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JUVENILE HALL SUPERINTENDENT: 1936-1943

Rhea C. Ackerman

Completed under the auspices
of the
Oral History Program
University of California
Los Angeles

DEDICATION

To RUTH BREZNIAK, my loyal, capable and enthusiastic secretary at Juvenile Hall. She and I shared the same basic desires, namely, to guide and inspire department heads to constantly strive to improve the varied activity programs for the youngsters detained at the Hall.

Rhea C. Ackerman

January 18, 1971

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Errata:

p. 31a exists to correct the pagination

INTRODUCTION

Rhea Carolyn Ackerman was born on April 4, 1896 in Richmond, Indiana to John Frederick and Mary Alice (Eggemeir) Ackerman. Her early years were spent in Richmond where she attended Hibbard School and Richmond High School. Upon graduation from high school, Miss Ackerman attended Earlham College, also in Richmond, where she majored in history and took courses in psychology. After a year and a half at Earlham, Miss Ackerman left in 1916 to attend Reid Memorial Hospital Training School for Nurses. After graduation, she stayed on at the hospital for a short time as night supervisor. Later, Miss Ackerman attended Teachers' College at Columbia University for a year, from 1922 to 1923, taking courses in hospital supervision and psychology. She then became assistant superintendent under Miss Clara B. Pound at Ingalls Memorial Hospital in Harvey, Illinois.

In 1925, Miss Ackerman became ill with tuberculosis and moved to California and then to Arizona to recuperate. When she had recovered, she worked as an assistant social worker in Oakland, California, remaining there from 1927 until 1929 when she came to Los Angeles.

Miss Ackerman first became associated with Juvenile Hall in 1929, one of her first positions being that of bailiff of the Juvenile Court. In the summer of that same year, after taking the Civil Service examination, she was

made assistant superintendent under Miss Katharin Ostrander. In this capacity, she worked very closely with the children at the Hall, and she encouraged the development of programs and of attitudes that would produce a more nearly normal environment for the children and would point in the direction of rehabilitation rather than merely detention. These were characteristics, too, of her term as superintendent, a position she held from 1936 until her resignation in 1943.

After leaving Juvenile Hall, Rhea Ackerman became acting assistant administrator and then assistant administrator at Children's Hospital, Los Angeles, where she remained from 1943 to 1951, working in close association with Mildred E. Smith, the chief administrator. After that, she spent a short time as an administrator in Taunton, Massachusetts under Miss Smith but returned to California to become director of public relations at Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Hollywood, where she stayed from 1954 until her retirement in 1959. Miss Ackerman currently lives in Sylvania, Ohio.

The following interview with Miss Ackerman, made under the auspices of the UCLA Oral History Program, is primarily concerned with her role at Juvenile Hall and with the nature of the changes that she brought about while she was assistant superintendent and superintendent at that institution. She also discusses in the interview the circumstances surrounding her resignation from the superintendency of the Hall and

briefly outlines the positions she held after leaving Juvenile Hall. In this regard, she describes her role in the national child safety program and her booklet, "Safety, Your Child's Heritage," which is still being printed.

This interview is part of the Oral History Program's Biography series. Records relating to the interview are located in the Office of the UCLA Oral History Program.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER: Donald J. Schippers, Interviewer-Editor, Oral History Program, UCLA. B.A., UCLA; M.A., American History, Occidental College; M.L.S., Library Service, UCLA.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Hollywood Plaza Hotel, 163 North Vine Street, Hollywood, California.

Dates: April 29 - May 8, 1968.

Time of day and length of sessions, and total number of recording hours: The recording sessions were conducted during the morning hours in Miss Ackerman's suite at the Hollywood Plaza Hotel while she was vacationing in the Los Angeles area. Each session lasted around two hours and yielded from one to two hours of recorded interview. This manuscript represents a total of seven and one-half hours of recording time.

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW: After providing basic biographical and background information, the respondent was encouraged, within a loose chronological framework, to discuss topically significant aspects of her career in juvenile work. Personal correspondence and papers as well as printed documents provided by the respondent were used by the interviewer in preparation and introduced at appropriate points during the course of the interview.

EDITING:

Editor: Patricia Waring, Bibliographer II, UCLA Oral History Program.

A verbatim transcription of the tape recordings was completed in March 1969. The editor did an audit-edit check of the manuscript, checking the transcript against the original tape. Editing was minor in nature; punctuation was introduced, spelling corrected, names verified, syntax emended only slightly when necessary. The manuscript was retained in the order that the material was recorded during the interviews. The editing was completed in January 1970.

The edited transcript was sent to the respondent in February 1970 and returned in April of the same year. The respondent reviewed and approved the edited transcript from which the following final manuscript was typed. She made minor corrections and deletions of occasional words or phrases and added some material by way of clarification and elaboration, including the verification of proper names the editor was unable to locate.

The index was prepared by Melanie Rangno, Editor, UCLA Oral History Program, and the supporting documents by the Program's staff.

DISPOSITION OF TAPE RECORDINGS, EDITED TRANSCRIPT AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: The tape recordings of the interviews and the edited transcripts are in the University Archives, Department of Special Collections, and are available under the regulations governing the use of noncurrent University records. Personal papers of the respondent, including correspondence, clippings and memorabilia (1929-1943), relating to her work at Cedars of Lebanon Hospital and Children's Hospital in Los Angeles and at Los Angeles County Juvenile Hall are cataloged as Collection 1056 in the Department of Special Collections.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

APRIL 29, 1968

SCHIPPERS: Now, as I requested, I would like a little bit in the way of a biographical background sketch.

ACKERMAN: I was born in Richmond, Indiana, a Quaker and Lutheran town, April 4, 1896. I had two older brothers, Carl and Everett; I was very much wanted because they wanted a baby sister. I lived in a very narrow world of Hibbard School--an excellent school, as I recall--and Trinity Church, a small Lutheran church. My father was an outstandingly successful merchant. Because our home (a very comfortable eight-room home) was near his business and the church, he didn't move out to the residential area, where friends and relations were moving. We stayed in this neighborhood that was near a Quaker church and a Lutheran church, but which was becoming a very poor neighborhood, with many families, with little waifs, and unwanted children. Our home became a volunteer welfare center for the neighborhood families. Mother often sewed for free, and Father's little black notebook listed the many people he had loaned money to. Interest was never requested or received, few ever repaid him, or rather were ever able to do so. He also gave sizeable amounts to all local charities.

When I was graduated from high school, I was very

shy, very retiring, frightened of the world. I attended Earlham College for a year and a half, majoring in history, and took courses in psychology. In 1916 (during the First World War) I entered Reid Memorial Hospital Training School for Nurses in Richmond. I was graduated from there and for a short time stayed on as night supervisor. We worked twelve hours a night, seven nights a week, an eighty-four-hour week. I later went to the University of Ann Arbor and had charge of the pediatrics ward under a very well-known pediatrician. Shortly after that, I did private duty cases for a brief period. Then I entered Teachers' College at Columbia University. They were giving a course in hospital and health supervision and administration, and again I took a year's course in applied psychology and one two-unit course (I was given special permission to take this) in mental hygiene. Fortunately for me, this looked very good a few years later on a Civil Service application blank for Juvenile Hall.

Following this, I went to Ingalls Memorial Hospital, Harvey, Illinois--it's an industrial town--as assistant superintendent to Clara B. Pound under whom I had trained. We were very busy, very understaffed, and in less than three months she was critically ill, and suddenly at 27 years of age I was superintendent and assistant superintendent of a new hospital.

I developed active tuberculosis, and rested in my home town for a while. After six months I was advised to see Dr. F. M. Pottenger, a TB specialist in Monrovia, California. He was a living saint. I rested there for about a year, then tried to return to Indiana again. But I was not well and my parents and I traveled to Tucson, Arizona, where I continued resting. This proved in many ways to be a lifesaver because it brought me into a larger, more interesting world. During this time I had a golden opportunity to think and to read. I kept notebooks of quotations and poems that had special appeal to me; throughout my life I have used that. Finally, I was told I might return to work, but it should be in the West.

I left Richmond and went to Los Angeles. There was an older woman standing on the train (this was March 1929, the year the stock blew up), and she asked if I had any friends and work in California. The courage of youth is simply tremendous; I smiled and said, "Oh, no, that didn't bother me at all." But after three weeks I found that I was absolutely not needed in the hospitals. There were more nurses than they needed, and the fact that I had had tuberculosis, closed the doors for me. I was very discouraged and finally a friend advised that I go to the Vocational Service Bureau, a Community Chest agency.

I had quite a trip there on various streetcars, and I sat among Negroes, Mexicans, whites, chauffeurs, porters, dishwashers and so forth. When a charming woman finally interviewed me, she seemed a little shocked and she said, "Well, really, Miss Ackerman, I don't believe that we would have anything of special interest to you. However, we have just had an emergency call from Juvenile Hall, which is the county detention home. Now this is most unusual,because all their positions are under Civil Service, but I'll write down the address, and you can see if it's anything you can do. Can you type?" Hesitatingly, I said, "Well, with two fingers."

Again I took three streetcars, went to the address she gave me, which was the court address on Eastlake, and it wasn't open. I was too early. A sign said to go to Henry Street, but did not indicate how to get there, so I decided to follow the twenty-foot wall. I found the entrance to a very beautiful new hospital building. I went up to this barred door and knocked, saw no bell, and was quite discouraged. When I was walking away and down the street, I heard a noise and looked around. A man was coming out of the building with perhaps seven or eight boys and I asked how to get into the building. He laughed and said, "Oh, high on the right side is a bell; you ring the bell." That

was my entrance to Juvenile Hall.

I was assigned work in the admitting office, which was terrific responsibility; it frightens me now to think of all the things that might have happened. I was to accept children, to review the forms, accept or decline their admission, and to type admission histories. After three days they very gently and firmly dismissed me, explaining that the typing would become court record and that my typing really wasn't adequate. I laughed later and said because I couldn't type, they made me the superintendent.

After about two days I received a call from the assistant superintendent; there was another emergency, [a position] at the court door as a bailiff. Dr. Miriam Van Waters, a remarkable and wonderful woman, was the court referee. She took me under her wing and explained many things that I needed to know. I remained the bailiff for a couple of months, then the superintendent came to me and said there was another emergency.

They were giving examinations for switchboard operators and she wished that I would take the switchboard until they could select the operators from a Civil Service list. And I became the switchboard operator. The bonus on that position was that I censored the children's letters. It began opening this entirely new world to me, a world I didn't know existed.

Even though I had been a nurse, there were many words I had never heard.

At this time, not only were they opening the new buildings (four beautiful new buildings, all Spanish architecture, and a colorful new campus filled with flowers, lovely playgrounds, an ideal physical set-up at the time) but they were changing job classifications. Until this time, there were nurses, cooks and cooks helpers, maids, matrons and attendants. The matrons had taken all the histories by hand, and they recoiled from the change of having new switchboard operators selected from Civil Service lists and new and qualified clerical employees and so forth.

Miss Katharin Ostrander, the superintendent, was a brilliant executive, but her own worst enemy, because she was absolutely honest, but tactless, and could be hurtful at times to others, I'm sorry to say. But she was a well-organized person; I learned a great deal from her. In July she came to me and asked that I come into her office for an interview. She questioned me regarding my background. I was reluctant to be assistant superintendent. I told her I didn't believe (I was always fearful) that I could possibly take the Civil Service examination. She insisted I do this and when I continued declining, she said, "I'm calling the deputy sheriffs to take you to City Hall; you're going to

take the examination." I was among the three high [scorers] and I was given my appointment in July. This was the beginning of an entirely new career.

Whether you are in a hotel, a hospital, or a detention home, there are many things as far as administration is concerned that are the same. The fact that I had had no experience with problem children other than with myself aided me in many ways, I think. When we finally began thinking quite seriously about the future planning, it seemed to me that the wise thing to do was to plan what would be of interest to the normal child. If we could expose these children to normal and delightful and interesting activities, it was my belief that a little of this might rub off and a new interest might awaken in them. They were really on a quest for purposeful living. We all are.

SCHIPPERS: Was your background in psychology in any way preparatory for this experience?

ACKERMAN: In a way, although the two courses were entirely different. The first course I took in Earlham (in 1914-15), I saw very little connection between that and the one I took in 1922-23 at Teachers' College under Professor Mary Theodore Whitely, a course entitled Applied Psychology. It did help me, of course, to understand intelligence quotients and the study of different levels of intelligence and that type of thing,

but as far as the child was concerned I wouldn't say that it was too helpful, especially with the challenge of large groups of ever-changing problem children.

SCHIPPERS: Was there anything in your training as a nurse that was at all helpful or preparatory?

ACKERMAN: We had no training whatever other than the physical care of the patient and supervision of institutions. However, as I look back, one reason I am sure that I enjoyed night duty so much was because I was with the patient twelve hours every night of the week for six weeks. The patients remained in the hospital three and four months, and I became very close to many patients. As I look back now, I realize that I did a great deal of what would be called counseling. I didn't think of it at the time. We had one wife of a professor who was mentally ill. I remember spending a great deal of time with her and experiencing great satisfaction following our talks.

SCHIPPERS: Was there anything about your religious background. I am not clear whether you were a Quaker or a Lutheran.

ACKERMAN: Lutheran in a small Lutheran church with very strict and very rigid training. I think the basic help from the church was that I was exposed to a religious background with the thought of prayer and what prayer might do. I think that would be the greatest aid that

I had from my religion. Over the years the example my parents gave me in their daily lives was the most enduring help I received.

SCHIPPERS: Did you become an R.N.?

ACKERMAN: Yes, I did. I passed the Indiana State Examination for Nurses.

SCHIPPERS: Was your work at Teachers' College considered graduate work?

ACKERMAN: No. Since I was a graduate nurse, if I had stayed on and had one more year, I would have received my degree from Teachers' College. They considered my three years' nurse's training along with my year and a half at Earlham.

SCHIPPERS: What are some of the things that you read during that one period of time and what kind of reading materials influenced you?

ACKERMAN: I read a few novels but primarily biography and autobiography. As I look back, so many of the people, as you know, who have made outstanding contributions in this country (not in just this country, but in the world) have been what we would call "problem children" today. So many people who have made contributions have been discouraged by the doubters they met in life, always doubting. Well, even the elevator, I believe, was considered not practical. But I noticed this in the lives of many people; I read that they had difficulty growing up.

There is a sort of suspension bridge extending from childhood to adulthood. It's a little difficult for many brilliant people to cross that bridge. I noticed that many people who have really made contributions did have problems as children. As I say they were harmed and they were certainly not helped by the people who simply would not believe in whatever they were attempting to do; too frequently they were discouraged.

And poetry, oh, I read a great deal of poetry. Shortly after I went to the Hall, there was just a little feeling there, fear of a new person coming in this role as assistant superintendent, who hadn't been there for years. I began giving little poems to children. One day I handed a poem to a girl who was having venereal treatment in the hospital. The nurse came by and said very haughtily, "Well, now, that's a laugh, a poem for a prostitute!" [laughter] The children received a great deal of poetry. In re-reading Miss Ostrander's first annual report, she mentioned that I brought poetry to the children. I don't believe it harmed them.

SCHIPPERS: What sort of social affiliation did you establish after coming to Los Angeles?

ACKERMAN: In my work at Juvenile Hall--I was later made assistant administrator at Children's Hospital and later Director of Public Relations at Cedars of Lebanon (all three positions are now held by men, all of whom have en-

larged their staffs)--through these positions, through these privileges, I met many very interesting people. When I left here, I knew and was a close friend of Mrs. Norman Chandler, I was entertained in her home. She was the head of my public relations committee at Children's Hospital. We worked beautifully together. I was a close friend of Dr. and Mrs. John Adams Comstock. He was head of the Science Department of the Los Angeles County Museum. I was a close friend of Mr. O[liver] B. Johnston. He is one of the vice-presidents of Disney and he has charge of their work in forty-two countries. His wife, Dr. Marion P. Firor, was our assistant psychiatrist--child psychiatrist--at Juvenile Hall. She was a dedicated and wonderful person. Among other friends I made at my work were Dr. Victor Goodhill, now head of the Hope for Hearing Project at UCLA; Helen Vogleson, head of the county libraries; Dr. Etta Jeancon, a prominent ophthalmologist and Dr. Harry Dietrich, a pediatrician, with whom I worked closely in the Child Safety Program at Children's Hospital; and Ervis Lester, who was Director of the Juvenile Bureau of the Los Angeles Police Department and whose contributions to youth work are outstanding in the United States.

SCHIPPERS: Then you began to make your acquaintances primarily through the Juvenile Hall situation.

ACKERMAN: I had practically no social life. My parents

came to Los Angeles in 1931. The first year that I was at Juvenile Hall, I worked every weekend. Miss Ostrander had a little ranch; she left sometime on Friday and returned on Monday morning, and left me in charge. I didn't have a car. I was off part of Monday afternoon and Tuesday. One day Mother said to me, "Rhea, you have no social life." And, frankly, it hadn't entered my head before that I hadn't had any social life. [laughter] I did have friends in Long Beach and Monrovia. After a time, I was seeing these friends and seeing friends of theirs.

SCHIPPERS: Would you say that most of your acquaintances were of a professional nature?

ACKERMAN: Yes, they were. I became a member of the Los Angeles Altrusa Club, and through the Altrusa Club, I made many friends. They were all executives from various lines of work. It was a very broadening experience. They helped me in a project at Juvenile Hall. The first evening dresses I collected for our teenaged girls to wear at parties at the Hall were given to me by the members of the Los Angeles Altrusa Club. Many times when trouble was brewing, quick plans for a "dress up" party saved the day and night, especially after we began allowing them to cross the campus for supper all dolled up--they knew a few of the fellows on the campus would see them. Nice idea! Just normal girl reactions.

SCHIPPERS: But that wasn't until you had become superintendent.

ACKERMAN: That's right.

SCHIPPERS: How much time did you spend on the various jobs before you became assistant superintendent?

ACKERMAN: I went to Juvenile Hall in March, and I became assistant superintendent in July, passed the Civil Service test in July. I can't tell you exactly, but during that interval I was at the front desk three days (I shouldn't have been there at all, of course), I was bailiff at the court door, and I was switchboard operator.

SCHIPPERS: What were your responsibilities as bailiff?

ACKERMAN: I opened and unlocked the door, and was sure that the person had a subpoena who entered the door, that the right people were coming into court. We had waiting rooms for the children (girls and boys), and I was to keep order in the waiting room. Of course, I soon began getting puzzles and books and writing material, something for them to do, because it was just bedlam for those little tots, big boys and highly disturbed girls to wait all day. They might come over for court in the morning, and then come back again in the afternoon. It was terrific, the long waits they had. There was nothing at the time for them to play with or anything for them to do. Each one, of course, was

under terrific tension; many of them were going through the most serious crisis in their lives, and we expected them to adjust. It is pretty terrible, what happens to children!

SCHIPPERS: In thinking back to that time when you first came to Juvenile Hall, what sort of feelings did you have about the place?

ACKERMAN: I was simply fascinated! I was simply fascinated! Had anyone told me when I went there that I would be working toward being the assistant superintendent, I would have never returned the next day; I was full of fear and doubt about my own abilities. I just couldn't have done it.

I think the children's letters gave me the best introduction to them that I could possibly have had. I now have copies, as you know, of many letters. It's amazing how they can communicate even with limited vocabulary. Of course, many of our Spanish-speaking children had great difficulty. But the gamut of emotions are covered in these letters. All their letters were an eye-opener to me. I had no idea that children in this country were subjected to the many tragedies that were occurring to these children. Of course, they poured in so rapidly; the turnover was so rapid that you just had to be on the jump because things were happening. The tempo was staccato, very rapid staccato. We averaged over 4000 admissions annually.

SCHIPPERS: Was this your first introduction to this kind of problem or with children?

ACKERMAN: Definitely.

SCHIPPERS: You had no links.

ACKERMAN: I worked with student nurses, and, of course, with all human beings you have some problems, a variety of problems. But for the most part, you have an accepted standard of behavior that is very different from most of the children who wend their way to Juvenile Court. A large percent of our children were embalmed in hate on admission. I had had no training.

SCHIPPERS: What were your responsibilities as censor?

ACKERMAN: Many of our children--perhaps I should say quite a few of our children--were connected with gangs, with adults who were in prison or jail, or they were held as witnesses by the District Attorney's office. The court felt it was very important that they not communicate their thoughts regarding the case. If there was anything in the letter that I felt the probation officer should have, [I sent it to him]. It was the probation officer's judgment, then, whether the letter should be sent to the parent or to whomever they were addressing it, or whether it would just be kept in the record. Often copies were sent to the psychiatrist. Finally, after I became assistant superintendent, I requested that I receive copies of "interesting" letters.

I wanted all of them that gave any complaints about the Hall, because I was seriously interested in correcting any weaknesses we might have. I also enjoyed their funny letters; wherever children are, your life is punctuated with funny things happening. I loved to share the funny things that did come in their letters.

SCHIPPERS: Who instructed you about what material was considered sensitive?

ACKERMAN: The former assistant superintendent told me that if there was any doubt at all, rather than approving it, to send it to the probation officer. It was better to send too many letters to the probation officers than to not send one that later would cause a problem for those working on the case.

SCHIPPERS: What sort of surroundings, physically speaking, did you have when you first went to the office? Tell me first about working conditions.

ACKERMAN: I was most fortunate to go there just as they were opening this new Juvenile Hall (as I understand it, it had previously been a little juvenile "jail" as they are still in many communities). Of course, at one time all children were detained in jail; unfortunately, in some cities that is still true. But here they had a new plan; the admitting building was a hospital of Spanish architecture, tiled roof, 110 beds, mostly single rooms with running water, very comfortable

modern offices (I had a very nice office).

In the other new buildings, the girls' department had all single rooms and a spacious, lovely living room with a fireplace. The girls had running water in their rooms. They each had Simmons furniture of a different color, monk's cloth curtains with cross-stitch design, which had this embroidery work done through the school department in some of the high schools. (It was a project.) We had a fish pond with tile that had been made by school children.

Our school was a modern, thirteen-room school with an auditorium that would seat 300. In the hall was a large mural of the California missions; it had been a year's project by one of the public schools.

The boys building, where we had our older boys, was a two-story building, too. The boys had dormitories--twenty boys in each dormitory (that would be forty on one floor), plus four single rooms, which were for discipline. Two adjoining rooms were taken in five departments to make the meditation rooms. In each room there was a toilet, wash bowl and stationary bed. Every child received books, puzzles, etc., and each child came out to work or exercise each day after the groups had gone to school. I or my assistant saw each child frequently. A record was kept of every child locked in meditation. We greatly reduced the number as we

improved our activity program and changed the atmosphere at the Hall.

SCHIPPERS: What was the staff like when you first went there?

ACKERMAN: The staff was divided; there was this serious gap between the new professional staff and the people who had been employed there for many years. In the hospital we were well blessed. We had a full-time medical director and psychiatrist, Dr. Herman Covey. He had a full-time assistant psychiatrist, Dr. Marion Firor. We had two full-time psychologists, with students from, I believe, USC who worked with our psychologists. We also had a full-time psychiatric social worker, twenty-eight graduate nurses, a few nurses' aides, a few maids in the hospital, and the clerical staff. As I said, we began selecting clerical employees from Civil Service lists: typists, stenographers, one secretary (for me), and switchboard operators. In the departments, there were matrons and attendants; later they became counselors. We had no maids in the department. Ever-changing children with problems, who knew very little about work when they came to us, did all the housework and we were always proud to take visitors through; we had an immaculate institution. The morning counselors were excellent housekeeping instructors.

SCHIPPERS: Was this that way at the time you arrived,

or are you speaking of this as it later became?

ACKERMAN: This new staff in the hospital was entirely new when I arrived there. The change in the matrons and attendants occurred after I became assistant under Miss Ostrander. Promotions were given to some; some of the attendants were permitted to take counselor's examination and became counselors. After I became superintendent we finally succeeded in having an increasing number of college graduates employed, especially in the boys' departments. Our best counselors, in my opinion, were former schoolteachers.

SCHIPPERS: Who was responsible for this shift to professionalism?

ACKERMAN: I imagine it was the Probation Committee. Mrs. Elizabeth McManus, who was far ahead of her time, was the chairman of the Probation Committee. She had great vision, great trust, and great belief. Throughout the years she supported me in almost anything I wanted to try. I was always an "eager-beaver" for trying something new with the children, and I did have excellent support from her and the Board of Supervisors. We at times had to fight about money quite a bit.

SCHIPPERS: Would you think, in the time that you first got there, that Juvenile Hall, vis-à-vis other cities, was in a state of advance?

ACKERMAN: Oh, greatly advanced, even over what you'll

find today in most cities. I think Miss Ostrander was largely responsible for the reclassification. Many of these matrons and attendants had worked in state schools, where if the child had a tantrum, you'd tie him to a bed and cover him with wet sheets until he calmed down. Oh, there were all kinds of things, horrible things. At one time corporal punishment had been used.

SCHIPPERS: Could you speculate as to why this was the case, that there should be this comparatively enlightened attitude in Los Angeles?

ACKERMAN: I would have to guess, but I would think it was a combination of things. I think that Dr. Miriam Van Waters brought the social workers' philosophy to the Hall. I think perhaps, that was her big contribution. She was followed by Edna Mahan--neither were there very long--but I believe she, too, had the social workers' thought about problem children. I do not believe either had had much experience in administration.

Miss Ostrander, on the other hand, although she could be so frank, brittle and cruel at times, was really kind-hearted and adored these children. She wanted the best for them and would fight to get it. She, I believe, improved the organizational set-up at the Hall which, for the most part, I inherited. In some ways we improved things after I arrived, but I think I inherited a great deal. There were, as I told

you, fifteen superintendents in less than twenty years before I arrived. [laughter]

SCHIPPERS: You did make reference to a possible tension as far as the staff was concerned at this time because of the shift to a more professional staff. Could you explain that a little bit more?

ACKERMAN: Well, humans are humans wherever you go, and we all, as we get older, I'm afraid recoil from change. Now the matrons and attendants had been supreme; the matrons had lived in, and here they were, it was their world. They lived in the girls department, and everything they said was the authority, was the command. (The children looked to just one person.) They had one day off a week, and they were quite satisfied with their world. They had very good maintenance, food, and security, and in this little world they were very important people. Then all of a sudden, the world was changing and they were asked to move out. (That happened after I arrived.) They thought the world was tumbling down when they were being asked to move out and go on an eight-hour day. Of course, a few years later you couldn't have gotten any of them to move back in. But at the time this was an awful thing that was happening. Not only that, they were no more longer supreme.

The children had adjustments, more adjustments to make. Think of the traumatic condition of a child when

the mother and father don't agree on their activities or their discipline, or a grandmother comes into the picture. Here, quite suddenly, at Juvenile Hall there were at least four personalities [to adjust to]: There was a morning counselor, an afternoon counselor, the night counselor, and a relief counselor. Sometimes you'd have to counsel the children to try to understand the counselors. A little girl was very upset because Mother So-and-so insists that the rug go at the foot of the stairs. The next day, the mother comes in, and she wants the rug at the top of the stairs. So you advise the child to try to understand. But the adjustments were terrific both for children and for employees.

SCHIPPERS: Now when the people were living in, would you say that they succumbed to what you might call institutionalization?

ACKERMAN: Oh, definitely; it was their only world. They ate all their meals there; they had very little; most of them did not have cars or families. It was the only world they knew. They had few refreshing thoughts to bring to the youngsters.

SCHIPPERS: Was part of the design of putting on shifts to break up this kind of symptom?

ACKERMAN: Definitely, definitely.

SCHIPPERS: It was very consciously done so.

ACKERMAN: We needed different types of people, and this

was a hurdle that was not easy (this came after I was there). In the morning I soon learned that we needed someone with the know-how of housekeeping. Children respect know-how more than adults realize. They will accept quite a stern person, if they really realize that that person is an organized person and knows how to do the task. We had three people who had been there for a number of years. Two of them decided that they wanted to rotate. I realized immediately that one was outstanding in her ability with recreation, play, and drama. That was Mrs. Moede. One was outstanding in housekeeping, a little difficult personality at first, but we finally got along just fine. Then one was the old-guard night watchman, state school person--firm, watchful, but not unkind. She was ideal at night. They finally did accept these assignments, but it wasn't easy. They tried it on a trial basis; fortunately, after the trial period was over, they wished to keep it.

SCHIPPERS: Would you describe the receiving routines that were adhered to when you first came there?

ACKERMAN: We accepted youngsters brought to us by the Juvenile Bureau of the Police or Sheriff's offices, by any recognized social agency, and there were a few detained by the federal government. The first few years there was no Juvenile Division of the Sheriff's Office, and we had great difficulty. The county is, as you

know, larger than many states. We had this admitting procedure where the child sat down and gave a history. (The police or the sheriff brought in a history that accompanied the child and became a part of the folder, a part of their record.) A very brief history was taken in the office, then the child went into the receiving room, which was a large room in the hospital, and there the admitting graduate nurse simply asked the child--she was the only person in Juvenile Hall permitted to ask a child--why they were there. (I might, but I didn't often; I usually could find out, of course.) I regret now that I didn't keep more admitting statements, they were very honest; many of them were quite revealing. It's too bad there isn't a record of them.

Then a large sheet was placed in the center of the room, and the child was instructed to turn his back to the nurse and completely undress, drop everything he had on the sheet. Even though the police were supposed to search, there were times when there might be something concealed, once a loaded gun. It also gave the nurse a very good chance to observe whether there was rash, skin conditions, or other problems. Previous to this, the child's temperature was taken, and there were comments made about the attitude of the child. They were given a shower and their hair was washed. Every child's head was fine combed for pediculi or nits.

During the fourteen years, this problem became less and less; evidently, we became more sanitary in Los Angeles. Their clothing was sent down to the clothes room, washed, and hung on hangers and completely sealed in bags and kept until they left; then they were issued Juvenile Hall clothes.

SCHIPPERS: Was this a uniform?

ACKERMAN: For the boys it was khaki pants, a blue shirt, and a belt. For the girls it was a middy and skirt, and tie; later, we had pastel-colored housedresses, too. Each child was given a toothbrush and comb.

SCHIPPERS: How do you feel on the subject of uniforms?

ACKERMAN: Well, I don't agree with a lot of people. When you stop to think about it, Marlborough School and most of our private schools have uniforms, and it doesn't seem to harm them mentally in any way. It seemed to work for us because we were on a limited budget, and our girls, unfortunately, came in all sizes and shapes. A wraparound navy skirt could look quite smart on most of the girls. If a girl was pregnant, it adjusted to the situation. I never felt that the girls objected at all. It was amazing how differently they could look in the same outfits. You'd issue these clean clothes to the girls, and one girl would come down the hall looking so smartly dressed. She'd know exactly how to pin or arrange her tie, etc. Another may. . .

SCHIPPERS: . . .not have the knack. What else did

they go through in this receiving process?

ACKERMAN: They became patients in the hospital; the girls were all in singles, a few in double rooms. They remained there usually three days until they had had a throat culture. They could not be transferred until it was negative. They also had a complete physical examination which included a vaginal exam and blood test. If they found that they had syphilis, active syphilis or venereal or gonorrhea, they were kept in the hospital; all the venereal girls were in one group. If they had active syphilis, they were isolated in a room. If they were fairly well-oriented, mentally o.k., and physically o.k. (no elevation of temperature, no rash, no venereal disease, no positive culture), they were transferred to one of the departments, the second or third day. While they were in the hospital, the medical director saw every child for a very superficial examination before they went to the department. If a child were absolutely insane, for instance, he would be kept in the hospital, or occasionally transferred to the County Hospital.

SCHIPPERS: Were they segregated all of this time, while they were in the hospital? Or were they in wards?

ACKERMAN: Most of them were in single rooms; they could be out in the halls unless they were isolated.

SCHIPPERS: Was there any effort to give them some

kind of test or psychological examination?

ACKERMAN: That was scheduled ahead; usually they had those after they went to the department because of scheduling.

SCHIPPERS: If the child had a deformity, was any kind of corrective action taken for that?

ACKERMAN: Oh, yes, in the annual reports there are statements of the number transferred to General Hospital for a variety of reasons; it might be for surgery, for plastic surgery, for hearing tests, or for a heart condition. Of course, all our contagious cases, especially scarlet fever, would be transferred to the General Hospital.

SCHIPPERS: In other words there was a premium placed on their physical welfare.

ACKERMAN: Oh, definitely. If they were in the receiving room they were always weighed, and if they were undernourished--they had a scale they followed according to their height and so forth--they were immediately placed on extra feedings at school. They had eggnog and graham crackers, or milk and graham crackers in the middle of the afternoon and morning.

SCHIPPERS: How did the other children cotton to that?

ACKERMAN: It was amazing; the children were really pretty wonderful. They all knew that they were undernourished, they accepted it in the most amazing way.

SCHIPPERS: On the subject of the psychological examination--was this, in your estimation, a very complete one?

ACKERMAN: For the period of time, I think it was. Again, the annual reports state the Stanford-Binet (oh, I should know the different ones they had, but I can't recall the names of the different tests) I think for 1929-30; I think it was amazing. We worked quite closely with Stanford University.

Do you remember the Gifted Children Program there? Well, one of those girls came down and helped us for a while in testing, too. I have often wondered what happened to her.

SCHIPPERS: Was there a follow-up on the basis of the findings?

ACKERMAN: Yes. There had been some follow-up as outpatients. Aside from the children who were detained in the Hall, we had quite a large group who came each year as outpatients for a physical, psychological, or psychiatric examination. In 1940-41, for instance, there were 1673 girls and boys examined in the outpatient clinic.

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SCHIPPERS: You had said that there were a few things that you would like to set right, one of them regarding the matter of clothing.

ACKERMAN: When I went there the girls who were held in the hospital for venereal treatment, remained for a protracted period. (We did not have the miracle drugs, and it was not unusual for them to be there two, three, or four months. There was practically no program for them, yet they were indeed the most challenging group.) They wore a nightgown, 'round the clock, a dark grey nightgown, which was usually not ironed. Because they had a great deal of time, I suggested that we might permit them to wear dresses. Of course, there were doubters, who felt that since the girls had to go to the treatment room, dresses might not be practical. However, we did give them the middies, skirts, and the little housedresses. Almost immediately we saw a change in group behavior and we also gave them an opportunity to groom their hair. Shortly after that, the Nightingale Club was formed by Ruth Wallis, whose name I suggest for an interview. But that's another story.

As I think of yesterday, there is one thing I feel concerned about, seriously concerned about, and that is that I do not wish to dwarf the contributions made by

so many people before I arrived on the scene. It must have taken very courageous people to make the buildings possible, knowing, as I do today, how little interest there is in a child labeled "bad." I am quite sure that the authorities--the Probation Committee and the Board of Supervisors--worked very closely with the Board of Education. I remember very distinctly Mr. Faithful's name and that of Dr. Wood, and I want them to be given recognition.

SCHIPPERS: We had ended yesterday by discussing a little bit about admittance procedure and the psychological testing which, you had said, was very good for that day. To what degree was there a follow-up on the results of those tests?

ACKERMAN: I would recommend that you contact Mrs. Cecil [Helene Powner] Mann. She was head of our Psychology Department. Her husband was head of the Psychology Department at Tulane University. I do have her address, and she could give that information better than I.

As I recall, before I left they were having children that were repeaters, and among these repeaters, I am quite sure that they did find (to their surprise at the time) that their IQ's were higher in some instances when the children were given opportunities. For instance, the Mexican children had limited vocabularies

and it was very difficult, but I think those things have been improved greatly today.

SCHIPPERS: Were the counselors in the cottages or the various facilities made aware of the results of the psychological examinations?

ACKERMAN: Occasionally they were given results of the tests. You see, the thing that's difficult for anyone from the outside to realize is the volume of work and the very short stay of the youngsters. Now, a state school can decide when they take a child. If they feel things are going smoothly, they will take one more, two more children. But at Juvenile Hall, we had to admit anyone brought to our door. Other institutions could refuse to admit children because they were too incorrigible, while we could not refuse admission of any child. I used to think it was like sitting on the outside of a big ferris wheel which was revolving very rapidly, and you had to grab children from every program, work, school, play. There were times when counselors might know the results of tests, but there was simply the time element; you couldn't admit as rapidly as we did and do that. It would be quite ideal, of course.

SCHIPPERS: Were those results, however, conveyed to the probation officer?

ACKERMAN: Yes, all the reports of the physicals (long detailed reports), were submitted to the probation

officer. The psychological examinations, psychiatric social worker's reports, the superficial psychiatric examination, and the psychological test were submitted, and the child did not appear in court until these tests had been completed. Also submitted were behavior reports, written by the nurses, of the girl's or boy's behavior on admission in the receiving room (at that time it could be quite dramatic, of course), in the hospital, then later in the departments. I wish that we had the material because a study, a thesis, might be written on some of the children who were the greatest disturbers on admission, and what happened in a very short span of time after they were in a department. Of course, not with all children--I don't want to give a wrong impression--but we saw miracles.

SCHIPPERS: In that receiving period, I believe, you gave me the length of time yesterday. Did it run usually a day or two days?

ACKERMAN: It would depend on their physical, if they had various skin diseases. In my annual reports I have the statistics; 400 a year, I believe, had scabies and impetigo or some skin disease. If they had an elevation of temperature, [they were kept]. They would be there at least two days, but it would be more apt to be three or four days.

SCHIPPERS: Was there any attempt to classify the people

being admitted?

ACKERMAN: As far as their placement after they left the hospital and departments?

SCHIPPERS: Yes.

ACKERMAN: Yes, there was. I believe we had more departments to care for children than most institutions, but we did not have enough. For instance, as far as girls were concerned, they either remained in the hospital as sick children, as children needing venereal treatment, while all sex-delinquent girls went to the girls' department. All other girls went to Junior Cottage, regardless of age. We never had a virgin in that department.

SCHIPPERS: Was this true at the time that you first worked there, or did this become something that occurred after you became assistant superintendent?

ACKERMAN: No, that was established before I went there. These were the segregation units.

Then when I went there, there were the boys, who were either in the hospital as sick children, sick boys, if they had an illness, elevation of temperature, or venereal disease. [The remaining ones] were transferred to Companies A or B. Almost all boys under fourteen went into Company B. All boys over fifteen went into Company A. I think I was there at least four or five years before we received permission to house and or-

ganize Company C. Here were these little fellows, little burglars, pickpockets, who were six-, seven-, eight-years-old, and who were runaways. They were being exposed to many things with these teenage boys, the most difficult group of boys, so we finally had permission to remodel what had been old cells in old dormitories and create a new department for the little boys. They were indeed challenging.

You know, Mark Twain said that it was very easy to care for a group of small boys; all you needed to do was to call out the militia. [laughter] Well, all we had to do was to employ dear Mrs. Arian Hunter. Soon there were many others, including Mr. Paul. They both made contributions.

Company C became the pride and joy of my heart, and there are many stories about their evaluation councils. I regret so much that we didn't get tape recordings. The little rascals liked Company C so much that it was very difficult for the court to place them. Among the thirty or more children who ran away from their court placements year after year and returned alone to the Hall were former members of our Little Men's Club in Company C. We should have gotten tape recordings of their evaluations of their own behavior every Saturday evening. I loved sitting in and listening. We had things of interest for them to do.

SCHIPPERS: Was there any attempt to break down another group for the girls?

ACKERMAN: No, we didn't have the facilities; we didn't have the buildings to do so.

Oh, I was so concerned when I was there; there was a group of perhaps twenty-five or thirty little children--under six or seven, many of them--with venereal disease, who had to have vaginal treatments all day long, just dripping with gonorrhea. Perfectly terrible thing! Such adorable children! They were in one wing of the hospital with these older girls. Now, from every angle, that was simply horrible! I immediately made recommendations to the Probation Committee, but it was several years before they were transferred to Ruth Home in El Monte, California. We loved them, but it was a great joy to know that they were in a very nice institution and not exposed to older girls suffering from venereal diseases.

SCHIPPERS: In this segregation, was there any contact between the groups at any time?

ACKERMAN: Between the different groups in segregation?

SCHIPPERS: Yes.

ACKERMAN: When I say segregation I mean that they were isolated, they were in a room alone, and there was little contact. There was glass in the door to the hall, and they could see other children, and talk per-

haps through the door. There were larger rooms, two bedrooms, and as I recall, a few very small dormitories. The situation was not good. In fact, we did improve it greatly, but we never had the program in the hospital that we had in the other buildings because here the incoming children were flowing in each day. As I said regarding the volume of work, the numbers defeated almost anything you wished to do. They were emotionally so disturbed, so hostile; and treatments, medical care, and the medical program came first. So it was very difficult to conduct programs. We improved it, but I would not say it was what one might wish. Ruth Wallis, Girl's Hospital recreational director, helped us to improve the activity program.

SCHIPPERS: In the buildings themselves, there was almost complete isolation between groups?

ACKERMAN: Yes, except as these clever girls and boys had a way of getting together. [laughter] The girls' building was on one side of the campus, and a beautiful, large playground surrounded it, completely bordered by acacia and oleander trees. I'm so glad that I didn't know oleander was poisonous at the time, because we had many children attempting or wanting to attempt suicide. They had this play field and on the other side of the play field was the school. Back of the school was the boys' playground and the boys' building.

They all knew that one side was for girls, the other was for boys, but there were times when they would get together. The messengers, taking notes and so forth, would have a way of getting together. We finally had a flower bed; the boys helped with the gardening, and the girls picked the little flowers (these were pansies). The girls were allowed to pick the pansies for the trays for the incoming children. Before long there was a special incident report on my desk stating that a girl had received this darling love-note from a boy. I said, "Well, I couldn't think of any better place to find a love-note than under a pansy." [laughter] So indirectly, they would get together in some way.

We had an elopement on May Day one time, which I think was just fantastic. As far as I know, they were never found. This girl, who was a messenger in the girls' department--I have a picture of her among these snapshots I gave to you--made quite a model child. She was really a young girl, quite mature for her age, and attractive. In the school at recess time, they served eggnog; they put the honor children in charge and she was an honor child. In Company A was an honor boy, who was in charge of eggnog for the boys. They got together going over to the kitchen for the eggnogs. Well, they found that just at recess time the fence around the incinerator was left open. There were large barrels

and they could put these barrels one on top of the other by the wall. They did that and they eloped on May Day, and as far as I know, I hoped they lived happily ever after. [laughter]

SCHIPPERS: Was there any segregation racially?

ACKERMAN: No, none whatever. They even elected a girl, two colored girl presidents of their club--there may have been more.

SCHIPPERS: Do you know if there had ever been any racial segregation in the facility?

ACKERMAN: Not that I know of. I believe not.

SCHIPPERS: What was the feeling toward races? I would say, first going from the personnel to the children.

ACKERMAN: There was a feeling among employees against having colored employees, a very hostile feeling. When I went there, all employees were white. The thought conveyed to me was that the children would not respect colored people. I expect I had been there five or six years when a very nice-looking and, in my opinion, qualified colored woman appeared from a Civil Service list. I employed her, and she is due for a pension now. I did a little promotional work in the various departments. She was going to be an assistant cook, and fortunately our chef was perfectly willing. Some of the other people who were there were not, but the chef was willing.

I had to talk to her and said, "You are going to have to be a pioneer. I want you here because I think you are capable of doing the job we want done, and you will have some Saturday and Sunday work and holiday work. Unless you can be happy working those days, I don't want you or anyone else. I want the children to have happy people around them." She assured me she was willing to work Saturdays or Sundays or holidays. We employed her, but I did tell her that I couldn't promise what would happen, that I hoped the employees would give her a cordial welcome. But she would have to know that she was the first colored person employed. She was a magnificent person, and she had the respect of everyone. There was no problem. After that, there were gradually more, and finally, a colored counselor (I forget his name); he was really very good. There were two excellent colored probation officers.

SCHIPPERS: Do you think there was any racial discrimination on the part of the counselors and so forth regarding the children?

ACKERMAN: No. I really feel there was none. However, I think, in fact I know, that if we would admit too many colored boys at one time, we might be headed for a little trouble. If we just admitted a few during the day and absorbed them gradually, there was none. In most instances--not entirely--they were the ones

who were on the defensive and who were almost looking for trouble.

More than once when there was trouble between a colored and a white boy, I would always try to see the child alone in a casual way, rather than have him come to my office. I would say, "Well, I'm so sorry you aren't happy here. I'm entirely responsible." Immediately, there would be this response, "Oh, they don't like us niggers. That white fella says he doesn't like niggers." When I'd say, "What did you say?" He'd repeat it. I'd say, "I just want you to know that all we talk about here are girls and boys as future Americans, and I never want to hear that word again." Usually that would help.

We had very, very little trouble, and as I said, I still remember some of the delightful colored children and Mexican children. They loved to dance and sing; they just dripped with music and rhythm. In one annual report you will find that I lament the fact that the colored girls too often had protracted stays and I mention that there were not sufficient outlets. Many institutions would not take a colored girl; all at that time limited the number.

SCHIPPERS: What was the racial composition of the Hall?

ACKERMAN: Oh, again I should have my annual reports. As I recall, the greatest number were white Americans,

and at that time, about ten or twelve percent Negro, I believe, and perhaps thirty or forty percent Mexican. We rarely had an Oriental child and we rarely had a Jewish child. Some years passed with no Oriental children, but if we did have a Jewish child, we had a real problem. It meant that since the Jewish welfare office, the temples, and the people in the homes had a beautiful religious life, that that child had been given a great deal of time by their own agencies before they would be willing to allow the child to come to Juvenile Hall. As I look back, I think that maybe some of those Jewish children who were so very incorrigible may not have been [healthy] children. We had a physical, but examining so many, I think rheumatic fever might have been overlooked in certain instances.

SCHIPPERS: What was the mode of discipline that was employed when you first went there?

ACKERMAN: If I were advising an administrator who was entering a correctional institution, I'm confident that I would advise him or her--they are mostly him's now--that he and all employees would definitely have a choice of either focusing all attention on discipline (you're motivated by fear, fear that the child will run away, fear that the child will kill you, or kill another child, so that everything is maximum-security, everything is discipline), or you try to have faith

and believe that these are human beings, that you can reach them--and you can, for the most part--and greatly increase their privilege for purposeful living, increase their opportunities for communication. They need listeners so badly; they have never had a listener. One little boy said to me one day, "Miss Ackerman, nobody is ever on my side." Well, that was the beginning of another long story, and I told him that I wanted to be on his side very much when he made it the right side. [laughter]

Oh, some of them were so promising, the potentials were great, I think, in many instances. But we did do many things: for instance, after school it was a game that the children were playing with adults there. Everything that happened all day long (if the child was sent to the principal's office in school, or if the child misbehaved in the dining room, no matter what happened), after school the assistant superintendent would have these notes on the file on her desk, and she'd start calling the girls from the girls' department, then from Company B and Company A. This was a parade that continued day after day. Whoever might be out in the play field with a large group of children had difficulty getting attention because everyone was so interested to know who was called to the office and what was going to happen to them.

We stopped that. The counselors took a great deal of time, but there were many individual meetings with counselors and group meetings in which they were told that they were there not to take care of "problem children," but children with problems. We believed that a very busy program of work, school, and play would help.

I rarely, rarely had a child sent to my office; I would try to see them on the campus just "accidentally," or if there was a grave problem, I would give permission for them to be placed in the meditation room, and I would go over to the meditation room. There was no audience. You have part of the problem whipped when you have the child away from their audience. Occasionally little notes would help. I found it very helpful to focus attention on the child who has done something outstanding, and we started a birthday cupboard, for instance, in my office. That's a long story about the human interest things that happened at that birthday cupboard.

SCHIPPERS: What were the penalties, however, for misbehavior?

ACKERMAN: There was no corporal punishment.

SCHIPPERS: And had there been?

ACKERMAN: There had been in the early days, but I don't believe there had been just a few years previous. I don't know for sure. I do know that when I came to

Juvenile Hall, one counselor, who later became a probation officer, would have boys with good records hold a lad who was misbehaving and have the lad bite into Lifebuoy soap and chew it. Then the boy was not permitted water for the remainder of the evening. That type of thing can happen, you know, even in spite of all your rules and regulations. It was perfectly horrible and, of course, we stopped it immediately.

But as far as the punishments, in extreme disobedience, or where we felt that for the child's good they needed to be away from the large group, we did have these meditation rooms. However, I did make a ruling that no one could be placed in meditation without my approval or my assistant's. We made it a plan to see them at that time or certainly the next day.

Then dear Mother Neel--one of the wonderful employees with a very soft voice and a very warm heart, devout Catholic (she would say or make novenas for me)--she taught us that these boys, who were considered dangerous, could come out and work. She came to me one day and she said a certain lad was in meditation and oh, my, he had had a terrific history. (I believe he had held up someone with a gun; it was a very serious charge, and we had been warned not to allow him out.) She said, "I think I have some special work, difficult cleaning, and I'd like to try." And I said, "Well, if

you'd like to try, I'd like to try, too." That was the beginning of allowing these boys to be out after the other children went to school to help with work or to exercise. They enjoyed it, and not in one instance do I remember trouble. There were troubles at other times, but not when they were given the permission of working; they considered it a privilege.

SCHIPPERS: What was the time period, on the average, for isolation?

ACKERMAN: I wish I had kept a record. We did keep a record of the children who were placed in meditation. But we didn't keep the book; in the early days, it was routine. Of course, at one time they were practically all in cells. After they built the new building, there weren't enough meditation or isolation rooms; they were using cells in the old building. And these boys stayed there. I was told, for instance, when I had my first tour, that it would never be safe for one boy, who was screaming and violent, to come out until he was transferred to the Preston School of Industry.

We just didn't do that. I would say that the average length of stay for the girls in meditation would be one or two days. For the boys, it probably could be from three to five days. Sometimes it would be half a day. There were several times when I was asked by a girl to go into meditation. I have a letter from one

girl from Ventura State School [for Girls]. I knew she was going to Ventura anyway, and I knew that it would be so much easier if we could get her to wish to go to Ventura. These things take a great deal of time; there is a time element but it can be done. Dr. Walton, superintendent of Ventura, came at my request and gave a talk to the girls about Ventura. This helped.

SCHIPPERS: What other privileges might have been withheld?

ACKERMAN: Oh, food. At one time they were given, I believe, just bread and water and very meager food, but when they were in meditation, we might have one meal of bread and milk but always two regular meals. Most of the discipline, finally, was controlled through our Saturday night evaluation councils.

We put such a spotlight of approval on good behavior which became definitely more contagious. In fact good behavior became more contagious than bad. You have in your records the weekly reports of the girls' council, of the numbers who received satisfactory or very satisfactory ratings. From these [the children] elected their own officers; the boys' officers wore neckerchiefs and the girls' officers wore a little gold emblem. With these they could go all over the campus alone. They were given many extra privileges. The president in the girls' department had a beautiful

room with a private bath, and so forth. Our councils were a great, great help. Each week they were working towards Saturday night, and, bless their hearts, they had to be good around the clock, which is pretty difficult for all of us. [laughter]

SCHIPPERS: I want to ask more about that later. Right now I'm trying to get the whole picture of what things were like in the setting when you first got there. What about food?

ACKERMAN: I feel that we greatly improved the food. The steward was planning the meals, and all you heard was that all the children had were starches. I think to an extent that that was true. I think Miss Ostrander tried and did improve the food to a certain extent, but in the hospital, for instance, all the food was served in one bowl to the child. You were supposed to save washing dishes, so the hot dish, the stew, was at the bottom, then anything else was on the top; butter was not served if there was gravy, etc. The serving of the food was pretty bad.

I happened to be interested in nutrition, and after a while, I did the planning of the menus. I enjoyed this. I did not use repeat menus. Finally, after all my good efforts, I sent samples of the month's menus (they had to be planned a month in advance because we had to buy food a month in advance) to Rama Bennett, who

was the head of the county nutritionists. She sent a note back that she definitely approved; however, she thought that perhaps we were not giving them quite enough potatoes! In my great effort not to give them too many starches, that's what happened. [laughter]

A funny thing happened (it wasn't too funny), but something happened at the visiting room on a Sunday when I was not there. A large boy--he happened to be a colored boy--complained, and the entire room heard him. Of course, these people were all on edge in the visiting room, and it took very little to sparkplug trouble, mass trouble. He announced that the food wasn't fit for hogs, that all he had was starches and so forth. So I told Mr. John Kreidler, the counselor, that some day I was going to stop him on the play field, and that I hoped he'd have him near him so I could just call him over and have a little talk. I did [have a talk with the boy] and I said, "You know I'm responsible for everything that happens here, and I hear you are very unhappy about the food." He said, "Yeah, just all we have is starches, you know, just nothing but starches." I said, "You know I eat the food, and I like other things, too."

Well, I had set the scene, and I often did set scenes for children without them knowing it. (I think these little tricks were permissible if they worked.) I had the big menus for the week on my desk. I said to him

in a very casual way, "How would you like to come over to my office right now? I have the menus made, but I can put in something you like; if you don't like starches, we'll just see what we can put in the menu." Oh, my, he was so enthused to be invited over to my office. "Now," I said, "you point out the starches and the things you don't like." He had a little difficulty reading at first; then he said, "Well, dose beets and carrots and peas and spinach. I just don't like starches." [laughter]

Again, the children taught us that we should have a very short session weekly on protein, carbohydrates, starches, and so forth. This was the beginning of posting the week's menu right outside my door on a big bulletin board. We marked all the meats (protein) in red, all the vegetables in yellow, all the fruits in blue. Underneath the menu we said, "You must have at least two vegetables a day, and at least two fruits." (But they really had more.)

Coming and going from court this was the place of attention. Again very funny things would happen. One day I heard an older boy say, "Look here, they are going to give us moldy salad." (Moulded fruit salad.) So we finally made extra copies of the menus so that the children might have them for their parents.

SCHIPPERS: In effect, you turned it into a weapon for

morale boosting.

ACKERMAN: Oh, yes, and in the kitchen, the boys worked with our capable, interested chef. He had worked at Eaton's Restaurant and came to us thanks to the Depression. Mr. Lytle did an outstanding job not only cooking, but with the boys, too. Before Easter I requested that he save all the eggshells to make little place cards with a little chicken in each eggshell. I went in and told him, of course, that his helpers, the boys, had to be careful about breaking the eggs. So here he was trying to show these boys how to open the egg without crushing it; but he had always crushed eggs the way a chef does. He said, "This is the only institution I have ever worked in where you have to use the eggs and the shells, too." [laughter] But he loved it as much as I did. [Going back to food,] they were using bulk milk, and we felt that that was hazardous, so we finally had bottled milk for each child. Each child had a bottle of milk at each meal, and they were allowed seconds on everything except dessert. We did limit the bread to three slices because there were some children who would eat nothing but bread and butter.

SCHIPPERS: Were there other maintenance chores beside kitchen work?

ACKERMAN: There were many work details. Each morning the counselors had to make out this list because each

child had to be in school four hours a day. That meant that if the child was going to be out with the probation officer, the sheriff, and the police in the morning, or in the clinic having psychological tests, or on a work detail, then they had to be in school in the afternoon. We had no maids in any department but the hospital, but the buildings--I'm sure everyone who visited will bear me out--were kept in beautiful condition. We had experts teaching housekeeping. When I left there, many of our children, when they left, could teach people in other institutions how to keep house.

In the girls' department, it was primarily housekeeping in their own department, or work in the laundry. In the boys' department, there was gardening at times, but not often; it was too difficult to get them when they were needed. Our children were floating around in every direction.

SCHIPPERS: Was there any attempt to make this some kind of an apprentice situation, where they would learn the elements of an occupation?

ACKERMAN: Yes, except in school. Boys, especially those who were repeaters, learned a great deal about printing, and many of them, I think, had quite a good course in the skill of printing and in sloyd. They had very good sloyd. These gifts they brought over to the visiting room and gave to their mothers. In the other departments, of course, the time element again was so

short.

I did recommend to the Board of Supervisors a plan for children after release (but that's another story) where I felt that they could have sort of half-way houses. I still think it would have worked.

SCHIPPERS: But there was no attempt to make any of these maintenance chores an educational process?

ACKERMAN: No, you see, a girl might be in the laundry two days a week, or she might be there three months, day after day. We never knew who we'd have the next day; we never knew who was going to be released.

SCHIPPERS: There was no attempt to assign children on the basis of aptitude or any other indications?

ACKERMAN: To a certain extent, they learned who were the girls who enjoyed and were good in the laundry, for instance, and other girls who excelled in housekeeping.

SCHIPPERS: Did they ever resent these occupations in terms of thinking of it perhaps as a punishment?

ACKERMAN: There was less and less of that. We had good demonstrations in our laundry. When I went there, there was an extremely tense, industrious, very devout woman in charge of our laundry, but certainly, in my opinion, the wrong person to be working with any children, especially problem children. I was called every morning practically from the girls' department. "What am I going to do?" they asked. "I can't fill the laundry

details." So many girls were needed, and they absolutely refused to go. Finally, I decided that the time had come to have a talk with this employee and suggested that she work in the hospital kitchen, where she would have boys, who are always easier to work with. She would have just two as a rule, so the strain would not be as great. She consented--in fact, she was relieved--and in her place was this Mrs. Harland, who proved to be a godsend.

She had never studied psychology, I am sure, but still she just knew; she was a jolly, overweight, delightful person who just loved children. Shortly after her assignment, she stopped by and asked if she might have a little refreshment for the girls in the middle of the morning (I hadn't even thought of it); so we planned for graham crackers, milk, or something in the morning and afternoon.

She, first of all, had the know-how of laundering, of how to launder things properly. Children definitely do respect that; they love to learn the correct way--we all do--to do something. It's always the easiest way. She taught them that their equipment came first (the ironing board, the cleanliness, the tight covering, and so forth) and the condition of the irons and everything. Then she gave them frequent little siesta times to just stop a little or have a joke or a little fun

along the way. She was full of fun and laughter, and they needed that so much. I didn't know frankly until a few months ago when I was rereading children's letters, that she evidently (she was quite overweight) allowed the children to tie and untie her shoes so that she could put bedroom slippers on. [laughter] I just read that in one of the children's letters; that was a privilege that she gave them.

It wasn't unusual in the departments, when a girl returned from court and was violently angry and threatening about her court placement, to have the counselors say, "Oh, Mrs. Harland just called. She is greatly in need of somebody; she doesn't know how she is going to get through the afternoon. Do you think you could go to help Mother Harland?" Then the counselor would surprise the girl by not sending her with a messenger but trusting her, giving a surprise trust to a child, which just worked marvelously well. The child who had never been trusted before [was given permission] to go alone on the campus. Mrs. Harland would greet her with open arms, and they'd have graham crackers and milk and a little talk; they'd sob on her shoulder. Then they'd iron and come back for dinner feeling better. There are so many untold heroes and heroines in the world.

SCHIPPERS: How about their formal schooling? What did the courses consist of? How would you rate it?

ACKERMAN: The school was, part of the time, under the [Los Angeles] City Board of Education and, part of the time, under the [Los Angeles] County Board of Education. The children were ever-changing children and every hour of the day in the office was like a gigantic switchboard or jigsaw puzzle; these children were being called to come to the office to see a policeman, a sheriff, probation officer, called to the clinic, released. All types of things were happening. Not only the group they started class with differed from the class they had the day before, but while they were conducting their classes, there were these many interruptions.

[One of] the two great weaknesses in the institution I felt was (and I still feel that it's true) that the principal, in my opinion, was very fearful of the children, and they knew it. (They know things immediately.) In an emergency he always called me. This was unfortunate. He was kind to the children. He wanted and, I think, he tried to do a very good job as far as the teaching program was concerned, but underneath there was this feeling of fear and insecurity. I sensed it and I know that the children did. The second thing--and again, this is in annual reports--we had practically no high school work. It was mostly domestic science, and for the little folks, reading and writing and spelling. For the older children, there was sloyd, printing, and home

economics. The children who were in high school and some of the children held as material witnesses missed out on high school work which, I still think, was deplorable.

SCHIPPERS: You had very little control over the content of the courses, of course.

ACKERMAN: No, we had no control whatever over the school. It was a city school within our grounds. The cleaning of the school, the maintenance, everything, was under the Board of Education; we simply sent our children there at least four hours a day.

SCHIPPERS: I would like to ask just one question, out of sequence, about visiting privileges.

ACKERMAN: The ruling was that parents or legal guardians may visit on Sundays only. A few children were held incommunicado, which meant "no visiting." "Occasionally-incommunicado" was a supervised visit, which was very difficult for us to do because we had a skeleton staff.

These mobs of visitors appeared every Sunday, and they were, as a rule, quite hostile, too. We were not responsible for bringing their child to the Hall, but quite often we were the first contact with the child held in detention. The cases that gave us the greatest cause for concern were custody cases, where there were actual threats that a father would kill a mother, or that violence of some form would take place. On such

occasions, we would arrange through the probation officer or the police, that the mother go to the hospital entrance on Henry Street and allow the father to visit the next hour at the Eastlake entrance (and not tell either parent of the two entrances). Aside from that, occasional extra privileges were given. Occasionally, for the child's good, a probation officer might feel that it would be helpful for a parent or a grandmother or some interested guardian or beloved aunt to come during the week and have a short visit.

SCHIPPERS: Where did they visit? In a room?

ACKERMAN: They visited in the court waiting room, a large room on Eastlake.

SCHIPPERS: Were they allowed physical contact?

ACKERMAN: Yes. We changed things there, too, that helped. As I said, it was a time of anxiety and great tension, at first. I had just two of the older boys to help me, but I felt so secure with these boys; they were honor boys, and the counselors were careful about selecting them. We opened the doors, and there were masses of people outside with many little children. (The little children weren't permitted inside. Many of them were our future children.) Each adult had to have a note saying that he was a legal guardian or a parent. The person who preceded me happened to be a very high-tempered person, good at heart, but very high-

tempered. She was so tense, and immediately she would pound on the desk after they'd lock the door (after the room was filled and all the rest had to wait for the second hour). She would pound on the desk and announce that there would be no gifts other than what they had left at the desk. Following this, she paced through the room watching to see that no gifts, cigarettes, etc., were being given to the youngsters. The group felt her hostility; even I felt the tension in the room. She meant well, but she was just too tense and fearful.

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SCHIPPERS: Since yesterday's interviewing session you have thought over a few of the things, and one of the things you wanted to expand on was the racial balance in the Hall.

ACKERMAN: Yes. As I recall, the statistics given were adequate. They changed a little from year to year, and that would be indicated in the annual reports. But I do recall this, and I believe that it is significant: we were rarely without a tragic child who had been physically abused. There were many cases of incest and rape, but of the many children who had these tragic experiences, I can recall just one teen-aged, colored girl. I recall very few Mexican children who were physically abused by parents or relatives. At visiting time, for the most part, both the colored parents and the Mexican parents were more friendly and gracious. We often had trouble with hostility and threats among parents of our white children. I thought that was interesting.

SCHIPPERS: Could you again mention something about the ratio of the races in the Hall?

ACKERMAN: Oh, this changed, as I recall, a little, but I believe that throughout the years it was approximately nine to ten percent Negro (I think that that increased during the fourteen years), and perhaps thirty to forty

percent Mexican. Most of our children were American white. But we did have children come from various parts of the world, so that we had children often of many nationalities. And as I said previously, there were very few Oriental or Jewish children.

SCHIPPERS: Would you describe how it was [concerning visiting privileges] as you found it when you first came there, then some of the changes that you put into effect?

ACKERMAN: My first experience in visiting privileges was with the very dedicated but hot-tempered person who preceded me as assistant superintendent. She had a heart of gold, but she just didn't appear to have the nervous set-up needed by these emotional children and parents, so that visiting time was an extremely tense time. As soon as everyone was in the visiting room and the door locked and the children called from their departments, she pounded on the table and in a very loud voice announced that the parents were not permitted to give anything to the children that they hadn't previously left on the desk. She also announced many things that they were not permitted to do. You could feel the emotions growing constantly. And we were to watch (she didn't use the word"spy")every visitor to be sure that they weren't handing the child a nail file, a gun or a weapon, cigarettes, matches, or something. It was fear; you just felt fear and hostility.

When the visiting period was over, it was simply bedlam. They had a large bell down the hall, and it was rung three times. It would just terrify you if you had never been to visiting before. I'm sure that you would think it was a fire alarm. Then she would announce again, "Visiting is over, and everybody leave at once." I was told we must be very cautious--not just I, but also one of these older boys (there would be two of us)--to be sure no child got out of that building with their parents. That was emphasized.

Then I was alone at visiting next period, and I followed pretty much the procedure several times. Frankly, I went to visiting with great anxiety about what might happen, and finally decided that we would change the program entirely. I gave an honor boy the privilege of being at the door and allowing--we had cards--just a parent or guardian. They had to identify who they were [with the cards]. They came in, and I had a little talk and requested that they leave any packages or presents for the children on the table. They were just permitted to bring comic books, marbles, candy and religious books to the children. (Today, I think, I would have changed that a little, but that was the ruling at the time.) After they were all seated I tried to tell them that we were there to try to help them and their children. Then we called children from various depart-

ments. We called all the children from, say, the girls' department, and after they were there, we would call the boys from the boys' department, so they wouldn't meet on campus, that is, hoping they wouldn't. Then during visiting, I would try to just casually drop by (if there was a vacant chair) a parent and a child, or parents and a child, where I knew there was conflict. Where I knew that the child was trying to make a good record, I would try to praise the child in front of the parent. I had very informal contact with them. Of course, I was not the caseworker; the Probation Department did that [type of work].

Then I decided that it would be much wiser to stop ringing the bell--it made me nervous to hear the bell--and that I would just very calmly announce instead. I learned both at programs in our big auditorium and at visiting that if I stood in front of the group and smiled and acted as if I had something quite pleasant to tell, but purposefully spoke in a rather low voice, they had to stop talking in order to hear me. It worked amazingly well. They would punch the talkers to notify them that I was trying to say something, and I could get their attention that way. I would announce that visiting was over, and I'd ask that all parents remain seated. Then we started dismissing groups one at a time. We started with the little folks (older children accompanied them),

then we had the younger group of boys, then the girls. After we were quite sure that there was time for all the girls to be in their own department, we'd have the boys dismissed. Then I would stand at the door, and announce that if there were any questions, I would be at the door and try to answer their questions. I'd thank them for coming to visit their children--that the visiting meant a great deal to our children--and thank them for observing our rules. Of course, there were times when they didn't, and we had some things happen.

SCHIPPERS: Did you have any trouble with contraband?

ACKERMAN: I hate to admit this, but it's the gospel truth. We had a retarded child; she had been in and out of the court, and it was finally decided that she was to go to Pacific Colony for the retarded children. Believe it or not, they were permitted to have any religious books. At first, we didn't look into the religious books; it was just a religious book so we passed it on. But this book remained there in the girls' department revealing that the parents plotted her runaway. Now the entire family were supposed to be retarded, but they outsmarted us. Around the edge of a page in the center of the Bible, near the Psalms--we laughed about that--they had written (the spelling was terrific) how they would be there one morning with this rope and that on the way to breakfast she was to break from the group,

and they would pull her up over the wall. They did exactly that. The probation office may have heard from her later, and she probably did go right on to Pacific Colony because if the parents could have, they would have visited the home.

We hung our head in shame to think that these retarded people could outsmart us. Mother Stoft had this large group of girls and always prided herself that she could take them to breakfast at seven o'clock across the campus and have no runaways. Then one morning this startling thing happened right in front of her own eyes, and there was nothing to do about it. Later, we occasionally found nail files (yes, things did happen), cigarettes, and so forth.

SCHIPPERS: What about reading materials in general? What was allowed and what sort of things did the children seem to like?

ACKERMAN: I don't have the information that, I'm afraid, you're seeking. I have in my annual reports and on the yardstick I wrote, an outline of points that we considered meant the success of our program, or improvement perhaps I should say. As I recall, one year there were over eight thousand books circulated, and over five thousand were to our children. Again in that report I stated that at one time books had been taken from all departments because of destruction of books, lewd writing, and books

being lost. We were very proud of our record.

SCHIPPERS: When had they been taken away? Before your administration?

ACKERMAN: Yes. They were, I believe, just in two departments when I arrived. We appointed student librarians, and they were given the privilege of going over to get the new books. For the most part, as I recall, they were reading the type of books that boys and girls were reading at that time. Many of the children read very little, and many of them--quite a few, I think--were probably non-readers. Generally speaking, I'm afraid that comics were the thing they were most interested in. We finally did have a story-reading hour in our girls' department, and they did read some very good things.

SCHIPPERS: Did you place any special restrictions on the reading material?

ACKERMAN: No, other than that the parents were not permitted, because we had a library, to bring in anything but funnies, comics, or religious books. As I say, today there are many things I would change a little. But again, [there was the factor of] this rapidly changing group. Each Sunday at least half of your visitors had never been there before. We were new to them, and they were new to us.

SCHIPPERS: Now about the problem of cigarettes, what was the attitude toward it?

ACKERMAN: During the entire fourteen years, that remained an unsolved problem. Many of these children, young girls and boys, suffered torture. They were under terrific nervous strain. For many of them, it was the first brush with the law, and they were deeply concerned. (A few didn't care, but most of them did.) They had smoked, and if they had ever needed a cigarette, they seemed to need it then. I had no objections. We had meetings with the psychiatrists, the psychologists, the Probation Committee and the chief probation officer; we tried to work out a plan that we might have smoking hour on the roof away from the other children, but we never could agree on what was correct. We did have the overall care of all the children who came into the Hall, and if we permitted smoking, there was the fear that some children who had never smoked before might learn to smoke while they were there. I'm afraid that in this particular instance, we allowed our fear to overrule.

Then there was always a great fear of fire. Matches were never permitted to be left out any place. Of course, no employee **ever** smoked within the grounds, and matches were never left where a child might get them.

They would bring cigarettes into the Hall from court. (In the article I have written about "Mother's Day in a Detention Home," there is an incident of a mother trying to smuggle cigarettes to her child.) We

would find cigarettes when girls were out for investigation with the police or went to court. They would come back with cigarettes rolled in their hair. They would conceal cigarettes in the little rubber base of a metal chair; they would remove that and put the cigarettes in. Whenever you restrict children, it becomes a game and they find some way to outsmart you. I was sorry we weren't able to work it out, but frankly we weren't.

SCHIPPERS: Did it become any kind of currency that you know of? Very often?

ACKERMAN: No, it was, as I look back now, quite amazing. In the hospital, I think, it was more pronounced because the children had just come in and that was a period of adjustment. Often there, we would have an older boy or girl who would say, "I just can't live without a cigarette." But they, as a group, never caused trouble about this; it wasn't an issue.

SCHIPPERS: Were there any problems with anything like dope or alcohol?

ACKERMAN: No, not at all. As I look over the records, we had very few (the statistics from the medical director give very few) who were drug addicts, or who came in intoxicated. In my own opinion--and I may be wrong on this--I recall certain children who were terrific problems and who on admission and for days after would

have these outbursts. I sometimes question whether a few drug addicts were not recognized. Again, I wouldn't say this critically, but because of the large number being admitted, the examinations had to be rather superficial. They did have a complete Wasserman blood test for syphilis and other tests that might be indicated.

SCHIPPERS: On the subject of sex, what was the attitude toward it, and how would you appraise the conduct of the children?

ACKERMAN: Well, there were, of course, more girls admitted because of so called sex delinquency. There were a few boys (and this would be in the annual statistics) admitted for rape. There was always--in fact, I have talked with deans of girls in very fine private schools and they, too, have the anxiety--the problem at times of homosexuality and what the wisest way to handle it is. Of course, we're looking upon it in a very different way today, as an illness. It wasn't too much of a problem; as a rule, it wasn't. We might have one child admitted who would suddenly inject this particular problem into the group. We would have to try (of course, the psychiatrist would see them) to have a program. But I wouldn't say that the problem was really much greater than it would have been where there is a group of girls alone or boys alone in an institution.

SCHIPPERS: How did you go about handling it when it was?
ACKERMAN: Fortunately, all the girls had single rooms, and that was a great help. They were not permitted to visit each other's room except to inspect the room for cleaning. Each girl cleaned her own room each morning and she inspected the room to the right. That was a terrific thing. [laughter] Other than that, if they wished to have an otherwise satisfactory record, it was marred if they were found visiting in another girl's room. There was glass in every door so that they could be observed. For the most part, they were kept in groups except when they were given definite club assignments. [They were allowed] in a room to work on some club assignment and were not to be disturbed. Of course, the psychiatrist in his report to the probation officer in court might make a detailed study of this particular child. Or, if in his opinion, it became quite serious he might have the child transferred to the hospital. The child was given another reason that he just wasn't too well and that the doctor wanted to observe them a little while in the hospital where they had closer supervision under the nurses. But it wasn't as great a problem as one might expect.
SCHIPPERS: Certainly, the attitude of yourself and members of the staff was not one of prudery.
ACKERMAN: Oh, no.

SCHIPPERS: Was there any punishment administered for this sort of activity?

ACKERMAN: No, no.

SCHIPPERS: On the average, what was the length of stays?

ACKERMAN: We tried sincerely (the Probation Committee supported me in this) and hoped to see the day when there would be no Juvenile Hall, where children might be brought in only as outpatients who needed study, and that the money that went into prevention and rehabilitation would decrease the number of children at the Hall. There were many meetings, serious meetings about the length of stay. If you study the annual reports, you will see that the children were there from twelve to fourteen to finally sixteen days, which was amazing.

I know that at times probation officers were cross with me. (As I have said before, there were all kinds of probation officers; many were dedicated, wonderful souls, unsung heroes who did outstanding work with their children. Unfortunately, there were some lazy, indifferent ones.) Sometimes after the court had made an order that a child could be placed in a foster home or go to an institution, a child would wait there for days for his clothing; the probation officers just couldn't be bothered because they were so busy with other things. I would call them up and say, "Well, if the child is

released from Juvenile Hall according to court, tomorrow we'll just open the door and out she goes." I'm afraid that I didn't make friends doing that.

But I definitely felt that the stay should be as short as possible, especially for high school children who had to go back to school where it had been learned, through the grapevine, that they had been in Juvenile Hall. I felt that this was most unfortunate. The schools were most cooperative, and I think that they tried to handle it the best they could. But I definitely hoped for ever shorter and shorter lengths of stay.

The two types of children, or perhaps I should say, three, who were there the longest, as I recall, were the children held as witnesses for the District Attorney. Now this was a difficult group of girls, because the man they were involved with--and sometimes he was a well-known person--was out on bail and later free. But they were detained in the Hall for three or four months as witnesses in the court. We had many sessions regarding what could be done, and when I left, they were still holding girls as material witnesses over protracted stays. Children will accept anything that seems fair, but how can you talk to a girl when she knows that this man (who, as I said, may be a prominent man) is out on bail.

The second group of children who were there for pro-

tracted stays were the children who were there for venereal treatments. The new miracle drugs were not available, and it meant weeks and weeks of treatment.

The third group who were at the Hall were out-of-state children. No state wants to claim a child unless it has to; it is interested in keeping the budget down. Often, too, the child came in under an alias. You might have a child for weeks and not know who the child was. (The Probation Department would be sending wires all over the country to agencies.) You had a "John Doe." (They gave another name, but you didn't have the correct name.)

Occasionally, children were held longer than I felt they should have been, waiting for admission into a state school. The state schools are quite independent; they can decide that things are not going too smoothly, and they won't admit any new girls or boys. Or, the state institution might not have a bed.

SCHIPPERS: Particularly during that period of years before the Youth Authority was developed?

ACKERMAN: Yes, that's right.

SCHIPPERS: Speaking of that latter category, the child is very aware that he is doing "dead time," so to speak. What was his reaction to that situation?

ACKERMAN: Again, it varied because humans are humans, and there are no two alike. You can have five people in one situation, and they will all react differently,

whether it is a child or an adult. Occasionally, a child had become an honor student; the boy had his kerchief and many privileges, and perhaps his life was better than it had ever been. He was having good food and he or she was enjoying being somebody, whether an honor student or president of a girls' club or counselor in the girls' club. There were a few who preferred to stay with us rather than go on to their next placement.

Again, there were children who were very hostile and very unhappy about this and would say, "Well, they told me in court this particular thing would happen, and that was two weeks ago." Again, there are the little things that can happen when you are dealing with humans, especially disturbed children. If there is some type of communication, it can save the day. I would suggest to the probation officers, "If you can't come over to see them, write them a note. Just on a scratch pad (it doesn't make any difference) and with pencil, saying, 'Honey, child, (if you feel like saying that) I'm thinking of you. I'll be over next week.' " That helps a great deal, just so that they have some communication with the outside world. Some tried to run away.

SCHIPPERS: Tell me about the runaways.

ACKERMAN: I wish now as I look back that we had made a study of runaways. In one report, I state that less than

two percent ran away, and I'm sure that the percentage was low throughout the years, that is, the total percentage of those admitted. My philosophy was this: if they had the idea of running away within them, and if we're going to have a maximum security institution which will make it easier for them because they won't be tempted (they'll know they can't run away), then wherever they are placed next, they are going to run away. I think statistics will bear me out. In one report (after I left), eight hundred ran away from placement. Now they couldn't run away from the Hall, so they ran away from placement. There was that opportunity. We were not a maximum security institution; although we had a twenty-foot wall, there were places where they could get over the wall and they knew it. (I wish we had had this study; I suppose it would be too late to do this.)

With our runaways, I think we played a factor. I hope that we helped many children, made them know that they would always live with themselves. I used to tell them, "In ten years, five years, four years, you won't have a probation officer and you may not have parents. You will always have yourself." I think in many instances where time permitted, our counseling in the Hall prevented runaways. But we still had runaways because they were usually fearful of their next placement. We had incidents more than once where a child got over the wall in

the morning and by dinner time was back, begging to be let in. [laughter] It was an emotional sort of thing.

I wish now that, during those years, we had made a study, an evaluation of the probation officers in relation to runaways. It's definitely my impression--I could be wrong--as I look back that certain probation officers (who were truly interested in their children, who kept the doors of communication open, who dropped by unexpectedly to see a child, who sent the child some little token, who wrote them a note) had fewer children run away from Juvenile Hall. I think that's true.

SCHIPPERS: Now on this attitude towards maximum security, was this imposed from above on you?

ACKERMAN: By law, our responsibility was housing these children, who were to become wards of the Juvenile Court. We were to have safekeeping and produce the bodies, habeas corpus, at the court so that from the legal angle it was a terrific responsibility. We definitely were supposed, once they were admitted, to have them there for court. I didn't exactly agree; in fact, I didn't agree at all about this. As I have said before, if a child has this idea of running away from life (which it is), he is going to have it after he leaves us. Unless you can do something to change that child's desires while he is at the Hall, he's eventually going to run

away.

SCHIPPERS: What degree of latitude did you have within this framework to alter any of the security arrangements?

ACKERMAN: When they first opened the new buildings, there were no "segregation cells," shall we say. (Most detention homes were all cells or jails.) With these large groups of very disturbed youngsters we found that for the child's sake, at times, it was important to have the child alone. Or, it might be for the safety of other children and for the safety of the child that he or she should be alone. After I was there as assistant superintendent, they built two security rooms in the hospital's first floor (just the first floor), two in the girls' department, two in the boys', two in the younger boys'. (That would be eight rooms; that wasn't too many rooms.) Again, as I said, we did have plans that they had play material, reading material, taken out for work assignments, and I always saw them. Sometimes the child would be in there as short a time as half a day. Certainly, no child was just put there and kept there because we felt it was unsafe for him to be with the group. That never happened.

SCHIPPERS: I understand the doors were all locked at night.

ACKERMAN: Yes, the doors were all locked at night.

SCHIPPERS: Except for one period, during the earthquake?

ACKERMAN: Yes, following the earthquake no doors were locked for three or four weeks.

SCHIPPERS: Then they went back to the door locking.

ACKERMAN: Yes. We did finally open the back door of the hospital. With every move you made to try to make a little progress about less security, you always had your doubters, who knew that the entire boys' department some day on the playfield was going to start rushing out of this institution. Of course, it never happened. But there was that fear.

Many, many children all day long had to enter this rear door of the hospital from the campus to go out with probation officers, to be released, to go to the psychiatric clinic. Oh, I wouldn't know how many children went in and out of that door. There were just two employees on the first floor, and there was another locked door leading to the hallway which led to the outside door. [laughter] Every time a child rang a bell, either the nurse or attendant had to go down and unlock this door.

One day as I was generally observing the children and as our program improved and as I myself felt more secure about everything, I suggested in a meeting of our department heads that we leave the back door unlocked

all day from seven in the morning until five at night. Of course, there was great objection. I had one supporter as I recall, so we dropped the matter entirely. It's always better that if you can avoid adult fights, it's better to do so. We simply dropped the idea. Then this annoyance of a busy nurse became more annoying because she became conscious of the fact of how often she was running back and forth to the door. The head nurse and everybody began to realize the time wasted and the disturbance to the program of just unlocking a door. Then we had the second meeting and, I believe, at that time it was approved to try it for a couple of days, if the entire Company A didn't rush through the hall. So ever after, that door was left open; it was accepted.

SCHIPPERS: To what degree, do you think, was custody on the minds of the staff, that is, the fear of runaways?

ACKERMAN: I know that we lessened that to a great degree, but there remained a few people who, in their early training, had been employed in state schools. This idea [fear of runaways] was glued to their make-up and although they wanted to go along with my program, they remained fearful in a way. The thought of a runaway was magnified in their minds, and it was just the worst thing that could possibly happen to <u>their</u> [emphasis is hers] record. It wasn't that they weren't so concerned about

the child, but they didn't want it to go down on their record on their [emphases are hers] detail. If they could keep the group together until 2:30 P.M. with no runaways, they didn't care what happened after 2:30. But their own record must not be marred by runaways. I don't want to give the wrong impression; I think we had a marvelous staff, on the whole.

SCHIPPERS: How much of a concern was it for you?

ACKERMAN: Well, I think at first I felt insecure, too. When we first opened the new buildings, we had more runaways and then it dropped. We had a two-year period in the girls' department (it states so in their "cottage reports") without one runaway, and during that time, I'm sure, there would have been four thousand girls. Well, now, that's just amazing in a place of temporary detention.

We'd go through periods where there would be too many runaways; then something was wrong. At first I was young, and I would receive the phone call first that Johnny was missing from Company A. (We had a skeleton staff, and during the day we might find one person who might be able to go on campus and try to find Johnny in back of a bush or hiding someplace or trying to get over the wall.) I actually would go out--I could run then--and try to catch these runaways. At times I did. In fact, one time when we were practicing for a program,

I had taken two older boys (one was committed to Preston), who had worked until they were honor boys, and I felt they were trustworthy. Right in the midst of these rehearsals, if these two rascals didn't start to run away! I started right after them. They got as far as the bushes near the school (they ran around the corner of the school); I saw the bushes moving and there they were. Again, when I commanded, for some unknown reason, they got up, went back to the department with me and wrote a poem: "Like the Mounties Miss Ackerman always gets her man, try as we can" etc., etc. I still have the poem. [laughter]

SCHIPPERS: Were there any mass attempts for runaway, or plots?

ACKERMAN: There were many plots. I would get reports that a group of girls was plotting. We had a report one time that the sailors, practically the entire Navy, was coming to the Hall that night, and they were going to try to get the girls over the walls. We had that type of thing.

We also had children disappear in the most amazing ways. A horrible thing happened one time. We had a girl who really was insane, and she had been in the hospital quite a while. They were having difficulty placing her (a very attractive girl), and finally decided to place her in the girls' department, which, as I recall,

just wasn't really wise. She needed more individual attention. She disappeared at school one day. All the doors were open in school, and they could get out any door at any time. The school reported her missing, and we simply couldn't find her. Where do you think they found her? I hate to even make a record of this. The school janitress, who was a marvelous person, went to the incinerator (surrounded by about a ten-foot wire fence, which was usually kept locked except for one period in the morning when it was unlocked so that barrels of things could be disposed of and the trucks could come in), opened the incinerator door, and there was the girl in the incinerator. That's about the worst thing I can tell that happened when I was in Juvenile Hall. This was the girl who likened every employee, every person in charge, to an animal. It was most amazing. She was perfectly alive; she hadn't been there very long. Of course, she couldn't have stayed very long. (I shouldn't have said that because that is a perfectly horrible thing, but that's true.)

She was attractive and could appear very normal, but she was under psychiatric care so I stayed out of the picture. As a rule, I did when the children were. Finally, there was trouble after she was in the girls' department. I thought that I'd see her and ask her who she had liked the most (I often asked children about their

happiest memory, or who they liked most in the world; some of them, of course, didn't like anyone), and she said, "My elephant." I thought, "Well, there must be something wrong here." But she loved animals, and she actually named everybody after one. The school principal was a fox, but they would never tell me what she called me; I never knew. The night supervisor was a giraffe; she had a long neck.

SCHIPPERS: You also mentioned that there were attempts at suicide.

ACKERMAN: Oh, my, yes. Of course, they were always referred to the psychiatric department. Unfortunately, with your professional staff--I think that this is something professional people must learn--you cannot confine the problems of disturbed children; you cannot schedule attempted suicide and tantrums to a thirty-nine or forty-hour week. You can't attempt to schedule it for next Tuesday at two o'clock. It's the people who are living there who live with it. While the psychiatrist would plan to see a child, in the meantime it was my staff's responsibility to see that no child committed suicide. We had, as I recall, one girl cut her wrists. We had many more threats than attempts, and thank goodness, no one ever did commit suicide. I thank God for that. But there was the threat. They did swallow safety pins at times, mostly to prevent going to Ventura

State School. That wasn't too much of a problem medically. We would send them to our own hospital, and they would be able to take care of that. But we did change the attitude regarding going to state schools.

SCHIPPERS: Did you take any extra precautions to see that instruments for suicide were kept away from the children?

ACKERMAN: Oh, yes, for all children that was true. When they were admitted, every child was given all the protection we could give. Knives were counted when they left the dining room. (We had to do that sort of thing.) When we had a report, which we did occasionally, that a butcher knife was missing at seven o'clock at night (there was one woman in charge in the kitchen, and she would have these older boys) we were faced with quite a problem, and we might not sleep that night. Fortunately, no one was ever seriously injured. I think that we had many children admitted because they were attempted suicides; that was the reason for admitting. We also had, in one year, three children whose mothers tried to murder them. We saw life in the raw.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO

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SCHIPPERS: You began to tell me about the attitudes of the girls going to Ventura for detention, and how that attitude changed during your administration.

ACKERMAN: Yes, I am very pleased to tell this story because there was a marked change. During the early years there was extreme apprehension. It would start the night before among the adults, among employees that tomorrow morning the sheriffs would come (two sheriffs, a man and a woman), and they always brought straps along in case they were needed. The girl would be going to Ventura, and we were to try to keep it very quiet. Depending on the girl, she was brought over to the hospital the night before and hospitalized as a patient, or she remained in the department. In the morning, an honor girl, with the matron or counselor watching carefully as they crossed the campus, would take her to the receiving room supposedly to be checked for some physical reason. When she arrived there, she was told to put her clothes on as she was going to be released. The sheriffs would be down in the office, or at times in the receiving room to get the girl. Again, depending on the girl, there was a terrific scene and battle, or when two adults approached--what could she do--she would cooperate. But gradually we were able to change this attitude.

I stole time from administration work to spend with children committed to state schools. I didn't do this at first, but I learned in time that it was time well spent. [I didn't do this] with all children, but with those that we felt were very apprehensive and emotional. I would try to spend extra time with them. You couldn't repeat the same words to each child, but I did have a general pattern. I would say, "Well, now, the very worst thing in the world happens to you. You feel right now that it is going to the state school, so let's just talk a little bit about what horrible things have happened to you. In the first place, you're committed for a year. Well, you know that you sleep a third of the time, so you'll really only be there two-thirds of the time." I would say that I had been there, and I'd describe the really beautiful physical set-up of Ventura on the hills and the lovely buildings. Then if I knew that a child had been undernourished when he came in, I would say, "You will have no concern about food; you will have three excellent meals. Then what happens will depend a great deal on you."

In our own counseling sessions on Saturday nights, in the evaluation councils (oh, I wish so much we had gotten tape recordings), you would not believe the things you heard; they were so much more honest than you would expect them to be. And for the first time

in their lives, the problem of their own behavior was put right on their own shoulders. Going to a state school entered this picture, too. I promised them and I kept my promise (not with all the boys, but with all the girls), that I would correspond with them. Regretfully, I have just two letters left from the girls, letters that I received. The folder of letters from state school children was lost: I gave it to Bess Wilson, who went to Washington, but she died and I don't know what happened to it. Anyway, there was the promise that there would be some communication; many of them would receive no communication because they had no parents who would care for them. And the fact that I would communicate! As I could, I occasionally would try to send some very little gift, and those are mentioned, I believe, in these letters.

We had to try to change, first of all, the idea in the nurses and the counselors that this terrific thing was going to happen tomorrow morning at eight o'clock when the sheriffs would be here, and that we must be prepared for this great emergency. Finally, with very few exceptions, for a girl going to Ventura it was not much more of a procedure than if she were going to El Retiro School or the convent or something like that. I did have the satisfaction of knowing both the administrator and assistant at Ventura, and I felt for

the time that they were doing a very good job. Dr. Bell told me, and again I don't have the dates (it was probably after I had been there seven or eight years) that they were having less trouble with the girls from Juvenile Hall than the girls from other parts of the state. I felt happy about this. I don't imagine that they were all saints and that there were no problems, because there were problems. But we certainly all felt a difference in the attitude of the girls.

SCHIPPERS: How many times did you visit Ventura?

ACKERMAN: I visited there twice.

SCHIPPERS: Did you make a very thorough tour of the buildings?

ACKERMAN: No, I didn't. But there were occasional times when a girl was released from Ventura, and the placement officer would bring her to the Hall for a few days until she could work out more details about the placement of the girl. I still remember their suitcases; each girl was taught how to pack a suitcase, and it was beautifully done. It's something that they'll benefit by the rest of their lives, that is, how to get material in a small space. They always had a Bible. They were always immaculate and well dressed. They were not released at that time from Ventura until they could show the committee in charge of parole that they could bake bread, and the committee would sample it.

[Also, they had to show] that they could make a dress and that they could iron. These were practical things that if they married--and I hope they all did--would certainly help them in their married life. I think Ventura was quite strict at the time. I believe that the strictest order was that there was to be no communication between houses because, I believe, at one time they had had a terrific riot. They felt that it could be prevented this way.

I have in my folder a letter from Juanita--I hadn't planned to use names--who was a terrific problem. Finally we knew that she was going to be committed to Ventura, but she was becoming increasingly interested in our club work. I talked to Mrs. Moede and I said, "You know, I'd like to try." (I was always wanting to experiment, and I said that I would like to experiment with Juanita.) "Can't you send her over with a message this afternoon? I'll just casually ask her to talk with me a little while, and see if I can't get her to go into court and ask to go to Ventura." I gave her a note and I said, "You know, the crowd over there disturbs you. You're like me; I have to have quiet. I'm going to give you a note, asking you to go into meditation overnight. You may have your books and your sewing and just be alone, and you may either tear up the note or give it to Mrs. Moede. I don't plan to do another

thing about it, other than to write the note saying that you would like to go into the meditation room." She went back alone, gave the note to Mrs. Moede, and went into meditation. Some of these things, as you look back, just seem amazing.

We had a number of talks after that: we talked about her future life, where she was in life, and what had happened. I would often draw a long line and say, "How many years do you think people live?" She would guess, eighty or sixty, then I'd chop off where she was. I'd say, "From birth until now, it's been pretty bumpy and pretty bad. The best help you are going to get is from yourself and within, really." Juanita went into court and asked to go to Ventura. I have a beautiful letter written by Juanita from Ventura about their activities. They were taken into the community on various programs. It sounded very happy. I didn't have too much real contact with Ventura.

SCHIPPERS: Did you have the same experience of boys being sent to either Whittier [State School for Boys] or Preston?

ACKERMAN: Yes, but not as much experience, I would say. The Whittier boys were on edge and were threatening and would attempt to run away. Many times we kept them much too long after their court commitment. There was this uncertainty. [We had to] ask a child to just sit in

Juvenile Hall and not have any idea when they awoke in the morning whether this would be the day. The state schools could keep them there until they wanted to admit them, or were able to admit them, but we had to keep them. They were disturbing to other children.

I have a letter from a boy at Whittier; he was our king--I showed you a picture--a little burglar. He invited me to his commencement (I think he called it "breakfast") given before he was leaving, and I went. He had stayed at Whittier, had had a fairly good record, I believe, but I had very little contact with Whittier.

I never saw Preston, but I heard one nice thing about Preston. We had an older boy, and he happened to be one I had spent quite a lot of time with before he went to Preston. As I say, I felt I knew nothing about it; they had told me it was a junior San Quentin; I don't know what it was. I told him when he went in, that wherever we went (whether we went into a T.B. sanitarium or a luxury hotel), we could either find the best or the worst. And it was up to us, so that while he was at Preston, I wished that he would try to think about the good things at Preston. I felt that he would have three good meals a day and so forth. Finally, he was, after quite a period, discharged from Preston. (It wasn't too unusual to have these youngsters come back to the Hall to see us; they just wandered in the

front door.) And here was this great big boy. Before I could say, "What could you find that was good about Preston?" guess what he said? He said, "Miss Ackerman, there was something wonderful." (He had been a very poor boy; he'd had a rough life, was hungry, and everything horrible that goes with poverty.) "They had pads on the benches in the dining room. I had never had that before. I used to go by furniture stores and see these chairs with pads." I hadn't thought of that before; at Juvenile Hall we had straight chairs, too, with no pads, and here was a thin boy who was able to sit down on a pad. That's the best thing I know about Preston. I know very little about the state schools.

SCHIPPERS: Did you have any contact with the administrators of any of the facilities outside of the one that you mentioned for Ventura?

ACKERMAN: I did have contact with El Retiro School for Girls, where the girls of normal intelligence or superior intelligence were taken. They went through a bumpy time. When I went there, they had a superintendent (a dedicated person) who really wanted to have a good school for girls, but oh, my, were they strict. I think that any girl in the community going out there would have found it a little difficult to adhere to the rules.

SCHIPPERS: About what year was this?

ACKERMAN: Oh, this was about 1929 or 1930. Later, they

changed administrators; I wish that I could remember the name of the woman who, I felt, made a great improvement in many ways in El Retiro.

We occasionally had contact in this way: we had two sports teams in the girls' department called the "Boons" and the "Pirates." (The girls, when they went to the department, could select their activity: drama, home arts, sports.) The "Boons" and the "Pirates" invited the El Retiro girls one Saturday to have a baseball game. We had refreshments, and we had pennants and all sorts of things. It was great fun because all these girls had previously been on the "Pirates" or the "Boons" team.

After the first administrator left, I think that there was improvement, although I do not believe that they were ever able to have the program that we had. The reason was that their housemothers lived in little cottages with the girls around the clock. Now how could they give as much as an employee coming in fresh at 2:30 who had been out in the community and away from the children [she cared for] and who would be [at her job] for just eight hours and concentrate on recreation? Although [the housemothers in El Retiro] had them over a longer period of time, they were handicapped, I think, by having the housemothers living in.

SCHIPPERS: What about some of the other facilities to

which the children were released? What did you know of them?

ACKERMAN: Again, I knew very little. I think that the superintendent of Pacific Lodge, especially, was trying very hard to do a good job. I believe that each person was [trying to do a good job.] [I know of] Strickland Home, and I had great respect for California Junior Republic. As I recall, we rarely had a boy return from there (CJR). There was another, the Optimist Club. (Is that correct?) I don't know about those institutions, but in each instance the little I heard from the superintendents themselves was [on the topic of] inadequate budgets on which I myself felt quite concerned. I have seven friends who at Christmas send cards with stickers from Boys Town. I think that Boys Town is a good institution, but they have millions pouring in. Here we have these small Protestant homes that are struggling to get another $2,000 or $3,000 a year. In almost each institution, I think, it was the inadequate budget that was partly responsible for [the type of] programs. In fact, our children (so many of them as I said) would come back. We had one retarded girl who went to Pacific Colony and tried to start a girls' club there.

It's tragic.

SCHIPPERS: Then there was no formal contact in the way of counsel or anything of that sort? Was there any kind

of influence exerted from any of the state boards as far as the detention facilities were concerned?

ACKERMAN: No, but I should go back to the El Retiro School regarding closer communication and contact. We did have a committee that met in the Probation Committee office in the Hall of Records. Before a girl was accepted at El Retiro, the psychiatrist and I appeared before this committee and gave the report (the psychiatrist's report they already had in writing), our verbal reports about whether we felt the girl would benefit by going to El Retiro and would fit in with the group. We were able to communicate in that way before any girl was sent to El Retiro, but regarding the state schools, I knew very little and had really no contact. I don't even know the names--I don't think I ever did--of people in charge of Preston.

SCHIPPERS: I would like to turn back to some specifics on your own advancement. I would like to know more about your becoming assistant superintendent, then your advancement to superintendent.

ACKERMAN: I had the privilege, as I said, of working under a brilliant executive, Katharin Ostrander. She, unfortunately, was her own worst enemy. She was brutally frank, and she finally did not have the cooperation and certainly not the love of her staff.

An incident occurred where a few Juvenile Hall

employees (not the best ones) were spying on her; she had bought a little property out in a canyon in Colton and she took fuel pipes and other no longer used equipment. It was just so stupid, really. AnyWay, she was given the chance to resign or to be placed in jail, which was pretty horrible. She came back from this hearing and was weeping; I had never seen her weep before.

Suddenly, I was the superintendent and the assistant superintendent but with no raise in salary at the time. I did get temporary help so that I could have a day and a half off. I was there around the clock but if conditions were quiet, I could have a day and a half off. An assistant came in for that period. They offered me the superintendency, and I was fearful; I didn't think that I had the capacity, and I was enjoying the job as assistant superintendent because my main responsibility was with the children and supervising their activities. I loved it; I loved the work I was doing. I had been in hospital administration about two years, of course, before I came to Juvenile Hall. Miss Ostrander had coached me on county procedures, and I felt quite familiar with the procedures. There was an excellent secretary there who knew all the county requirements and the red tape. I was called down to the Probation Committee and was urged to take the superintendency,

but I did decline.

Then a Civil Service examination was given, and Miss Lydia M. Blakeslee was appointed. She was there, I imagine, for two years. (I'm not too sure if it was a year and a half or two years.)*

Then, again, they asked if I would take the Civil Service examination, the promotional examination for superintendent, and I did. So it was easier, then, to take the responsibility [of the superintendency] and I did take the exam. It was an oral examination. I was given the position of superintendent in 1936, and Mrs. Grace Payne, who had been a matron in the early years and who was very level-headed and had a lot of just good common sense and judgment, became my assistant. We both lived in an apartment over the court, and I was there until my own resignation in 1943.

SCHIPPERS: You mentioned that there was quite a high turnover in the position prior to the time you came there. How could you explain that?

ACKERMAN: I couldn't explain it because I don't know the background, but from what I hear, it was just bedlam all the time. Riots and a great amount of destruc-

*Ed. note: Miss Lydia M. Blakeslee served as superintendent from April 18, 1932 to March 14, 1936.

tion. Dr. Miriam Van Waters mentions the rioting in her book, The Lady at Box 66. I think that people just couldn't take the tensions. They were probably fearful, too. It was just like many detention homes; there were threats of violence constantly; it's a pretty terrible thing.

SCHIPPERS: Violence from the. . .

ACKERMAN: Children. I don't know; I shouldn't say because I actually don't know, but there must have been a reason that they had fifteen superintendents in twenty years. The longest stay, I believe, was that of Dr. Van Waters. She became referee of court, and she was wonderful in that position, of course.

SCHIPPERS: Would any of this have been political pressure?

ACKERMAN: I doubt it. I felt very little political pressure; in fact, I didn't even think about it for years. I had the most wonderful cooperation from my board; my board was called the Probation Committee. We had an attorney; a professor in social work, Dr. [George B.] Mangold; a doctor; an educator, Miss Clark from the Board of Education. They represented just about everything that might affect children. I think that I had an excellent board, and I had a hundred percent cooperation.

SCHIPPERS: How often did you have conferences with the committee?

ACKERMAN: We met, regularly, once a month. I sent them my monthly report in advance so that they had it about three days before the meeting. Dr. Herman Covey sent his, too. He was the medical director and the head psychiatrist. We met with the board once a month, but there might be subcommittee meetings, for instance, on gardens or on a variety of things that might come up throughout the year.

SCHIPPERS: Did they give you direct advice on how to proceed in anything?

ACKERMAN: Very little, I would say.

SCHIPPERS: Did you have a relatively free hand in forming policy?

ACKERMAN: Oh, very, very.

SCHIPPERS: And making innovations. . .

ACKERMAN: Very. But you could only go as fast as your staff would go. In anything you do with children, I believe (certainly it was true at Juvenile Hall) that if you wanted the children to have more freedom, or if you wanted to do certain things that hadn't been done before but that you felt were wise, you had to win your staff first. You couldn't put your children in the place of knowing that you approve this and someone else doesn't, even on little things.

We were constantly trying to add a little color and beauty to the place, and our dining rooms became

quite colorful. When I went there, there was a white tablecloth put on each table in the morning, and you can imagine what it would look like at suppertime after eight or ten children had sat at each table. So we had all the tables painted bright colors. We had place mats for a long time and often flowers. In the girls' hospital dining room I had an exhibit, under glass. And the children took pride in this.

Well, I remember one incident. I had a big poster [near the exit], asking what the seven kinds of transportation were (I believe that was it). [The children were] to try to guess what they were as they left the hall. Under the poster I had a beautiful bowl that I had brought from Mexico, and I filled it with colorful gourds; I thought that that would be another little touch of color. Immediately, some of the doubters said to me, "Oh, you'd better take that bowl away. That will be taken; the gourds will be taken." "Well," I said, "if they're taken, that won't be too serious." I thought that they wouldn't be, but the very next morning, half of the gourds were gone. [laughter] Of course, I was in the doghouse. My darlings had disappointed me so I went to the honor boy in the hospital (I was pretty sure that some kids in the hospital had them and wouldn't know what to do with them), and I had a talk with him. I said, "You know, I have faith enough

to know that you're smart enough to know where they are, and by evening those gourds will be back in that bowl." And they were. [laughter] It's funny little things like that that would happen.

SCHIPPERS: To what degree, though, did you have liberty in establishing policy? Did any major decisions have to be approved by the committee?

ACKERMAN: Oh, definitely. For instance, I was reminded of the policy against corporal punishment many times the first year because, I think, they were not too sure that it was being followed. I was told repeatedly that even a slap was corporal punishment. They made policies like that. When I became interested in nutrition, I began sending our monthly menus down so that the committee and the county nutritionist could see them. But policies about discharging an employee would definitely have to pass the Probation Committee first.

Mrs. McManus gave me very good advice. I was having quite serious difficulty with one older woman who had been there a long time. I wrote a letter and sent Mrs. McManus a copy of the letter I had planned to give to this employee. The very next day she made an appointment and gave me very good advice. She said, "You know, in life, if you have something pleasant to say to someone, always write it. But if it is unpleasant, say it." I tore up the letter. I had quite good coun-

seling at times.

SCHIPPERS: Did you have any rules or regulations to adhere to?

ACKERMAN: No, except the first years, as I look back, I was so interested in the project that I wasn't off one weekend. (After my parents came out, my mother said to me one day, "Well, you have no social life; all you do is work." I hadn't thought of it before.) If things were quiet as assistant superintendent, I could leave Monday afternoon (leave the grounds about three o'clock) and be away until Tuesday evening. The rest of the time I was right there at the Hall. It wasn't considered safe for a year or two for me to go across the street to get a hamburger because there was this fear that there might be a riot, which, of course, was very silly. We did have trouble at times, and at that time things were not as calm as they were later, but I had no night supervisor for seven years. The first seven years that I was there, I had two free evenings a week and those were the only evenings that I could be away. Again, I didn't leave unless every department appeared calm, and I'd call in the next night to find out whether I'd better return. I can't imagine it today. After seven years they gave me a very good night supervisor, but during the entire time that I was there, I was on call after 11:00 or 11:30 at night. My

assistant and I were on call in case of emergency.

SCHIPPERS: What was your major problem as an administrator?

ACKERMAN: I think that my major problem was human relations among adults, the staff. Later when this movement appeared to enlarge the Hall, it was extremely disturbing to me because I felt that it wasn't what the children wanted or needed. I think that any school superintendent would agree that his greatest problems are with his teachers (as fine as many of them are), the human-relations balance, and adjustments and problems day by day with the adults. In fact, I regret very much that I didn't keep a diary, with adult problems on one side of the page and the children's problems on the other. There were days when I had to devote more time to adult situations. As I said, in anything we did, I had to sell my idea to my staff first, even my kitchen helpers; if I wanted to give an Easter morning breakfast, I definitely had to get their cooperation. They put in hours of what we call "overtime" today, and they didn't get a penny.

SCHIPPERS: Would you say that the inter-staff relationships were good?

ACKERMAN: I think that they were excellent until about 1941. A man and wife came on the staff and were eager for advancement. I did not feel that they were quali-

fied, and it got to be a situation. Another had quite a lot to do with the County Employees Association. After that, one nurse came in who was very abrupt and ugly to a Sunday visitor, and the director of nurses was afraid to talk to her about it. (I usually didn't get into nursing; the nursing supervisor handled things.) I did have a talk with that nurse, but she became very hostile, and I think that she started a little wave among the nurses.

I know that during the last year, my administration broke down, and I can't blame that on anyone but myself. My father was out here; he was senile and also mental at times, and he was in a small hotel. Just when things were breaking at the Hall, I would receive a call from the hotel, or (four times) from the Emergency Hospital that they had picked him up unconscious on the street. I was far from being a calm person, and I was head of this big institution with disturbed people. I began to feel (but not with everyone) for the first time that there was a little wave of unrest among my own employees. Later, I found that one was working very closely with the Probation Committee. (I didn't know this at the time.) And he was promoted. But I think part of it was my own family and personal problems.

SCHIPPERS: Although people took Civil Service exams in order to fill these positions, did you have a chance to

review and screen applicants?

ACKERMAN: Yes, the three who scored the highest came to see me in that order: the person highest on the list first, then the second, then third, and I always saw all three. I had the choice of any one of the three. Or, if they all turned it down (some would, because in many classifications they were required to take their turns working Saturdays, Sundays, holidays, or nights), quite often I'd get down on the list to the twelfth or the fourteenth person. Many, when they found that that was true, would prefer to go someplace else. Then our location was difficult; it was two or three blocks to the streetcar, and many people at the time did not have cars.

SCHIPPERS: Within these limitations, what qualities did you look for?

ACKERMAN: Well, it depended on the particular position. If it was someone in the kitchen, of course, we were very much interested to know how they appeared, if they appeared clean. I watched their eyes and their hands; hands tell so much. Then, similar to interviewing children, I tried to listen. Often an applicant talked himself out of a job. In my experience in interviewing many, many people for positions, the person who came in and was so cocksure that he could do the job (a good salesman to sell himself to you) could talk himself out

of a job. Then again, when I had some very timid, retiring person who wasn't sure of himself but seemed quite relaxed, the results were amazing. One of my best switchboard operators was sure that she could never do it, and she proved to be one of the best. I had to beg her almost on bended knees to at least try. Then hands tell a great deal. With our children, their clenched fists show that most of their lives they have been fighting. I'd see these tense, nervous, clenched fists. Mostly, I would say that the employees who, I felt, from my previous experience, were really interested in children [I would hire]. I would always try to warn them how challenging these children could be; to be with a large group of children for eight hours takes patience unlimited. There were many times when the easiest thing to do would be to give them a slap or to lock them up, but we did not approve of that. I had some marvelous employees. I wish that I could write a book about some of the people.

SCHIPPERS: I would like to ask you where you got your ideas for innovation. What kinds of materials did you read? Who gave you advice?

ACKERMAN: I got most of my ideas from the children. I had never thought of a birthday cupboard, and one day (a family of children had been in) this little boy walked by my office--it happened to have been my birth-

day and I had birthday cards, some very interesting ones--and he came in to tell me that it was his birthday and that he was going home in a day or two. I also happened to have one of those little Japanese puzzles that I had gotten down at Chinatown. I wished him a happy birthday and told him that I had a present for him, and that he could select one of my cards and I would write his name on it. He was simply thrilled to death. I hadn't even thought of it before that many of these children had birthdays while they were with us. About three days later, the entire family was going to be discharged, and they couldn't get his brother to dress because he was going to have a birthday in a week and he wouldn't get a birthday present [if he left]. Anyway, we started the birthday cupboard, and the idea was that each employee would bring a present on his or her birthday, to give to the children's birthday cupboard. We had so many birthdays that we didn't have enough gifts, but the Emerson School of Self Expression--I don't know whether it still exists or not--had an annual party and brought us gifts for the birthday cupboard. Oh, there are so many stories about the birthday cupboard. Many times children selected a gift for someone else. It was a privilege of having something to give. You could write a book on the birthday cupboard.

In desperation as Easter approached the first year,

every department was getting edgy, and I was there alone. I suddenly had an idea: Why don't we try to have an Easter parade? I got some of the older boys--oh, they were eager beavers--and we got laundry trucks, a hospital cart (we did all sorts of things), and each department decorated one of these for the Easter parade. They worked on it, and they immediately became different children. And we had our first Easter parade. Ever after that, Easter was a big occasion that took at least a month's preparation with every department entering into it. One time we had an Easter breakfast. The children were served the picnic supper the night before so that they could begin moving tables and chairs from seven dining rooms to the school auditorium. Imagine the work! It was wonderful that they were all working for the same thing. The older boys moved the tables and cleaned the silverware and the girls made the flower costumes. The girls gave the pageants, which were always in costumes. They loved it.

SCHIPPERS: Did you ever attend lectures or any courses?

ACKERMAN: I did attend with Dr. [Marion P.] Firor. She became my very closest friend. She was the assistant psychiatrist, and, as I said, the wife of O[liver] B. Johnston, who is with Disney. She gave me many books, and together we would often talk about individual children. For the most part, she approved of everything

I did. At times I would go to lectures with her. I attended this big conference in Pasadena of social workers on problems faced by youth in the community today. I think it was almost a week long, with social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists [and people from] this area.

SCHIPPERS: What year was this?

ACKERMAN: Oh, I'd have to check. It was about 1936 or 1937, perhaps. I went home, and I thought: why don't we have the children write on the same subject? Less than fifty percent cared about writing or could write at all, but I have all those letters telling what they thought was wrong, what the problems of youth were in the community. Many of their ideas were wiser than those of the specialists I heard speak. But I didn't have very much time off to attend many meetings or lectures.

We had speakers come to the Hall at times; they came to our staff meetings (I have a record of that); we had some very good speakers.

SCHIPPERS: What did they discuss? A wide variety of things?

ACKERMAN: They discussed the children and problems pertaining to children.

SCHIPPERS: Were you influenced by these book materials, by this council, and by the lectures?

ACKERMAN: Depending. Some definitely influenced me. Ruth Faison Shaw, who originated finger painting in this country (of course, it is an old art), came to the Hall. We had very satisfying experiences with our finger painting. The psychiatrist used it to tell a great deal about children; even the color of paint they selected and their design, I believe would [tell a great deal]. She came and talked to the psychiatrists and psychologists in the community whom we had invited to come to the Hall. She had folders on different types of misbehavior: the despondent child; the child with sex problems; and the nervous, disturbed child from too many adult pressures. That night I almost couldn't believe what she showed us because the same colors and the same type of design came out. We found that [the psychological matchings] were true. We had a program under Mrs. Helen Moede where the children were instructed on making designs. One year they made over a hundred finger painting designs, and we selected fifty to cover my annual reports.

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SCHIPPERS: Since our last visit, you have thought over some of your comments about transportation to Ventura and would like to correct it for the record.

ACKERMAN: Yes. Because the attitude of both our employees and the girls changed regarding placement in Ventura, I'm very proud to say that the policy was changed regarding transportation. Instead of the Sheriff's Office having to do this, it was changed so that the transportation of the girls became the responsibility of the Probation Department. Usually Mrs. Magnuson took the girls to Ventura. Occasionally a girl's probation officer transported her. Straps for restraints were no longer used.

SCHIPPERS: We also were discussing your reactions to some of the things you had read in my thesis on the California prison system. One of the things [that we discussed] was lock-up, and this set you to reminiscing about that at Juvenile Hall. I wish you would add that to the record.

ACKERMAN: We definitely found that the more children you took from the group and locked in rooms alone or in meditation rooms, the more you had to lock up because you were focusing everyone's attention on the one child

or the minority group who was misbehaving. So we tried and were quite successful, I think, in limiting, in decreasing the number of children taken from the groups and certainly decreasing the length of stay. We also gave them the opportunity to go out and work and have some freedom while the other children were in school.

SCHIPPERS: You said that you had found lock-up to be quite the mode of the day, so to speak, when you first went there.

ACKERMAN: Oh, yes. They had built the buildings with idealistic views, and I think that they were right in doing that. But I am sure that anyone who has had the responsibility of ever-changing, highly-emotional children has to face the facts; there are times when for the child's good, it is best for him to be alone for a while. When I went there, they did not have these meditation rooms; they were still using horrible cells in old buildings. These cells were without toilet facilities, and there was no one to supervise them except the night watchman, who walked through the area during the night. At times there was screaming, and [I remember] the emotions of the children. I remember one lad especially. He was about 14 years of age, and I was told that this boy could never come out of the cell because he was much too dangerous; he was jumping all over the cell just like a wild man. Of course, he had been in there for

days with nothing to read, and he had not been taken out. But we did find that by constantly focusing more and more attention on those who were making good--they were always the majority group--and by giving them the spotlight whenever we could, we certainly were able to decrease and finally did not use these rooms at all in the old building.

SCHIPPERS: You had previously made reference to a plan in some of your correspondence for segregating delinquent, dependent, and mentally-ill children, and court wards. To what degree were you able to do that during your administration?

ACKERMAN: When you review my annual reports, you will find that each year I was lamenting because the little folks were in Junior Cottage. At first the tiny tots who were there for venereal disease were in one wing of the hospital; we finally were able to transfer the tiny folks with venereal disease to Ruth Home in El Monte. But the other children in Junior Cottage did have their separate building outside the wall. Their playground faced Mission Road, and there was an iron fence around it. They had their own room in school, also their own dining room. But they still had a Juvenile Court record, and for many reasons it saddened me constantly. We loved these little folks, and they were a joy to work with because they had had so little.

These were the dependent children. This was where Marilyn Monroe was, for instance; she was a dependent child, never admitted because of delinquency. After I left, they finally built a new institution for them, and I was very happy when I learned that they were housed there. This was, I believe, 1954--eleven years after I left.

Regarding the other children, I definitely believe that it would be almost impossible to have enough segregation units. I think that we perhaps had more than any other detention home. We had a unit for sick girls and a unit for sick boys. We had a unit called the "Nightingales" for the older girls who had venereal disease. We had the girls' building, where so-called sex-delinquent girls (most of our teenage girls admitted were no longer virgins) were housed. Although they had separate rooms, we were constantly mindful of trying to protect each girl. You might have a homosexual, for instance. You might have a girl called a "sex delinquent" but who was truly in love with her boyfriend. She had never had an affair before, but she was now pregnant. They were in love, but because of society, she was too young to marry. Sometimes there wasn't enough money, or the parents disapproved. She was truly not, in my opinion, a prostitute. You also had girls who were in there for sex delinquency plus forging;

they would and could tell the girls how this was an easy way to make money. I was always amazed when I saw a young girl and found that she was there for forgery. (I realize the problem that I had going into a strange store to get a check cashed.) An amazing number had that particular weakness. Shoplifting, too, was quite common. Unless you kept them very busy--we certainly tried to do that--I think that there was danger, just as there is danger at times in a summer camp.

We may send a boy to a summer camp and pay a good price for him to go, and he may have a roommate who isn't a model child, shall we say. I think that it's rather an unsolved problem. I think that we did the very best that we could at the time.

We had three separate departments for boys: the six- to twelve-year-olds were in Company C; the twelve- to fifteen-year-olds in Company B; and all the boys over fifteen in Company A.

SCHIPPERS: What was the plan that you referred to in your correspondence towards the end of your administration? Do you recall? You seemed to have had something in mind for developing further a system of segregating these various classes of new commitments.

ACKERMAN: I cannot recall. There is one thing, however, [that I'd like to comment on] your material. So often I hear that there must be an institution for

first offenders. Now I don't quite agree with that. You can have a "first offender" as far as his admission to a correctional institution but who just didn't get caught earlier. He may have been in difficulty many more years and in more serious difficulty than a boy who is a repeater. I don't think that that should be exactly the yardstick for detention.

SCHIPPERS: We'll shift back to the influence of various visitors and so forth on the Hall. You mentioned a visitor who brought finger painting, which turned out to be a very therapeutic device. Were there more people who in some way influenced the course of development at the Hall?

ACKERMAN: When you receive my annual reports, you will find that one is covered with finger painting. The happy girls selected bright colors, and the very depressed girls always selected black. I chose one that was black. I think that you will be interested to see that the finger painting is beginning to show a relaxation; it's beginning to show a rhythm in her pattern and a relaxation. It proved to be a very therapeutic activity.

In speaking of the library, I neglected to say that Miss Knolte, who was head of the Children's Division of the library, visited Juvenile Hall several times a year, and at least once, and maybe more frequently, visited the

Girls Club. She would bring books with her, and among the books that she brought were books that had received awards that year. She would always thank them profusely for the excellent care that they were taking of the library. She helped, too, to select books to send to us.

I also had a delightful Russian woman, who was the author of a number of children's books; she also illustrated them. I still remember the night that she talked to our Girls Club. She began with a question, which was a good way to bridge herself to her audience. Her name was Miss [Grishina] Givago, and she spoke with an accent. She said, "How many girls in this room have ever seen an author?" Of course, not one girl had, so then she said, "I am an author. Now when anyone asks you that question, you may all raise your hands and say that you have seen an author." Then she proceeded to read one of her books. She gave me a copy of Peter-Pea, which was a delightful child's book. Oh! we had many speakers come; I don't recall all of them, but I remember one who spoke on the sculptor of the statue of Lincoln in Washington, D.C., and he told a story about the life of the sculptor.

At times we would try to focus attention on people who had been very poor or who were from minority races (who had lived to contribute). One--and I was reminded

of it last night--was Irving Berlin.

One of the first things that we did there, when I realized that we simply had to keep these children busier in some way, was to suggest that each department have a "good-night" song. We decided that "God Bless America" would be the song for the boys' department, and while they were there, they were to learn the words and sing this song before they went to bed. I made a point at first to go to each department and tell the boys about Irving Berlin. This man, I understood, was a very poor Jewish boy, so he had every strike against him. But all the money, all the royalties made from this song went to the Boy Scouts.

Oh, there were other people who came to the Hall and talked to the children. Chief of Police August Vollmer came. (Of course, you are familiar with that name.) To the children it didn't mean too much except that they were very excited to have a policeman there. He gave an excellent talk to the children. (In inviting speakers to the Hall, I had found that it was a little hazardous at times. The speaker was very nervous, and, in my opinion, they either spoke over the heads of the children or talked down to them.)

Well, Chief of Police Vollmer knew how to talk to youngsters in trouble. He decided that he would have a question-and-answer period. Finally, he called on

one boy from Pasadena. There had been some scandal in Pasadena concerning some prominent person, but I don't recall the person. Anyway, this boy asked, "Well, in spite of all that you say, I think that there are two kind of burglars; there's two kinds of crooks. There's the father (this was during the Depression days) who says to his family in the morning, he just says it right out, 'I'm going out today, and I'm going to get us some food. I'll have some tonight, and if I have to steal it, I'll steal it.' And he goes to jail. Then [the other kind], like that fellow in Pasadena, can sit in the back of a big desk, and steal lots and lots of money. He pays something they call 'bail' and he is out; he doesn't even go to jail." I wish that I had Vollmer's answer to that question; it was most interesting.

Dr. Marion Firor, who was assistant psychiatrist, was the one professional person who found time to come back at night and be in the audience when the children gave a program. The children appreciated this very much. She brought her beautiful Chinese Mandarin coats from the Orient, where [she and her husband] had lived for many years, for the girls to model. Several times she came to the Girls Club meetings and would always give a short talk.

I practiced public speaking, in which I hadn't ex-

celled, on the Girls Club. They had a thought for the week--and we could repeat the thought for the week because the children were changing--which they selected. It might be a prayer; it might be on courage, marriage, love; it could be on any subject. They would read a poem or two regarding this thought for the week, then different girls would be asked to give their thoughts on the subject. Again, I wish we had had tape recordings. Their thinking is so much more serious than we think it would be. But I asked purposely that they not tell me the thought for the week so that it was a challenge to see what I could do with the thought. And we tried to bring in, at times, people with new thoughts that might be helpful to the children.

SCHIPPERS: Was there any regular staff counseling? Did you bring in lecturers from the outside?

ACKERMAN: Yes, to an extent we did, but it was very difficult to get busy people to give their time. Dr. Marion Firor helped me with that, too, by suggesting names.

Then we had our staff meetings that helped bridge the gap between the professional new staff and the other employees. These meetings were well attended by cooks, psychiatrists, nurses, maids, counselors, night-watchmen; all classifications were represented. Most employees at the Hall had responsibility of supervising

children. When you were asking about screening them, I neglected to say that one of the first things I asked was, "Do you have children, or have you been around children? Do you enjoy children?" Even the humblest kitchen helper had to supervise the work of children.

SCHIPPERS: Did you bring in people from the outside to counsel the staff?

ACKERMAN: Oh, yes, we did, and the entire staff was invited to the staff meetings usually held once a month. That meant that the psychiatrist, the psychologist, the kitchen helper, the nightwatchman, everyone might come, but it wasn't compulsory that they come. Of course, they weren't always able to come, but I think that we had excellent attendance. And we always started on time.

SCHIPPERS: What was the content of these discussions?

ACKERMAN: Well, with Dr. H.E. Chamberlin, it was about that particular lecture [that he gave]. I still remember parts of it; it was enlightening and certainly true to the teenager. It was about the teenager, and what you can expect in almost any generation of the teenager. This difficult bridge leading from childhood to maturity is a threatening and an uncertain and often a painful time for children; he spoke about how they are usually misunderstood.

Dr. Miriam Van Waters also spoke. I can't remember

all the names of the speakers, but we did at times--not as frequently as I wish now--have speakers who had had experience with problem or normal children.

SCHIPPERS: Did you receive any outside institutional support, either from USC or young UCLA (at that time) or any church groups?

ACKERMAN: No, I had a disappointing time with the churches, I'm sorry to say. Members of the Church of the Open Door came and had Sunday School. Monsigneur O'Dwyer, who was simply marvelous, came and had Catholic Mass for the first few years, then he was promoted and another priest came.

We learned so much through the Easter program which, as I said, was the most therapeutic thing we did because the preparations took weeks. I sent invitations to different ministers, telling them that we were having this Easter morning breakfast. Of course, I realized that that was a challenge because in their own churches they had to have an Easter Service; so I really was asking quite a lot. I finally was able to get Dr. Willard O. Trueblood from Whittier. The breakfast was at 6:30, and he came and gave an excellent talk to our children.

This was stimulating to me, and I thought that maybe we could ask that the Council of Churches give thought to sending one minister a month. Now it's true

that there were children in the audience of low mentality who perhaps wouldn't be helped at all, but I constantly felt that we never knew the potential of many of our children. It might just be the words from that particular person [that would help the child]; if it would help three children or one child, it would be worthwhile. I wrote to the Council of Churches, and I waited weeks before I had an answer. I was finally told that the ministers were so very busy, and I could understand that they were. So then I decided to approach this on an individual basis.

I had heard that Dr. Richard Evans--and I had read a very complimentary report about his background--was coming to the First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood, and I wrote a letter to him. Although he had been in the city less than a month, he came and gave a wonderful talk to our children. Dr. Clarence H. Parlour from Glendale, an Episcopal minister who was on our board, came several times and gave short, excellent talks to the children. Also Dr. George Gleason, formerly with the YMCA in Japan, [came and spoke]. In the folder I have a letter from Dr. [Robert B.] Gooden, who was the bishop at St. Paul's Episcopal Church for many years and is ninety-four or ninety-five-years-old. I had sent him a letter, congratulating him on his birthday. And he wrote a most gracious letter, recalling so many

things that happened the day that he was at the Hall, things that I had forgotten. As the children left the auditorium--he recalls and I do, too--these older boys flocked around him; they were hungry to hear more. I can show you the copy of his hand-written letter that I received just a year or two ago. No one, no one realizes the painful quest most children with problems are experiencing. They are eager for help from an understanding person.

SCHIPPERS: What impresses me is that you went to the extent you did in really rehabilitational lines. Was this any part of your responsibility as far as it being written out in a job requirement, or was it something you yourself did?

ACKERMAN: That was the icing on the cake for me. Legally we were just there to hold the body of the child and to produce it alive at court. We were responsible for the well-being of the child or teenager; complete physical examinations were given to each child admitted, as well as psychological examinations, and reports were sent to the child's probation officer and to the Juvenile Court judge or referee. In addition there were behavior reports written by nurses and counselors, and I, too, often submitted reports. But my responsibility was administration. The Hall was a complex institution to administer; there were county procedures and a great

deal of red tape. I worked with a minimum of secretarial assistance, and practically everything I did with the children was done in what would be called "overtime" today, mostly in the evenings after my full office day. But it was very precious overtime.

SCHIPPERS: In developing your attitudes, you mentioned that you had the help of a psychiatrist. You also did some reading. Were you influenced in any way by developments in detention facilities elsewhere that came by way of reading matter or through journals?

ACKERMAN: Someone had told me that there was a man in Detroit, working with the detention home there and showing the children that everything in life had a price tag, and that he had been very successful in working with these problem children. On a trip to the Midwest, I wrote to have an appointment and met him. I was very impressed with the good common sense that he was using because any child can understand a price tag. We all pay a price tag; even for friendship we pay a price tag. Through him, I was able to have an appointment and go through the detention home. I could have wept; I thought it was perfectly terrible.

Now anyone will tell you (and you will hear this later) that during the fourteen-year period I was at the Hall, the children were different, less dangerous, etc., than they were in any other institution, or dif-

ferent than they are today. Visitors from other correctional schools went through the Hall and saw the large groups playing in the playgrounds with one counselor, or the large groups in their departments or in the dining rooms. There was one counselor and usually everything was perfectly happy. Of course, we never knew; something could explode just like that. But we certainly had a very calm life most of the time. The visitors would always say, "Well, you have different children." We had visitors from San Diego Detention Home and from as close as Santa Barbara. They would say, "Well, we couldn't do that; we have more difficult children."

Just yesterday I was with a nurse employee at the Hall for many years. She came in very late upon the picture of my administration, but she told me very seriously yesterday, "Well, after you left, the type of children changed entirely." And I said, "I just checked my records, and we had 1,690 boys over sixteen in three-year periods." She said, "Oh, yes, but now there are serious charges like burglary and holdup with a gun." And I said, "Well, look at our statistics; we admitted from one to four children a year for murder, as I recall." When I was in Detroit, I commented very little about what we were trying to do in Juvenile Hall. They had bunk beds so close together there that there

was practically no aisle space. You could feel the tension when you went into the room. They each had a tin plate and a tin cup. I didn't see any silver. I found it very discouraging and very sad.

SCHIPPERS: Was that the only other detention facility you visited?

ACKERMAN: We visited San Diego. That was, I think, the only other place until I visited the correctional school in Pittsburgh at Morganza [School for Girls]. That was a state school. Mr. Kenyon Scudder can tell you about conditions there. The night before I went to make a survey, nine girls were placed in a dungeon.

SCHIPPERS: Did any of the groups visiting you take any of the ideas away with them?

ACKERMAN: The ones who took the greatest amount of notes and asked for the most literature were the four men who came from Japan. I gave a great deal of time to them because I was pleased that they were so interested, and I was feeling so sorry for them because they were taking so many notes. I think that one man was head of the state school, the so-called reformatory, and the others were either on the board or from that institution. I had the strange idea that they probably had just nothing in Japan. Well, the head was most gracious after they left and when they returned to Japan, he sent me pictures of this beautiful institution. They

were working with animals, sloyd, art and printing; they had a beautiful set-up. (I had no idea. But they were interested in what we were doing.) They had the children over a longer period of time, and they evidently were interested in the detention home program.

Some of the other visitors would just go through casually and say, "Well, the children we have are much tougher; they are much more difficult, I can see, than the children you have."

SCHIPPERS: Do you know if any of the ideas were employed in any way at any other institutions?

ACKERMAN: No, I don't know; I have no idea. I told you that one of the retarded girls tried to start a girls club in Pacific Colony.

SCHIPPERS: But would you say that the Hall had a reputation for being something special and that this attracted visitors?

ACKERMAN: I would definitely say so because we gave a great deal of time to visitors. Between 1936 and 1940, for example, we were visited by Constance Duncan from Australia, Dolores P. Alonso from Nicaragua, Fumi Asazama from Japan, James Heedle from England, Y. Shuimidzu from China, and many others. We also had visits from many people prominent in this country; among them were Margaret Sanger, Judge Ben Lindsey, John Clark Eichelburger, and Annie Goodrich. We also had large groups

from the University of Southern California come. Usually Helene Powner [Mann] or Dr. Firor and I would give talks.

One time an amusing but upsetting thing happened. We were telling them that we were so proud of our program and so proud to have them see the activities. Helene Powner [Mann] had just told them that we rarely had a runaway. This was just after school, and we had a relief counselor with the older boys. And right in front of this group of people, this boy dashed from the line to get over the wall near the kitchen. (There was a place where they could get over.) So strange things would happen at times.

SCHIPPERS: What universities visited?

ACKERMAN: USC, I remember mostly. Of course UCLA wasn't here at the time, I believe.

SCHIPPERS: (Well, it was very small; it was on the Vermont campus. I'm sure that they wouldn't offer anything.) What kind of classes were they?

ACKERMAN: They were usually classes in sociology. And then we had the Junior League. The Junior League, I learned about later when I went to Children's Hospital, where they have an outstanding volunteer program. Groups from the Junior League would come to visit; they were very interested and helpful. But most of our students were from USC. It became a routine thing, I think, with

some professors, to include a tour of the Hall and a talk. And we had many PTA groups. Also large teachers' institutes were held at the Hall. The children always gave a program with costumes.

SCHIPPERS: Was there any direct cooperation between USC and the Hall?

ACKERMAN: The only cooperation that I recall was with the psychology department. We later had student psychologists working there under Dr. Helene Powner (now Mrs. Cecil Mann). We had some recreational directors who, I believe, at times did a little volunteer work. This was not too successful because the planning and orientation had not been adequate.

SCHIPPERS: Tell me about the PTA groups.

ACKERMAN: We had many, many PTA groups. Their visits were scheduled. And because time was of the essence, I finally tried to see if I couldn't combine groups. My time was so limited, and my entire morning or afternoon would practically be gone [with these visits]. I might stay on duty, but I'd be without secretarial help and quite helpless to accomplish anything. But I was never able to get the USC professors and the PTA to agree on the time, so they came separately.

SCHIPPERS: What was their purpose in coming?

ACKERMAN: I think that they were just interested in what was happening in the community.

I had an unexpected surprise. I went to a PTA meeting at a very large school. (I don't know the area; it seems to me that it was south and west of the Hall.) And this was a large meeting. I had learned to tell officers that if they wanted me to give a short talk regarding the Hall, I requested that I give the talk first and they have the meeting after. (Again, it was too time-consuming to sit through the Ways and Means Committee report and all the different reports.) I was introduced to the officers, and among them was a very attractive young woman who was the secretary. I gave my talk, and the president announced that I would leave. I started down this long hall, and I heard very rapid footsteps behind me and finally a voice calling, "Miss Ackerman, Miss Ackerman." I was walking rapidly, too. I didn't know the girl, but she introduced herself; she had been a girl at Juvenile Hall and was now secretary for the PTA. And, of course, she was fearful in the meeting that I would recognize her. It surprised me so, that I tried to recall quickly what I had said. Had I known that a former child was in the audience, I might have been a little more guarded in my comments. However, she seemed happy about it all, so I hoped it was all right. She had been president of our Girls Club and had been helped by our Saturday evening self-evaluation councils.

SCHIPPERS: What was the content, usually, of your talks?

ACKERMAN: Usually, I talked on just the procedure of the agencies in admitting children to the Hall, very briefly our program at the Hall, then the plans for children when they left. Usually, because I enjoyed it, I'd have a story or two that I liked to share with someone.

SCHIPPERS: Did you have any contact with the Community Coordinating Council?

ACKERMAN: I had very little contact except that I happened to have been at the very first meeting. And it sounded very interesting to me. Mrs. Elizabeth McManus was very interested, and she was at that meeting. And Kenyon Scudder was there. The thought that the heads of all agencies having contact with children would coordinate their efforts seemed like a very sound one to me. But after the Council was functioning, I had very little contact. The Probation Committee or recognized social agencies did the case work so we were quite cut off.

SCHIPPERS: Then you did not get very much into the area of delinquency prevention work?

ACKERMAN: Not at all, except in talks. In talks I certainly was very vocal about it. Very early, from 1937 on, there were these plans for a larger detention home. And I became more and more convinced that larger deten-

tion homes and more money poured into detention homes could never be the answer. [A detention home] is based on a temporary plan. [Pouring money into a detention home] can be a harmful thing, really.

SCHIPPERS: I'd like to pursue a little bit more about the groups that visited. Did they, in any way, do substantial things for the Hall?

ACKERMAN: Not as much as one might hope. We always told them about the birthday cupboard, which was very meaningful to the children. Many of the children had never had their birthdays remembered. But most of all, I think that it meant that a child had the honor of coming to the superintendent's office. They considered that quite an honor. And if the counselors thought it was wise, they would permit them to come alone. As a rule, an honor child brought them over.

But we were constantly requesting gifts for the birthday cupboard. I saw such a contrast when I went to Children's Hospital because people will empty their pockets when they see a child in a cast or a child after surgery. But a child who needs help in an emotional way is labeled a "bad" child, and [the visitors are] not interested in them. We had just thousands of dollars worth of gifts given to us at Children's Hospital, but we had a difficult time keeping enough presents for our birthday cupboard.

The Emerson School of Self Expression in Hollywood gave a party once a year. They were a small group, and they brought presents to us for the birthday cupboard. I think that they did nobly. The Ephebian Society gave Christmas gifts to us. They were honor students, I believe, in the high schools, and it was their annual Christmas project. Again, we changed something. They had previously brought a program to us. I had contact with the president, and I said, "I hope that you will understand. I would like very much for the children to have a program for you so that they feel that they are giving something." While I was there, programs were not brought in, but the children gave very beautiful Christmas programs.

SCHIPPERS: Could you tell me if the children reacted in any way to these visiting groups? Did they find them negative?

ACKERMAN: Yes and no. As you know, a Juvenile Court session is supposed to be absolutely private, but there were a few organizations who could get permission for one to four people to sit in Juvenile Court hearings. At times there was resentment by the parents. (Just one referee, as I recall, did this.) And at times there was resentment from the children because they'd see this stranger whom they had never seen before. The parents and children didn't know that they could request

a private hearing, and they did not know that they had the privilege of asking for the room to be cleared. That was legally their privilege, but these tragic parents didn't know that. So they had to share all this horrible information with other people. It didn't happen frequently but, in my opinion, it happened too often. As far as visitors going through the grounds is concerned, many of the children loved it; it was something exciting to have a lot of people come in, and they didn't seem to mind at all.

SCHIPPERS: Were there any formal inspections by any groups?

ACKERMAN: The Grand Jury bounced in and out at times throughout the year. They came unannounced, which was just fine, and they always seemed very happy when they left. We had inspection by sanitation officers in our kitchens and so forth. Then our own Probation Committee (different members) at times would come. Aside from that, Judge [Robert H.] Scott, when he was the Juvenile Court judge, had many luncheons there. He usually brought ten or eleven judges for luncheon, and he always seemed very proud to have them see the Hall.

During the polio epidemic, Dr. Stevenson, who was a marvelous person, was there every day examining children and so forth. It was a horrible polio epidemic; many of the doctors and nurses in General Hospital as

well as patients were crippled. We had one nurse crippled and, I believe, one or two children.

SCHIPPERS: What was your relationship to, for instance, Judge Scott and some of these others? What kind of contact did you have with them, outside of these visits?

ACKERMAN: There was no planned contact. Judge Scott (or the other Juvenile Court judges) and the heads of probation, including Mr. Kenyon J. Scudder and Mr. [Karl] Holton, frequently brought their visitors to the Hall often for a meal, and they seemed very proud to bring the visitors over. But there was no planned contact with the court or with probation.

SCHIPPERS: Did you discuss the Hall, though, with them on these occasions?

ACKERMAN: Oh, yes, and I would discuss the Hall over the phone. I had phone conversations at times about problems, but I recall one problem that remained unsolved with the court. And do you know what that was? The court faced Eastlake, and there was a small garden in front of the court. It so happened that the County Forestry Department and the Juvenile Court worked the same hours, and the lawnmower was very disturbing to the court. I would get these calls that the employee must stop mowing the lawn immediately because he was disturbing the court. Then I would call the head of the Forestry Department, and he would say, "Well, that's

the only time [he can work], and you do not have authority over that employee. He is to cut the lawn." Certain times of the year we just went around and around on these petty little time-consuming things that were never solved.

SCHIPPERS: What, ordinarily, would be the nature of your exchange with the Juvenile Court people or Probation Department? What would be the nature of the discussion?

ACKERMAN: With the Probation Department, it was usually very friendly. We always invited probation officers over when we were having some big event so that some of the probation officers might see some of their children in some of these various activities. I also had rather painful conversations with some of the probation officers because there were at times children, as I said, who had been committed by the Juvenile Court, who were ready for placement, yet for some very small reason, they were still at the Hall. And I was constantly and seriously trying to reduce our census. I felt that the children should be back in school or at their placement. And with some officers we had a problem. Finally, I believe, it was through Mr. Holton that they appointed Mr. Schapps to be the detention director, to be the "policeman". When court orders were made, he would check with the hospital to see if the child was physically well. And if the court order had been made for

that child to be placed, then he was the "police officer" to contact the probation officer and get that child out of Juvenile Hall. It proved very helpful. Again, a few probation officers came to activities, and a few came and gave programs for the children. There were occasional times when I felt that it was wise to transfer a child back to jail. Then I would, of course, have to call the chief probation officer who would contact the judge and have the child transferred to jail (if he was definitely beyond our control and was harming other children).

SCHIPPERS: And you had the authority to made that decision?

ACKERMAN: I had the authority under my board to do that. But it was up to the probation department or the judge whether it would be done. Usually, they cooperated.

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SCHIPPERS: Since yesterday's interview, you have reviewed in your own mind a little bit about the responsibilities of your administration; perhaps one of the most important was that of finances, or the budget.

ACKERMAN: I had the real responsibility of the budget, and I felt very definitely--and I think that the Probation Committee encouraged me here--that we should try to live within our budget and, if possible, to reduce it. There had been criticism in the community that so much money had been wasted on these beautiful buildings, and the Probation Committee was on the spot about throwing county money away for these girls and boys who were [considered to be] "bad girls and boys." So the committee impressed me with this thought. And I think that the one mistake that I did make was trying to reduce the budget. I took it so seriously; in one of my annual reports, you will see how we reduced expenses in many items over a five-year period. Briefly, the county budget was divided into three sections: there was a salary section, the utilities and supply section, and the capital outlay section. After I had worked on my budget with my bookkeeper, I first appeared before the Probation Committee. If, for in-

stance, I was asking for a new item, another employee, [I appeared before the committee]. (I asked for a night supervisor for seven years before we had this item granted. During this seven-year period, I was free to leave the Hall two nights a week. It was the reluctance of the committee to spend more money.) So the Probation Committee would approve this budget by comparing it with the budget of the previous year. Then the county people would send us help on our budget in that they would predict that in the coming year there would probably be a five percent increase in salary; then we would figure the salary budget with an increase. If they felt that commodities were going to increase, they might give suggestions along this line. But our challenge was that we had no way of knowing whether our census would drop dramatically, or whether it would increase. Regardless of what our budget was, as I said, there were three steps in presenting it: first, to my Probation Committee; second, to the Bureau of Efficiency; and finally, to the Board of Supervisors. Taxpayers were always at these meetings and could ask questions about your budget. Every county department head did this. And then the budget was finally approved. It was then my budget, but I was given strict instructions by the county that in each area I must live within my quarter. Although I might have wanted

to get certain things or have certain expenses higher in the beginning of the year, I was definitely required to live within the quarters.

While they were understanding at times, at times they were very difficult. For instance, when I went there, as I recall, there was no item of play material or recreational material. They asked, "Well, why do you need it? These are bad children, and all you have to do is keep them two weeks or three until they go to court." I finally was able to convince them that a little more money could be spent for baseball bats; we never were really allowed to buy toys, but they were given to us. But even with recreational supplies, it was very limited what we could buy. However, this particular thing, I think, proved to benefit the children. I had been reared in a very thrifty German home, where we used everything that could be used. So with our counselors and our recreational directors, I tried to instill this thought that the children were going, for the most part, into very poor homes, and if we could teach them to make something out of nothing, there would be a great satisfaction in doing it. We would be helping the children. So I began begging from everybody: stationery stores, some of our big shops, and a winery. The good Catholic [at the winery] was very helpful. He gave me this beautiful gold paper

that was left after they had cut their labels for the liquor bottles. This gold paper was a godsend. It became a cover for our cross, the gold crown for the king on coronation, the links of gold chains, all types of things. But we did, for the most part, use waste material in our recreation program.

SCHIPPERS: Now you said just offhand--I don't know whether you had a record or not--that your biggest mistake was trying to save money for the county.

ACKERMAN: Oh, definitely. I felt so sincerely about it, too. It was a dual responsibility regarding finances at Juvenile Hall. And I instilled this thought in my secretary until I realized that she was really so overworked. I felt, first of all, that we were spending taxpayers' money, and I felt that that was a terrific responsibility. Secondly, I was so naive that I really thought that whatever money we could save could be placed into a program of prevention in the community and rehabilitation. I was constantly chanting to everyone that these were the needs. In the records on the annual reports, you will find that we returned $9,000 one year, at times $10,000 or $11,000 to the General Fund. But as I look back, we could have improved our program had I been more courageous and more demanding, especially of more employees.

SCHIPPERS: Yesterday we were discussing your relation-

ship with the other county agencies. Are there any besides the Probation Department and the Juvenile Court itself that directly affected you in your operation?
ACKERMAN: Yes, thanks to Mr. John [Anson] Ford, who was supervisor at the time. He, by the way, was very interested in the Hall and made many visits there; he came to many of our programs. I didn't agree with him--and it's on record--in enlarging the Hall. But he was very much interested. Once a month he had breakfast at a different county institution. (I think that he had five or ten under his supervision; they each have so many, as I understand it.) So we went to Olive View Sanitarium and had breakfast. We went to the Los Angeles County Museum and had breakfast. The department heads came to Juvenile Hall. Also under his supervision were the pound, the library, and Rancho Los Amigos. Now this is the cooperation we received: of course, I told you previously about the helpfulness of the Los Angeles Library; we were able to get statues that are still, I believe, in back of the hospital, and several things of interest were brought to us from the museum. [These were from] the children's section of the library and the museum. We visited Rancho Los Amigos which was at that time the so-called poor farm, [but it was] very deluxe, I would say. I don't recall others.

SCHIPPERS: I again would like to pursue a little bit more on the question of your relations with the Probation Department. What individuals did you have specific contact with?

ACKERMAN: [I had contact] with Mr. Scudder and, as I said, we saw eye to eye. I had quite a lot of contact with Karl Holton before he became chief probation officer. When I went to the Hall, he was a probation officer, and he was, in my opinion, an excellent one. And I recall that he did this to demonstrate the type of probation officer he was. We had a boy in the Hall, I recall, with a rather serious charge. While he was at the Hall, we had the rewarding experience of suddenly feeling that we had penetrated into the heart of that child, and that for the first time he was desiring a different type of life. And we sensed it. Very seldom were we wrong. Well, we had worked with this boy. All right, he was committed to Whittier State School, and I contacted all the counselors (around the clock) and the schoolteachers. [I also had] my own observations and talks with this lad. I called Mr. Holton on the phone and, I believe, I wrote a letter, which is probably in his folder, saying that (I tried not to interfere with court placements because case work was not my task, but Mr. Holton was very patient) I wished so much that this boy would be given an oppor-

tunity on probation. I felt that he was one who had been helped. At first, Mr. Holton was hesitant because there were serious charges [against the boy], and finally he laughed and gave in. He said, "Well, I guess you win. But if you get him back in a few months, just remember we tried." Fortunately, the boy did not return. After Mr. Holton became chief probation officer, he was helpful, quite helpful at first. But I saw less and less of him as the years went on. I think he became more and more involved in community activities, in Youth Authority, and so forth. With individual probation officers, I had very close contact with many.

SCHIPPERS: And what was the nature of your exchange with them?

ACKERMAN: Again, I think, I was treading into an area that was not my area; quite often it was regarding recommendations about the children's future. I had become quite interested in that. And then quite often we would invite officers to attend, for example, the Easter program or a coronation or pageant the children were giving.

Then as I reviewed yesterday, I think that I was on this committee with El Retiro to give advice on placement for girls. Other than that, I don't recall at this time that I had a close contact. I had a very, very friendly relationship for years.

SCHIPPERS: With Mr. Scudder?

ACKERMAN: With Mr. Scudder especially, and during the early years, I would say, for the most part with Mr. Holton. Whenever out-of-town visitors came, Mr. Holton or Judge Scott would bring them for a meal. And they always expressed their delight with what they found so that I think for the most part they were pleased. Juvenile Hall became a showplace for Juvenile Court and the Probation Department.

SCHIPPERS: And Mr. Scudder was, of course, responsible for a much larger area. But did he, in any way, give advice regarding the Hall that you recall?

ACKERMAN: I recall just one instance. I don't remember the details, but we were going through one of those problem times with a group of older boys; these would bob up from time to time. We were constantly admitting new children, and he happened to come to the Hall with a photographer to get pictures. I don't recall why he was using them--I wish that I knew where they were--he took beautiful pictures of our buildings. And since he was there and since I was bothered and disturbed and puzzled about this particular problem (with, say, a group of four or five boys in the hospital where they were at the time), I invited him into my office. And together we talked over this particular problem. It was sort of an incidental meeting, but he was most helpful and, as I said, a staunch and loyal supporter

of everything that we did.

SCHIPPERS: Now you did see eye to eye on the idea of prevention rather than incarceration?

ACKERMAN: Yes, I have letters. Would you want the letters? I don't want to throw them away.

SCHIPPERS: Yes, I have some in the files. We certainly would like to complete that. We have some of his things; he promised some of the others, and your letters would make a much more complete record. When did you get most directly involved in anything along this line with him? Was this more at the time that you had gotten into your contest about the expansion of the Hall?

ACKERMAN: No, he was no longer there. And I had no contact with Mr. Scudder for a number of years until he invited me to the dedication of the [California Institution for Men] at Chino. Then several years after that, I visited there and, of course, was thrilled with everything I saw. The last time that I visited there, he and his wife were a cordial, gracious host and hostess at luncheon, and we reviewed the years we had spent together in this work.

SCHIPPERS: Now I would like to ask a little bit about the origin of the Girls Club. I have quite a complete account of that from Mrs. Moede, but I would like to hear from you about the genesis of that.

ACKERMAN: I think that I told you yesterday of this

unhappy experience on Sunday night when I was so puzzled and hurriedly went to my apartment. I received word that there was trouble brewing in the girls' department, to send the night watchman to stay with the building because all these dreadful things were going to happen. And I went over. (We had no Girls Club at the time or no planned Sunday night program.) Stepping into the room, I immediately knew that everyone was on edge. I quietly had Mrs. Moede come to the desk, and I asked her who were the girls involved and how many. She surprised me by saying there were four or five. Since there was a total of about thirty-two girls in the department, this meant that just a few were really planning trouble. Through the grapevine report I had received it sounded as though the entire group were about to riot. I asked Mrs. Moede to quickly point out her three or four strongest, most trustworthy girls and the leader of the troublemakers. I entered the living room and calmly announced that I loved parties, then picking out three strong, helpful girls and the leader of the potential troublemakers, I invited them to the apartment I shared with Miss Ostrander, who was away for the weekend. We raided Miss Ostrander's closet and mine and returned to the department with about eight evening gowns. Each of these girls were then invited to select two girls to be in the style show, and they

would take names of movie stars. Well, I found it helped. So my thought was: "Well, hereafter on Sunday night, it might be a wise idea to try to prepare for a program." But I had no thought of a girls' club, nor did I really think it could function because of changing girls and girls of all mentality from very low to very superior.

I would like to say that when Mrs. Moede approached me about this, I was not enthusiastic and [did not immediately] approve. I realized that I had to evaluate. I could only move as rapidly as my employees would move with me. And I didn't feel at the time that I was too secure with the other three employees in this department. So I told Mrs. Moede that I would give thought to it. There was such hostility at the time to her; there was an insecurity by these older people who had not had college work. She was a college graduate. And I realized suddenly, too, that I hadn't been quite fair with them. They, too, needed a place in the sun. The morning counselor, Mrs. Louise Stoft, I later found had a great deal to give to a group of girls. She had the know-how of housekeeping, and most of our children would have housekeeping tasks in their lives. She was very firm and could be a little sharp at times, but she was fair. Then I found that Mrs. Douglas, the night watch, was really quite a brilliant woman. We

not only won her over, but she worked for the club; for years she was the reporter. The children were not allowed newspapers so she gave a weekly report. She was very clever about, I remember, her write-up of the Dionne quintuplets, for instance. And they would have the make-believe microphone for interviews. After I had spent some time (as I could get the time) with these two people, I felt that we'd give this a trial. We didn't say that we were going to have it, but we would just try it for maybe three or four weeks. Finally, I went to Mrs. Moede and told her that I'd be backing her a hundred percent, and that I had talked with the co-workers. I was so concerned, but Mrs. Moede was a very courageous woman.

There had been so many complaints that she couldn't handle the girls. She had a facial scar (I don't know whether you recall or not), and the grapevine story began that she had been in a correctional institution, worked in one, and had been injured; that scar was from this injury. There was no truth in it. But the thought was that because she was gentle and quiet, she could not handle these girls. It was so serious that I had given very serious thought to transferring her to the department where the younger girls were. I even talked to her about this. She said, "Oh, no." She was very eager to stay. And, of course, I would have made the

most serious mistake I could have made had I transferred her. So she did launch the Girls Club, and as you see, it functioned around the clock. I think that the mistake that many correctional institutions have made or that they make is this: they think that they'll have a community sing or they'll take them to the beach or they'll do one or two things. But there are twenty-four hours in a day, and we have to have something that coordinates their every minute. And our Girls Club did that. Their behavior on their work program, in school, in Sunday school, in court, in every area, was linked with this evaluation of their own behavior on Saturday night.

SCHIPPERS: How much did you have to do with the evolution of the club?

ACKERMAN: Oh, I suggested little ideas. For instance, having been with normal girls previously, I thought that all young girls were interested in beauty. So I suggested that we have as a theme "loveliness," and I did write the short club prayer on loveliness. And I did suggest Sara Teasdale's poem ["Barter"],which was memorized each week: "Life has loveliness to sell, All beautiful and splendid things. . ." The Girls Club prayer was simply: "Dear Father of all loveliness, help us each to strive toward that which is beautiful in thought, in word, and in deed. Strengthen us this

day, guide us this day. Amen." Now I feel that there are many girls--I hope there are--who are still saying this prayer. They can't go wrong if they abide by loveliness.

SCHIPPERS: But primarily the club was. . .

ACKERMAN: Mrs. Moede's idea. The organization was hers; everything about it was hers. I suggested ideas for pageants and wrote a couple.

SCHIPPERS: And this idea spread to the other units?

ACKERMAN: It did spread to Junior Cottage and to our younger boys for a very, very short time in Company B; we couldn't get leadership which was inspired and patient enough. And there was greater turnover in the afternoon counselors in the boys' department. In the older boys' department, we had at times a club and again because of leadership, it didn't function continuously.

Mr. [Joe] Hirleman, on Sunday nights, had an excellent debating team, and sometimes they would debate something quite serious. He would allow the boys to select what they would debate. One time, I remember, they debated: "Is it wise to be a burglar?" And there was the negative and the positive side, but sometimes they would take quite serious subjects. But as a continuous club, [it functioned with] the little folks in Junior Cottage and the younger boys under Mrs. Arian Hunter. She did an outstanding job. She was responsi-

ble for our coronation, for the play, "Snow White," for the circus, for many things. The circus, for instance, involved all the children. The older boys worked on these animals for weeks before the event. The circus was given seven times; each time about 57 youngsters were in animal costumes.

SCHIPPERS: Did the club organization receive any special attention from anybody on the outside?

ACKERMAN: We invited people to come to the club meetings and, as I said, on Sunday nights people working five days a week aren't too interested. I'm amazed now that we were able to get as many as we did. Dr. Firor came several times. My own parents came twice when they visited, and the children gave a special program for them. They were touched, very deeply touched. A number of probation officers came. And then as I met interesting people through Altrusa International, I would invite at times some of these people to come and give a short talk. And, as I said, we did have the head of the Children's Library and various other people, but it wasn't too easy to get people to come way across town; the Hall was in a miserable neighborhood so we didn't have visitors too often. But it was a great joy to the children when they did.

SCHIPPERS: The whole club idea was quite an innovation. Do you know if anyone in any way tried to imitate or

reduplicate it outside of the little girl you mentioned?

ACKERMAN: Not to my knowledge. The average detention home--in my opinion from the little I have heard or seen--felt that these children are here for a comparatively short time. [The detention homes thought] just as I had thought when Mrs. Moede mentioned the idea, "Well, how can we have a girls' club and have a president preside, have a secretary, and then have a program?" It just seemed that we were defeated before we started. But Mrs. Moede was a very valiant soul, and she was determined that we were going to do this.

My Sundays were very full days. I was in charge of the office in the morning and any problems that might arise. And I relieved the operator at the switchboard at noon to save money for the county, then in the afternoon I had charge of all the visiting with no other employee, just the honor boys who indeed proved to be honor boys; I never had them disappoint me. Then on Sunday nights I went to the club meetings in the three departments. So the Sundays were busy, but I feel that it was all very worthwhile.

SCHIPPERS: You have mentioned now Mrs. Moede and some of the others by name. Why don't you talk about some of the contributions of the rest of your staff?

ACKERMAN: I just can think of one thing regarding Mrs. Moede. I think that she has given copies of the

cottage reports to you; these were written by various children; we encouraged them to elaborate on the unfortunate things that happened that day. But you'd be surprised at how many days were happy days.

However, I do recall after Sunday visiting, that a number of times Mrs. Moede would call me and say, "Well, I know that you're coming to the club, but don't expect too much tonight. All the girls who were promising as presidents or leaders have been released, and oh, the girls we're working with now. This will be a sad occasion. But we'll try to have the club meeting." And they did; it's surprising how children will rise to the occasion.

Now, trying to give thought to the people who made contributions, this is very difficult to do. I'm afraid that it would be unfair because so many people made small contributions and in working with children, I would like to stress how very important little things could be, far more important than anyone realizes. If I were to finish the manuscript I'm hoping to write, I should like to dedicate it to Dr. Marion Firor, our assistant psychiatrist who was later head of the Child Guidance Clinic, for her help in theory, her friendship, and her beliefs in what I was trying to do. And I should also like to dedicate it to Mr. John Bremer, this older man who was counselor and who had been a school-

teacher. His judgment was so excellent on the wise policies, when we were dealing with disturbed youngsters. I might name the people that I recall who wished to work on weekends and holidays because I think that that indicates their sincere interest in problem children. My secretary planned a schedule, and she knew that the following people wished to be there with the children the night before and the night of the holidays: they were Mrs. Helen Moede and her excellent assistant, Susan Kelso; Mrs. Arian Hunter, who was in charge of the younger boys and did such an outstanding job with the Little Mens' Club; Mother Neel, this devout Catholic woman who was first a kitchen helper and who was left alone in the evenings with these older boys and later became hospital housekeeper. Our chef, Mr. Lytle, took great pride in the meals, especially on holidays and the night we dedicated the garden which had been a prison yard. That day he came in at five in the morning and stayed until six that night. We had all the tables moved into this garden, and the tables were beautiful. He took a real pride in that, and he wanted to be there on a holiday. Now there were many others who made contributions in various ways. And for the first ten years, it would be easier to name the ones who weren't too interested than to name those who were. But I remember such small

things as this: Mrs. Rainey, who was in charge of the clothes room and had a very full eight-hour day, as Easter approached, came to me and offered to dye four hundred eggs on off-duty time. We never talked about overtime; I don't remember the word being used. And I had an excellent director of nurses, Dorothy Coyner (her name is now Mrs. Showalter); I never had to worry about good nursing care or medical care. She was there during the entire time [that I was there], was an excellent co-worker, and is today a very good friend. There were many others, and I just wouldn't know where to begin or where to stop, really. My own secretary, Miss Ruth Brezniak, was so eager to save money for the county that she was always offering to do extra things in order that we could reduce some item in the salary budget. She was amazing.

SCHIPPERS: How would you describe the interrelationship of the staff?

ACKERMAN: I think that for the most part, until the last year or two, it was very good; it was excellent, I would say. I still hear from a number of Juvenile Hall former staff members.

SCHIPPERS: Were there any feelings of, shall we say, individual empires, of guarding their jurisdiction?

ACKERMAN: I felt that more when I arrived there with these people who had lived in and whose sole responsi-

bility twenty-four hours a day had been in that department. But as they moved out and had the five-day week, they learned what was their area of responsibility and so forth. We had a few problem adults, yes, but for the most part I think that we had a very happy staff.

SCHIPPERS: Did you have anybody who transgressed the "no corporal punishment" edict?

ACKERMAN: Yes, I had to watch that almost constantly as new people came in. I stressed that they had to take their turns at night duty and be there on holidays and that they like children. Well, of course, they would always say that they loved children. But one can love children and still be with a group when it is very difficult not to bat a child over the head, when they are very trying.

One time with a chef (before Mr. Lytle came) we got worried that he had struck a boy. I really think it was just a slap. The boy, I guess, had it coming, really, but I had to expel the chef for a short time. I wanted him back because it wasn't easy to get a good chef, and the Probation Committee and the Civil Service allowed him to come back. Then I had a relief employee (I recall that I was horrified because he was a college man) about whom I got this report. I began watching, being more watchful. I couldn't believe it when I first heard it. Still, as you know, any group of chil-

dren can be challenging, but especially children who are so incorrigible that they won't keep them in the public school. They said that this counselor would get his two honor boys to beat up a boy, while he would go in and telephone [about the incident], if they were on the playfield while this was happening. I had to be constantly on guard about it. But we had minimum trouble. I would say ninety-eight percent of our employees were very kind to the children.

SCHIPPERS: We have discussed the relationship between the Hall and the actual education function of the school. Did that improve with time?

ACKERMAN: I'm not clear about this. At one time we were under, I believe, the [Los Angeles] City Board of Education and at another time the [Los Angeles] County Board of Education. I frankly can't tell you which years these things occurred. But Mr. Cripe was the principal during that time, and his supervisors came. We usually had them to luncheon, and there was a very happy relationship there. Occasionally, the principal from a school would come to Juvenile Court. Dr. Ethel Perry Andrus, this wonderful person who started the AARP [American Association of Retired Persons], was principal of Lincoln Heights School during those years. And I did not know until her death that Dr. Andrus was the Miss Andrus I knew, who came from Lincoln Heights

School occasionally to sit in on a case in Juvenile Court. That didn't happen often, but she did, and other people from schools occasionally were there.

SCHIPPERS: Did the school administration in any way try to coordinate any of their activity with any of your activity? For example, did they recognize the Girls Club?

ACKERMAN: They had at times their own dramatic programs, and some of them were very good. But they did a little printing for us. I have the little invitations, for instance, to the Easter program. If it worked in with their program, they would do the printing of that type for our program.

SCHIPPERS: Was there any exchange of information regarding individual problem cases or carryovers?

ACKERMAN: Oh, yes. The principal of the school came over too frequently to weep on my shoulder. I don't want to belittle this person. He had a difficult task and, like all principals, he knew that he had some very good teachers and some who, frankly, were not so good. Then he had his problems with ever-changing children. But he appeared to me to be constantly fearful that he would have to send in a record that there had been a runaway from school, that a child had been injured in a fight on the playfield, or something that would mar his record. I felt that he was very conscious of that.

And then one time (I did have the card here) a little boy secured some little blue cards, and he printed love notes to girls. I still have one that says, "Honey, I want to kiss you on the playgrounds," or something like that. Well, the principal came over very serious, very concerned one day, and he had a bunch of these. Then the question was: "Well, I don't know; maybe we'd better just stop printing." If we're going to take these out in the community and the boy says that he learned to print in Juvenile Hall. . ." There was always this bit of fear in the back of his mind, which was unfortunate for him, too.

SCHIPPERS: Would you say that that was a good structure, that is, to have the schooling, or the educational function separated from the other functions of the Hall?

ACKERMAN: Yes, I definitely think that it was. I certainly was not an experienced executive in educational matters, and it would have just added to our burdens.

SCHIPPERS: Then,administratively, you don't think an ideal model would be to have all these functions in some way in one place?

ACKERMAN: Not in a detention home, I don't think so. Of course, we had a beautiful school.

SCHIPPERS: Did you have any scandals during your administration that received any attention?

ACKERMAN: I wish that I could whisper this to you. We had a terrific homosexual problem. Believe it or not, one who I considered one of our top boys' counselors in charge of younger boys was one. I have a letter that a little boy wrote to him; this boy hoped to grow up and be as fine a man as this man. Again, he was one who worked overtime; he made marvelous contributions to his department, and we had had no signs of difficulty of any kind. One evening I was in my apartment, and I received a call from the office that two police officers in the Adult Division would like to see me at once. I thought, "Oh, I've always been afraid that I'd be arrested." The superintendent who was there a couple of years before me was arrested for illegally holding a child; he was sued for $25,000. So I thought that this was my time. I went over and these two Adult Division officers asked if this employee worked here. I said, "Yes, he was over on duty with these younger boys." And they said, "Well, we're here to arrest him. He is charged with sexually molesting a young boy." It was a low moment in my life. I thought, of course, that they meant it had occurred in Juvenile Hall. Well, very quickly they told me that after the boy was discharged to go home, he took the youngster up in the mountains (of course, any boy would go with him because the boys were very fond of him),

and that these acts had occurred there. The officers wanted me to have him come over, so I called Company C and asked that he be sent over to the office. Much to my surprise, he was not there. It was a very strict order that no employee could go off early; if they wanted the night man to come in an hour earlier and if they'd make up the time, they might do that, but the request had to be in my office in writing and approved so that I'd know for sure who was on duty. And he was [supposed to be] the night man on duty at about nine o'clock at night. Then the switchboard operator said, "Oh, I know, he went to the County Employees dance and took the day telephone operator." Well, we got into this police car and,with the siren on, went through the city to this big annual dance that the County Employees Association had. (I still couldn't believe that it could be possible; I felt that he had been such a fine clean-cut man. I still can scarcely realize it.) On the dance floor he was dancing with the day telephone operator. The officers said, "Well, when the dance is over, please go up and tap him on the shoulder and tell him that two people are here to see him." It was one of my most painful experiences. I did go on to the dance floor and he was just ashen when he saw me. I said, "There are two men here who wish to see you." And when he met them, he began to weep, and

he said, "Yes, it's all true." Then we found that he had been in the choir of a large church here and had been dismissed because of this particular problem. For years after the incident, I received Christmas cards from him from various camps. He was a sick man; he may still be hospitalized. But it was a horrible shock to me.

SCHIPPERS: Did that receive any notoriety in the newspapers?

ACKERMAN: It received very little in the Hall--it was amazing--and never from the children; it was amazing because usually they heard everything that adults heard and could imagine many things more. But I never heard one thing from any of the boys. We announced that he was ill and wouldn't be back for a week or so, then new children came in.

SCHIPPERS: Were there any problems that got aired in the newspapers?

ACKERMAN: Yes, there was one little girl whose mother murdered her three younger sisters and killed herself; we had that child and that's quite a story. Adela Rogers St. Johns wrote a special feature article. There was a lot of publicity about her.

There was also a notice about a riot started by this girl from Minneapolis, from Minnesota State School. I think that there were four or five girls involved. And there was a notice shortly before I left, where

again they called it a riot. There were very few girls involved, but we did ask that two of them, I believe, be transferred to the jail. They were far beyond us. That particular thing shouldn't have happened; it could have been nipped in the bud. I think that our weakness at that particular moment helped produce that.

SCHIPPERS: In general, would you say that the newspaper was friendly?

ACKERMAN: They were friendly, but for the most part, they didn't know that we existed. They weren't too interested. Bess Wilson, who became my friend, was head of the Women's Section of the Los Angeles Times. She came down one Christmas Eve and gave us a beautiful write-up; there was quite a dramatic story about a little boy. I won't go into it now, but some of the things that come out of the mouths of babes! She wrote several stories, then later Lee Shippey visited us, and he wrote several stories. At that time, we didn't solicit, in fact, we tried not to have publicity news service. But we had some very good stories.

SCHIPPERS: What about these events you mentioned, the riots?

ACKERMAN: We called them riots, but there would be four or five girls out of forty involved,so it wasn't a very big riot.

SCHIPPERS: Were the newspapers in any way critical?

ACKERMAN: They were not critical. I still have the articles, I think. No, for the most part, they told just what happened.

SCHIPPERS: Did these incidents, in any way, stir any kind of an investigation or aftermath?

ACKERMAN: No. I think that the last one probably did because I learned later that one of my trusted counselors was having quite direct contact with the Probation Department, unknown to me. This was a double shock to me. I would never have had meetings with a probation officer unknown to the chief probation officer. It's all a pretty sad story, really. I wouldn't promote him, and he was very eager to be promoted. He was later promoted; he had later quite a good position coordinating, I think, the work of probation and so forth. But for the most part, I feel that I had, certainly up to the last year, very loyal employees.

SCHIPPERS: That was really tied almost directly to your stand on non-expansion?

ACKERMAN: Yes, and I think his criticism was that we needed reorganization, which I think, too, that we needed at that time. I had made suggestions regarding reorganization.

SCHIPPERS: Administrative ones?

ACKERMAN: Yes. There are letters (I'm not sure if they're in my last report, I'd have to check); but, as

I said, with the budget it was a constant struggle to get even one more new employee, let alone all those needed for complete reorganization. I recognized the fact that we were getting to the place where we needed reorganization in areas. A new person, especially a man, could accomplish this; this is true today too. Life for women executives is always more challenging.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE

MAY 8, 1968

SCHIPPERS: This morning we planned to talk about the events that led to your leaving Juvenile Hall and the issues involved.

ACKERMAN: As you know, I am very reluctant to recall these painful and really crucifying experiences, the saddest in my entire professional life. (I would much rather tell you the story about the little boy who started the silent time and the prayer time, but I guess that will have to wait.) I, frankly, was totally unaware that any human being, especially anyone working with children, would wish to have the largest jail or the largest detention home, until a luncheon was given for the daughter of the Prime Minister of England, who had heard about Juvenile Hall. Judge Samuel R. Blake brought her to the Hall as a luncheon guest, and there were members of the Probation Committee there. Naturally, the conversation was about jails, delinquency, and so forth.

SCHIPPERS: This was Sarah Churchill?

ACKERMAN: No, it was Sheila MacDonald, daughter of Ramsay MacDonald. [She was a] delightful person, and she had been interested in this type of work in England. She was a very reserved, dignified, wonderful person, and quite young.

Right in the midst of the luncheon,Judge Blake interrupted by announcing (it appeared with great pride) that Los Angeles had the largest jail in the entire country, and there was absolute silence following this because it didn't follow the course of conversation at the moment. I was so amazed, and that night in my room I thought, "We must all have misunderstood. He probably was wanting to convey the thought to her that so many criminals were coming into this area; it was a problem." So I tried to drop the thought, and I think that I succeeded. I was extremely busy in the work I was doing and trying constantly to reduce the size of our census and so forth.

I went [to the Hall] in 1929 when we had an entire set of new buildings; the campus, everything,was very beautiful. It was about 1936 or 1937 when at meetings I would hear rumblings of the need for a larger Juvenile Hall. And I was always surprised; it didn't appear to me that we had this need other than a unit for the mentally-disturbed children. I felt that we always needed that. In 1937, when they were pressing this idea, I suggested that a committee study Juvenile Hall and present their recommendations [to the Probation Committee] and then [we could] see which way we should go. Before this committee had time to study the Hall or present recommendations, I was invited to be a member

of the committee to request the Board of Supervisors to build new buildings at what now seems a modest amount of money--I think it was $237,000--which seemed like a great deal to me. Of course, I immediately wanted to put it in the bank for children before they came and after they left. So you do have a copy of a letter I wrote in which I declined to be a member of this committee and told them why. After this, I frankly felt no hostility whatever towards me by members of the Juvenile Bureau of the Police Department or the Probation Committee or the Juvenile Court or my own co-workers. I had thought that since I wouldn't go along with it, they might ask for my resignation. But they still seemed extremely proud of our program at the Hall and brought many visitors there. I think that 1937 and 1938 were perhaps our best years as far as program was concerned. This is borne out by reports from staff members and annual reports. I didn't keep records,so I can't say accurately what happened. But I did resign in 1943; I resigned several months before this resignation became effective. I was urged by supervisors, including Supervisors John Anson Ford and [Roger] Jessup, to remain with the County and keep my position. I think that it was probably about 1942, maybe 1941, that I suddenly realized there was a very active and very vocal group of people who were determined to have a

larger Juvenile Hall. They had very elaborate plans. Judge Robert [H.] Scott headed this group, as I recall. And they had speakers who would go to the various church and civic groups (both men and women) and especially stress that these young boys were detained in the jail (they should have been in Juvenile Hall); they were sleeping on the floor, and the conditions were pretty bad. After acquainting all the civic groups in the city (school departments, PTA, Kiwanis, Rotarians), finally a big meeting, a luncheon, was held in the Elks Club. This announcement was going to be made by Judge Scott: the time had now come when for the sake of these tragic children, we must have this larger Juvenile Hall. I went to the luncheon. There were a number of speakers: Judge Scott spoke first, very eloquently, and he was very articulate on his subject. Others followed again with the thought that now the time had come, and the enlargement was something that Los Angeles must do; it could not wait. After all these speakers, he surprised me; he looked at me, and he said, "We are most fortunate today to have Miss Ackerman, who has been superintendent at the Hall for many years; I think you'd all like to hear from her about this great need." Well, it was like a knife in my breast; I was so stunned. You know, so many things can go through your mind in a few minutes. Here were all these prominent civic leaders

in Los Angeles, so I finally stood, addressed Judge Scott, and said, as I recall, "Judge Scott, you know my attitude, my belief about the needs at Juvenile Hall. And I must just repeat what I previously said to you and to the Probation Committee and to the Probation Department; I feel at this time that four or five things should be tried before we enlarge the Hall." And I sat down. There was a lull over the room that frightened me.

After I returned to my office, three different probation officers who felt as I did called me. They said, "How did you dare? Did you feel the lull? You know, the meeting was just dismissed practically on the spot?" "Well," I said, "how did I dare not." From that time on, I began having a variety of difficulties (maybe I didn't see the whole picture); I had less and less communication with the Juvenile Court and with the Probation Department.

We continued to try to do our best at the Hall, and finally, at my request, a detention director was appointed to try to watch the admissions and stop the abuse of keeping children there longer than they should have been. And he was a friend, Mr. Schapps--who later left the Probation Department--and I thought, a wonderful person. So I told Judge Scott and the Juvenile Bureau and my own committee that first I would like to

try taking some of these older boys. I thought we could do it, but I wasn't sure. At first, I talked to my own counselors, and they were all for it. They were absolutely all for it; I had no problem with my own staff. I said, "I would like to try it on a probation period with the understanding that we would just take a few a day." We were already taking boys over sixteen for minor offenses or for vagrancy, but not for felonies. I personally at first and for a long time saw every boy. I looked him in the eye and said, "Now, God gave you a brain, I hope, and if you're ever going to use it, you are going to need it the next two or three weeks. It's very easy to run away from Juvenile Hall, but it's your own life, not mine. There's going to be no funny business. And you are not only going to abide by our rules, but you are going to try to help other youngsters here." Well, anyway, I had practically no trouble with the older boys.

Then this began happening. We had a skeleton staff on duty after five o'clock at night. (It frightens me now when I think of it; how we got by all those years I'll never know.) We had as a rule a rather young girl alone in the office; she was both switchboard operator and admitting clerk. She could call an attendant from the hospital (she could just open a door in the record room), but he might be in another building. There was

one nurse alone in the receiving room. So then I began getting reports and noticing when I came to my office in the morning that the sheriffs were bringing in large groups of these older boys in handcuffs, taking the handcuffs off, and just walking out and leaving the group with this one person, a young woman in the office, one person in the receiving room.

One night they had a little trouble; a group began causing a little trouble. I went over immediately. Then afterwards I called Mr. Schapps, and I said, "Now, listen, Mr. Schapps. As you know, this idea of taking older boys arrested for felonies was my suggestion, and I want very much to continue it. I feel that the older boys are more mature, and as far as danger is concerned, I don't think that there is the hazard that there is among our thirteen- and fifteen-year-olds; in fact, I know that there isn't. I want to continue it. But I cannot and will not take these boys after five o'clock at night. They must come in the morning or early afternoon when we have our entire staff there." He laughed and said, "Why, Miss Ackerman, that's impossible." And I said, "What do you mean 'impossible'? There are sheriffs on duty all day." "Well," he said, "you know, we have to keep the jails filled and keep the boys on the floor of the jail because all these civic groups come through during the day. We have to

show how overcrowded the jail is." I could not believe my ears. He laughed and hung up the receiver.

Well, then, I got into action and became increasingly unpopular because I was willing to take the boys. There was a little relief given, and the situation improved a little but not too much. Then this big public relations program in the community to have bond issues, and so forth, really got into action.

At that point I think that I should insert my own human frailties. I used to tell our children and our employees when they had problems, "Well, now let's look within first." And I must admit a series of things happened about that time to me. I was less able to handle difficult situations and tensions like this. First of all, among family problems, my father was in a small hotel; he was senile, mental and violent at times, but really a wonderful person when he was well. And I was called four times to come to the receiving hospital; they had picked him up unconscious on the street. I was advised to commit him to an institution, which I was reluctant to do. A young adopted niece had problems back in the Middle West, and I made the great mistake of paying her way out here and assuming full responsibility for this very disturbed youngster. From her point of view, things had happened to her that shouldn't have; it wasn't really her fault. But I

had these double, these two responsibilities within my own family. The niece was living in the apartment with me part of the time, and it was pretty difficult; it was challenging. I also had major surgery and, following that, had problems of menopause and was not the calm person I had been. The president of my board used to tell people that I had a disposition that never warped. But during this period, I must admit my own weaknesses; I found that things were disturbing me more and that I was not the calm person I had been before.

Through death I had lost Mr. Bremer, who had been one of my most valuable counselors and advisors, and his death was a great loss to the institution. Dr. Firor, the assistant psychiatrist, became unhappy with the situation and especially the one that we've been talking about, and she left the hall and became head of the Child Guidance Clinic. Then, unfortunately, I realized that there was a split in the Probation Committee. It began with Mrs. McManus and a very attractive new member who was appointed. I began feeling that I didn't have the staunch support that I had had for twelve years, and that the Probation Committee was dividing. Along with that the war came in 1941. I think it was in June 1942 (I think that the records would show it; I still don't know how we lived through this

as an organization),within a period, I think, of six weeks, I had eight resignations from our best men counselors, who were entering the service. To lose even one trained person [was a great loss]. We could have a person with degrees and with a variety of experiences, but it's the unusual person [whom we wanted]. He must be there quite a while before he knows truly how to handle these large groups, and we were just desperate. We began getting in new people and, as I said, there were things that they had to learn on the job; we could have classes and tell them many things, but it would be extremely [difficult to do]. That was one of the most challenging things that happened.

Finally, I had to put a woman in charge of the older boys in the morning because there was absolutely no man to do this, and it's amazing how the boys rose to the occasion. The morning that Mr. Bremer had his heart attack, I was called. He came on duty at seven, and I was called at five after seven. We had forty-some boys in the department, and just the day before there had been some trouble. I went right over; he was lying on the floor and we called for the ambulance and so forth. I remember the calmness and the helpfulness and the loyalty of those boys. They took Mr. Bremer to the hospital, and I stayed with them until about twenty minutes of eight, over a half hour,

and the spirit of helpfulness just amazed me. I couldn't believe it. So within each one of them is really something very fine, if you can ferret it out.

Well, between my own human frailties and then this pressure from the outside, I did take a poll of my own employees, a verbal poll, and found not one person in the Hall felt that we needed a larger Juvenile Hall at that time. They had the same concern I had: they were all really cross about these children returning to the Hall. We had children return as many as seventeen times, and in the reports you'll see that to return five and six times was very frequent. It was so appalling, it was so horrible; but the thing that really worried me the most, and I still regret I wasn't able to communicate to do something about this, were the runaways from other institutions. They were just delighted with our program; for the most part, we had no problem. Now I'm sure that the authorities who placed them and who approved the institutions felt that the institution was right. But from the child's viewpoint, it wasn't. And in Mr. Bogan's annual report of either 1950 or 1954, he states that they were having over eight hundred runaways returned from other institutions. All this money now has been spent on this enormous, well-staffed Juvenile Hall with maximum security. But the outlets from the child's viewpoint

were so poor that over eight hundred--more than that were running away, but eight hundred were caught--returned to Juvenile Hall. So it's a sad story, and I felt since 1929 that I had let the children down. I know that they all, if they had had a vote, would have said, "We want more money for our families or for care before we come and after we leave."

Dr. Covey in his reports year after year told about the number of children who entered undernourished. I was there a long time before I realized that we should try to have some kind of a luncheon in the receiving room because these youngsters were brought in at all hours of the night. Maybe they hadn't eaten for three days, and just such a simple thing as food, which a child, I think,rightfully should be able to expect when they are little,[could be given]. But [there was a] lack of nutrition, proper nutrition; Dr. Covey would confirm this; it was appalling.

SCHIPPERS: Could you tell me what you think motivated the people who wanted a larger facility?

ACKERMAN: I could never figure it out. It was just like Judge Blake's statement. And as I said, the expression on his face and everything expressed pride about it. Of course, I'll tell you about this later. Of course, with larger institutions, salaries are much higher and, of course, they have escalated.

The salary now, the salary of the assistant dishwasher, is more than I received as superintendent. Salaries were very low when I was there, but that's beside the point; I can't believe that that would really have motivated them. As far as people in the community were concerned, they were sincere; they felt that here were these tragic children who have to go to Juvenile Court, that they should see that everything is lovely and proper, and that these boys shouldn't be lying on the floor. But as far as informed people are concerned, I could not understand it. This picture that I have is just one of many. Mr. Kenyon J. Scudder will confirm this I am sure.

SCHIPPERS: Let's identify it. This is a photograph from the Los Angeles Times. I can't tell the year on it; it's April 11; I suspect it must be about '40, '41, '42, '43?

ACKERMAN: A little earlier, I believe. Here is a boy, and the caption is "So-Called Cat Man Agility in Cell. He was arrested yesterday [April 10] as a suspect in recent murders of women. Demonstrating his agility, he was seized after climbing a fire escape in the home for elderly and creeping along a narrow ledge to a dormer window by which he entered." This is a picture of our adorable David, who was brought to us by the police department for, as I recall, a very minor of-

fense, shoplifting. Before he went to court, he was released to his home, as I recall, and came back shortly wearing a little black band on his arm; his mama had died. And temporarily he was to be at the Hall as a dependent, but originally he was in some conflict with the law. We never saw him again until this picture appeared. But, certainly, a lot of things must have happened in the interval. We saw too much of that,and in my annual reports, I was constantly pleading for more time and money for the younger groups of children who were exposed to Juvenile Hall experiences.

SCHIPPERS: This was right along the line of what I wanted to ask: what were your alternative plans rather than having a larger facility?

ACKERMAN: I had them listed. As I recall, first of all, a unit for the mentally-disturbed because I felt that we not only didn't help them but they, in turn, disrupted every program we tried to have. To have one child who was mentally disturbed in a group of forty is very harmful to everyone concerned. Camarillo [State Hospital] would only take them for three months, and they were back. They couldn't get along in the community,so they were right back on our doorstep.

I definitely recommended, and it is in writing, decentralization. This was one of my most important recommendations, because Los Angeles County, as I

recall, is larger than many states. We had boys go to Preston because of lack of decentralization. For instance, a boy's parents who lived in Lancaster or Pomona or some great distance away, and because of finances during the Depression, couldn't come in for visiting and then go to Juvenile Court. They had to appear in court, money or no money. All right, Sunday would come with no visitors. It takes very little to sparkplug violence when a child is filled with hate. So I felt that decentralization was very important.

For years I recommended that our dear little dependent children be moved to another institution so that they would not have a label. The Probation Committee and the court knew this; it was in writing, repeatedly. They were not moved, I believe, until 1954. Now I think that probably the reason for this was that it was easier for the probation officers to have them at the Hall; they had to come there, anyway, and especially on court days there was no transportation problem. But they would try to soothe me by going over to Junior Cottage, which was a separate building and outside the wall, really. They had attractive playgrounds and single rooms, a very nice program, and their own schoolroom. They would always say, "Oh, but they're happy here and well cared for." That was the soothing syrup fed to me about them. All right, de-

centralization, a unit for the mentally disturbed, separation of dependent and delinquent, and (there were five recommendations) oh, a hospital for Juvenile Court wards.

I still think it was tragic that if a child who was in the Hall just once and placed in a boarding home, became ill but did not need surgery or that type of care, he was not taken to General Hospital. If they needed surgery, they went to General Hospital, but for all other illnesses, they were brought back to the Hall. I forget how many camp boys we had. We had to have a large part of our bed space just for care of sick court wards. And I felt there was a need there. There was one other recommendation--there were five altogether--and I don't recall it right now. Those were the most important.

SCHIPPERS: Yes, you listed them in one of your letters. You also mentioned the other day about certain administrative changes that you recognized the need for. What were those?

ACKERMAN: It's amazing how people will follow a pattern. I noticed finally that year after year when I presented my budget, people did not analyze (just generally speaking they did not); they were pretty busy, and any item that was already on the budget--frankly, whether it was needed or not was beside

the point--I could be pretty sure it would go through and be approved. But if I would try to put a new item on,[it was a battle]. I tried one time for a dietician when I felt that I couldn't assume that responsibility. I finally did make out all the diets because I was interested, but the dietician was turned down; it was a new item. If I tried to get a night supervisor, or an extra counselor, or if I tried to get one more aide,it was a battle. Occasionally, it was accepted, but not very often. And so I failed to continue to request; I did feel that I and my assistant needed someone else to come in and help us on calls on emergencies in the evening. I had thought of additional evening supervisors or head counselors to whom the individual counselors might go. But I didn't battle for it.

Then I had the strangest thing happen. I had a man whom I had trusted in the boys' department. But he had wanted promotions, and for a number of reasons, I didn't feel that he merited this promotion at the time. He did do very good work with the Latter Day Saints' boys--he was a Mormon--and they had a marvelous program for the youths. All during the Depression years the minute a train would pull in, if there was a youth from a Mormon home, he was picked up and cared for. He was a devout Mormon, and he had his good

qualities. But I was amazed one day when he asked if he could have an appointment with me (not amazed that he would ask but amazed at the subject). He came over and on a big piece of paper he had a complete reorganization of the Hall. I listened and I was impressed with most of it. Then he surprised me by saying that he had been down to the Probation Department several times (I hadn't known this) and that they, too, thought that his plan was just wonderful. Well, of course, that was an entirely new experience; I never before had had an employee who, as you would say, went over my head. I thought that I had the confidence of all of them, and they felt very free, I think, to make appointments to see me. From then on we began hearing rumblings of things that were happening, and I myself recognized the fact that this extremely friendly feeling with my own committee and with the Probation Department was waning, that things were changing. Mrs. McManus remained very loyal. By this time, of course, Mr. Scudder had left. And my dear friend, as I say, Dr. Marion Firor had left,so the picture was changing.

SCHIPPERS: Could you tell me a little bit more about this division in the Probation Committee?

ACKERMAN: Mrs. Elizabeth McManus had been head of the Probation Committee for years and, I believe, at one time she was head of social welfare in the state.

The Probation Committee was, of course, a voluntary service, but she gave full time. She had an office downtown in the Hall of Records, and she had a secretary. She was ahead of her times; there's no doubt about it. She would say to groups, "We're working here toward the day when there will no longer be a Juvenile Hall, when this problem will be in the community and through prevention and so forth, we won't need the Juvenile Hall." She, unfortunately, did not have a tactful manner; she angered people, and she would say things that really were tactless. She lost friends; it was very sad. But for many years she was head of the Probation Committee and had quite a free hand, I believe, from the Board of Supervisors. She certainly worked as hard as any paid employee worked; in fact, I think she worked harder than some paid employees. And she supported me in everything and, oh, she brought visitors from abroad, some from the League of Nations, especially when we had some program. I have letters, many letters from her.

And then for the first time, and I may be wrong in this, but it appeared to me that we had a political appointment. One of the supervisors, a new supervisor, came to the scene. The story that I was told was that the husband of this woman was extremely wealthy, and that his money helped to finance the

campaign of this supervisor.

She was quite young and a beautiful woman and a very determined woman. Well, from the minute she was appointed and from the minute she and Mrs. McManus met, they just were at sword's point. It was really quite tragic. . .

SCHIPPERS: That she was appointed to the. . .?

ACKERMAN: To the Probation Committee. She would appear at the Hall with great demands and maybe it would be our busiest day. For instance, one day she came in with, I think, one or two hundred balloons to be blown up by the children for some party or social event she was giving. At first, I was practically floored. We had to have the children in school part of the day and in court and doing their work assignment. And [the blowing of balloons] was to be done, and she was to pick them up the next day. And I didn't dare refuse. Well, you know, it proved to be a blessing [laughter]; sometimes problems do. We happened to have a girl in meditation who was a terrific problem, so Mrs. Moede took these balloons down to the girl all day long, and she

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had the fun of blowing up these balloons and bursting one occasionally. [laughter] Finally, the next morning, I forget how many people helped get all these balloons in the back of her car.

Then she was given charge of the gardens. Oh, there were many things that happened, which seem petty now, but they were more or less disturbing. But there was a division in the committee which hadn't appeared before. I think I told you before that we had an attorney, Mr. Brink. I think that that is in the record, isn't it? He too left the board and it was a great loss.

ACKERMAN: As I recall, Mrs. McManus, who had been head of the social work in the state, was the Chairman of the Probation Committee. In addition, we had Mr. Brink, who was an attorney and a judge for the Federal Bankruptcy Court; Dr. George B. Mangold, who was, I believe, head [of the department] or in social work at USC; an educator, Miss Clark, who was with the Board of Education; Dr. Etta Gray, who was a medical person; Dr. Clarence Parlour, Episcopal minister from Glendale; and one other (whose name I forget) who was, I believe, a businessman. So as far as children were concerned, I feel that this was quite a well-balanced board, and by being a small unit it proved to us to be helpful and successful.

SCHIPPERS: Now regarding this divisiveness that occurred in the Probation Committee, you indicated that the matters were really small ones. Was there any major difference as far as overall philosophy about how things should be managed?

ACKERMAN: Oh, I feel quite definitely [that there was a difference]. As I recall, Mrs. McManus felt as I did, and that she was all for a twenty-four-hour school or for anything that would keep children out of Juvenile Hall. And, as I recall, this was the beginning of a committee being drawn to the side of Judge Scott and his followers who wanted and felt the real need was a larger Juvenile Hall.

SCHIPPERS: Was this new member for a larger hall?

ACKERMAN: Oh, I'm sure.

SCHIPPERS: Was she, in any way, affiliated directly with Judge Scott?

ACKERMAN: No. Her husband was a close friend of a member of the Board of Supervisors, powerful through money, and she, like our children, was seeking a place in the sun. And she was uninformed.

SCHIPPERS: She simply wished for a larger facility?

ACKERMAN: Yes.

SCHIPPERS: Did she in any way suggest any major policy change regarding the administration of the Hall?

ACKERMAN: No, I do not recall that she suggested any

major policy change, but almost everything I did annoyed her. This was a new experience at the Hall for me. For years the Probation Committee, my employees, the Juvenile Bureau of the Police Department, the Sheriff's Juvenile Division, the Probation Department, had all been loyal, grand friends.

SCHIPPERS: What did eventually lead to your actual resignation?

ACKERMAN: Well, primarily they went ahead and just definitely were going to have the enlarged Hall. I was just sure that I couldn't be a part of it.

At each Probation Committee meeting that I went to, with each group of visitors who were taken through the Hall, and in each article in the newspaper,[they wanted a larger Hall]. The papers, of course, were all for this larger Juvenile Hall because they didn't have the real facts. I became more and more tense and, as I said, I did not have the stability because of ill health and family problems. Of course, I am rationalizing now, but it was just almost more than I was equal to. Frankly, it was just finally easier to pull out entirely. Mrs. McManus saw me several times and urged me to stay, and even Supervisor Jessup, whom I hadn't known well and who hadn't had too much interest in the Hall, called me down to his offices and we had quite a long talk. But I just couldn't stay on;

it was just contrary to everything that I believed and everything I saw happening. So I did resign. It wasn't accepted at first, but I finally resigned. When I left, they gave me a very beautiful plaque and a party and so forth. But I have no regrets, except that I do regret sincerely that I hadn't had the ability to communicate and that I didn't take the time. I think that my big mistake was not having enough assistance, personal assistance, so that I could have been freed of more administrative tasks and so forth to work in the community, to try to advise people and let people know what the real situation was. I failed in getting my own message over; there's no doubt about it.

SCHIPPERS: Were there any others besides your immediate staff that supported you in your move not to expand the facilities?

ACKERMAN: Aside from a few members on the Probation Committee, I don't recall that there were.

SCHIPPERS: Who were the members?

ACKERMAN: Well, Mrs. McManus and Mrs. John C. Urquhart and, I think, Dr. Etta Gray. That's all that I recall.

SCHIPPERS: Since that time, this has become, of course, a much more generally accepted idea; facilities should not ever be increased and more money should go into prevention work.

ACKERMAN: Definitely. Also rehabilitation work. The tragic administrators of these small institutions, who wanted to do a good job but had people living on the premises twenty-four hours a day, were lost before they started. Really, it was sad.

I would like for you to contact Dr. Herman Covey, who was the medical director. He, too, attended the Probation Committee meetings, and he never expressed his thoughts about this. But about twenty years later, in fact, since I have been at Crestview, I did receive a letter and I did appreciate it. I have the letter in which he stated that he was sad and fearful at times, that he did not support me the way he should have and that, in his opinion, the only time we could really be proud of Juvenile Hall's program was during the period I was there. I appreciated this, and I have kept it confidential until now.

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MAY 8, 1968

SCHIPPERS: We would now like to briefly discuss your career after your resignation.

ACKERMAN: Briefly, I became assistant administrator at Children's Hospital in Los Angeles and was there from 1943 until, I think, 1951. I had administrative duties primarily, but I also coordinated the work of thirty-seven auxiliaries, with Mrs. Norman Chandler, who was head of the public relations committee. Following this, I went to Taunton, Massachusetts, and was assistant administrator under Mildred E. Smith, who had been the administrator at Children's Hospital when I went there. [She was a] brilliant woman, who had done an outstanding job in administration. Again I was in administration and public relations. They had hoped to launch a building program; it did not go through, and I returned after a little over a year or two to Los Angeles. Then I became director of public relations and patient relations at Cedars of Lebanon Hospital and had an enlightening and pleasant experience. I now have, I am proud to say, many brilliant and delightful Jewish friends. My own doctor was a Jew, and I learned a great deal from him. In addition, I worked as sort of an assistant to the administrator; I had a meeting with him every morning about problems in the

hospital. I was the troubleshooter; I also handled all the news service for all the movie stars and the prominent people. And that opened an entirely new world to me because I had had no contact before. I would like to say, contrary to what people think, that most of the movie stars were delightful patients. I felt sorry for them because they absolutely had no life of their own. When death and serious illness came, they were still in a glass house, and they still were surrounded by the public.

SCHIPPERS: Did you find that the experience at Juvenile Hall in administration was a good preparation for this kind of work?

ACKERMAN: Oh, definitely. Of course, I had had some administration before I went to the Hall, but I learned a great deal under Miss Mildred E. Smith. She's retiring soon, and recently the American Hospital Association has given that hospital one of the highest ratings for hospital administration. She was a brilliant person, who had a degree in hospital administration.

I also learned that it was so very easy to raise money for something that is evident, such as [a child who has] a crutch or a child who has had heart surgery, in comparison to the difficult time we had even getting toys for a birthday cupboard for emotionally disturbed youngsters and children in trouble. At Christmas time,

as an example, we had a volunteer in charge at Children's Hospital and she, in turn, appointed three volunteers who were assigned to a store on Vermont [Avenue] to accept the tons of Christmas toys. It took three workers three weeks to accept and keep the names of the people who gave the toys and then distribute these toys; they distributed them mostly to outpatients because, after all, we just had approximately two hundred children. But one year Mrs. Frank S. Stormand and I figured it out; we'd have a hundred dolls that would cost $15 each. There must have been $10,000 worth of toys there. But in the folder you'll find a letter that I wrote to Mr. Scudder, trying to get toys for Juvenile Hall.

SCHIPPERS: How would you compare and contrast the behavior of the children in the juvenile setting and that in the hospital?

ACKERMAN: Well, we had behavior problems, too, especially in our convalescent home, but they were in a way similar, often similar. Of course, they didn't have the desperate situations we did when children were so fearful because of what was going to happen to them after they left the Hall or because of the threats to them. I don't ever remember having that at Children's. I do want to talk about evaluation.

SCHIPPERS: I would just like to make perhaps an over-

all evaluation of institutions in general, if there is any observation you can make.

ACKERMAN: Oh, definitely. Humans are humans wherever you go. For instance, as troubleshooter at Cedars of Lebanon Hospital (not because this was a Jewish hospital but any hospital) at the time a loved one is ill, the family is extremely tense. And because of human weaknesses, there are times when things go wrong, when I really was ashamed of something an employee had said, or something that had happened to a patient. Well, at Cedars I have always wished that I had kept my little notebook of the times I had been called. If there were complaints, I was called immediately.

I soon learned to follow the same procedure that I followed at Juvenile Hall. I told the head nurses, "You go up first to the floor." And here might be a very vocal, excitable person at the desk, telling everybody about the horrible thing that had just happened to her mother. There was an audience. And so I did the very same thing that I did at Juvenile Hall; I would try to get her away from her audience and gently suggest that we go into a consultation room. [I would tell her] that I was interested, and I was regretful. For many things, I really handled them practically the same. It is important just to listen.

SCHIPPERS: In your work with Mrs. Chandler on the public relations aspect, how much did you contact her and what did you accomplish?

ACKERMAN: Oh, she was in every day. She's told me many times that she had learned a great deal from me; I have a letter in which she states that. She was a dedicated worker and an organized, brilliant worker. She came in and there was no foolishness about visiting a while and wasting your time; I laid her work out, and she took it in another room and did it. She produced. Together we wrote a brochure that received an award from the American Hospital Association. The Los Angeles Times paid my fare to St. Louis to receive this award. I found her very stimulating and interesting to work with, and she did a great deal. She and Miss Smith, in my opinion, did a great deal to launch a program that finally made Children's Hospital what it is today. Since then, Mrs. Gabriel Duque has come in, and she, too, has really given her life to that hospital. But I really feel that it began with Dr. John D. Lyttle, the new medical director; Mildred Smith, the administrator; and Dorothy Chandler, the board member.

SCHIPPERS: And what did they do? What made it?

ACKERMAN: First of all, they did get a medical director, which Children's Hospital had never had. And that was the basis of everything; it became a teaching

hospital. He came from Babies' Hospital in New York. The first thing that we did was begin working on personnel policy. There had been none previously. Some people had worked there for twenty years and never had been given a raise. Someone else had worked there two or three months and had been given $40. Coming from the county, I was familiar with the county program of raises and fringe benefits and everything. We had a committee that made the first personnel policy, and I wrote the booklet, "It's a Nice Place to Work." I'll send it to you. I found it very satisfying to work with Mrs. Chandler and Miss Smith. Miss Smith was demanding and strict, but I certainly learned a great deal from her.

SCHIPPERS: In looking back over your whole career, which of these occupations stands out most and is nearest to your heart?

ACKERMAN: Oh, Juvenile Hall, by far. There was one boy who wanted so much to be a dentist. He happened to get a probation officer who had little time for his children--you know, there were all kinds, some who were so wonderful. He would come in and see the boy and in ten or fifteen minutes be out; he had his life planned. Many children didn't know his name. He went down to a bank where [the boy's] mother, a widow, was working and began discussing this boy in Juvenile Hall

with her over the counter. Everyone around heard this. And the boy wanted to be a dentist. He was the grandest kid. And [he was at the Hall for] grand theft auto. Oh, with some of these older boys, the things that happened would make you sick. He had a Juvenile Hall record. I have no idea what happened to him. I just regret that we didn't have more time and, as I say, that I didn't have the courage to request more money and to spend more money. I was too careful about it.

I also had a satisfying experience at Children's Hospital. Dr. Harry Dietrich said that I sparkplugged the national child safety program. There was none at the time, and Dr. Etta Jeancon, an opthalmologist, stimulated my interest in it. It's too long a story to tell, but we did get interested. Dr. Dietrich, in turn, contacted the American Academy of Pediatrics. I did a great deal, really. I planned twenty-one talks on child safety in one month, with our doctors giving them. Finally, I collected all the objects children had swallowed or inhaled on a big poster, and that was copied by the Red Cross. I wrote the first booklet; Dr. Jeancon paid for the printing, and then Prudential Insurance Company [of America] printed 250,000 and in a very short time printed 250,000 more, and my caption was "Safety, Your Child's Heritage." I got students from the Art Center [College of Design] to do the pictures for nothing,

but they did get a little money later. Many of the captions on those pictures one hears over the radio today in the Midwest. For example, "The soap will float; your baby won't." So many babies die in the bathtub. [Launching the program] was a satisfying experience, too.

SCHIPPERS: Now you said that you have something to say about evaluation.

ACKERMAN: Oh, yes. I wish that those responsible for the graduates in any type of welfare work especially, or in correctional institutions--administrators or volunteers (oh, volunteers, bless them, they want to do so much, but too frequently they are so uninformed)--would etch the word "evaluation" upon their soul and their brain. I constantly see things happening. Someone suddenly has a bright idea, an emotional idea perhaps, and it's extremely interesting; or it's extremely easy, it appears, to convince a large group of volunteers that this is what we need. [This is done] without any evaluation. Maybe there is a need in that area, but in this other area, is there a greater need? Now I feel that at Juvenile Hall if people had just taken time to study a few statistics, [it would have improved the situation]. As an example, I have before me, from Mr. Bogan's annual report, the Juvenile Court petitions and the population. Well, in 1930, which was the year

after I went there, we admitted 4,853 children; we were not overcrowded. During these years of the bond issues, there was this campaign to increase all. The admissions went up over six thousand in one year. Then what happened? (These are not my ideas; these are facts.) From 1947 to 1951 inclusive, the number of children being admitted to Juvenile Hall (this was after I left), each year was less than it was in 1930 when I went there. But what about the census? It was up much, much higher, up to 371. Why? Well, there aren't enough outlets for one thing; they weren't adequate, and eight hundred returned. But this happens in any field; you will see this in hospitals. Oh, there are many examples. A department head will express a need, and perhaps it will be an interesting one, but it has to be evaluated. Maybe there was a need in the X-ray department or the records room or whatever it may be. But again we must calmly, in my opinion, look over the entire area that we're responsible for. Where is the greatest immediate need? I mean, if people would just pause and get facts, and so often it doesn't take long to get them. But too frequently I think that workers and volunteers become emotional, and they just sweep ahead in a wave of enthusiasm which is misdirected.

SCHIPPERS: It certainly was the case regarding the

expansion of the Hall.

ACKERMAN: I believe so. I firmly believe that when I resigned from Juvenile Hall in 1943, the young people in Los Angeles County and the majority of my employees did not want a larger detention home. They wanted, and I wanted, more money spent in the community to improve conditions for underprivileged girls and boys; certainly more money was needed for better quality and more outlets. For years Los Angeles had the cart before the horse. Other institutions could not match our program, and countless children preferred Juvenile Hall to any placement.

I sacrificed a county pension, which I could use today, but I have no regrets. Before leaving the Hall, I sent a letter to the Board of Supervisors (copies were sent to the Probation Department, to the Judge of the Juvenile Court and there is one in the files at UCLA) stating that "the citizens in Los Angeles will rue the day they enlarged the Hall." That day was followed by the night of Watts.

APPENDIX

Foreign Visitors to Juvenile Hall*

1936-1937

Constance Duncan, Well-on-Rue, Australia
Una Cato, Melbourne, Australia
Jacqueline de Rothschalf, Paris, France
Ida L. Fraser, Sydney, Australia
Kathleen Rivals, Sydney, Australia
Dolores P. Alonso, Managua, Nicaragua

1937-1938

Aha de Bates, Arequipa, Peru
Caris E. Mills, Istanbul, Turkey
Reverend Sado Masuka, Hirosaki, Japan
Fumi Asazama, Tokyo, Japan
Mrs. Hiski Matsuko, Tokyo, Japan
Judge Francis M. Brook, Honolulu, Hawaii
Baron C. Van der Brugger, Brussels, Belgium
Mrs. Douglas Hanne, Belfast, Ireland
Mrs. H. E. Aldridge, South Australia
S. Nag, Lt. Colonel H.M.S., Calcutta, India
James Heedle, Southend-on-Sea, England
Edward Heedle, Southend-on-Sea, England
Miss Wilkes, Newcastle-on-Tyne, England
Mrs. Brookes, Melbourne, Australia

1939-1940

Mr. and Mrs. Hildebrandt, Sydney, Australia
Charles H. Guyatt, London, England
Nova E. Young, Honolulu, Hawaii
Thomas and Villa Greenwood, London, England
Y. Shuimidzu, Chaoyang, China

*This partial list of foreign visitors was compiled by Miss Ackerman from the available records of Juvenile Hall. Most of the visitors were involved in either juvenile court or child welfare work in their own country.

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