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## **THEIR STORIES, OUR HISTORY**

# **Ruth and Brian Manchester: Social work's dynamic duo**

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This article follows on from a series of articles done by Mary Nash, looking at the historical accounts of social workers who have contributed to the development of social work in Aotearoa New Zealand. Barbara wishes to acknowledge Mary, who has given permission for her 'Their Stories, our History' format to be used here and for her ongoing commitment to documenting and telling the stories of the history of social work in this country. Barbara also wishes to thank the Manchesters and all those who have contributed to the development of this article.



### **Introduction**

While setting out to gain a better understanding of the relationships of social work and counselling in Aotearoa New Zealand, it quickly became clear to me that the best way to learn about this was to talk to the people who had been part of the history of social work here. I was fortunate enough to interview 15 different social workers from February to September of 2006, who had all played significant parts in the development of social work. It seemed to me that throughout these interviews, one of the themes that emerged consistently was

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that social work (and therefore the relationship of social work and counselling) had been forged through the ongoing tensions and synthesis which arose out of the community vs professionalisation debates which have been ongoing since Victoria University started the first social work programme in 1950. (One of the other significant themes was the evolution of our commitment to bicultural practice and the impact this has had.)

With the advent of the Social Work Registration Act 2003, social work in Aotearoa New Zealand appears to be coming to terms with its ongoing ambivalence regarding professionalisation. Two people who have been instrumental in moving this issue forward over many years are Ruth and Brian Manchester. Together they have been actively engaged in education, management, policy development and direct practice in social work in New Zealand, Brian since 1954 and Ruth from 1965. Many social workers who are new to practice, or who have come from overseas, are not aware of the contributions made by those who have come before us. This article attempts to explore the contributions made by the Manchesters towards growing a professional social work workforce and demonstrate their commitment towards those using social work services, at a time when social work was at a very early and rocky developmental stage.

### **Methodological note**

This article has come together as a result of two interviews with the Manchesters and several telephone calls and emails. The Manchesters were asked to provide a list of people who they thought may be able to expand on some of their views, and who may be able to give an independent perspective on the contribution the Manchesters had made. Written consent was given by the Manchesters to approach these individuals. Information from these people was provided either through telephone calls or emails.

### **The careers**

Ruth obtained her degree in social administration from Manchester University at the age of 21. From there she trained as a hospital almoner and worked in both general and geriatric hospitals. She then moved to community mental health and proceeded to take a one year postgraduate course in psychiatric social work. In the early 1960s Ruth was involved, together with a local clinical psychologist, in setting up a child guidance clinic in Blackpool.

Ruth came to New Zealand in 1965 to take up an appointment with Head Office of the Department of Health, which involved secondment to the State Services Commission's Tiromoana Social Work Training Centre. Ruth was employed as a tutor and part-time social worker at Porirua Psychiatric Hospital, and also taught training courses held by the Mental Hygiene Division of the Department of Health. The Tiromoana courses, established in 1963 under the umbrella of the State Services Commission's Social Science Advisory Committee, were residential and offered generic social work training of eight weeks duration in two blocks of four weeks. Staff from government and voluntary social work agencies from throughout New Zealand could apply to attend these courses.

From 1966 to 1969 Ruth held a joint appointment with Otago University and the Otago Hospital Board as Lecturer in Psychiatric Social Work in the Department of Psychological Medicine. This position covered teaching, clinical practice and research.

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At the beginning of 1970 Ruth returned to Tiromoana as a tutor and became Director from September of that year. In 1975 she moved to Victoria University in Wellington as Senior Lecturer in Social Work Method for the Diploma and Master in Social Work programmes within the Department of Sociology and Social Work.

By 1982 Ruth's sight was beginning to seriously deteriorate and she made the decision to go back to direct clinical practice. Ruth worked in the Student Counselling Service at Victoria University until 1989 and simultaneously established herself in private practice as a psychotherapist in Wellington and later in Waikanae.

Ruth's abiding interest in the development of mental health services was reflected in her service as a board member of the Mental Health Foundation from 1979 to 1988, her chairmanship from 1984 to 1988 of the Board of Health Standing Committee on Mental Health, and her work on committees planning the development of mental health services for the Wellington region.

Brian was born in New Zealand. He trained as a primary school teacher at Wellington Teachers' College, 1948 to 1949, completed a BA in Education and Psychology in 1952, and a Diploma of Education in 1953, both from Victoria University. After four years of primary school teaching he began his career in social work as a Child Welfare Officer in Wellington District Office of the Child Welfare Division of the Department of Education. On a State Services Commission Social Science Study Award, he returned to Victoria University full time from 1956 to 1957 and obtained a Diploma of Social Science, which at the time was the only tertiary-level social work qualification available in New Zealand.

From there Brian moved back to child welfare work at Masterton, 1958 to 1959, and from 1960 to 1962 was Senior Boys' Welfare Officer, Head Office, in which position he had substantial involvement in the establishment of Tiromoana and in continuing the administration of the Social Science Cadetship and Social Work Trainee schemes of the State Services Commission. From 1963 to 1964 he was District Child Welfare Officer, Masterton, then returned to Head Office as an Inspector of Field and Institution Social Work Services for the Child Welfare Division from 1965 to 1968. This position involved substantial travel throughout New Zealand. In 1969 he became District Child Welfare Officer, Wellington, and whilst in this position travelled overseas for three months on a United Nations Human Rights Fellowship to study juvenile courts, juvenile justice systems and child protection social work in Canada, the USA and England.

On 1 April 1972 the Child Welfare Division was restructured into the Department of Social Welfare. Brian was for the remainder of that year Assistant Director, Social Work in the Wellington District Office. From the beginning of 1973 he took up a newly created Head Office position in the Department of Social Welfare as Chief Education and Training Officer which he held until 1978. In this position he was involved in the expansion of the Tiromoana courses, the establishment of Taranaki House in Avondale, Auckland, as a second generic social work short course training centre and the expansion of teaching and residential facilities and course programmes at the Residential Staff Training Centre at Levin. He was also instrumental in the development of an extensive programme of social work and social work supervision and management short courses offered regionally to government and voluntary services in accordance with legislative obligations at that

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time. He was able to base Head Office staff at Auckland and Christchurch to make this possible. In this position he also made occasional visits with Ruth to the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) in London when in the UK on annual leave.

In 1978 Brian attended the NZ Administrative Staff College's Executive Management Course before taking up the newly created position of Director, Social Work Development for the Department. His last appointment, taken up in July 1979, was as Assistant Director General at DSW with national responsibility for field and residential social work services of the Department in child care and protection and with young offenders under 1. The position Brian held was disestablished in 1987 in the substantial down-sizing in government services which took place in the late 1980's. At that time the plan was to have a Principal Social Worker appointed to Head Office and to, in large measure, delegate administrative oversight of the Department's social work services to the relatively newly created regional offices. Brian took the offered option of early retirement.

## **The contributions**

### **Brian**

Raoul Ketko, a long-time close colleague and friend of Brian comments on Brian's contribution to social work:

Brian's greatest contribution to the New Zealand social work profession was his clear vision, strategy and articulation of what professional social work was about and his tireless work in pursuit of soundly-based training for social workers and of high standards in social work services delivery (personal communication, 25/08/06).

Brian moved more than most at the time between work in the field and work in central administration. 'I used to tell people that it was probably a sign of not being able to make up my mind which I liked most!' (B. Manchester, personal communication, 30/10/06). Twice (Masterton and Wellington) he worked at basic grade in the district then came back later in charge of the operation after time in Head Office.

There are streams which are consistent through Brian's career. Towards the end of his career a friend in a leading position in another service asked Brian whether he felt he had been driven by any special 'mission'. 'On reflection I recognised that there were three major issues which had been 'out front' in terms of sustained effort over time to produce positive change.' (B. Manchester, personal communication, 30/10/06).

The expansion of social work training at tertiary level as the major step towards achieving a professionally trained social work service was one of Brian's primary endeavours. Ruth and Brian's impact upon social work training in this country cannot be underestimated. Brian had a significant role, along with many others, to up-skill and train a social work workforce which was largely without professional social work qualification. Brian sat on the Social Work Training Council from 1973 to 1979 and on almost all of its working parties as policy development and funding approvals had to be actioned through his department.

With the first social work training course at Victoria only starting in 1950, and only graduating approximately 10-12 graduates per year, there was a dearth of training oppor-

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tunities for a growing profession. Brian had a significant role in the establishment of many of the training programmes, both professional and academic, within the country. He was particularly pleased to see the establishment of the social work courses at Massey University and the University of Canterbury, and kept closely in touch with both. For a brief time the University of Auckland offered a course at master's level but it was inadequately funded and unable to meet the needs of the Auckland area, which had the greatest training need at that time.

For some years Brian put forward a proposal in the Department of Social Welfare's annual 'New Policy Round' for funding of courses in teachers colleges (colleges of education). Four locations were proposed in order to make such courses regionally available. This was at a time when government expenditure restraints required that funding for all new policies and developments put forward by departments had to be met from within their existing budget. Some funding was eventually achieved and a case put to the Cabinet Committee on Family and Social Affairs for a two year full time Diploma of Social Work course at Auckland College of Education. Approval was given by the Cabinet Committee on 15 June 1981. This had been a long and arduous process, which would not have succeeded without Brian's tenacity.

Improving the foster care system was a second area of concentration for Brian. He describes how, when he joined the service, foster parents received a very minimal allowance for children and adolescents in their care. Although improvements were made, there was no realistic recognition of the real costs to the foster parents of the care they provided and no specific monetary compensation for the tremendous commitment of time, energy and resourcefulness which was required if a really good standard of foster care was to result.

I was also concerned, like so many others, that social work support for foster parents and the children and young persons in their care should be a high priority. I was greatly encouraged by the development of regional foster care associations and ultimately by the establishment of the New Zealand Foster Care Federation, which did so much in my last years of service to assist us in our efforts to improve the quality of foster care we offered to children and young persons under our guardianship (B. Manchester, personal communication, 5/07/06).

Brian's third major concern was to try to achieve legislation in the field of child care and protection and the young offender which would facilitate meeting the needs of children, young persons and their families and provide a basis for effective action for the social worker.

When I joined the service in 1954 the main legislative base was the Child Welfare Act 1925 and although it was imaginative in its day and its creation, it became progressively amended and we had to go on working with it when it really didn't fit the job to be done. After my overseas studies in 1971 I was asked by the Director General of Social Welfare to chair a committee to produce a first draft of a bill in revision of that legislation and that led to the production in 1973 by a Head Office committee, of which I was a member, of the Bill which became The Children and Young Persons Act 1974 (B. Manchester, personal communication, 30/10/06).

In 1984 Brian was asked by Ann Hercus, then Minister of Social Welfare, to chair a working party to produce a 'Public Discussion Paper – Review of Children and Young Persons Legislation' (the so called 'Red Book' because of the colour of its cover) which had wide distribution throughout New Zealand and which received a large number of responses. He was asked by the Minister to chair a further working party throughout 1985 and 1986 to

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produce a draft Children and Young Persons Bill which was introduced to Parliament at the end of 1986 and referred to Select Committee. There was considerable conflict of opinion about this Bill and the next year, by which time Brian had retired, it was withdrawn from Select Committee and further revision by another working party ultimately resulted in The Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989.

Beverley Keall joined the Department of Social Welfare in 1986 as Senior Social Worker Community Development, was EEO Officer in 1987 and then went on to become Principal Social Worker from 1988 to 1992. When the Department was restructured in 1992 she became National Manager Development and Training in the Children and Young Persons' Service until 1994. Beverley remembers her time working under Brian:

The major discussion at that time was of course the need for radical change in how the department dealt with children coming into care, especially how to acknowledge and incorporate Maori customs, values and beliefs into the decision-making process. Well before the Puao-te-Ata-tu Report of 1986 Brian promoted discussions with key departmental and community people to prepare the ground for change and encouraged social work action which included family involvement (personal communication, 26/08/06).

Brian comments:

From 1993 to 1998, I was invited by the Department to be a member of a small editorial committee consulting with Bronwyn Dalley, leading to the 1998 publication of 'Family Matters – Child Welfare in Twentieth Century New Zealand. I think Bronwyn achieved an excellent result both in text and illustrations and its writing was timely in recounting New Zealand endeavour in this field (personal communication, 30/10/06).

Brian's influence in child welfare continues into the present day.

In July of this year Brian and I, along with others who had been in the DSW at the time the CYPF Act was being developed, were invited to attend a meeting with the Minister and officials to discuss what had been the key issues at that time which we felt the CYPF Act needed to address. Brian's recall of the formative discussions in the process of change which preceded Puao-te-Ata-tu and the CYPF Act 1989 was as ever, crisp and illuminating (B. Keall, personal communication, 26/08/06).

Brian was also deeply involved and committed to providing good residential services for children in care.

Throughout my career I always had a real interest in residential social work. When I joined the service in 1954 'institutional' work in child care and protection tended to be seen as a 'holding' operation pending future foster care or work placement and the longer-term institutions tended to be seen as giving social re-education and work skills training. Many staff saw institution work as a training ground for eventual work in the field as child welfare officers (personal communication, 30/10/06).

Brian recalls the shifts in philosophy from the establishment of more purpose-built residential premises in the 1960s to their gradual disestablishment following Puao-Te-Ata-Tu which came after much criticism of residential care facilities for young offenders in Auckland. (Human Rights Commission Report, 1982).

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Brian felt that the closure of residential facilities was a positive move in several instances where residential units were no longer appropriately located, too large or did not provide good enough use of space.

I couldn't help feeling, however, that several regional institutions were too readily dispensed with and over the last 20 years the media have seemed to me to be constantly expressing the concerns of the Chief Youth Court Judge, lawyers, police and parents at the periods young offenders have had to be held in police custody. Now purpose built units are gradually being built again, but this is inevitably a slow process in view of difficulties of site acquisition and finance (personal communication, 30/10/06).

Mike O'Brien, a life member of the ANZASW and Associate Professor of Social Work at Massey University, Auckland, remembers how well Brian negotiated his multiple roles:

Brian...always walked a tricky path between being a senior employee of the largest social work organisation in the country and being committed to social work practice, a path in which his professional commitment to the purposes of social work were always central (personal communication, 10/09/06).

Terry Comer, who worked with Brian for many years in the Departments of Education (Child Welfare) and Social Welfare, relates his views of Brian's contribution to social work:

Fifty years on, I have two lasting impressions of Brian; firstly, his long-term achievement in gradually breaking down or at least softening the image of a largely prescriptive, formalistic, even censorious upper management culture in Child Welfare and secondly, his memorable and lasting contribution to the direction of social work training and professional development, both within the government agencies and in the wider field (personal communication, 12/08/06).

### **Ruth**

Ruth has consistently demonstrated a real pioneer spirit throughout her career. This became evident in England with her initial work in geriatric social work and in her further work developing a child guidance clinic. Early involvement with a team in the professional settings of geriatric work and child guidance proved a really stimulating experience at this formative stage of Ruth's career.

Ruth came to New Zealand at a time when social work education in this country was in its very early developmental stage. Many of our current social work leaders are able to relate learning under Ruth with fondness. Ginny Hickman is a psychotherapist in private practice and a lecturer in rehabilitation at the Wellington School of Medicine. She remembers her time as a student of Ruth's in 1980 and 1981. 'I had a great deal of respect for Ruth, and I learned a lot from her' (personal communication, 27/08/06).

Judith Mackenzie was an early graduate of the Diploma of Social Sciences at Victoria, 1953 to 1954. Also heavily involved in pursuing the development of professional education and training for social workers, she has been a friend of both Brian and Ruth and has valued their support, openness and wisdom. Judith recounts her early association with Ruth. 'Ruth's professional ability preceded her appointment to Tiromoana, the residential social work training centre set in the grounds of Porirua Hospital. English trained, she had been working with Professor Ironside at Dunedin's Medical School, and her arrival on the Wellington scene was very welcome' (personal communication, 18/08/06).

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Ruth also played an instrumental role in the development of future social work educators.

My early connections with Ruth were primarily through attending the Tiromoana training course in 1970 for new social workers. Ruth was a tutor on the course at the time and I can still clearly recall her careful and thoughtful questioning of the material we were bringing for discussion on the course and the thorough way that she always seemed to be prepared for the conceptual work we were doing. I recall too the wide breadth of material that she brought to that and the strong positive sense she had about the possibilities for social work (M. O'Brien, personal communication, 10/09/06).

Mike goes on to say that Ruth was also very helpful and encouraging of him moving into the two-year Diploma of Social Science course at Victoria which then led on into his 26 year career in social work education.

Ruth was aware early on of the importance of supervision to ongoing professional development and accountability to clients. She was involved in teaching at the first social work supervision courses offered by Victoria's School of Social Science and the State Services Commission at Tiromoana from the end of 1965. Ruth:

...recognised the importance of understanding one's self, acknowledging one's own past, and that incidents and aspects of clients' lives could trigger emotional responses in the worker and distort the social work relationship and consequent outcome for the client (J. MacKenzie, personal communication, 18/08/06).

Judith also describes Ruth's production of the first video recording of a supervision session in New Zealand: 'Thoughtful, empathic, and focused, she demonstrated her ability to highlight issues and allow the worker to find her approach and solution' (ibid).

I've always enjoyed training and students, and I've always had a very strong emphasis on supervision and the value of supervision. Perhaps that has been one of the main things. I just see that students can have all the theory in the world, but unless they can integrate theory and practice they won't do a good job (R. Manchester, personal communication, 05/07/06).

Berverley Keall was a student social worker under Ruth's supervision at the Victoria University Counselling Centre.

I benefited hugely from her shrewd insight into what was going on both for my clients and for me, and from watching her help people with understanding and often with gentle humour to gain new confidence and a path forward...In social work, counselling and supervision circles Ruth has been a touchstone for the depth of her knowledge and understanding of people, and for her deep commitment to professional and ethical practice. She has a well-honed skill of being as sharp as a tack on this, without ever being unkind (personal communication, 26/08/06).

I think a lot of them found me challenging, but I enjoy working with people and I've always enjoyed, as I've said, the professional side of it – of seeing people grow and develop, and watching their work develop. It's always given me a buzz. And the same with patients or clients – seeing them get better. Terrific! (R. Manchester, personal communication, 05/07/06).

Ian Culpitt, now retired, was formerly an Associate Professor in Social Policy and Head of the School of Social and Cultural Studies at Victoria University. He worked alongside Ruth from the mid 1970s. He recalls the great contribution she made in supervision and in bringing in a psychodynamic perspective:



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She was also active in challenging bureaucracy and was one of the first practitioners to bring in a systemic view of working with families and family therapy. Professional practice was very high on Ruth's agenda (personal communication, 27/08/06).

Both Ruth and Brian actively lobbied for change and improvement in social work in Aotearoa New Zealand on many different levels.

The commitment to professionalism has been an ongoing theme through both of their careers, and both were early members of the New Zealand Association of Social Workers. Judith MacKenzie recalls the early years of the NZASW and the debates around whether the profession should be registered. In 1972 a remit was put before the NZASW Annual General Meeting calling for a move towards registration. This motion was resoundingly defeated.

Brian was involved with the Association of Social Workers in Wellington and a group of us, concerned about the direction that social work seemed to be going, met as the executive of NZASW, and talked endlessly about how to increase professionalism in the agencies and increase the education and training opportunities (personal communication, 18/08/06).

Mike O'Brien remembers Ruth and Brian's ongoing commitment to the Association over the years:

I continued to meet with both of them from time to time at Association gatherings as our work moved in different directions and my strong recollection is that the thoughtful constructive contributions that I noted personally were central to their work with the Association (personal communication, 10/09/06).

Ruth convened the NZASW conferences in Wellington in 1972 and 1980, and both she and Brian contributed to the Association journal. Ruth was also extremely influential in the New Zealand Psychotherapy Association, and served as President Elect, President and Past President from 1989 to 1991. Ruth and Brian also documented the history of the Psychotherapy Association in their 1996 book, *The New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists, Te Roopu Whakaora Hinengaro: Notes Towards a History: A chronology of the first fifty years, 1947-1997*.

## **The couple**

Ruth and Brian have now been together for over 35 years. They first met in 1965 at a Don Jackson family therapy seminar at Victoria University. They met again in 1967 but only saw each other sporadically as Ruth was then in Dunedin teaching at the Medical School, and Brian in Wellington. Even their marriage might be said to have been tied in fairly closely with the profession.

Ruth describes the days after their wedding: 'We married in January 1970, a few days before the NZASW Biennial Conference in Hamilton and surprised the few who knew of our marriage by turning up at the conference – we just wandered in' (personal communication, 5/07/06). Brian comments: 'Our lives seemed fairly busy at the time – we married in Wellington on a Friday. I dictated correspondence all morning, went out and bought a new tie for the occasion, and we married in the afternoon' (personal communication, 5/07/06).

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Brian and Ruth both report keeping their careers fairly separate, and rarely discussing work at home. Ruth describes her time as director at Tiromoana:

In 1973 Brian became Chief Education and Training Officer, so he was then my immediate boss and of course that then required special approval in the public service. That was obtained. The consequence was that for two or three years we communicated by day through official memoranda – ‘Chief Education and Training Officer’ to ‘Director, Tiromoana’. It worked really well. The only person that got upset about it was my secretary at Tiromoana when she thought Brian was being awful to me! (personal communication, 05/02/06).

When queried about any potential conflicts or difficulties which their relationship may have presented in working within a small professional circle, Ruth describes an occasion when:

...I was lecturing at Vic. I became aware that some students on study awards from the Department seemed to think that in ‘off-duty’ time we would talk about them. I can recall making it very clear at the beginning of one lecture that if they thought that Brian and I had nothing better to do when at home than to discuss them and their progress or otherwise, then they had better think again – and that seemed to sort the matter out! We’ve talked extensively about social work issues during our careers, but it has never been a source of conflict as we have both held a fairly consistent view about needed development (personal communication, 05/07/06),

## The conclusions

Ruth and Brian’s contribution to the profession of social work has been multifaceted and can be seen as a good metaphor for current balanced social work practice. Together they have influenced the development of social work from one side of the social work change continuum to the other. They have been influential in policy development, professional development, training and education, and supervision. Moving along the continuum they have influenced the lives of individuals, whanau/families and communities with their knowledge and practice of direct social work techniques. Ruth’s contribution through her knowledge and skills in psychodynamic social work and psychotherapy helped create interpersonal and intra-psychic change for many people in New Zealand.

The final words are left to colleagues and friends.

Ruth is wise and has absolute integrity. She has worked for high standards of professionalism in both social work and psychotherapy. She is a really lovely human being (G. Hickman, personal communication, 27/08/06).

Brian is a man of impeccable principles, strong values and total integrity. He is very intelligent, clear thinking and has been thoroughly grounded in his professional work (R. Ketko, personal communication, 25/08/06).

I can’t think of a more highly committed couple. They are really good quality people (I. Culpitt, personal communication, 27/08/06).

Ruth and Brian are currently living in Waikanae and are as busy as ever.

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