

Interview with Albert and Lois Eldrick, December 20, 1983.

Annette Parks: I've been told that the Progressives started about 1970. Were you part of them?

Albert Eldrick: Yes, I was the treasurer of the Progressives and the Citizens. And there was Golda Conner, Bessie Heinz, Marcella Barnett--w were all instrumental in the Progressive Senior Citizens. And the reason we could not coordinate with--oh, there's one senior citizens' group that Mrs. Bechtol had charge of...Dorothy Bechtol. She would not take any applicants for senior citizens in her senior citizens' program.

Annette: Dorothy wouldn't?

Albert: No. That's why we organized the new Senior Citizens--Progressive Senior Citizen--program.

Annette: I don't quite understand. You mean she--Dorothy--was part of the Progressives?

Albert: No, she had a Senior Citizens' group of her own. There was a few of them--I know--I know Mrs. Bechtol. We finally got some from her, because we progressed more than they did.

Annette: She didn't want to combine the groups?

Albert: No. She didn't want to take on any new senior citizens, see?

Annette: What did her group do that was different?

Albert: Nothing. They didn't do-nothing. I'll tell you that, they didn't do nothing, and I was in this from the start. We never could find out that they did anything. Alright? As the timepasses, our membership--I think our membership--was \$3 a month. And we were accumulating new members in the vicinity of 200 members. We lacked a place to meet. We met up at the Clubhouse on several occasions...

Annette: And the Grange?

Albert: Not the Progressives. I think we just went there twice--to the Grange Hall. And so, through our Board, we figured that we would try to find a place to meet. Golda and Bessie and myself were appointed to try to find a place to meet. We first--I can't think of the name of the party who owned the building, it's where the Moose Lodge is now...

Annette: Out on South State?

Albert: Yes. We approached them, to see what we could rent that hall for, for meetings. But from the looks of it--size--it wasn't going to satisfy our dining-room facility--it wasn't big enough for a meeting even in there. So we started to look further. I was a member of the Advisory Group on North Coast Opportunities, at that time. I approached Roy Garlett who was manager. The North Coast had their office at 601 N. State, and that space was getting too small for them. They had leased a building over on S. Main where--~~Van~~ Motor Sales was moving from there,

~~They were moving where the present Portlock building is now.~~ I got in touch with Roy, man-to-man, and explained what we wanted. And he offered a deal that he would pay--they would pay--they, North Coast--they would pay the rent on the property and pay the insurance and the utilities. If we would take that building and promote our Senior Citizens' program, our Progressive Senior Citizen program--but also work into a meal program, and further Meals on Wheels. We consulted with the Board, and they agreed to progress, and take that over, on the proposition that Roy got for us, with government money. Through longtime effort, North Coast appointed a bi-county Senior Citizen Advisory Committee. *This committee existed before.*

Annette: Lynetta Jones was involved with it, at this time, wasn't she?

Albert: Yes. She worked at North Coast, she had her office in the building.

So, as a result of our agreement to take over 601 N. State, NCO would back us, if we would promote the... So, as time progressed, we got together and had a meeting, and explained to the membership what we needed. We needed lots of furniture donated.

Annette: Now at this point were you the Seniors or the Progressives?

Albert: Well, now we are still Progressive Senior Citizens. We still were Progressives.

Annette: But the Progressive group--I've been told that the PROGRESSive group--went off on their own, separate from the Ukiah Seniors when they started. That that group continued to meet on their own?

Albert: No. There's some hatred there. And they wouldn't agree--they wouldn't agree to that, see? All our officers in the Progressives went toward this, see? Then there were some obstinate ones. The Progressive senior citizen dropped out of the picture after we organized this.

Annette: But they continued to meet at the Clubhouse?

Albert: No. That was our meeting place (601 N. State), and they were all to meet there, anytime that they wanted to, but they just drifted away.

Annette: But there was only one group?

Albert: What?

Annette: You're saying there was only one group--the Ukiah Seniors?

Albert: Yes. And I can't remember whether the other group was Methodist or Presbyterian. I can't remember which Mrs. Bechtol is, see?

Annette: I wouldn't know that either.

Albert: You can find that out, easy. I don't want to say one way or the other.

Annette: I understand.

Albert: So people brought stuff--furniture--and donated money and time and dishes--well, we wouldn't worry about the dishes, till we get ready for them. We were worried about furniture and stuff to sit on. Chairs, and tables. Meeting. And we had to have a stove in the kitchen, a range to cook on. To run a restaurant we had to have a three-hole sink. I promoted that from the State Hospital, 'cause I think I was working at the hospital at the time, off and on. I was working on contract. So I knew where the stuff was, and I promoted it in the name of the Senior Citizen program. There was money donated by various members, and we had members solititing donations. To gain the support of the government program to finance us, we had to show Washington that we were able to progress and make a go of the law that Kennedy put in. I don't remember that law exactly...

Annette: I don't either. But it seems like Senior Citizens programs were springing up all over at about this time...

Albert: They're paying, they're paying yet. They pay for these yet, because of that law he put in. George would know.

Annette: Anyway, the Federal Government was behind it?

Albert: Yeh, the Federal Government--yeh, it was Federal. That money always comes to North Coast.

Annette: This was the first one to happen in Mendocino County, wasn't it? The Senior Citizen Center you helped establish?

Albert: Yes. North coast appointed the Advisory Council, of which Claude Trimble was president. There was Dr. Jean Taylor, worked out at Talmage. And there was Lois Anderson, Golda Conner, Bessie Heinz--that was Bessie Heinz Timerhoff--she was married and he passed away.

Annette: What do you remember in these days at the Senior Center, in the way of personal experiences? Human interest sort of stuff. Are there any particular experiences there that stand out in your mind?

Albert: Only to our setting our goal, what we were to do. When we accomplished what goal.

Annette: What was your goal?

Albert: A meal program was our goal at that time. We finally got things together and an inspection by the County Health Department.

Annette: This was on State Street?

Albert: Yes. Getting back to the Advisory Council, which had charge of the Senior Citizens in two counties. I know we went to Lake County, we went to Fort Bragg, then we went to Willits--to get her working. When they found out we were organizing for new efforts with the Progressives--not coordination with, but we brought it up to the committee, the advisory committee, that we had access to the building and we do such and such a thing. Claude set aside Dr. Jean Taylor as Chairman of our Board, I was still Treasurer, Lois Anderson was on that Board--the first Board that started, to get ready for meals. I remember when--boy, you talk

about one interesting portion. We borrowed our tables from North Coast-- 8 foot tables, we had to haul 'em--and chairs, back and forth, from S. Main to that place, to have a meeting, then take them back there for their meeting down there. That's what we had to do till we got enough tables. Then North Coast ordered extra tables from somewhere in the Bay Area, and we had tables of our own then.

Lois: They served the best meals down there. Oh, they were good. Not anything like this one down here.

Albert: When we were finally ready to operate, because we didn't have money to do this on, to work on, Roy got us \$240 to start the meals. Yes, he did. We were looking for a cook at that time, and we contacted-- we happened to know of Cookie Phillips--they called her "COokie"--June Cookie Phillips--and asked her if she would start for us, which she agreed to. I remember our meals, the first meals was, I think 90 cents. I think that first meal sold for 90 cents. I kept inventory and costs of the meals, and the receipts, to find out if we were losing money or gaining money. I didn't want to gain too much, but I wanted to keep an even budget if I could.

All right, to date back to how we got our money from the government. We had to prove--North Coast couldn't just tell them that we were operating we had to have--they sent out a sheet to the people, to the organization--they sent out papers. They put in so many hours, donated so much. Then they would send you what they called an "in kind" sheet...

Annette: When you say "they", you mean the government?

Albert: No. North Coast had to promote the "in kind" , through the government, for our financing--for our government financing--direct to the Senior Citizens' Center. In order to obtain this money we had to incorporate. And we incorporated under the Greater Ukiah Senior Citizens' Center, of which I am a Charter Member. Jean Taylor resigned-- she got married and was transferred somewhere. She was a fairly young doctor, ~~at~~ at the State Hospital. Well, that threw a lot of the responsibility onto me, because I was her horse--working horse. Most of the responsibility, direct responsibility, of the meals, came to me. I asked the Board if I could get some help, and that we should hire a manager. After Jean Taylor left, well then Claude Tremble took the Chairmanship of this organization. He was on the bi-county deal too. They were still working in Willits--Willits was going a little slow in promoting--Lake County and Fort Bragg. They were all working, getting started.

We got our meals organized, and one of the first--if you remember, it just come to my mind, now you got his name down there--Myers.

Lois: Leland.

Albert: Leland Myers. He ~~was~~ ^{poured} our coffee

Lois: Yeah--he was so cute. He was such a nice man.

Albert: He couldn't see too good, but he wanted to do something. And we had different waitresses. Lennie Yappin was one of our first

dishwashers. Was it Lennie *Laffin* kids that used to come in there and *help*,

Lois: Eat so much? That was funny.

Albert: Things like that. So, after the passing of time, we hired a manager, put out an ad for somebody acceptable to the Board to run the outfit. It was in--now I can't pinpoint any years or dates on any of this.

Annette: We can always get that in the minutes. Don't worry about that.

Albert: Betty Cooper applied. She was a cook, and she had one restaurant we agreed to hire her. The job didn't pay too much. That was after we had got organized and got financing that we could do this. I still was Treasurer of the organization. And through efforts to coordinate and see that everything was running right, I kept track of the costs, analyzing each meal. Lois worked with Betty, and she mentioned several times how she used to load up. ~~Went to the store and buy some stuff and take it home.~~ Well, I didn't say nothing in particular at the time, but I kept my eyes open and ears open, and we'd find out how much stuff was missing. Betty lived where she lives now...

Lois: On *Jones* Street.

Albert:...and she had a daughter that lived in the back--she had two or three houses. Anyway, I had quite a problem to convince the Board that our stuff was disappearing, that we weren't using it. The Board was composed of--I think George Bartlett was on the Board, at that time, and myself and Claude--that's three men--and I think there was 4 women on the Board, right?--it was a 7-member board.

Annette: Now we're still talking about the early 1970's when it (Senior Center) was on State Street?

Albert: Yeh, the 70's, yeh. I asked for an Executive session, but nobody else was too anxious to hear ~~what's now known.~~ I'd lay it out to the Board, what was going on, and I could get no support. Well, I'd known _____ for a long time before that, and I told him, "What's the use of having anybody to find out anything, if you don't do anything?" "Well," he said, "if you can find out something authentic, well, we'll consider it." So I said "okay." I happened to know the Personnel Manager--I found out she worked at the State Hospital, that's where she met her husband...

Annette: Betty Cooper?

Lois: Yes.

Albert: Red. And she met him, and...

Annette: Was Red her husband?

Albert: Yeah, yeah, Red was her husband, he died. So I contacted the

personnel manager out there, and I told him, and he said, "I'll tell you anything you want to know," and I said, "Will you write it down?" and he said, "You bet." "I'll write it down." He said, "Betty Cooper was discharged from the State Hospital on 4 accounts of theft, two on dope and two on alcohol." He said, "That enough?" and I said, "I think that's enough." So I took that back to the Board, and they ~~replaced~~ her, because they found out I was telling what I knew was happening.

Lois: I knew it was the truth, because she used to put it in the back end of her car--all that food, you know? Take it home. She said, "Why don't you take some?" I said, "I don't want any. I wouldn't take any food like that."

Albert: So at the next election after that, because of people who didn't know Betty Cooper as I know her, I lost my seat on the Board.

Annette: How was it connected? I'm not quite clear.

Albert: Because I was the one that promoted the firing of her.

Annette: But how did that cause you to lose your seat?

Albert: The people--wouldn't vote for me.

Annette: Because they liked her?

Albert: Well, evidently did--yeah. She had a slick tongue to talk, but at the same time a crafty hand. And I was discharged from the Board.

Lois: I'll bet Claude Trimble had a lot to do with that.

Albert: No, no, I don't think so, not after he *learned the truth*,

Lois: With his big mouth.

Albert: Now, listen, don't think.

Lois: I'm not, it's the truth.

Albert: No, it isn't true. The Board is the one that fired her, and I promoted it. We had to get another cook. Ellen, her name was, she lived out on Low Gap Road. Put down Ellen Lou's Roost. That's the restaurant. You know where it is, don't you?

Annette: No.

Albert: Right across from--it's the Green Barn now.

Lois: She was a good cook too.

Albert: And she cooked for awhile. Then after I dropped out, away from there..they got their meals started, and they were after a bus for transportation. They promoted a bus, to haul passengers to the Center for meals. And that same year they promoted "Meals on Wheels"--delivering meals to people that couldn't get out. And I think Jack Carpenter was

the first bus driver that they had--you got his name down?

Annette: No, I'll put it down.

Albert: Jack Carpenter.

Annette: Now was that just in Ukiah, at that time? That was before meals got started in Willits and other places?

Albert: Yeh, that was ^{just} in Ukiah.

Annette: And at this time you (Senior Center) was still on State Street?

Albert: Yeh, we were still on State. Shortly after this, after they got the "Meal on Wheels", they moved over--I don't know who had the program, the kids had it--the school program, over by Humboldt Federal?

Annette: Out there on Perkins?

Albert: Yeh. The house that was there, some junior group had that. They were losing it, or whatever happened. I don't remember, in fact I wasn't instrumental then. But I knew that the Senior Citizens' Center, as an incorporation, moved over there and fixed that up and had "Meals on Wheels", and they did some repair work there. They were there for a couple of years, or so. I don't know. George could tell you, because it was after--I think it was a year after--that we hired two managers before George, and they didn't last too long. George was still on the Board.

Annette: Was Lynette Jones one manager, and then also...

Albert: No.

Annette: Lynette Jones wasn't ever the manager--where did I get that idea? And then White--what was his name?

Albert: Yeah, he was one manager.

Annette: What was his first name?

Albert: I can't remember it either.

Annette: But, anyway, the years you were the most active were those early.

5 Albert: In the beginning. And also after we moved, we took the--they repaired that building and got started there. I don't know whether GEorge was manager there or whether he came in after we moved where we are now?

Annette: You're still involved ~~it~~ with it now, aren't you?

Albert: What?

Annette: You still are active with the Senior Center now?

Albert: Oh, I still was active, but I wasn't an officer, like I was before.

Annette: Do you still both go to it(Senior Center activities)?

Albert: Not too much, anymore. The opening came for the present Senior Citizens' Center. It was Youth--I don't know what the name was...

Annette: I remember--there was the Youth Center right next door.

Albert: They had the big building. The Center was given this building here.

Annette: On Leslie?

Albert: No, on Perkins. And they moved it over onto Leslie. That's the other building. Then they added onto it and coordinated it with the Recreation Hall. That's what the other one was, see, was the Recreation Hall. The Senior Citizens made a Redrecreation Hall and combined the Youth Group and Senior Citizens, in coordination of working together in various projects. I was instrumental in starting the dances, in the hall.

Annette: That's fun--do you like to dance? I guess, if you started them, you do.

Lois: I love to--we both like to dance.

Albert: We started the dances. Doc Powell--you got his name down?

Lois: Doc Powell. He played the piano.

Annette: Can I find him? Is he still around?

Albert: You can probably find him down at the Center. Ask Angie, down at the desk.

Through his piano playing, and we'd get pieces of orchestration sometimes with it, but we starated with the piano--the way he ~~92~~ played that piano was always good.

Lois: Oh, he was good, yeh.

Albert: And we had to carry chairs back and forth, from the Center into that room.

Annette: Over to the room where you had the dances?

Albert: Uhuh. See, they didn't have the meetings in that room, in the big hall, it was all recreation until we got the dinner program moved over there, then they got this organized for their meals, see--the recreation room. Then they were able to get new equipment--chairs--I don't thiikk there's any donated stuff there at all anymore, I don't see any. I think it's all been replaced by new furniture.

Lois: Yeh, they got great big tables.

Albert: Yeh, nice tables and chairs...

Lois: Great big round tables...

Albert: And the program carried on to the present day.

Annette: You said more-or-less that you don't go much anymore? Is there a reason for that?

Lois: We just don't go much. We don't go too much.

Annette: How has it changed?

Lois: You mean the Center?

Annette: Yes. From how it was when you first started.

Lois: Oh, it's a lot nicer. I think it is.

Albert: Each year there's a build-up, one after another. Through our manager, George Bartlett, they have done a wonderful job.

Lois: You see, Albert used to drive the bus, too.

Albert: I drove bus for 3 years.

Annette: Oh, you drove bus?

Lois: Yeh, he drove bus.

Albert: I broke my hip, see--right here!

Annette: Oh, wow!

Albert: And after I was able to move around I drove bus, lacking a month I think of being 3 years.

Annette: Was that after they moved to Leslie?

Albert: Yeh.

Lois: They only had one bus then, didn't they? When you drove?

Annette: Now was this the bus for Meals on Wheels?

Albert: No.

Lois: To bring people in.

Albert: To bring people in. But we delivered the Meals on Wheels, too. I delivered them after I brought people in.

Lois: Then he used to take ~~them~~ ^{people} to the doctor.

Annette: You'd take them to the doctor?

Albert: Yeh, in the afternoons. We'd take them home for lunch, or something; then for a certain period of time afterwards we had to pick them up for the doctor, or shopping, or anything what-have-you.

Annette: You mentioned that your first goal, when you started on State Street, was to get the meal program going. Why did you think that was important, and then how did other goals grow from that? I mean after you got the meal program, the Center kept growing and growing, like we can see at this point. How do the goals now fit with what the goals were then, I guess is what I'm trying to ask? Your original goals? Is it still pretty much in line with those, or are there new ideas now?

Albert: There was only one to our knowledge at that time, and that was in Sonoma County. They were organized and working already. And that was another goal, to beat them. To catch up and beat them?

Annette: Beat them in what way?

Albert: In the activities. Like we got this big hall and the dances and one thing and another...

Lois: And they played bingo and cards...

Albert: Cards and bingo--all activities for the Senior Citizens activities

Lois: And they had crocheting, and sewing and knitting...

Albert: Liquid embroidery, and different classes they taught. I don't know who was the teacher, there was one teacher that taught there for awhile for something. I know she donated a stove, for that kitchen of the old hall, before they built that kitchen now. I can't remember her name. There's only one person that I can tell you that can remember, besides George--George's secretary, Nancy Bogey. Nancy Bogey can pretty near ~~9999~~ verify anything it says on there, because she worked for North Coast