

Interview with Lois Anderson, January 23, 1984.

Annette: Of course, you know this is for the Senior History, that we are trying to put together. And you started some real interesting things the other day when we were down at the Senior Center. I didn't get them down..about your experience. What I've been asking most people is: What do you recall as your first experience with the Senior program?

Lois: Well, I sold property to couples that couldn't find anything to do here. Three different couples, one especially, were very bitter because they just couldn't find anything. They'd bought a house and spent a year fixing it up, then they wanted something to do, and there was just nothing for them to do at all. And then two other couples that finally--I had 2 sales out of it, sold the house to them and sold it for them. But that wasn't fair, for them not for them not--they liked this area. And in none of these instances did they have children here, they had no ties. But they kept supposing that they could find something to do. One of them went to every church in town, she said, and none of them ever asked her back. And in one instance I think they were tired of being together. They'd never been together 24 hours a day, and they were just tired, of not having any..and the neighbors didn't like them, according to them. I felt very sorry for them.

And I kept hunting--this was in 1963 and 4, a long time ago, long before I was interested in retiring at all. And I couldn't find anybody who was interested. The man in charge of the Recreation Dept. for the city simply wouldn't touch any older people, he just didn't want to touch them. He said they fought over the doors, and they fought over the windows, and they quarreled, and he said he wouldn't. And I said, "Besides that, they don't play football, do they?" I couldn't get anybody interested.

I finally met a Lynetta Jones, who had done something for them with the North Coast. I don't know just what they did, I hadn't heard of it when they did it. And she and I kept hunting together, trying to find somebody that would listen to us. At that time they used to get a group together for the day. I've even forgot what they called it, but the Chambers of Commerce get people together to try to start new things, and at that place I met her, and a few others that were somewhat interested. In the meantime there was this little club that you heard about from some of the others.

Annette: The Progressives?

Lois: The Progressives. They really didn't have anything to do with this, because--a Commission was started, was formed, and I was on it. You should be given some information in regard to Claude Trimble, because he did a lot of work. Claude Trimble was on it, and a Board was formed.

Annette: Was this the Commission on Aging, right?

Lois: That must have been the Commission on Aging.

Annette: It's still going. Was it out of NCO?

Lois: Well, I don't even know if it was connected with NCO, because, at this time, I didn't have anything to do with NCO. It wasn't too long after that--or about that time--I was put on the North Coast Board.

Annette: What year are we talking about?

Lois: In 1970. I'd been asked long before that to go on the Board, for the League of Women Voters. They had a seat on this. And I just refuse to go on it. Then I went on in 1970, for that reason I went on, in order to get a new--what do they call Tom? Well, you'll find from Tom what he was. Executive Secretary, I guess. No, he's in charge of North Coast. Well, anyway...

And I was on the Board, when the Board talked to all of the people that wanted the position--I think we had about 35 that wanted the job. And Tom was the one that we selected. He'd had good experience, and you had the feeling of honesty. He'd been on the Peace Corps for quite awhile. So we voted him to take the job. The other man was going down to San Francisco, the man that had been on the Board.

Pretty soon, the Board--the rest of the Board that was on there--didn't want him for some reason or other. Somehow or other they weren't happy with him. It just happened at that particular time I pulled off the top page--we had all these pages with what they'd done, the type of thing they'd done, for every single one of them, and they told us to turn these all in, and for some reason or other I tore the top page off--the one for Tom MonPere--and put it in my bag and brought it home.

So pretty soon they made things so difficult for him--they were going to put a person in for his assistant that he couldn't work with--and he resigned, said he wasn't going to take the job. And I phoned him, in San Francisco. I said, "You don't remember me, I don't suppose, but I was one of those that worked"--well, we took them down to the Center, and they had a lovely dinner for all those people that were running for the job, and it was lovely."

Annette: Now this was the job at NCO?

Lois: This was the job at NCO. But the NCO--evidently there must have been a Center down there before that time? We had a lunch down there.

Annette: Down there, where?

Lois: That would be 601 N. State St. An old, old house, that was older than anybody that went there, I guess.

Annette: Before that--the only place I've heard of that the Seniors were in before that was out on Talmage Road, where the old Safeway store used to be. And the Progressives were out there.

Lois: In Talmage?

Annette: Uhuh. That was before the one on State Street.

Lois: Well, I didn't know about that. They were meeting up at the city park, and it seemed they didn't like it--some of them didn't like it, because meals were too--for somereason they didn't like it. And then Charles and I paid conerent on some place that we had. Oh, and then we went to one of the churches for awhile, and I think...Golda told you about the time we met with that older group that was already here?

Annette: Yes.

Lois: I didn't know too much about that. They were trying to get together with them.

Annette: That wasn't the group Dorothy Bechtol had, was it?

Lois: That was the one that she had.

Anyway, I phoned him (Tom) and we brought him back here, and with about 3 or 4 months real battle, we kept him here.

Annette: That's in the job at NCO?

Lois: That's the President--or the...I still can't remember what you call it. He'll tell you what he was, though, when you talk to him.

We couldn't have had a meal down at that place, because at that time North Coast finally rented that little old place. They found another place, and they paid two years rent for us, down there on that place.

Annette: On State Street?

Lois: On State Street. ~~I called to find out if Golda's money was right or not, and you pay, or did not. He said, "Oh, we paid four years for 2 years." So that all they had to pay all we had to pay, and if we did get the \$2000, that's what we did pay. I'm not trying to argue about it. But, anyway, what little we had was for telephone and things like that. We had to pay on that.~~

So that gave us a start. And then we had to fix that old, old house up, so that we could have public meals. Because when you're offering it to anybody, you have to pass the county sanitary regulations. And that was really a job, because we had to put in new sink and all sorts of new things, in order to bring it up to that. And then we had a lot of trouble with our cooks. They'd last a month, and then they'd quarrel, and they'd quit. Now it's just marvelous; they have a cook that stays 6 months, a year, 2 years; it's just wonderful.

But we did have trouble with our cooks, and we had trouble, but we got it going. And we had no way with transportation. Had a van from somewhere, but we didn't have anybody to drive it, and had to have a certain license to drive it. So the only people who could come were people who either could walk or could drive or somebody would bring. And now we have this marvelous transportation, which makes it so nice.

And all the time we had it there our Board was coming very carefully down to see the School Board, because the school had been declared unsafe for

earthquakes.

Annette: What school?

Lois: The Yokayo. And they had a marvelous all-purpose room with a lovely kitchen. And we kept thinking if we could get that place, we could move where we could have a larger crowd, than we could take care of in that little old place that we had.

They wouldn't let us have it. We didn't do anything undignified, we just sat there and asked for help and they wouldn't give it to us, and of course the man that was in charge of the Recreation, that I was speaking of earlier, wouldn't help us any; he didn't do a thing to help us. And they finally--one of them said, "Why don't you folks play golf?" Says, "We'll give you half of the greens fees." And I said, "I thought the days when if you don't have bread eat cake were gone, but apparently not in Ukiah."

But finally--we'd made enough fuss, we'd gone there often enough--finally one of them called me and told me that there was a chance of getting ahold of a little building that was down near the railroad track that they'd been using for "Achievement", something they used in the high school. The man in charge of that had died, and nobody else was taking...and they said that they had been allowed to have that building. So I said, "You say we're going to have it?" "Yes, you're going to have it." And they moved in there, then later they moved over where--they moved that building over where they are now.

Annette: Now you mean when you say "they", the Seniors, right?

Lois: The Senior Center, moved in there.

Annette: Was that on Perkins?

Lois: That would have been on Perkins Street. We were renting it--renting the land--from the railroad. Then too there was the danger of coming straight onto Perkins for the older people. It was much better. The other had been a group that had formed to take care of the high school students. But there weren't enough people in the--there weren't enough parents interested, there never were. They got a place there, and they got the metal building that we meet in built, and marvelous lights and blacktop, and they still never had income enough to do anything with it. I think they still use it parttime. But they had come to the time that whatever money had been borrowed, the bank was going to have to take it, because they didn't have the monthly payments. And we were able to take over because we did have, money from the National Agency on Aging or wherever our money comes from. And of course by the time that we had gotten a pretty good start the National Aging Commission was formed, and there was money coming in. We had a good enough start so they really gave us quite a bit of help.

Annette: Well, it sounds like you have been involved with it (the Senior Center) since it was on State St., then? You know, through all its moves--through the moves to Perkins and the move to Leslie--that you have been there.

Lois: No, I was on the Board 3½ to 4 years, I don't know exactly. But as long as--whenever they began to get in money I figured they didn't--we were working other years when we didn't have any money, but it was nice to get it started, and I'm so proud of it. It's so wonderful to have somewhere for people to go that don't--that want to be able to do something on their own.

Annette: I'm interested in going back to the years when you and Lynetta were trying to start something before it started. What were some of the things that you did?

Lois: Oh. I wish that you could give Lynetta something. Lynetta has never gotten any thanks or anything else for all the work she put in over the years, and it really hurt her. Did you ever meet Lynetta?

Annette: Lynetta was in my Folklore class at college.

Lois: What did you think of her?

Annette: I liked her very much. She was a very interesting woman, very dynamic, and she was trying to write family stories, so forth. Some other

Lois: She was trying to write a book of her husband's life..her brother's ..her son's life. And she was down to about 8 chapters left that she was to write.

people have told me about her, too. They think it's very important to remember her in the history.

Lois: Oh, that's good. I'm glad that somebody else is interested. I know you're going to find that Tom MonPere is very much interested in remembering her, because there were 3 women that did a lot of the work for North Coast--Medina in Lake County, and she here, and Erickson over on the coast. The other two have gotten a great deal of credit for what they did, and Lynetta never got any credit. So if we can give her the credit, I'd love to have her get it if it's possible.

Annette: What kind of credit would you give her? Could you tell me how you would deal with that, or what you would say about her?

Lois: Well, she couldn't be on the Board, because she was working for North Coast so much of the time. She worked as an outreach worker and helped everybody that she could. You ask Tom MonPere that. Because he was in charge up until 1975. He stayed there until 1975, then somebody else took it from '75 'til--oh, I think '79 perhaps--then he took the job back when they got themselves in such a mess they couldn't...And he can tell you when she went to work and what kind of work she did. He can tell you a lot more than I can, about her aid and assistance in the Senior Center, because she was always so anxious to do...I never thought of feeding them. All I wanted to do was just give them a place to meet.

Annette: That was your priority?

Lois: That was my priority, was just to meet, and find things in common, my husband was always saying, "Now don't do anything like that for me,

I'm not going to get old enough to need it." So I knew that for us-- and we had our own friends and our own card clubs, and we weren't interested----I knew it wasn't anything that I was involved with, but I just wanted to get it for those that needed it, that maybe didn't have the roots. Because if you live here 15-20 years, you've got roots, and friends that maybe weren't interested in taking care of the Senior Citizens. Because it was a very dirty word around here.

You'd say to people, "Can't you help us with the Senior Citizens?" or "Wouldn't you be interested?" and they'd say, "Well, what do those old people want that we haven't given them?" And those same people are coming in numbers on the lists now. They don't ever realize that someday they're going to get older.

But it's been very nice that we've had places for those. I still want more things that--well, we did have a creative writing class for awhile, we had a relaxation class for awhile-- lip-reading, now they've gotten another lip-reading class. Most of the things we've had have just been knitting and crocheting and the type of thing that older people could use because I suppose it was easier for them. But it's still a wonderful place for people to meet.

Annette: Can you remember any interesting incidents? Humorous stories, or just human interest sort of things? Things that would kind of liven up a history.

Lois: Well, we had two, three, four marriages--maybe a lot more than that.

Annette: Now that's interesting. I haven't heard about marriages.

Lois: Yes, we've had quite a few marriages happen from there. A lot of them, one or the other died since. but a few happy years inbetween.

Annette: And you remember any personal details?

Lois: I don't go down there much anymore. They've got it, and it's fine. I don't have to go.

Annette: How about from the time you were active? Can you remember any personal stories or details from the time you were active in it?

Lois: Leave that, and I'll see if I can think of any.

Annette: You know, human interest sort of stories. So people could see, rather than just hearing about.

Lois: Well, it's not quite as dull. Just the facts are very dull, as far as that's concerned.

Annette: But there are always interesting people, and interesting things happening, and I'm sure events--a particular event that stands out in your mind over the rest.

Lois: So many of the things of human interest were unhappy, which I'm very carefully trying to keep out.

Annette: Something else I've been trying to get from people who have been involved is a little personal background. This is for human interest in the book. Where people came from to get to the Senior Center. Where were you born?

Lois: I was born in New Mexico, but I was raised in California.

Annette: You left New Mexico at an early age, did you?

Lois: When I was 9 months old, I believe they took me away. My folks traveled quite a bit, they were in Cuba for awhile. Most of their folks were from the south, and we stayed in the south quite a bit 'til I was 3 years old, moved to California.

My husband and I--he had the Caterpillar agency in the Imperial Valley. I was raised in Los Angeles until we were married. He finally decided he wanted a ranch and bought 6500 acres in Potter Valley, is how we happened to be in Northern California. We had that for 5 years and sold out, went back into another agency. Sold that--at the time of the war when you couldn't get any stock much--bought around 4500 acres out on the Boonville Road. And then after he sold that, he took out his broker's license. After the girls--one was married and the other in college--why,, I took out a license, but I didn't have one 'til after the girls were gone from home. He kept his license until the time of his death.

A lot of this I was just working on on the side, to try to give people something to do who moved in here. It seemed a pity for them to move in, then to have to sell and move out.

Annette: You mean the Senior program?

Lois: Yes, the Senior program. I was trying to get something started for the people who--well, the world was getting older, and older people wanted to stay here, and you just felt sorry for them for having to miss out on any kind of social life because they were older, or because in some instances they didn't have any children here. And they didn't want to hang around the children anyway, they wanted some life of their own. So we used to go down and play cards, before my husband's death. That's about the only thing I ever have really taken part in, but evidently they have wonderful dances now, which is nice for those that want to. That's just wonderful that so many lovely things are happening down there, for those that have the time and are interested in what they have down there.

Annette: So you've been in Ukiah how long?

Lois: We moved to Potter Valley in 1935. Well, if it was anywhere but here you'd be an oldtimer, but here you're a newcomer.

Annette: The other thing I want to ask you is about the history. Do you have any particular ideas about how you would like the book to be?

Or any suggestions?

Lois: I'm sure you know more about writing than I do.

Annette: Yes, but I don't know more about what the group wants.

Lois: I don't even know who wants it.

Annette: It was George's idea. But as you might recall from the meeting the other day, I was asked to ask people I interview what they would like to see? If they have any ideas about how the book should be?

Lois: They're probably people with better ideas than I have. I have no idea about how you'd write it up, one way or the other.

Annette: There's no form you envision it being in? As far as size? Or hard or soft cover? Illustrations, or whatever?

Lois: Fifteen pages would take care of all there was to it. As far as I'mas I'm concerned. I'm just so glad we've got it.

But I do want you to talk to Tom. Because he'll give you the--there just wasn't anything when we got started on it, and North Coast really did an awful lot for us. They kept us going 'til we could get them together, you know--people wanted this, and people wanted that--and get us together and give us money enough to take care of a lot of the problems. And it was rough going.

~~Some of the things that we did were...~~
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Lois: ~~Something~~ ^{was said} about ^{the program getting} some money--a grant--from some source. Maybe ~~we~~ ^{we} did, I don't know. But I know we didn't have any money, we weren't allowed to spend it on the building. I know we were begging, and I used to--that year I spent going to the Rotary Club and the Lion's Club and the Exchange Club. In the meantime Charles and I was paying a lot of rent on the stuff, and he'd say, "What are you doing that for?--we aren't never going to need that." I'd say, "Well, dear, there's old people that do need it, and we'll go ahead and help them." Not that he minded, but he was annoyed that I was thinking that I was that old, anywhere near the age that--and I wasn't, but I still felt we needed it for somebody else.

I know all those years we were working so hard to get money enough to even keep going, to have our meals or anything. I didn't particularly want meals, but of course the meals have worked out wonderfully because there's so many old, old people that aren't able to cook for themselves. And it saves them--many of them have years more of life if they have at least one good meal a day, instead of no good meals a day, maybe not able to cook for themselves. But I have never served down there, so I have never met the people--like you find some of these people have served down there. Have you talked to people who have served in the dining-room?