

INVITED ADDRESS

Forward

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A number of us had the privilege of hearing a talk given by Henry Maier, PhD, at the 7th International Child and Youth Care Conference held at the University of Victoria, B.C., August 20 – 23, 2003. The reader will notice in the title of his talk, that he speaks of being 'envious' of others in the field, which at first glance seems ironic, given Henry's position as a leader of, and as some of us like to say, a grandfather to, the field. How could he possibly be envious of others in the field? But the reality is, as Henry says in this talk, that he is experiencing himself as an 'antique person', with less flexibility than he had in the past. But he talks about that here, so I will say nothing further.

Henry was invited to give this talk as a way of honoring him for his contributions to the field over the past 50 plus years. It was given at a small dinner for a selected group of presenters and invited guests which, unfortunately, limited for others the opportunity to connect with, witness the honoring of, this man who has given so much to the field.

Henry's talk is published here, as he wrote it for the conference, so that Child and Youth Care people who were not there, or were not at his talk, can share in the experience in some small manner. As you read this, we ask you to remember that this was written and delivered as an interactive 'talk', and it reflects that reality. Thus, at times, for example, Henry asks people in the audience to do certain things. We leave it to you, the reader, to allow your imagination to place you in the audience. I will have more to say at the end, but for now, here is Henry's talk.

I AM ENVIOUS OF YOU, THE LEADERS IN THE FIELD OF CARE PRACTICE

Henry W. Maier

*Professor Emeritus
University of Washington*

I appreciate your invitation and trust that we can have a stimulating time together. I have in mind that we might work in small groups of peers to help each other through mutual inspiration and effective peer learning;

both as current and more experienced care staff. As the first task let's join your neighbors in building a mutual peer learning group. Please meet your neighbors with a hearty handshake or embrace. Introduce yourself, and if necessary give your first name; then tell what connects you with care work or the reason you have for this alignment. We are here for our commitment to care services, as individuals; less important is the bureaucratic organization we represent. No professional lawyer, physician or businessman introduces him or herself for the program organization with which they are connected.

I am here happily as "Henry" an antique person in our field. I also would like you to meet Thom Garfat "a good friend and colleague". He is here as my eyes because my sight is very limited. He will spot persons who want to contribute something, or possibly interject a different opinion or require further exploration of the topic at hand. Both Thom and I look forward to having fun together; in the past we have enjoyed other's cooperative teaching efforts.

I entitled our time together "*I am envious of you the leaders in the field of care practice*". I am envious both of your past experience and the current challenges that we presently face together. Child and youth care work enables you to make connections between past and present experiences. Let's take the time for you to join with three or four of your neighbors with the intent to form a spontaneous work group. But first, I want to add I am envious of you, the practitioners and leaders, because we are engaged in a field of human practice where the ability to expand our skills occurs daily. Real care work has the promise to develop basic practice skills needed for most professions. As a care worker one learns to make immediate human contacts. Looking back on your mastery of these capabilities, in addition you can also make use of your earlier childhood experiences; tapping into the many fun activities you learned which nurtured relationships. For instance, we can all recall a storehouse of games, stories, and activities from your youth which bring people together.

Let's try it. In the small group that you just established among each other, for example, you can briefly teach each other different forms of finger games such as thumb wrestling or catching each other's hand spontaneously. (Thom lets try it as an illustration)

Also, you could introduce a number of game activities, which are not competitive but bring people close together. I stated earlier I am envious - because I no longer have long evenings where I attempt to fall asleep while stretching my brain, trying to think what might be done the next day. On-line workers are challenged to come up with new ideas and capabilities; they must organize their time, but also become close to people within their work commitments. Regardless of the age of the care

receivers, experiences we learned in childhood apply. This concept will be a rich resource for the care worker in whatever role he or she chooses.

So, let us take a few minutes for each work group to introduce a brief game or other enjoyable activity, which you have seen successfully used in daily care work.

I am envious of you in the field of practice because I miss the occasion to be challenged to think of stories I read as a child, stories extracted from books or TV which I could then use for my nightly story telling. Let us take a minute where you exchange with each other one of your favorite recollections such as Treasure Island, Robinson Crusoe, or Harry Potter or Batman. Moreover, in pulling up one or another such "Heroes", it is possible to create a whole new sequence of your own making for story telling.

I have emphasized that I am envious that you are in a profession which trains you in those skills which are so badly needed in combining childhood experience with future competence. Each of you I am sure could come up with activities that are creative and non-competitive, with no winners no losers.

Regardless of whether you are a care worker, consultant, an administrator or board member, consider some other program ideas that are essential for the care practitioner to master. One such idea is food; we always can use food to further our togetherness. The on-line worker could arrange a dinner or dessert when the residents could invite a friend in the unit, or a family member, enabling the care receivers to be the giver. In fact, kitchen staff could be invited to teach the kids how to make a crisp pie crust which care receivers could fill with something of their choice. In this way the kitchen staff could be utilized for their skills far beyond their original service.

And now I also have quite a different concern. Presently we face a situation where unfortunately effective care staff have to accept our limited or meager pay scale because organizations suffer from a lack of public funding. By adjusting to this dilemma in a strange way and applying it to advantage, more and more the work schedule is arranged so that the care worker can follow up personal needs like continuing their education, meeting family demands or personal comfort.

This money pinch leads to the point where the program manipulation serves to justify staffs' personal requirements rather than the care work, which should itself justify the program. I think that this concern deserves the attention of care workers, administrators, board members and consultants.

Our challenge at the present time is to prevent the confining of care work from becoming an economic solution rather than recognizing the challenge for legitimate publicly supported services.

Let us commit ourselves to endeavor to work together to assure that at the next international CYC Child/Youth Care Conference we can celebrate that we have achieved renewed public funding and support for care services.

I will close by congratulating all of us who are together for this needed international child/youth care effort.

AFTERTHOUGHT

Thom Garfat

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Throughout, and following this talk, Henry took questions from the audience. For many of us it was the opportunity to ask what may seem like the simplest of questions, such as what should you do when a young person offers you a gift, and to hear what one of our elders has to say about it. Henry's answers, often themselves stunning in their clarity and simplicity, offered further opportunities for learning. He spoke of some of these in last month's CYC-net column.

Afterwards I had the opportunity to ask others who had heard his talk what they thought. Here are some of their comments:

- Please tell Henry I learned from him once again.
- It is too bad that newer workers did not get to hear what he had to say.
- It was amazing to see a man honored by a room full of current leaders in the field.
- I wish we had more time.
- I always learn something.

As I mentioned earlier, it was unfortunate that, because of the venue of his talk, others did not have the chance to connect with Henry and to hear what he had to say. We are a field with too few elders and the entire field could benefit with increased contact with those that we do have. For Henry, connecting with others, especially newer workers, is an opportunity to be treasured. He lives in connectedness and hates to miss the chance to meet new people.

But there were opportunities none-the-less, as Henry, true to his nature, attended workshops given by other presenters whenever he had the chance and was often seen 'hanging out' in the corridors with his wife Jeanne. And some, new to this field, also had the opportunity to visit with Henry and Jeanne, for example, some Child and Youth Care people from the Cree nation of Northern Quebec.

In the Cree culture there exists a profound respect for elders, especially for those who carry knowledge, which comes from a time when such knowledge was passed along in the oral tradition. Henry Maier learned in our field before we were writing our knowledge down. He has, someone said, the wisdom of experience. As Jane Cromarty, one of the Cree women, was to say after this meeting, "It was such an honor. Imagine, meeting a founder of the field". Indeed, Jane, indeed.

So, in the end, while the occasion of Henry's talk was essentially to honor him, it was we who were honored.

