

## IN MEMORIAM

August 13th, 2011

Professor Jerome (Jerry) Beker  
Editorial Advisor, *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work* (1985-2011)

Scholar, Mentor, and Friend

Sometimes it is said that scholarship brings knowledge into the light. Throughout the years, Jerry Beker was the light of our lives in the field of child and youth care!

Many of us made the journey to his comfortable home in St Louis Park, Minnesota, where many of the faculty from the "U" lived. The place was full of tasteful art, mostly of children playing, from his many trips to Israel, Europe, China, and around the world. And oh, the books, they were everywhere.

He would pull his chair close to yours in excitement to see you, sit eye to eye, even closer and say "now tell me the story" as he asked for the recent update of your work with children and youth. Presciently, he would remember the smallest detail of challenge and social growth from the last exchange, always encouraging you to see the opportunity in the next development of the relationship.

And from her well kept kitchen in the other room, Jerry's dear wife, Emily, while cooking a kosher feast for us, would call out her wisdom about the latest situation shared about the youth workers.

Jerry was a scholar, mentor, and friend. The depth and breadth of his work in child and youth care founded a whole new line of inquiry about how we use the knowledge of relationship to help and heal one another in community. It began with Jerry's father, who brought into publication, *Camping and Character: A Camp Experiment in Character Education*, a seminal work which undergirded the advancement of the American camping movement in the 1930s and 40s. This thinking imbued group life with the power to teach teamwork and self-care within the support of civic behavior and conscience.

Following his father's footsteps, Jerry wrote two classics that changed the course of our field. First as a young scholar soon to be brought to the University of Minnesota by Gisela Konopka, he led the development of *Critical Incidents in Child Care: A Case Book*, together with a team from the agencies which birthed residential treatment, the Judge Baker Guidance Center, the Hawthorne Cedar Knolls School, and the Berkshire Farm for Boys. Jerry and his youth work colleagues were 50 years ahead of their time in proposing strength-based methods for reporting and understanding the behavior of youth. Jerry saw the youth in relationship to their experiences and promoted care strategies to guide healthy change. His case study method is at the core of the treatment team meetings and case staffing sessions we do today in contemporary work. Then as a kernel of his Fulbright Fellowship to Israel, and latter in

its most mature version, Jerry demonstrated the power of knowing one another and sharing understanding through relationships in *Knowledge Utilization in Child and Youth Care Practice*, which he edited with Zvi Eiskovits.

Perhaps as the ultimate scholar in child and youth care work, Jerry will always be remembered for his magnificent editorial work on the *Child and Youth Care Quarterly*, *Child & Youth Care Forum*, *International Journal of Child, Youth, and Family Studies*, *Journal of Child Care*, *Child and Youth Services*, and *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work*. This work covers a prolific span of more than 50 years. He gave me a copy of every edition, and the collection fills the shelf space of a double story faculty office wall. To Jerry, each and every volume represented the relationship he had with the author in bringing their story of care for children and youth to light. He edited and published the work of more than 200 fellow youth work authors over time. It is the most significant comprehensive body of work in our field. In my early youth work days, I asked him once what his favorite article was. With one of the few frowns he ever gave me, as if I had violated a principle of fairness and trust that all the authors were his favorite, he said I would have to read them and decide for myself what might be the best work.

Jerry's last great project, as he prepared his archive for the University of Victoria School of Child and Youth Care Work, was to organize a taxonomy for the subjects and topics of our still emergent field. This effort remains inestimably valuable to future youth work scholars.

It was a gift for all of us to have known Jerry—the smile, the tease with the truth in it, the deep introspection and encouragement. If one could sum up so great a life, it would be to say that Jerry Beker was a magnificent editor and youth worker. He most wanted for all of us to get along with one another as we put children and youth first. Jerry had a calling. We were all in his care! He brought our story into the light!

Andrew J. Schneider-Muñoz, Editor

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