

AL 132

Interviewee: Helen Graham Andersen

Interviewer: Connie Lazenby Bieber

Date: February 26, 1991

B: Good evening. This is Connie Lazenby Bieber interviewing Helen Graham Andersen. Today is February 26, 1991, and we are at Helen's home in Gainesville. Good evening, Helen.

A: Good evening.

B: I would like to start today by getting some biographical information from you. First, where were you born?

A: In Gainesville, Florida.

B: What year was that?

A: [In] 1942.

B: Your parents' names?

A: Bill and Helen Graham.

B: Where were they from, Helen?

A: My father was born in Gainesville, and my mother was born in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

B: How did she come to live in Gainesville?

A: Her parents moved to Gulf Hammock and then from there to Gainesville when she was a youth.

B: Did you live in Gainesville during your growing-up years?

A: Yes. [I have lived] all of my life in Gainesville.

B: Where did you go to school?

A: I went to J. J. Finley [Elementary School] and then to the junior high school, which was Buchholz, the old Gainesville High School [GHS]. Then I went to Gainesville High School, which was the one that was built more recently out near the [Gainesville] mall on [NW] 13th Street.

B: When you started school, was the first grade you went to the first grade or kindergarten?

A: Kindergarten.

B: So kindergarten was part of public school at that time?

A: Well, I went to P. K. Yonge [Lab School] first, as a matter of fact.

B: So you went to kindergarten at P. K.

A: At P. K. – kindergarten, first, and second. Then I went to third grade at J. J. Finley.

B: Thinking back into your childhood, what is the very earliest thing that you can remember?

A: My goodness. I remember living at my grandmother's house. I guess that is probably [my earliest memory]. I guess I was about three or four then.

B: Where did your grandmother live?

A: As a matter of fact, I even remember something before that. I remember living in Bangor, Maine, during the war. My father was stationed there. I remember having a snowsuit and being out in the snow and playing with the dog. I would not leave its food alone, and I think I got nipped [laughter].

B: I wonder where he found a spot to bite you if you were wearing a snowsuit.

A: Right on the cheek, I think [laughter].

B: So what was your dad doing in the war?

A: He was in the air force. He was part of training troops.

B: This is the Second World War?

A: Right.

B: OK. Tell me a little bit about the memory that you were talking about earlier when you referred to living at your grandmother's.

A: After the war we came back to Gainesville and lived with my grandmother while my father went to law school, so we lived in her house for a couple of years. I

have a lot of fond memories of living there.

B: I am sure you do. Where was the house located?

A: Well, then it was called Palmetto Street. It is the same street that Mark Barrow has his office on now. I do not know what the number would be.

B: Is that East University?

A: It is off of East University, about one block over from Kirby-Smith. [Dr. Barrow's office is at 810 E. University Avenue.]

B: One block east?

A: Yes, one block east of Kirby-Smith.

B: On the north side of University.

A: Yes.

B: So your dad was in law school.

A: Yes.

B: Well, tell me a little bit about what Gainesville was like when you were growing up.

A: Well, it was quite small. The University pretty much was the center of it. The boundaries when I was in high school was pretty much Gainesville High School down on 13th Street, the University Inn going south, east would probably be downtown Gainesville--the courthouse and the northeast section of town--and I guess going west would be the old Gainesville Golf and Country Club, which is now the University golf course [on SW 2nd Avenue]. That sort of were the perimeters.

B: Are you saying that is as far out as buildings were developed?

A: Pretty much so, yes.

B: Were the roads paved to those places?

A: Yes, and they were paved farther out. But there were not the subdivisions or the businesses. It was pretty much out in the woods, just a scattering of houses.

B: Gainesville has spread a lot since then, has it not. So you finished school at GHS. What did you do after high school.

A: I went to the University of Florida here in Gainesville.

B: And you studied?

A: I studied English, journalism, [and] speech. It was a liberal arts education.

B: Did you finish here in Gainesville?

A: I graduated in 1964. Then I taught at Gainesville High School, my alma mater, for about three years.

B: What did you teach?

A: I taught English and speech. Then I went back to school and got a master's degree in speech pathology.

B: OK. And that was also here at the University of Florida?

A: Yes.

B: You have a family. Can you tell me a little bit about them?

A: I have two daughters. Currently one is at Clemson [University] in [Clemson,] South Carolina. She is nineteen. Her name is Karen. Kathleen is fourteen and goes to Oak Hall [School in Gainesville]. She is in the eighth grade.

B: OK. And you are married to?

A: I am married to Torsten Andersen, and he is a pediatrician in private practice in Gainesville.

B: Is he a Gainesville native also?

A: No. He really is a native of Denmark. At age ten he emigrated with his parents to the Boston area where his father was an anesthesiologist at Massachusetts General Hospital. Then in 1959 when the University of Florida opened its medical center, his father came down and was on the original staff of the medical center here. Then he followed them after his senior year in high school and then went to the University of Florida.

B: So you met in college?

A: We met in college. Right.

B: As you know, what I am really trying to learn about in interviewing you tonight is something about the Junior Welfare League, which started in Gainesville in the 1930s and has since that time become that time become a part of the association of Junior Leagues. When were you invited to join the Junior League?

A: It was about 1965.

B: At that time it was still the Junior Welfare League, correct?

A: Yes.

B: How were you invited to join? Can you tell me a little about that process?

A: It was very mysterious. You attended a social function – I believe it was a luncheon – with some people you knew and a lot of people you did not know. It was just sort of a social engagement. Then you just received an invitation in the mail. So you did not know you were being sponsored, and you really were not aware of [what was happening]. You were just invited, and you either accepted or rejected it.

B: So you did not know you were going to be put up for membership?

A: No. At that point I guess you could say it was a secret admission system.

B: Is it still handled that way today?

A: No. There has been a tremendous change over the last twenty-odd years. It is an open system at this point. The members know that they are being sponsored. In fact, they are even asked if this is something they would be interested in doing. Are they really interested in volunteerism and spending their discretionary time in this manner? They are told very precisely what the responsibilities and the objectives [of the Junior League are]. So they go into it with clear knowledge of the organization they are joining and what demands will be made on them and what they will get from it, too. So I think it is more of a partnership now in joining than it was earlier.

B: How do you feel about the change in the way they do this?

A: I think it is much better. We have changed so much, just the woman's role and what they do with their discretionary time. In fact, there is not much of that discretionary time anymore. In the early years, in the late 1960s, there were

maybe a handful of us, ten or twelve who worked. The rest were non-working members. Consequently the meetings were held in the daytime. They had what they called the professional group, and the ten or so of us that were working met at night. So we had two separate groups. Eventually more and more people were working, and then I think they tried to combine. They had a few at night. Finally it evolved where all the meetings were held at night because so many of the members were working.

B: It sounds like you are saying that you have seen quite a change, not only in the admission system, but in the membership as a whole since you joined in the 1960s.

A: Yes. Well, there are just many more professional women working. [New members are] choosing it not necessarily because they have to do it. [They are] choosing it as a way that they want to spend their time. So to sandwich volunteerism in a working schedule, they have had to be a great deal more selective in how they do it. It has to be meaningful. I always enjoyed membership, even though I was working from the very beginning and have most of the time, because if you are very busy quite often you do not have the opportunity set up. It gives you the opportunity to do something worthwhile and socialize at the same time on a schedule that you do not have to set up. It sort of maximizes your time. So it was always very appealing to me from that standpoint.

B: How would you evaluate the way this organization has addressed the changing needs of women that you are alluding to during this period of time?

A: I think this is when we joined the national association and became a Junior League rather than a Junior Welfare League. I think joining the national association was very helpful because the opportunities [to attend] conferences and just the networking with other areas just made the transition, I think, easier. I think the options were clear. I am not sure – I am just guessing – but I think the southern leagues tend to have maybe not as high of a proportion of women working as maybe some of the Northeast leagues and some of the other areas that were much more career oriented earlier than our area. So I think they kind of showed the way in a number of instances.

B: Would you say that one of the purposes of this organization was a women's support group?

A: I think so. I do not think that was a specifically stated intent. I do not believe that was in the organization's statement of purpose. It was more to develop volunteerism and to develop the individual's skills.

- B: But it sounds like that is what you are saying.
- A: Well, anytime we had a questionnaire that was trying to tap "What is it that you like about the Junior League? Why are you doing this? What is your motivation for becoming a member?" generally number one on the list was they really enjoyed the contacts they made with other women. They enjoyed the kinds of women they met, and they enjoyed just getting to know people. So social interaction was always very high on the motivation list. At the same time, they enjoyed developing their potential and also serving their community. But definitely socialization was a high motivation.
- B: Moving back to when you received your invitation to join the Junior League, the Junior Welfare League at that time, I am assuming that you knew something of the organization. I understand your mother is a past president of this group, also, so you must have grown up in a "league" home.
- A: Well, I do not think I was really that aware. I just vaguely remember playing around in what I later came to understand was the Thrift Shop in those days. I remember a tin garage in back of Louise McMullen's house, and I remember just kind of playing around in the dirt while they were selling all these clothes in this enclosed tin shed. So that was probably about the only memory I have specifically of it.
- B: But as a growing-up young woman and young adult, you did know the existence of the organization in town already. Is that true?
- A: I guess I probably did, but I was not [really aware of the league's activities]. In those days – I do not know when it changed; I guess it changed when we became a member of the national association – you remained a member until age forty. Prior to that your stint of service was seven years. So if you joined at a relatively young age, like twenty-five, you were out by thirty-two, which is quite a bit different. We tend to have a much older membership. Quite often you are not coming in until about thirty-two and [are] staying until forty or forty-two. Some even choose to stay till forty-five. So I think when my mother was involved in it I was very young, and she was young, so by the time she had put in her seven years, there was not really that much involvement that I recall after that. It was not spread over a long period of time like it is now.
- B: How was this group perceived in the community at that time? What sort of reputation did it have? How did the community view it?
- A: It had a wonderful reputation. I think they felt that if the Junior League was going to take it on that it was something that was well thought out and needed and the job would be done well. Probably all you had to say was, "This is something the

Junior Welfare [League] wanted to do," and it just opened doors, more or less.

B: How do you think it was perceived by the community in terms of its being a social organization?

B: I think it probably did have more of the "white gloves" perception. I do not think that is an accurate perception, because I think especially in those early projects, the volunteers really enjoyed hands-on kinds of opportunities.

B: Now, what years are you talking about now?

A: I think of the very early years, of which I was not a member then, [in which the league worked on projects like] the pediatric clinic [at Alachua General Hospital] and some of those early projects that were very much hands-on kinds of [activities. I think there was even a school lunch program at one time. I think that was one of the earliest projects.

B: The pediatric clinic project probably continued into the 1950s.

A: Right, and those were very hands-on kinds of things, hardly white glove. I would have to say now we have become more cerebral [laughter]. In fact, there was a period of time that we were developing so much of our ability to plan and to organize and to implement that we became very cerebral in our approach to projects. There was one point, I remember, there was a loud cry to get back to the hands-on, person-to-person contact, rather than the big project planning that we directed.

B: Can you tell me what period of time you are talking about when you refer to this time when we were not doing direct projects, direct volunteerism on a one-to-one basis?

A: Let's see. Gosh. I am trying to think. [It was] during the period of time [when we worked] with the Santa Fe Community Art Gallery. What year would that have been?

B: The docent program was established in 1979 for the Santa Fe Community Art Gallery.

A: OK. Then [came] the Morningside park and later the Cracker Farm – that is what I am thinking of. That came after Morningside Nature Center, when they were trying to create a cracker farm.

B: Would you say this coincided with the period of time when the group was really behind the idea of advocacy and making changes in the system as opposed to

direct one-on-one [contact]? Would you address that a little bit?

A: Right. That was probably more mid 1970s to late 1970s. I think, again, that was very much an influence of the national organization and the training, because they were very much into systems change. Most of the conferences were [focused on that type of activity, and our local chapter was] very much into developing the community research aspect.

Also, education [was very important to us]. I would have to go back and look because dates are not coming to mind, but along about 1975, I guess, when we joined [the national organization] and the late 1970s [we turned more to education and training our members]. Part of the training when we joined the national association was the Association Management Process, which was a process by which the organization established its goals, objectives, and strategies. It was a planning process. That was first introduced to our league [when we joined the national organization]. So between 1975 – could that be right? Did we join in 1975?

B: Nineteen seventy-five is when we joined.

A: Because that year is when Betty Alsobrook was president. That would only have been six years, from 1975 to 1981. I was trying to think. I had never really thought what a brief period of time [that was that since we joined the national group], because it seemed, when I was president in 1981, that we had been a member of the association forever. [laughter] When I think back on it and subtract, that is only six years. In a brief period of six years, we went from pretty much [a group where] somebody would see a need or an idea would arrive, and we would sort of implement a project – and they were good, well thought-out, and planned projects, but more on the local level – [to a group with a much wider vision].

When we joined the [national] association, they really brought in heavy training over the next six years. As you say, in terms of management – management by objectives, advocacy techniques, writing position statements and taking positions, heavy into community research and how to do a needs assessment in the community. We – Carolyn Mahan and JoElla Harris – did a huge children's needs assessment during that period of time. That was part of the national organization. So it was a great time for developing skills. I would say our league members developed skills on a volunteer basis or in their volunteer career that were equal to any that you would get specifically studying management in a college setting.

Not only did we have the opportunity to think through the process, [but] then we had the opportunity to go the next step and implement it all and then to evaluate

the process afterwards and establish the new goals. I think so often when you study from an educational perspective – how to create a project, how to do your research and then establish needs from the research, etcetera with a project – it all is theoretical. I think the one great thing about the league was a real advantage to those of us learning it [was] not only did we theoretically go through it, but then we got to apply it and really implement and then evaluate. So that, in terms of project development, from my perspective, was just an incredible experience. Most people – college-trained business people – have really not had in-depth experience with project development.

B: What size was the Junior Welfare League when you joined? About what size a group was it?

A: I do not really remember. I am just kind of visualize the meeting room. [There may have been] maybe fifty or sixty.

B: How large was the class when you were invited to join, the [provisional class]?

A: There were about twenty-five of us.

B: That many. Now, there were the people that had received an invitation to join, and then their next step was –

A: There was a provisional course. Then, too, there was a provisional ball, and that was a very formal affair.

B: A ball?

A: A ball. I think that one other big change I have seen over the years of bringing the provisional members into formal membership [in the] social occasion. It has not been as formal as it was back in the early 1960s. There were always a lot of sustainers attending the function. I do not if that is probably as true today.

B: Can you describe it for me a little bit more?

A: Well, I remember it was at the Gainesville Gold and Country Club, and it was long dresses and tuxes and white leather gloves up to the elbow. [laughter]

B: It sounds kind of like a cotillion.

A: A cotillion it was, yes.

B: Or a debutante ball.

- A: It was very much. I guess it was Gainesville's closest thing to a debutante presentation, and you were presented. Halfway through the evening everybody would line up with their escorts and they would call your name out and you would parade across the ballroom. I believe we had the first dance, too [laughter].
- B: Well, tell me a little bit about this group of women at this time, in the 1960s. Were they a very homogeneous group? What were they like?
- A: Yes, they were very homogeneous, I think. It was definitely all white, educated (pretty much) women.
- B: Was it mostly people who had grown up in Gainesville?
- A: There were [those who] either grew up in Gainesville themselves or they married someone whose family lived here, so they were the wife of someone who grew up in Gainesville. [It was] probably 50 percent. I am just guessing. If I saw the list I could check them off and let you know. But I do get that feeling.
- B: Gainesville was a very different then.
- A: Oh, it was very small then.
- B: In the 1960s. How would you say it had changed by the 1960s from the time you were describing earlier, when you were growing up, about what Gainesville was like?
- A: There really was not a huge change. That would have been right after I graduated from college, and I just do not remember the community's growing. Oh, it did a little bit, but it pretty much was very similar.
- B: Would you say the University was still in the same position, vis-à-vis the community, as you described earlier?
- A: Yes. I do not remember exactly when it happened, but I do remember that there was tremendous segregation between the community and the University. I do not remember exactly when University personnel were allowed to run for public office, like the city commission and county commission, but I do remember that's being quite a controversial issue, and for those natives who had lived in Gainesville a long time the old "town and gown" was very evident. I just do not remember exactly when that changed, but I do remember its being quite an important time.
- B: Now, you said you became a member in 1965, I think.

A: Yes.

B: In the late 1960s there was a good bit of student unrest throughout the country. Did this occur in Gainesville in conjunction with student protests in general and in conjunction with the Vietnamese War?

A: Yes, I think the University of Florida campus was very much following the trend of the nation. I also remember the attitude, because I was involved with one of the sororities on the UF campus in the late 1960s. I had gotten involved again ten or twelve years later, and there was a real difference in the attitude of the students. During the late 1960s if you were perceived at all as any sense of authority figure they really resented your trying to tell them what to do or to be directive at all. It was sort of "this is my life and my group." They were not very amenable to suggestions. It was a very difficult time for people who had any responsibility at all in terms of advising or trying to guide that young generation at that time. I will not say everyone, but you really did not look forward a lot of times to going over there if you had to be directive.

B: What group were you affiliated with on the campus?

A: Chi Omega sorority. But that was not just typical of them. I think it was just typical in general of the real strive for independence and that "I am the boss" kind of attitude. Now I am involved again going over, and it is just such a striking difference. They are anxious for you to come over; in fact, they ask you to, and when you do they are extremely polite. They thank you. They even ask your opinion and in fact seem to be interested in what you have to say [laughter]. I do not think it totally out of obligation. I think they genuinely do try to absorb opinions and information. So it is just a wonderful time to be interacting with what I call young people in their late teens and early twenties. [It is] very much different.

B: I see what you are saying. I can see that you have had some very up-close experience because of your experiences as an advisor on the campus. Did you find that the student unrest or the student positions intrude into the community, or were they limited to the campus? Did they affect people out in the community?

A: Probably. I cannot really remember specifically, but I would say probably so, because when you have such a large student population you can hardly go anywhere in Gainesville that you are not interacting with students, whether in a store or their positions as waitresses or waiters or sales personnel. I would say the attitude was felt, probably, by the community.

B: That was a time of unrest for a lot of people for a lot of reasons. Getting back

more specifically of the organization of the league now, what projects was the league involved in when you began as a member in the 1960s? What sorts of things were they doing in the community?

- A: This is where my memory gets a little fuzzy. I would have to refer back to the history where they list the projects, because, as I said, I was a professional, and unfortunately not only did the membership meet during the day, but all their projects were projects that were manned during the day. So if you worked, you really did not have the opportunity on any of those projects. The only thing that we were able to participate in because of our working schedule was Saturday Thrift Shop. So I would have to say for the first five years of my life in the league I worked at the Thrift Shop on Saturdays, so I had very limited experience with their projects.
- B: Well, tell me a little about the Thrift Shop. You mentioned earlier when you were a child that the Thrift Shop was in somebody's garage. Was it still there when you became a member?
- A: No. By the time that I was an active member it had moved to behind J. C. Penney's and across from Rex's Bakery. I cannot remember the street number there, but it was right off of Main Street.
- B: Just south of West University, almost one block south of Lewis watch company is now.
- A: Right, directly behind J. C. Penney's.
- B: And I think I noticed just this year that that building has sold.
- A: Oh, did it?
- B: Yes. The league no longer owns it. But that was where the Thrift Shop was located when you worked there?
- A: Right. In those days we did all of the work. We marked the salvage, we sold the salvage.
- B: Would you define "salvage" for me?
- A: OK. Salvage would be donated goods: clothing, small household articles (not furniture or large appliances), maybe small appliances, books. But mainly clothes. People in the community would donate salvage, and each member had a quota that they had to meet. I do not recall exactly what it was; it was probably \$100 of salvage that you had to bring in during the year. Then, of course, the

sustaining membership, those who were no longer actives but were sustaining members, contributed a great deal to the salvage. So when the salvage would come in we would mark it and put it out on the shelves and the racks and were responsible for selling it. Then at the end of the day we would count up the money and deposit it in the bank. I do not remember exactly when we started paying workers to do all that, but at that time we did all of it. There was no such thing as a paid worker.

B: So the Thrift Shop was in the business of selling second-hand items to people in the community who frequented the Thrift Shop.

A: Right.

B: Was it a fund raiser for the league?

A: Yes. In fact, the majority of the money that they turned back into the community in the form of projects was made in the Thrift Shop. It was really their way to generate their funds for project development. It is kind of an interesting thing, because when I think back on the clientele, they were relatively indigent people, and just the other day I was saying something about taking some salvage to the Thrift Shop, and my housekeeper said, "I went in the other day, and I cannot afford that anymore. They have really upgraded right out of my price range."
[laughter]

B: Where are they located now?

A: They are now located on Main Street. You are better at the directions than I am. It is on North Main Street about three or four blocks [from University Avenue].

B: It is right across from the Sun Bank building, is it not?

A: Right. That seems like the right block.

B: So they are selling a better grade of [clothing]?

A: It seems to me. I have not been in that much since they moved to their new location, and I have noticed in the newsletter they are really striving to upgrade their merchandise. But it seems from what this individual is reporting, not only have they upgraded their merchandise but also their prices. So perhaps they are attracting a more affluent clientele than we were serving back in the early 1960s.

B: That is interesting. So the first five years or so that you were a member of the league your project duties were always the same, being the Thrift Shop.

A: Yes.

B: At what time during this period did you go back to school?

A: Probably the last two years.

B: And then when you finished school were you still limited to the Thrift Shop, or were your opportunities wider?

A: I moved away from Gainesville for about two years. Then when I came back I was in graduate school. Again, my time was more flexible, so I was able to participate in more of the projects. But somehow I really have been more involved in the administration of the league than I really have in the projects, because I remember going from there to chairing the admissions committee and then secretary. So it has been more of the internal operations of the league that I specifically been involved in than the projects.

B: And then, of course, you went on to sit on the executive committee and then president.

A: Then I became president. It really was not until after I was president and [became a sustainer] that [I got involved in] probably one of my most involved community projects, the Family Resource Center. That was the most demanding project I have worked on.

B: I am really interested in learning about the Family Resource Center from the idea and the inception on. What can you tell me about it? How did it come about?

A: Well, I think it was probably one of the finest jobs the league did in following the [Association Management] Process. It took about three to four years.

B: What do you mean, "follow the process"?

A: Well, the first step of the process was to assess the community needs. Ann Rials was just a very able community research chairman; [she] brought a great deal of talent and skill to that job. They had a series – I think there were three – of round-table discussions, inviting professionals and a broad range of people. First of all we did an internal assessment of the league, asking them what areas they would be interested in working in. There was a long list to choose from, and always there was the "other" category that people could insert their specific interest area if it had not been listed. From the internal appraisal, basically what the membership wanted was to work with families with children. The other thing they wanted was a project that would have a high impact on the community. So those were the two basic directives or guidelines from the membership.

Then Community Research Committee brought together three separate community round tables. I guess there were maybe ten to twelve people at each one, so after it was all said and done there were probably thirty to thirty-six individuals in the community from all sectors that had any information or had any connection to children and families. We asked them, "What are the needs in this community that relate to children and families?"

From that there was a real concern that the family unit itself was in jeopardy of surviving and how the family does, in fact, meet the needs of children. [In many cases] they were not being met because the family was under a great deal of stress. Basically, the outgrowth was that you could not meet the needs of children without meeting the needs of the family. That is why it grew from, "What is a project that we can do that will address children?" to the more global issue, where we really needed to address the whole concept of the family.

Then in the process of the networking and the round table [discussions], what they were realizing was there was a tremendous amount of resource out there, but there was not a great deal of integration and interfacing. So the other thing [we decided was] we do not need to reinvent the wheel. We do not need to invent another project. What we need to do is to get all of these agencies and groups and private organizations that are already addressing some facet of the needs of the family to work together and to network and to integrate and to more effectively deliver their services. So that is why they decided to make it more a family resource center and not a specific project. I was more of an idea than it was a specific thing you were going to do to a specific group.

So when we decided how we were going to implement it, a lot of ideas arose. I think a number of attempts had been made in the community to get sort of an umbrella groups getting all of these various factions of the community working together and coordinating better. The decision was that if we did it ourselves by ourselves that it would not be effective.

About this time information was being distributed by national about how to develop a collaboration with the community. It was a very involved process, and it would take a long time to explain it to you, but we decided to use a collaborative process, inviting the community to be partners with us in developing this, because a lot of it was ideas. We were trying to establish a mechanism that could be viable, that could change with the needs, but had an ongoing way of establishing what the needs were, of assessing the needs, keeping the pulse on the community of what were the needs of family and children, and then trying to pull together the resources there and saying: "This is a real need. What are you doing?" If any need was not being met, then not necessarily the Family Resource Center [would] develop the service but [would] say, "Would any of you like to [handle this]? Can you expand in any way?" So it was really more of a

networking [coalition].

B: Would you say it was like a clearinghouse?

A: To some extent, but it was not just an in-and-out clearinghouse. It was really to generate ideas. The first thing that the Family Resource Center did – and it was really a monumental task – [was a telephone survey] in cooperation with the College of Nursing. I think I added up the figures at one point, and I think we got, in terms of research and donation of time by some members of HRS and the College of Nursing, about \$30,000 worth of services to do a really massive –

B: In kind.

A: In kind – telephone survey of the community, asking them specifically what they saw the needs were. The process was (1) we asked the membership what are they wanted to work in, then (2) we asked professionals in the area that the league wanted to work in what they saw the needs were, and after that we went to the community and asked them what they saw their needs were. So it really was quite a massive endeavor to pull together the information to find out what was needed and how we could develop a viable organization that could continue to assess and bring together people in a cooperative effort to meet those needs. It was never designed to specifically pick out a need and meet it. And if no one else wanted to do it and it was something that fell within the possibility of the Family Resource Center, then they would create a particular resource.

B: OK. So what happened next?

A: Well, it was a great idea, and I think probably one of the real difficulties the league and this whole – I need to back up a minute. When the league did their internal evaluation or assessment of the area they wanted to work in, they had also decided they wanted to have a significant impact on the community. In order to do that, a Follies was coming up in a couple, or maybe it was the next year, and they decided they were going to earmark all proceeds from that Follies to this project.

B: Can you stop just a minute and tell me what a Follies is and how that fits into the scheme of money-making projects?

A: OK. Every four years the Junior League sponsored an evening of entertainment. They usually contracted with Cargill, which was an entertainment-production company, and they would come in and bring in all the costumes, all the acts, all the songs, all the dances. What we had to do was just have people to fit into the various slots. So it was an evening of entertainment with not just league members, but community members who were invited to participate.

B: By invitation, you mean?

A: Well, no. In fact, I do not know if it was ever specifically advertised in the papers, saying, "Anyone who wants to come, come," but I think people just listed anyone they thought might be interested. It was just whomever you could possibly think of that might be interested in doing it, so a lot of good friends were made. In fact, a lot of the league members are community people who were interested in participating in the Follies and got to know league members, and pretty soon they were involved as league members themselves, were invited to membership. But every four years the league would put this on and generate a rather significant amount of money. So the Follies and the Thrift Shop were the primary money-raising [activities].

B: So that is how they funded the different projects.

A: Then at one point they had a cookbook that generated some money.

B: What was the name of that?

A: *Gator Country Cooks*. I am not sure what year that was.

B: I am sorry to have interrupted your train of thought. You were talking about after we got the conception of the idea for the Family Resource Center, then you were going to explain that we were earmarking funds.

A: Right. One of the things they really wanted was a significant impact on the community, and they said they felt by earmarking all of the funds from the Follies that would also make it easier to go out [and sell advertising]. One of the ways that the money raised from Follies was not just selling tickets to the performance but from selling advertising to individuals in the community [for the program]. They felt it would also be easier when they made their contacts for selling space in the Follies program to tell them, "This is specifically what we are going to do with the money," instead of "We do great things. Won't you contribute?"

B: Did you feel that you had a better response in terms of the amount of advertising spent and donated dollars when you did that?

A: We made more that year. I do not know if it was totally related to the fact that they earmarked it, but one might think it could have been.

So the funding for the Family Resource Center was pretty close to \$50,000, which the profits [covered], and in-kind services from like Alachua General Hospital and Santa Fe Healthcare System. They [Alachua General] donated the office space and renovated it for us.

B: Now, where was that located?

A: That was located near the hospital, about one block from Alachua General Hospital. [It was] one of the buildings they owned. I believe we stayed there two to three years rent free.

So we tried to develop a grassroots membership, and they wrote some grants. I guess the real difficult problem was establishing a good, permanent, acceptable funding base. I guess it was about four years later, we do not like to say we terminated the project. It just went through a metamorphosis. As a matter of fact, it is interesting, because they keep talking [about it]. Somebody recently said, "The idea has been resurrected. What we still need is –" I guess funding might have been easier to generate on a more permanent basis if you were doing something to someone or to a group. It was very difficult to get people to fund an idea. It really was not an idea, but a networking, coordinating, [and] collaborating process. That they never really could understand. In fact, I remember when I was addressing Altrusa – their organization asked me to come and talk to them about the Family Resource Center – I took great pains to explain very clearly what the Family Resource Center was and this networking, collaborating, coordinating role of the center. I thought I had done a relatively coherent job, and at the end a good friend of mine and said: "Oh, that was a wonderful talk. Tell me, now, exactly what are they going to do?" [laughter] So I realized that as hard as I tried, it was just something that was very difficult [to comprehend]. Anyone who worked in the area of human services for families knew exactly what was needed, but it was a concept that was very complicated to convey to the general public. They understood if you had a parenting class or they understood if you had a workshop on this or if you did counseling. Direct service they understood. They just never quite understood [the Family Resource Center concept].

B: So this was an attempt to collaborate with government agencies and private organizations that were working of families and their needs.

A: Yes.

B: Well, I certainly hope that it will get resurrected again.

A: Oh, people are talking about the same thing that is needed, how it will evolve a second time around.

B: When I am doing research in what is happening in this organization during this period of time, particularly the early 1980s, I keep running into things that the league seems to be doing that they had not been doing before, like contributing mini-grants to community groups and funding positions or paying for services

that are provided by some other group. Could you address that and tell me if that is a change from the way it was done before, and, if so, give me a little of the rationale.

A: It very much is a change. I remember specifically – and this again would have been mid to late 1970s – that when we raised funds we did have requests from various organizations for \$500 here or \$100 there, and occasionally, if it was really seed money, sometimes we would consider it. But the real thrust was that when we generated this money it was up to the league to then develop projects that we did not fund-raise for other organizations to fund them. When we would fund-raise it would be for our organization for development of the projects that we thought were important.

It really is interesting. I guess I was so ingrained with that that I have a real difficult time every time I see that we are [awarding] these mini-grants, and there are more and more of them and the sums are getting larger and larger. I keep wondering why there was such a change. I guess perhaps that it is because so many of the members worked that there just really is not the time [to maintain a project of any substance on our own]. It takes an inordinate amount of time to take a project from its original thought to its implementation, and that kind of time is just not available, perhaps, in the membership, now that so many of them are working. Although they have money for projects, they just do not have the time to expend developing the projects themselves for which they would use their money for funding. So it is easier to give it away than it is to [use it for our own projects. We just do not have time to keep them going.]

B: I see.

A: I do not know that that is what it is, but it is just I wonder why that change has taken place, because it certainly is 180 degrees from what it was.

B: In other words, are you saying that there used to be a policy that you did not put your money where you did not also place your members?

A: Exactly.

B: But that seems to be changing now.

A: Yes.

B: You mentioned one program just briefly a little while ago when we were talking about something else, and I would like to go back and ask you a little bit about it now. That is the parenting project, or the Parent Education project. That is something that this group was involved in or started?

A: Well, it was not a part of the Family [Resource Center]. There was a parenting project in the Family Resource Center, but that had been established quite a few years before that in conjunction with Santa Fe Community College. Bebe Fernside was very instrumental in getting that project off the ground.

B: Can you tell me a little bit about what was involved?

A: I cannot remember exactly the detail of the funding. I know it came through Santa Fe Community College, some of the funding units there, to pay for the parenting instructors. I think the league provided volunteers to help also some money to establish a toy-lending library and other aspects of the project. So we did not fully fund the project, but we were in coordination with Santa Fe.

B: I read at one point in some newspaper articles where the league picked up the salary for one of the teachers in the middle of the year, but I have the impression that that was because the school board was unable to follow through with a commitment.

A: That might have been.

B: I was just wondered if that was the same project. It was in the late 1970s.

A: Well, this went on for five or six years. In fact, it expanded. I know Bebe was particularly interested in getting parenting classes going over in the Palmer King-Woodland Park area.

B: I do not know where that is.

A: That is right off Waldo Road near the Evergreen Cemetery. Really, [her main interest was in] getting parenting courses into the low-income areas.

B: Was that successful?

A: No. I think we were a great deal more successful providing classes for the upper middle class or middle class [laughter]. They just were more into doing everything they could to make sure they got their babies off to a great start.

B: So you offered it to the community as a whole, but you are saying those are the people who responded.

A: Yes. I think Bebe really was hoping to get more of the lower [income population], the people who really needed the parenting skills. Although if anyone comes, whoever comes it certainly is worthwhile. If they see the need, then certainly it is worthwhile for them to come and you feel like you have provided a service. But I

do not think it touched the population that needed it most as significantly as they had hoped it would in the beginning. But you cannot necessarily make people come. It just was not something they were particularly attracted to.

B: I see. Tell me, did you know Mrs. [Carolyn Julia La Fontissee McCollum] Palmer, who is affectionately known as Aunt Carrie in this group?

A: Right. No, only by reputation.

B: We have jumped around a lot tonight. We have talked about a lot of different things that have happened in the Junior Welfare and the league after it became a part of the Association of Junior Leagues, the Junior League of Gainesville. Is there something that you would like to point out that we have not talked about tonight in terms of how the organization has changed or its purpose or its projects or its people have changed or anything else you would like to add?

A: I think we [have covered most of it]. I have not been that involved with the organization over the last eight years, so I do not have a real feel for it, not as closely as I did up until about 1981. I think one thing we were really concerned about from an administrative perspective was that being president of the league probably was about a twenty- to thirty-hour work week. It was the kind of position that you could work all day if you wanted to. You really just had to stop when you just could not afford to devote any more time to it. It could be a forty-hour week if you let it be. So there was real concern that because so many of the people were employed that we would not be able to accommodate the leadership positions or to tailor them such that people who were working could in fact consider the leadership position. That is when we went into the council kind of organizational structure, trying to diversify the decision-making, getting it farther down and not having everything have to be decided at the top. That is the one thing I have noticed of our last couple of presidents. One was a lawyer. The one who was president and left has a full-time job, so it appears that they have been able to make the position such that one could do that and hold a full-time job, too.

B: You mentioned earlier that when you joined the league, about 50 percent of the people were wither Gainesville people or were married to Gainesville people. Would you say that is probably still true today?

A: Oh, I think it is very diversified, just because the community is more diversified than it used to be. I would think the Junior League probably in those earlier days were more community people, community meaning those that were not related to the University, but I think more and more women connected to the University have joined the league, which adds to diversity. Then there was a real push in the organization starting about 1978 for racial diversity, and that has also been

accomplished in the league.

B: Now, did that take place before you ended your active membership?

A: No, it took place afterwards.

B: What can you tell me about that?

A: Well, all I can say is that the national organization lent a great deal of expertise in (1) demonstrating the advantage to diversity and (2) assisting leagues in how to accomplish diversity, especially in areas where it might be more resisted. I think had it not been for the national thrust that it would not have happened in Gainesville as soon as it did.

B: Did you feel that it was resisted here?

A: I do not think it was resisted as much by the active membership, [but] the active membership was concerned how it would affect sustainers and earlier generations that might be more resistant to diversity. It turned out not to be a problem at all. But any time there is change you always wonder who will it affect and in what way. Obviously it has been a very positive influence on the organization.

And [it is] working in the community, too, because I felt one of the real difficulties was not being very visible in the community. It really was not until about the late 1970s or early 1980s that there was a real thrust in the league to become more visible in the community. It was always sort of a low profile, because until we had an admission policy that was open and not secret most people felt very uncomfortable about being too visible in the community outside of the league circles because they were afraid one of the first questions [would be], "Well, that is such a great organization. How do you join?" It was such a ticklish situation nobody wanted to have to deal with it. So you sort of kept a low profile. Once we opened the admission so it was much more open, that became easier to deal with. Then the other aspect [was] because most of the community groups we were working with were diversified and racially integrated that it was difficult to operate in a community without representation from all sectors of the population.

B: You indicated that you have seen diversification of membership to include the University segment of the community as well as the town.

A: Yes.

B: And also to include racial diversity. Have you seen other types?

A: And ethnic groups.

B: Can you expound on that a little bit?

A: Well, I think just as our community has become more ethnically diversified in terms of people from other [walks of life, such as] the Latin American sector and the Jewish sector, it has evolved from a pretty much white Anglo-Saxon [organization] back in the early 1960s to a very diversified, vibrant group of people. I do not think there is any consideration given to [a member's race or ethnic background]. I think the major consideration now for membership is, "Do you believe in volunteerism?" and "Are you willing to be developed as a volunteer and participate in the community?" That is probably the primary criteria for membership.

B: So you no longer feel that you have a particularly homogeneous membership.

A: Absolutely not. No. I would say [it is] homogeneous in the sense that it is still a well-educated group. They are homogeneous in their values, that they believe in giving to their community. I think they are homogeneous in that they enjoy the challenge, and they are an intellectually stimulating group.

B: OK. Well, Helen, is there anything else you would like to add that I have neglected to ask you about?

A: No.

B: Thank you very much for talking with me tonight.