



## IN MEMORIAM

Margaret Schubert  
Associate Professor of Social Welfare  
Berkeley  
1912 — 2001

Margaret S. Schubert, who died July 1, 2001 in Oakland, taught for the School of Social Welfare at the University of California, Berkeley, from 1949 to 1968. Although often interrupted by leaves of absence, it was the longest stay of a peripatetic career. She was born in 1912, the youngest of three children of Hans Otto and Marie Storm. Her parents were German immigrants who met in America. Margaret was born in Anaheim, California, where German-Americans were still a large part of the population. Her older brothers, born in 1895 and 1897, both attended Stanford University, one becoming an engineer (and novelist), the other a teacher.

A precocious student, Margaret graduated from UC Los Angeles in 1932 at the age of 20. She got her first regular job in 1934 as a case aide in the expanding State Relief Administration. In the next five years she became a caseworker and supervisor, working in various locations around the state. In 1939 she enrolled in the graduate program of the renowned School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago (bypassing the graduate programs at the University of Southern California and Berkeley). When she received her M.A. in 1941 she was already a full-time caseworker at the Travelers' Aid Society; later that year she went to the Presbyterian Hospital of New York, where she was a caseworker and fieldwork instructor until 1944. While in New York, she met and married Clarence F. Schubert, a promising young physician. Tragically, he contracted tuberculosis and died in 1949 after a long illness. The couple had moved to Janesville, Ohio, where Margaret directed Home Service for the American Red Cross from 1944 to 1945, then to San Francisco, where she became caseworker, field instructor and casework supervisor at the Medical Center of the University of California, San Francisco. In 1949 she became a lecturer at the School of Social Welfare in Berkeley, from which most of her fieldwork students had come. From 1954 to 1956 she took leave to enroll in the doctoral program at the University of Chicago, where she also taught. She received her Ph.D. in 1958 and then served as a visiting professor in the following year.

The years 1941 to 1958 saw epochal change in the science, practice and organization of medical care. The spirit and scientific precision of these changes infused Professor Schubert's view of casework. Medical and psychiatric caseworkers had to try to understand clients whose personal and social situation was difficult to individualize. Fieldwork for student caseworkers was a deliberate strategy to help them recognize and analyze this complexity and respond to it, thus transforming psychology and social science into "practice wisdom." Was it possible better to systematize and classify observations in the casework interview and to ascertain their significance for various possible outcomes, so that the caseworker would have a clearer sense of direction and expectations? Professor Lillian Ripple of Chicago thought so and launched a very large survey of practice and its outcomes. Schubert took part in this work in her doctoral program and teaching at Chicago, and her long and intimate experience with doctors and patients gave her a realistic grasp of the medical process of diagnosis, prognosis, and intervention.

The first fruit of this interest, even before she began doctoral work at Chicago, was "The Content of Field Work Instruction in a Case Work Setting," (Social Casework, March 1953), of which she was the lead author along with three other fieldwork instructors at the agency who also supervised Berkeley students. This was followed by a dozen articles on problems of measuring fieldwork performances and on decisions about

admitting students. Always the emphasis was on outcomes: which students did better, what teaching helped most, how could these outcomes be measured and studied? Her most influential work was entitled *Interviewing*, published in 1971 by the Council on Social Work Education, and revised and expanded in 1983.

Schubert's work spoke to a great interest and need in social work. She was invited to give short courses or institutes in 13 schools in the United States and Canada and three in the British Isles. She was an important member of the Accreditation Committee of The Council of Social Work Education, from 1963 to 1968.

Professor Schubert's focus on casework appealed to most students and practitioners, but she was often uncomfortable at Berkeley, where many of her colleagues liked to emphasize that Berkeley was a school of "social welfare," not "social work," which stressed administration, policy, and basic research. In 1968 she resigned from UC Berkeley, still as an associate professor, to join the faculty of a new school, Virginia Commonwealth University at Richmond, Virginia, which was led by her doctoral student, William Carpenter, D.S.W. She retired in 1973 and returned to Oakland, where she undertook various tasks to help local agencies. A careful and exact writer, she helped establish The Emeriti Prize for Excellence in Writing, which is still a feature of our M.S.W. graduations.

Personally, she was tall, statuesque, and beautiful – she designed and made her own clothes, which were elegant and stylish. Painting and reading were her favorite hobbies. She read much fiction, savoring the prose, greatly. She loved to travel and relished the many invitations to teach and consult which her work brought to her. She is survived by her nephew, Dr. James Storm, a psychiatrist.

James Leiby