

Professor Eric Sainsbury – a reminiscence

I first met Eric not long after I moved from the USA to the United Kingdom with my British husband. I wanted to become a social worker, and was accepted by the University of Sheffield for postgraduate study as an intending social worker. Eric became my tutor. At that time he divided his time between the University and the Sheffield Council of Voluntary Service, where I completed a placement. I remember Eric's kindness, perception, and wisdom that helped to guide my developing practice. Audrey, his wife, was interested in the student group and we benefited greatly from her warmth and hospitality.

Florence Hollis' psychosocial casework formed the basis of the theory we were taught, but unusually Eric also wanted us to learn about bureaucracy and administration. I remember two pieces of advice from him that served me well over the years: first, that as a social worker, I would be required to undertake administrative tasks which I would need to manage well; and second, that when choosing between psychosocial treatment's direct intervention (e.g. interpretation of a relationship's psychosocial dynamics) and the sustaining process (offering support), 99% of the time it was best to offer support. Eric helped me to think carefully and to learn to use professional judgement when choosing between alternatives.

He was supportive to me when I had a period of ill health. He never stopped believing in my capabilities. Later, when I moved to the USA for a period of years, he assisted my efforts to establish equivalency of my British social work qualification with the American Master's in Social Work through negotiation with the Council of Social Work Education. On my return to the UK, he helped me with references for employment as a social worker.

I kept in touch with Eric throughout the years, and was thrilled when he came to my inaugural professorial lecture at Nottingham Trent University and to my farewell party at the University when I retired.

He was a person of great ability and humanity whom I shall never forget. His death leaves social work the poorer. Eric made a lasting contribution to the development of the profession.

Dr Patricia Higham