By Way of Thanks for Warm Recognition:
Some Personal and Professional Reflections on the Field and Its Prospects for the Future

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ABSTRACT: The author responds to the recent Child and Youth Care Forum Festschrift and the current special issue that were published in his honor, acknowledging the contributors, offering a few personal reminiscences, assessing the current status of the child and youth care field, and drawing implications for its continuing development.

KEY WORDS: child and youth care work; residential child and youth care; professional youthwork.

Your Editors have been kind enough to invite me to respond to the Festschrift they developed in my honor, which appeared as the June 2000 issue of the Forum, as well as to the current special issue in which they have chosen to include letters from colleagues that were not included in the Festschrift along with selections from my earlier writings. I think they were seeking both a personal and a professional response, and I will try to meet this dual expectation.

But how does one respond adequately to such an honor and recognition? Perhaps that can best be done in the way that I have always tried to work, that is, by focusing on and seeking to draw out the contribution I might be able to make to our readers and to the field. In any event, I shall try.

Looking Back

There was no grand plan when I began, or as my life and work have unfolded, beyond the conviction based in long summer camp experience that positive group care environments can provide powerful develop-
mental influences on young people, and an overriding commitment to
the growth of our field. I did what I did as opportunities arose that
seemed to serve that overall objective. It should be fun now to look back
and see whether and how things fall into place in some retrospectively
organized way, and thus to help decide what to do next.1

Colleagues

I would certainly be remiss, however, were I not to begin with words
of appreciation to Forum Co-Editors Sibylle Artz and Doug Magnuson
for having chosen to honor me with these two special issues, for develop-
ing the approach, and for undertaking the hard work required to see
it through to fruition—as well as for contributing their own tributes
to the Festschrift. They are wonderful friends and colleagues, and it
is good to see how the Forum is developing under their leadership.

Thanks are due also to the other colleagues—who, along with Sibylle
and Doug, are cherished friends as well—who contributed the articles
included in the Festschrift and the letters in the current issue. They
represent the gamut of my experience in the field over the years, rang-
ing from Jack Phelan, who was there at the beginning, to Craig Shealy,
who very quickly established himself as a valued associate after we
first became acquainted in the late 1990s. Jack and I go back more
than 30 years together, from the early days of the Association of Child
Care Workers in New York, when both the field and the Association
were just beginning to emerge as visible entities on the professional
horizon. In the midst of all the difficulties and frustrations we encoun-
tered—and there were many—Jack never lost the ability to make us
laugh and so to give us the strength to stay on task. He is still doing it!
Craig represents a new generation, those dedicated younger colleagues
who renew our faith in the future and in the promise of increasing
rigor in our thinking, our research, and our practice.

Other contributors, particularly Herb Barnes, Henry Maier, Karen
VanderVen, and Jim Whittaker, have been there almost from the begin-
ning and our careers have remained intertwined across the miles until
the present day. Mike Baizerman and Mary Burnison have had an
active, virtually daily presence in my life through most of my years at
the University of Minnesota, from 1978 until today. Others with whom
I have been closely associated over the years, most of whom have
contributed heavily in various ways to the development and evolution
of the Forum, include Buell Goocher, Don Peters, Mark Krueger, Jim
Anglin, Penny Parry, and Rod Durkin. Mordecai Arieli personifies the
relationship I have had and treasured with a goodly number of Israeli
colleagues, whose perspectives have done so much to enrich my own
and the field in North America.