



## IN MEMORIAM

Maurine McKeany  
Professor of Social Welfare, Emerita  
Berkeley  
1905 — 2001

At the time of her death, May 20, 2001, Professor Maurine McKeany had for years been the last survivor of the little group of faculty who, in 1939, began to plan the School of Social Welfare at the University of California, Berkeley. Her association with the school's predecessors went back to 1925. She was a central person in building the school into a leader in the nation.

She was born in 1905 in Porterville, California. The family moved to Berkeley, where she attended Berkeley High School and the University. In 1927 she graduated with honors in Social Economics with a credential for secondary school teaching. She was elected to the honorary societies Phi Beta Kappa and Pi Lambda Theta.

She might have taught secondary school, but inspired and encouraged by her professors in social economics, such as Jessica Peixotto, the first female professor in the University, and Lucy Stebbins, the dean of women, she took a job as caseworker with the Associated Charities of Oakland. This was a private agency, which administered some aspects of public outdoor relief and related family welfare. Its purpose was also to give direction and leadership to the scores of charitable and philanthropic organizations in Oakland. The number and variety of agencies had increased in the prosperous 1920s, and so had their association, locally and in the State Conference of Social Welfare. Their boards of directors, mostly well- educated, prosperous, and influential women, were eager to mobilize newly- enfranchised women voters and secure opportunities for predominantly female social workers.

In 1927 the Department of Social Economics initiated a graduate program leading to a certificate in social service, and in 1932 McKeany began supervising students sent to the Associated Charities for field work. In 1936 she received an M.A. and in 1937 joined the faculty as one of three full- time instructors. She was in charge of fieldwork when the director of the department, Dr. Martha Chickering, left in 1939 to head the State Department of Social Welfare. The curriculum in social service was separated from the Department of Economics and became a new graduate School of Social Welfare, under Dean Harry Cassidy, former director of Social Welfare in British Columbia. McKeany helped plan the program of the new school, taught courses in casework, child welfare, public assistance and community organization and supervised field work. In 1941, she took a leave to work on a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago, which she received in 1948. Meanwhile, the Berkeley school flourished. Shortly after it was accredited in 1944, Dean Cassidy went to the University of Toronto and Assistant Professor McKeany, her rank at the time, became acting dean at Berkeley from 1944 to 1946 and, as the school grew, she served as associate dean.

Between 1932 and 1946, social work education faced profound changes in the institutions labeled "social welfare." The private agencies in the Associated Charities continued to expand; the Social Security Act of 1935 created three huge new bureaucracies: public assistance for the aged, blind, and dependent children; old age and survivors insurance; and unemployment insurance and employment offices. The military soon became the largest single employer of M.S.W.s. The large state institutions would soon emphasize community placement and care. In her various roles in the school, Professor McKeany, more than anyone else, came to grips with the appropriate response of social work education.

The most familiar form of the problem was the difference between casework or group work, in their various settings, and 'social service administration,' which implied management, policy and research - the role of Oakland's Associated Charities writ very large. Obviously, M.S.W.s could not begin to fill the ranks of eligibility workers, claims representatives, and employment counselors in the new bureaucracies. (In 1942 the School of Social Welfare re- established the A.B. in social economics as a group major in the College of Letters and Sciences, partly to help prepare students for these jobs.)

Professor McKeany's primary interest in these problems was fieldwork. It was half of the M.S.W. program. Its supervision involved selecting local agencies placing and monitoring students, and evaluating outcomes. Students had a light workload, carefully supervised to bring out the relevance of classroom studies and their self- awareness as helpers and coworkers. One must consider 50 or 100 students – a growing number – and 20 or 30 agencies, spread around the Bay Area, and take into account the interest of various professional groups and employers. When the State Conference of Social Welfare set up a voluntary program to certify professional social workers analogous to a licensing exam, McKeany was a part of its organization. When the state government took over the program, she was part of that.

Because of endless occasions to confer and troubleshoot in fieldwork, she could not afford much time for research. Her dissertation was a history of provision for dependent children in California, from 1850 to 1941. It was in a tradition of dissertations at Chicago, based solidly on legal, administrative, and judicial documents. It should have been published, but she wanted to improve it and bring it up- to- date. Hence, she did not publish it. It was the basis for her teaching in child welfare and public assistance. In 1960, she published a penetrating analysis of *The Absent Father and Public Policy in the Program of Aid to Dependent Children*, which, alas, is still relevant. Later, she worked on the important problem of legal guardianship for people who need this protection to continue to live in the community. For her, to do research was to get to the facts about a situation in order to understand it; it was not to form or test a theory or interpretation.

As a teacher, she excelled in the tutorial style of fieldwork supervision, applied also to administrative relations and conferences. She was uncomfortable playing the big shot professor dominating a classroom. She helped hold things together.

Her service was much in demand. The University of Chicago wanted her; so did Dean Cassidy at Toronto; the State Department of Social Welfare wanted her to direct Social Welfare; the Association of Schools of Social Work wanted her. But, she was a Berkeley product, tied by her life and personal qualities and success to the school, the campus, the community, and the state. She was appointed professor in 1960 and retired in 1970, well- placed to enjoy her years of retirement.

James Leiby