

Interview with Tom MonPere, February 6, 1984.

I have been involved with Ukiah's Senior program during two different periods of time, as Director of NCO (North Coast Opportunity). The first was December 1970 to mid-1973, then I subsequently came back in March 1981, until the current time.

I'm trying to remember the old site. The Senior Center when I moved here (1970) was called the NCO Senior Center. It served lunches and was in an old house at 601 N. State. So there was this building, and there was a meal program going.

What occurred at that time was that NCO provided staff for that center--paid staff persons--as well as paying rent and utilities. This had gone on prior to my getting there. The lady who had operated it was Lynetta Jones, Jim Jones's mother. She was a remarkable woman. She was the first person to provide real, direct service to seniors--taking people to doctors, taking meals to homebound seniors, etc.

Claude Trimble, Al Eldrick, Arthur Burke--are the original group I remember. A lot came out of the grange. They were first involved to work as a board on the Senior Center. Golda Connor and Marcella Barnett were part of another faction, who called themselves the Progressives.

They were two distinct groups, one had the name of Progressives, the other was the Advisory Committee to NCO on Senior Services here in Ukiah. This ultimately became the core group who formed the Senior Board. Our function (NCO's) at that time was to deliver services to low-income seniors (doctor care, meals). The other function we had--around '72-'73--was to actually organize a Senior Center with its own Board.

Initially a name here was Bob O'Donnel, and a second name was Duane Hill. Duane is still in town, the Director of Rural Housing.

What occurred about this same time ('72-'73) is the Older American Act passed--or maybe it had passed earlier and just began to be important--about this time. Money moved then from the Federal to State level, and the State established a Commission on Aging. The Commission on Aging went around and said, "Before we send money out to all these agencies, we want to know. We want to know who the low income and frail elders are, and what are their needs." NCO had the planning contract to do the assessment on that for 4 counties, which originally included Mendocino, Lake, Humboldt, Del Norte. We split that in half and ended up with just two, Lake and Mendocino.

This is a two-tier process. The Ukiah Senior Center continued to evolve during this period--people like Lois Anderson and Lynetta Jones went to different organizations and groups on the local level to try and get money. The City was approached and put up some money--not a lot, but a little--and several service clubs put up a little. About this same time a group of Seniors and myself went to the County Supervisors to request matching funds *from revenue sharing funds.*

The big breakthrough came when the Board OF Supervisors set aside \$100,000 (1/10 of their revenue-sharing) for all Senior programs in the county. These included: Fort Bragg, Willits, Anderson Valley, Covelo, Point Arena, Ukiah. This was a real breakthrough, because local funds became committed to the Senior program.

They started really rolling at that time. NCO began backing off, when it came to delivering direct services. The Senior Center Board was formed and hired its own managers--first, Clarence White, then George Bartlett. Earlier staff had been hired by NCO.

It is important to recognize that these events were not just taking place as concerning Ukiah, but were part of a broad movement, county-wide. Three ladies were at the forefront of making it happen. In Fort Bragg was Bea Erickson, and there was Emily Medina in Kelseyville, then Lynetta Jones in Ukiah.

It was a movement both humanistic and institutional. The institutional process was fairly simple--NCO providing services through 3 ladies, receiving funds. Then after the Older American Act passed, NCO deliberated the best approach, decided to back off and work through local groups. Over the past 10-12 years, Senior programs have been developed in 12 communities: Middletown, Clear Lake, Clearlake Oaks, Lakeport, Lucerne, Ukiah, Willits, Fort Bragg, Point Arena, Anderson Valley, Covelo, Ukiah INdians and Laytonville(a small center).

From the institutional perspective, NCO's objective was to develop Senior services in these communities. We developed in each community an organization or agency to operate these services--in Ukiah it is the Ukiah Senior Center. Our role backed off, until now it is limited to getting money from the State and parceling it out to agencies--the Area Agency on Aging was formed to do this. The Ukiah Senior Center is only 1 out of 12 which we work with.

The Senior program's traditional purpose has been to help the elderly poor, frail and ill. Lynetta Jones was a critical person when it came to outreach work with seniors in the community--she had real compassion and a sense of identity with their situations. I think of Lynetta as one of 3 strong, dedicated women who helped get these programs going. To them it was part of the class struggle. ~~Bea saw it in clear, [redacted] terms.~~ Emily said, "We're going to go out and save these folks." Lynetta was somewhere in the middle.

They would all work long into the night. I remember one night a woman was homebound, debilitated, could not get up and get food. It was a rainy night, during a spring of fierce storms such as we had in the early '70's. Lynetta drove out--here she was in a white ~~Toyota~~ <sup>van</sup> ~~Toyota~~--took food to the woman, in an area of Talmage that was being semi-flooded. "What time did you get home?" I asked Lynetta next morning at work. "Oh--about 10," Lynetta said.

It wasn't a job, but a mission, with all 3 of these women. Lynetta was a direct service sort of a person, not concerned with the politics. Each of them worked separately, but would get together

here (in Ukiah) and talk once a month. If there's anyone who is responsible for a sense of community in terms of the community's obligation to Seniors, as well as what services should be provided, it was these 3 women.

The Progressives kept going for a few years (after Ukiah Seniors formed), then phased out. They were kind of a short-lived organization, not really a forerunner to the Ukiah Seniors, more a parallel development. What it breaks down to is that the Senior program was starting from 3 separate directions at this time--the Progressives, (Golda and Marcella), NCO (Tom and Lynetta), and the group, largely dominated by men from the Grange, who would form the core of the first Senior Board.

George Bartlett is an element of continuity from the early years of the Seniors 'til now. Also Nancy Bogey, because she worked for both NCO and the Senior Center.