that they were generally

happy in school and pleased with what had gone on. I think partly that this is because there is some personalization of relationships with faculty - faculty availability has been a favorable thing. Students have said that they felt they knew faculty both professionally and in personal kinds of ways.

I think the campus itself is essentially a friendly campus, welcoming students from all over the world and from all ethnic groups. There is quite a range of economic groups on campus also. In general I felt that the climate was very warm and accepting.

MCBROOM: You mentioned having Richard Medhurst and Carl Shafer in your first group of students; are there some other students who stand out in your memory for particular reasons or qualities?

MILNER: There are really many that I think have done awfully well in the field that came from our School. One of them is Dan Reid up in northern California; at one time we wanted him to come on the faculty and get his doctoral degree. He turned us down. He had been an actor at one time, a New York actor, very talented. He is an independent sort of guy so upon completing his Master's program he went north and worked in some of the public mental health clinics. He has had some private practice with children and their families; now he is doing a little teaching in the north.

Marv Weinstein here in Los Angeles, is probably one of the most successful private practitioners in the country. He tends to have the rich and famous for his clients. Skip Hinchman is a very able teacher; I think I have always regretted that he did not teach on our faculty.

MCBROOM: He is teaching in Psychiatry at UCLA?

MILNER: Yes, there are also a number of other male and female students that I could name, who I think are outstanding.

MCBROOM: Tell me how you would describe a good student-teacher relationship.

MILNER: The teacher needs to care about the student as a person, as well as where they are going professionally so that you have an honest concern for their well-being. Many times students have problems while they are in school and I think that oftentimes the student-teacher relationship is enhanced when students get some help from faculty with the resolution of their problems. This I think is kind of natural for a social work teacher to do.

I know I have been introduced a number of times by Mareaner Appelbaum at meetings; she always cited the example of the time when she came home from school shortly after her husband's death and found her house flooded. She called the School to say that she would not be able to come to a certain meeting because of this. When the meeting was over I went to her house to see if I could be helpful to her. This does not come exactly under faculty responsibility, but it impressed her.

MCBROOM: It says something about the teacher.

MILNER: Yes, but I think that the teacher needs to encourage students, to support them, but also to challenge them and that the students respect this.

MCBROOM: If you were going to give advice to a young teacher on relationships with students, what would you have to say?

MILNER: I do not like to give advice. I would want to talk with this new teacher and tell them that they first must understand themselves as well as they can. They need to understand what their own interests are, what their prejudices are, their feelings and thinking about various things. This is all so that they can feel secure and comfortable enough to relate to the students and be open to what the students bring them as their problems.

McBroom: Do you think inexperienced young teachers have a problem being defensive with students?

MILNER: Yes, I think that many young teachers rely very heavily on what I call 'canned knowledge', their old notes from their classes. They feel insecure about relating their own kind of experience and knowledge to the real situations that a caseworker, group worker or community organizer brings. It is also partly out of insecurity that many new teachers tend to over prepare for their classes.

MCBROOM: They are afraid of saying that they do not know.

MILNER: That is right; there is no natural response to things. I remember when I was in Japan some years ago a Japanese student said that in Japan unless a teacher uses big words, the students do not think he knows much; so many of the teachers cram themselves with big technical terms to impress the students. I think this happens sometimes early on in our teaching until you are comfortable with it.

MCBROOM: Well, you must have gotten very quickly over that because I remember Skip Hinchman referring to your "elegant simplicity."

MILNER: Well, I do not know about that; some students probably thought I was too simple.

MCBROOM: Do you think that as we are approaching the 1990s, that there are changes in this student-teacher relationship in the School?

MILNER: I have been out of teaching for over 10 years and so my observations are long-distance. However, I do think that there is change. I think there is much less personalization of the relationship between faculty and student. The faculty are not as available; they are instead available for appointments. This lack of an open door policy I think leaves a great deal to be desired. For example, the faculty do not want students

to know their home numbers and there is a tendency to stay away from campus except when teaching class or for specific appointments. I do not see faculty and students eating together at lunch, as it used to be true in the Commons. Partly that is the University's fault for making a separate Faculty Center away from the Commons.

Some of the best experiences I had as a student were sitting at a table where some of the faculty would join us and you could get to know them. At the New York School of Social Work a luncheon was held every week where all faculty and students came and shared a meal. These are the kinds of things that I would call personal contacts, I think they mean an awful lot to student-faculty relationships.

MCBROOM: Those are the kinds of things that students remember for a long time.

MILNER: That is right.

MCBROOM: What do you think about (inaudible)?

MILNER: Students today have learned so much from visuals: the television, motion pictures and so forth that I think there is real learning to be gained from the use of these tools if it is done selectively and they are not overly used. I do think that some teachers use them, however, as an excuse for not preparing other things. The tape recorder and visual tapes have been very valuable, I think. As an example, students use of tape recorders in their fieldwork has been valuable for them. All in all it supplements other types of teaching. I think I had one of the first tape recorders ever used in an agency in Los Angeles.

MCBROOM: It probably weighed a ton.

MILNER: It weighed a ton and was awkward to operate. I know that some people who claimed that it was unethical for me to use a tape recorder criticized me. One social worker, a lady, walked out of a meeting accusing me of being unethical and going on to

claim that I did not belong in the profession for taping an interview and subsequently using it for training purposes in a staff session at a family service agency. We have moved a long way from then, however; I think that there has been a lot of change in applying the concept of confidentiality over the years.

MCBROOM: videotape must be a marvelously complete record for teaching and learning.

MILNER: Yes, but the videotape is still expensive so that it is still not commonly used in fieldwork, but I think it can have a great value.

MCBROOM: Turning back for a minute, would you say a word about teacher and social workers of an earlier generation, who had a big influence on you?

MILNER: Yes, there were quite a number. Arlien Johnson as a teacher, taught me a course in community organization at the University of Washington. She was quite inspirational; teaching a subject that I did not necessarily think was an exciting subject at the time. Gordon Hamilton, at the New York School of Social Work at Columbia University, was an inspiring teacher to me. I learned a great deal not only about the subjects I took from her, but also about teaching methodology. Fern Lowry also was a superb teacher; in fact she taught a better class drunk than she did sober – occasionally she did arrive pretty high. A number of the male teachers were awfully good there. I think that there are an awful lot of good teachers in the country who I never took, but I have heard at conferences - I thought they have made great contributions.

MCBROOM: Have any of them influenced you?

MILNER: Yes, a great deal; through their books and writings.

MCBROOM: Would you say that you have a philosophy of teaching?

MILNER: I have never thought particularly of having a philosophy, but I suppose I do although I am not sure I can think of it in a specific way today. First, you have to care about your profession – really respect it and believe in it; this has to be communicated to students. You also have to care about the people whom your profession serves, which helps you to bring about understanding of those same people to your students. Third, you need to care about your students and know that this is their possible career and that you have a responsibility to help them to make the best possible experience out of it. Fourth, to respect your colleagues who may differ with you on some points of view and the way they teach - you must maintain mutual respect. I think the importance of relating the real world to theoretical concepts is an awfully important assignment in teaching: the challenge of bringing alive conceptual thinking that also tests students. These are just some points.

MCBROOM: Say a word about the deficiencies that you think some students have brought to professional education that posed problems.

MILNER: I think that some students come to the field with a misconception of what social work is and expect something different. Some even stay after finding this out, without truly accepting it. We have had some come into the social work field when they have failed at other things and I think basically they are not mentally prepared for academically preparing themselves in social work.

We also get some quite neurotic students who have difficulty relating both to clients and to community people. Not that many successful social workers are neurotic, but I think that we have some where the neurosis is destructive and these individuals misuse their authority in social work.

There are some misplaced students, I think, who come, for example, out of wealthy families – they may not be able to really relate to the poor or to certain problematic things those cases present. On the other hand we have also had some very good ones who come from this type of family. Conversely, I think sometimes that some of the

students we have had who come from lower economic groups never feel comfortable in the social arenas that they get exposed to in being a social worker – it handicaps them.

Probably the biggest handicap however, is those individuals who come in with prejudices that they do not seem able to break away from – racial or prejudices against people who have money or any type of prejudice that would interfere with working with specific kinds of people.

MCBROOM: How do you measure what you have taught students?

MILNER: I think I learn from most students through discussion – really talking with them about what they have gained or not gained from any course that I might have taught. Their written evaluations have given some clues, but not very complete ones. I think I also learn a great deal from their written material, particularly when I have given open-ended kinds of assignments where they are freer to be themselves and do not need to respond with definite answers that are expected to questions. Some of our assignments such as writing their autobiographies which was called the ‘Hometown Paper.’ I thought was an invaluable assignment. I thought the way they talked about themselves indicated a great deal of what we had taught them. They had developed insight that was invaluable. Also the reports on how they were doing in their field practice gave clues as to whether they had gained something from the practice class. I suppose there are a variety of measurements that we have that I am not particularly conscious of.

MCBROOM: How do you think that students react to teachers’ high standards?

MILNER: I think that generally students respect high standards. I think they respect themselves more when you make demands on them, but I also think that this has to be balanced – expectations have to be different for different students. The students start at different points and their readiness for social work differs.

I think one of the things that can be handicapping is that a single professor can have such high expectations of the students that they tend to monopolize the students' time by over-assigning a lot of reading thus ignoring what the rest of the faculty might be expecting of the same students. I think we as teachers need to keep in balance what the expectations of the other faculty are for the given students that we might have so that the student does not feel overly burdened by any given course. It often happens that the faculty do not have respect for the other courses that students are taking.

MCBROOM: You know that the formal written evaluations of teachers by students evolved during your tenure. What do you have to say about this?

MILNER: I always felt the written evaluation was more detrimental, more damaging than good. In the first place they were more check-off kinds of questions where the students did not really write a narrative opinion on any given point - there was some place for this. Often the students would not write anything except negative; I think that for some faculty this was quite destructive because these are not balanced evaluations. I know some faculty members who were quite hurt by the written evaluations that came in. I think that these were not always well handled in our School by the Dean in relation to faculty members, I believe that they needed to be discussed with the faculty member with some balance of judgment.

The program we had before written evaluations was that each student had a faculty advisor. The students could come in and discuss their feeling about each of their instructors. I believe that was a better plan. If there was a problem with a given instructor; the advisor could bring it up with them but not in a way that was threatening.

MCBROOM: We went through some turbulent times in the late 1960s and early 1970s. During part of this time you were acting as Dean, particularly through a potentially explosive incident. Would you talk about that and how you handled it?

MILNER: Yes, those are days that I will never forget - they were strenuous, heartbreaking days for a while. I think the incident that I will refer to, is really indicative of a time when students were really restless, unhappy and full of both anxiety and hostility. This particular incident involved a Jewish female student in our School who accused one of the black students of saying, "It is too bad that Hitler had not won the war." implying that Hitler would have done away with the Jews. This created a major incident between the black students and the Jewish students. Whether the student had actually said this was questionable or whether it had been stated some other way and had been misunderstood. Regardless, the emotions were so high that it was very difficult to get at the truth of this.

As the Acting Dean, I insisted that representative students who were in that class meet with me - I think that we met on two different nights. The second night I told them that I would not give them permission to go home until we had resolved the problem; the school could not go on with this disruption. Two Jewish women came to me and told me that they wanted to tell me something in confidence because they would lose face with their own group if the larger group knew these students had reported to me. These two knew actually that the comments of the black student were not the same as had been reported - that the intent was not the same as the one student had said. They hoped that some resolution would come from their coming in because they felt a sense of responsibility to the School and to me for this state of affairs.

In the meantime I had investigated what had happened with this particular student before she had come to our School. She had previously been at Long Beach State. I did this because I sensed in our meetings that she seemed to be quite a troublemaker or rabble-rouser. I found that at Long Beach State she had created almost a similar situation - as a result of her accusations, the Jewish community came in on it and the black community stood by and said they would also come in on it if the Jewish community made it a major problem. In the meeting on the second evening, I confronted her and she finally admitted that it was probably not true that what she believed was said.

The black student who had been accused wrote a nasty letter and posted it on the bulletin board on the day following this evening meeting. Fortunately we got it off the board before it created further trouble. I believe that the Jewish student finished school that year, but did not return the following year; the black student graduated and I later saw him at Tulane University. The whole incident had affected the morale of the School; there was always a kind of fear pervading the School that someone would hurt someone else's feelings – there was quite a lot of hostility toward the faculty.

At graduation that year I had heard that some of our students were going to protest and walk out of the graduation. I cannot even remember the point of the protest. I had to go to the University president's office and say to him that this might happen. He asked me if I wanted to cancel the participation of our School in the general graduation. I replied no, that I would take the chance that the protest might take place. To my knowledge, no one walked out of the general graduation.

When we went to our own School part of the graduation, it turned into a regular 'love fest.' This was despite the fact that the faculty were quite concerned about coming. I also had parents of some of our students call and ask if it was safe for them to come. It [the graduation] turned out to be very safe. I think one of the things that made the graduation turn into something pleasant, was that when I gave out the diplomas, I asked that the family members and friends of that given student stand so that they could be acknowledged. The applause led to cheering and by the end of the ceremony there was a great deal of hugging and kissing between faculty and students and family members and students. It turned out to be a happy day.

MCBROOM: It was a happy ending to all that turbulence.

MILNER: It was a relief.

MCBROOM: You really worked hard on that.

MILNER: The whole affair was really hard on me. As a result of my concerns about this series of incidents there were a lot of nights that I did not get any sleep at all.

MCBROOM: We know that you are an artist – a musician and an actor; would you say a word about the relationship between art and the practice of social work?

MILNER: I think that many people who are talented in any way or have creative abilities apply them to whatever field they are in. I think that there are quite a lot of social workers that are really artists. They paint or take photographs, for example. I think that there is a correlation between artistic talent and the practice of social work or the teaching of social work. I think this is particularly true of those who come from a liberal arts background, for example, literature. Some of our best social workers have come from an English undergraduate major. They have gained a great understanding of human behavior through the study of literature and also have developed an ability to write, which is an art in itself.

I remember that at one time we had a requirement in the School that you had to take certain undergraduate courses in sociology and in economics in order to get into the School of Social Work. If you came into the School without these requirements having been fulfilled, you had to take them part-time while you were taking social work courses, in order to make up for your deficiencies. One time I looked through quite a number of the folders of our students who had graduated who I knew were doing well in the professional community. I noted that a number of these individuals had been English majors and they were now doing some of the best things in the Los Angeles community in their respective practices. I talked to Arlien Johnson about this; at first she felt it was important that these other courses be background, but eventually we did away with these requirements. Students were accepted into the School with almost any undergraduate major.

MCBROOM: Would you tell a little bit about some of your off-campus activities – your career at Tulane [University] and some of the other places where you taught?

MILNER: During the summers I tended to teach at a number of different schools. At Tulane University I went every summer for 18 summers. I got an appointment to the faculty as a professor. I forget the other title they put on my appointment - it was something . . . they were so-called 'lifetime appointments.' I think there were only three such appointments in the university at that time; Norris Class also got one of them. I think Otto Pollack who was at the University of Pennsylvania at the time and then later at Bryn Mawr, got the other one.

MCBROOM: You were a trio.

MILNER: Yes. I also taught three or four summers at the University of Texas, Austin; as well as at the University of North Carolina in their children's home program; and did some teaching at other California schools, including Berkeley, UCLA and Riverside. Out of the country, I taught at Guam, Hawaii, England, and Canada. It was always an enriching experience to find out what other schools were doing and what programs were operating in other communities. Also to see our school relative to these and learn something about the people and cultures of other states.

In New Orleans it was an experience for me to have students from Southern states. I remember that when I initially came to the Tulane campus, no blacks were allowed on the campus. Private donors had given most of the building funds with stipulations at that time that no blacks be allowed in the buildings other than as a workman.

I remember being asked during the second year that I was there if I would give a public speech with community social workers in attendance, which I agreed to. In all innocence, I called one of our black graduates from USC and asked her if she was coming to the meeting. She said she wanted to very much, but that she was not allowed to enter this particular building, but that she hoped to see me at some other

place. I went to the Dean and found that this was true, that no blacks could enter the building, and I said that I did not want to give the lecture. He explained to me that the school had taken the initiative to change these policies about the campus but that it was very difficult to change because of the legal aspects of some of the wills, which had originally provided for these buildings. However, the school was in the process of obtaining a court ruling that he believed would ultimately change this. We agreed to change the lecture to a different location where the blacks could come, which we did. This former student came with a couple of her friends and sat way in the back row.

The next year when I came to the campus there were a number of black students in my class – our former student had sent them. When I came out of class there was a newspaper reporter from the London Times and two or three American reporters waiting outside to ask if they could interview the black students. I went back and asked their permission and they said they would be glad to be interviewed. This was the beginning of integration in that university. The following year I noticed in the Student Union and so forth, that there was more of a relationship between black and white students. In a couple of more years you could see them dancing together and participating in quite a healthy way. It was interesting to be a part of that change – to be able to observe it.

MCBROOM: John, you have done so much work with foster parents and foster parent organizations, would you tell something about that?

MILNER: I was of course first interested in working with foster parents when I was working in Idaho.

END TAPE