

Interview with Alice Trimble, December 14, 1983.

Annette Parks: What was your first experience with the Center when it started?

Alice Trimble: Well, my husband was still alive. One day he came home, and he said, "Oh, guess what?" I don't know the name of the gentleman anymore--I'll think of it later--they're on School Street now. Anyhow, he met my husband he said, "We're looking for new quarters--North Coast something-or-other--anyway, they had a place here on State Street, a few years ago. And he said, "We're leaving all the furniture, we're moving from, and maybe you could use it--start a Senior Center." So my husband dashed madly home, and he started working on it right away. He called a few people that he thought might be interested, and he was going to get the ball rolling that same day.

Then he went over to look at the house. Of course all the furniture, the overstuffed furniture, was soiled, you know, and we brought couch covers. I just packed up lots of my large kettles, and so did a few of the other ladies. By the next day we were ready to operate--pass the word around.

A.P.: Now where was this building? Was it the building on Clara & Stat

A.T.: On Clara and State. It's an office building. I don't know what the name of the street is there. It's on State St. The yellow building on the corner there.

A.P.: And this was the first building the Senior Center had?

A.T.: Yes, uhuh.

A.P.: How did the man happen to come to your husband?

A.T.: He met him on the street. It's somebody that my husband knew.

A.P.: He knew your husband was interested in it, was it?

A.T.: I guess...

A.P.: Had something been happening with it before then, I mean? Work leading toward getting a center?

A.T.: No, there was nothing. Nothing ever was said that I knew of, you know.

A.P.: I understand that the Progressive Seniors was going before the Senior Center, and I get confused between the two.

A.T.: The Progressives..we joined them too. And they used to meet at the Methodist Church, and we'd go there for their potluck suppers, and then we'd talk, you know, about how nice it would be to have a nice place of our own, for the--oh, for the seniors. My husband was

just like a kid when he came home, to tell me that man had offered a place and maybe we could do something about it. So he talked to several people he knew, that had the time to put in, and they were off. We were serving coffee the next day.

We gathered dishes and pots and everything, and we worked there all the next day--cleaning up, you know, after they're moving out. Oh, it was a lot of fun, and everybody got so excited because we were going to have...

We belonged to the Progressives, and then we attended the potlucks at the Methodist Church. I guess there's a lot of Progressive people who used to attend there, too, you know, and we didn't belong to the church, but we were interested in the Senior group.

A.P.: How's the church connected with the Seniors?

A.T.: No way at all. It's just a few people that used to go to the card parties and potlucks, you know. We'd talk about how nice it'd be to have a place for the Seniors. Because ever once in awhile you read something in the papers, you know--and we thought, well, it'd be nice for us to have something in Ukiah. So--I just know my husband was so excited that it wasn't even funny. He was like a kid with a new toy.

A.P.: Sounds like you picked right up and got involved with it too?

A.T.: Yeah. I packed up all my big kettles. We had those down the first night, I think, and we were ready to start. Oh, we had to clean up the place, it needed a lot of cleaning. Oh, and the couches were worn, and I brought some couch covers to cover up, you know, the worn spots. We were like a bunch of kids with a toy.

A.P.: You were enjoying it, it sounds like.

A.T.: And everything just seemed to fall into place. You'd think that the whole community was waiting for it.

A.P.: So you had good response?

A.T.: We had wonderful response. We started playing cards at night and--in the afternoon, people would be shopping downtown, after we were running for awhile, and they'd go shopping, and come back and have some coffee--we had a coffee pot on. People had more access to the place than they have now, because we close it right after dinner, and there the ladies would stay all afternoon, and in the evening the men would be playing cards, playing bingo or something. Just to keep the place open, and get it rolling, you know?

A.P.: Sounds great. How did you let people know about it? How did people find out about it?

A.T.: Well, I don't remember now whether they had articles in the paper? We were so busy, getting things going, 'cause we started serving meals right away. If we had 6 or 8 people that would come and eat the first time we served--why, we were happy. It just grew.

A.P.: Do you remember some of the people that were involved with it then?

A.T.: Yes. Let's see--Kitty Schwank was one. She's still working with me.

A.P.: She sounds like a good person for me to talk to.

A.T.: Well, she came in after we opened over there. I didn't do any cooking at home after that, because we were there from 9 o'clock in the morning until maybe 1 o'clock the next morning. The men would be playing cards in the little room off the side, and we'd be playing ~~99999~~ bingo or doing something, you know. And we right away started our handcrafts. And for Mother's Day we had a tableful of corsages made that we sold. Oh--everybody had some idea, you know.

A.P.: Did you have a mutual idea, what your purpose was? Was it to just get together and have fun? Or was it toward some future goal?

A.T.: No. To have a place for the seniors, you know. Like we have now. We had no idea how large it would get. But we had such a fantastic start there. It just seemed like the Lord wanted us to have it or something. I'm still working there.

A.P.: I know you are. The funds for it? How did you raise the money for rent, things like that? Did you have fund-raisings?

A.T.: We were selling things. Making things and selling things, to get started--with our dinners, you know. And I think everybody brought all the dishes they could, because we didn't buy anything at first. We just had a conglomeration of all sorts of things there. But everybody was so happy to get that, that they never even noticed it. And the ladies who worked in the kitchen. I don't think that Mary...now Katey Schwank remembers the names of these people better than I do, because I run into so many people..you know? I know the people, but I'm not sure of their last names. She..I think she was our first cook. She comes to the Center for dinner--Mary somebody. And--it just sort of grew. And then we got a station wagon to pick up people. And, I think if I remember right, the bus driver was just gratis. They didn't pay anybody, I know.

A.P.: Everything was volunteer at that point, was it?

A.T.: Everything was volunteer, and everybody was happy. Mr. Bartlett came in, and my husband was in charge of the office--until Mr. Bartlett came in, then that was turned over to Mr. Bartlett.

A.P.: What year was this?

A.T.: Oh, gosh, I don't remember. You'd have to ask Mr. Bartlett.

A.P.: How long were you in that building?

A.T.: Not very long. Oh, maybe...I remember we had the first Christmas there..which was in the same year that we--oh, maybe, a year-and-a-half

A.P.: What was the first Christmas like?

A.T.: Oh, a great, great, great big Christmas tree. Oh, everybody just--they all ~~9999~~ acted like a bunch of kids that are just tickled with something that they've got, something new. And everybody was just bringing, you know, and trying to help..and we started making things, and selling. After dinner we'd have the tables all covered with handiwork..that we made, you know? It was great. Everybody had...that's what we need now.

A.P.: Do you feel it's different now?

A.T.: Well--they have so many departments. They're working..but there isn't the enthusiasm.

A.P.: I wonder why that happens with organizations?

A.T.: Well--this was something new, and everybody wanted its success, you know, and, gosh--we'd be up at 2 o'clock in the morning.
to be able to

A.P.: Be nice ~~8888888888~~ hang on to that initial enthusiasm, wouldn't it?

A.T.: But you know when things get going, and money coming in, you lose something.

A.P.: How long did you operate before you started getting Federal funds

A.T.: I don't think we were getting any funds while we were on State Street. And then we moved in--are you familiar with the Senior buildings there?

A.P.: ~~BB~~ Yes.

A.T.: Where the office is?

A.P.: Yes.

A.T.: Well, that was on a side street across from the depot there. And the boys, the high school boys or something, had a workshop or something there, but something happened to their financing.

A.P.: On Perkins? Was this on Perkins?

A.T.: Well, across from the depot.

A.P.: The railroad depot?

A.T.: Yes. And something happened there. They weren't producing or something..they had trouble getting instructors. I don't remember what

it was. But, again, they came to Claude, and wanted to turn the deal over, to the Seniors. That building.

A.P.: Now, who came to him?

A.T.: Whoever was financing that, the high school boys or something that they had there.

A.P.: It was an organization that was in this building?

A.T.: Yes. And they weren't getting..somehow they weren't getting together with the kids--you know? So they offered it to the Seniors. So of course the Seniors took it over, right quick. And they put in the kitchen in there, a small kitchen, and they started serving dinners

A.P.: You weren't serving dinners at the place on State Street?

A.T.: Yes, we were. OH, yes, And that was really funny. Everybody brought some dishes, you know, from home. Sometimes you look at a table, and everybody had a different kind of a dish.

A.P.: Like a potluck?

A.T.: Everybody was happy. They wanted a Senior Center so badly, once they got the idea. So they they took over the place across from the depot. What is it?--Perkins. But that was so small.

A.P.: But there must have been a reason why that building was better, or they thought it was better--huh? They liked it better for some reason?

A.T.: I really don't know. They wanted to up our rent, or something, because somebody else offered to...They have nice offices in there now. And the place really needed repairs. Everything was worn down so badly. So when somebody made them an offer--I think it was through Mr. Bartlett--I mean they made it to Mr. Bartlett...

A.P.: And he was the director at that time?

A.T.: yes

A.P.: He became the director while you were still on State Street?

A.T.: Yes. And then--well, that became too small for the crowd that was coming in. So then they started to look around for something bigger, and the present--our dining-room, you know, there, where we're at now, on Leslie. The kids ~~were~~ weren't taking care of the building. They were very rough on the floors, and sometimes we'd drive by at night and they'd have the door open, motorcycles running around in there. So they had to do something about it, to save the building you know. So anyhow, Mr. Bartlett and his committee managed it, to turn it over to the Seniors. Now the Juniors--I mean..the Youth Club, anyhow--I don't know what the arrangement exactly is, but I heard somebody say the other day they can use it at a certain time, you know? They still have the use of it, but not as much as they did before, because they were abusing the place.

Now they had all the things repaired that the kids broke in there, and everything. And as soon as they finished, where the place was in repair, they were playing pool, and with the cues they poked holes in the ceiling. Well, that's when they put the kids out.

A.P.: Uhuh. Now this is the building where the Youth Center is now?

A.T.: The Youth Building, yeah.

A.P.: And the Seniors moved into the building they're in now?

A.T.: That's the office next door, yes. And the kitchen is next door. And they bring the meals over to the dining-room. Just recently they built a nice garage, for the buses. And they're getting some new buses, they've got an order in for 9 years ahead, we have to put an order in way ahead, for your buses, when they have to replace them. I guess when they're used so much, they just fall apart finally.

A.P.: Well, I understand that the surrounding Senior Centers kind of grew from the one in Ukiah? The one in Willits, and the one in Lake County and on the coast--that they started here first, then grew from there--is that what you remember?

A.T.: Yes. My husband and I were organizers. We organized trade unions around here, and we organized AARP from--well, from the Oregon border to Los Angeles--and lots of other organizations, I organized several on the national level. And I think it's progressing very well.

A.P.: Sounds like it. Something that I want to include, that would make the history more interesting, is where people came from that were involved in starting the Senior Center and have worked with it--to get here. Where were you born?

A.P.: I was born in Milwaukee. And, let's see..my husband was born--where did he come from? Isn't it funny? I don't remember. And Kate Schwank--she came from the mid-West, some of those states in the mid-West. 88

A.P.: When did you leave Milwaukee? Did you come to California directly from there?

A.T.: No. I worked in Chicago. I had a funny..type bringing up. I wanted to be a nurse. My father was a business man. He insisted that I go to Business College. That wasn't what I wanted. But just to satisfy my dad, I went. The next day, the day I graduated, right across the street was a newspaper office. So they were looking for a reporter, and I applied and got it. That was great! I worked there a about 4 years. That was the nicest job I ever had. I was young, you know, and...And, so, mama was stepping on her chin, because she thought that I--she always wanted me to take beauty culture and have my own business.

A.P.: What kind of business was your father in?

A.T.: My father, primarily, was in the real estate business. For years and years, before they were married even. And so, I took the newspaper job, and after 4 years I went into Beauty Culture. I

graduated there and worked for 6 months. It wasn't what I wanted. I still wanted--you know. So then I took on selling the Volume Library. In one book we have everything in outline form, you know, and that was beautiful. I just sold that like mad. So they had a meeting--I worked there about 2½ years--they announced that I was in third place in the United States, in sales. Well, I was just thrilled about that. I could take the foreign section, see? You had to hold your book upside down, facing the customers, and give your sales talk.

I went in training in Chicago, in Chicago General Hospital. It was after mama died. It's stood me in ~~9000~~ good stead for about 30 years now. I had a resthome right after the 2nd world war, in Kelseyville. Dr. Woods was our doctor, and he was also doctor to people who had Holden Street Home. They were adventists. Dr. Woods came to us one day, and he said, "I have some friends at Holden Street. He will have to have some kind of an operation, and they'll have to give up Holden Street." It would be so much handier for us. I had the same number of patients as they had on Holden St.--I had 9 patients. I bought the place, then we sold our place in Kelseyville. I had it three years, and we wanted something bigger. A girl that worked for me wanted to take over Holden St., so she sold us her home on Luce Avenue. We lived there about 2 years, and started looking around for a larger resthome. One day Dr. Woods came over to us and said, "Oh, I've found just the place you are looking for." Well, I'd been looking for that for two years and couldn't find a larger place, so I wasn't too enthused. We'd just bought another home in this area. So I thought my husband had bats in the belfry. We were so involved, we had just bought a new home. So I sold Holden St. to this lady, and my husband went over to what is now Silver Birches. I named this, on account of those three silver birches on the corner. When we went over and looked at it, I thought, "God, we can't ever afford that!" But he was enthused. I wouldn't even get out of the car. So when I finally went in, I looked around, and I thought, "Well, this place has a lot of promise." I said to my husband, "Let's take it." He was flabbergasted.

I had to run the business. I had my husband's help, and I had two girls working there. We bought it, remodeled it, and we had a ~~900000~~ beautiful business there.

A.P.: Well, it sounds like you had your chance to become a nurse, after a

A.T.: I did, I did. I attended nursing school in Chicago.

A.P.: Where did you meet your husband?

A.T.: In Chicago. Then we came out here together. After World War II, because we worked at the shipyards, during WWII. I'm a welder.

A.P.: Then you worked all the time you were married, it sounds like?

A.T.: I did. I continued to work, until my husband passed away. I lived on Carlton. And we just had our house all painted inside. My husband had a formal rose garden in the back, and we put the little ornamental shrubs in front. Oh, we did a lot of things there. We spent a lot of money on the place. Then my husband died, and somehow I felt

I just couldn't live there. By myself, you know. I wanted a place with a dining-room. For 40 years, I had dinettes--great big living-roc and a dinette--and I love company. And you can't do much with a dinett This real estate agent was showing me all of these houses. So he opened the door to one, and I walked in, and I took about 3 steps in the front room, and I said, "Aaah--my dining-room. I'll take it!"

A.P.: And your music. Have you been working with your music for a long time.

A.T.: Oh, I've been working with it all mylife. I started lessons when I was five.

A.P.: We didn't mention that in line with the Seniors. Have you always played for them around? Have you been doing that for a long time?

A.T.: From the 5 very beginning.

A.P.: One of the happiest offerings one can give, I think, is music.

A.T.: Well, it's getting the best of me now. I'm musician for the Grange. I'm musician for Willits Grange--anytime they have installatio or anything, in Laytonville. I'veplayed at Whitesboro--that's way on the coast--Sunday. And last Friday, I think it was, I played at Fort Bragg. And at Comptche. And that's how I go. I'm going to be 82 next month.

A.P.: And all your Senior volunteer work--I was wondering with all your business, how you had time for it? You must feel it's very important.

A.T.: Well, we were always--my husband and I were always--involved with that. We had the business with the seniors, you know, and we started the resthome for the seniors over here. I'd love to have that Bruner place (Silver Birches) back again. They're not running it the way I did. They've got some of these welfare patients. They're spoiling the reputation of the place. You can't expect to get a higher priced patient--like I had Judge Held and people like that in there. He lived right next-door and he ate at our place--I didn't actually have him as a patient, but he used to eat at our place. We had real nice people, and no people that should have been in an institution someplace, you know. They're not doing that now.

A.P.: But to come back to the history. Is there any particular way that you would like to see it done? The Senior Center history that we're putting together--do you have ideas that you think would be good to put in it?

A.T.: How they could improve, you mean?

Ideas

A.P.: No. /That you think would be good to put in the history. This history that we're trying to put together. Are there things you would like to see in it? Things you think are important? Things I might ask as I talk to people, that you think would be especially good to know?

A.T.: Well, it just grew like wildfire. It was something that they wanted here real bad. The Progressives--they just had a certain little clique--you know? And there wasn't anything here to interest--you know the Seniors. We joined the Progressive group, but we didn't care about it. I had no idea that we'd get into this Senior deal that quick, because my husband was busy, I was busy.

A.P.: Senior Centers seem to be a product of recent generations--say, since World War II. How would it have been done in your mother's time? What did seniors do in the generation before?

A.T.: Well, I guess the families just took care of them. My grandparents lived with us, and this seemed natural. It seemed that everybody else's grandparents did too. Very few of them ever lived by themselves. That I knew. And this is just a god-send--they really enjoy it. I enjoy it. I'm one of the Seniors, who's enjoying it. I go up there every day to eat. I hate to cook for just one person.

A.P.: Can you think of anything you'd like to mention to include that I haven't thought to ask?

A.T.: They're always looking for expansion. It's the neatest thing over here, and I'm sure that they'll make it. We have a very good--he's president right now, I guess--Mr. Bartlett. He's a good businessman. And we have a very good group of officers. They're all business people, and they're really going to town. I don't hear everything that's going on. But what I do hear, I'm really proud of the Center.