FRANCES LOMAS FELDMAN
Interviewed by Maurice B. Hamovitch
In the School of Social Work, USC
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HAMOVITCH: This is Tuesday, October 24, 1989. I have the privilege of interviewing you in connection with the California Social Welfare Archives in order to learn about you and your experiences in social work in California. Frances, let me start with asking you when and why you first became interested in social work.

FELDMAN: I became interested in the summer of 1934, when a friend who had been a pre-medical student with me called to tell me that if I took off my lipstick and put on some glasses and went to see a particular woman at such and such an address, she would give me a job as a social worker for the summer. I didn't know what a social worker was. He explained it was someone who works for the city or the state or the county. This was for the state and it helped people. So I went down for the job because I had a Bachelor's degree, which was all that was needed. I got the job.

HAMOVITCH: What was your major?

FELDMAN: My major was chemistry. Actually, I had two majors because I had also been interested in literature. So I had a literature major as well as one in chemistry. You either had to have chemistry or biology to complete the pre-medical requirements for medical school.

HAMOVITCH: You were admitted to the medical school?

FELDMAN: Yes, I was definitely to go in September, and I was admitted as one of four girls. This was the largest number the USC Medical School had. Sometimes they had none, and sometimes they had one or two. Four was a good number, we could handle an anatomy table and share other things. I jumped at the job as a social worker and never looked back and never entered medical school. I heard about this for most of the rest of my life, because one of the other three girls became my sister-in-law, and one of the others became my child's pediatrician. So they were always reminding me.

HAMOVITCH: What did your brothers think about your leaving?

FELDMAN: Well, they got the point. The youngest of my brothers, Max, kind of liked the idea, though he was disappointed. Some years later, (1950), when Al (my husband) and I went to Chicago so that we could take what we thought was an educational vacation, my brother, Jack, was still saying, "Listen, it's still not too late. They will take you into the medical school." He still had that idea for the rest of his life that I should become a doctor and practice with Max and Jack. I could go into medical school, but for me, it was right not to.

HAMOVITCH: Obviously, for the field, it was right not to. Another question, why did this friend tell you that you should take off your lipstick and put on glasses?

FELDMAN: I think that was a stereotype of the day, that social workers were grumpy women--men rarely became social workers, but grumpy women with petticoats showing below the hem of the skirt, would. Moreover, a grumpy woman would wear glasses, which I didn't own at that time.

HAMOVITCH: When you got the job, and you worked at it awhile, did you find that this stereotype was accurate for the most part?

FELDMAN: No, actually, there were a lot of young women and young men at the time--all really very excited over this new program which was one of the first of the federal government. It was viewed with great excitement about what we could do. There were some grumpy women and grumpy men but, really, for the most part they were just normally dressed people with a usual facade.

HAMOVITCH: What was your experience?

FELDMAN: It really was very exciting. I started with a handicap because the condition of my having the job was knowing how to drive. I didn't know how to drive. The afternoon that I got the job, I called my brother who was working as a librarian while he was going to medical school. He came home with the car, showed me how to drive, took me down to the Motor Vehicle Office, and I took a practical test and passed--not because I was skilled. You didn't have to have a written examination then. Someone simply took you out for a field test. He asked me where I came from. He found out I was born in Philadelphia, and he was too. I don't think he noticed any of my many mistakes. The next morning, Al, who was courting me, came over in his car and followed me to a point on North Broadway, where my fellow pre-med student, who became a well-known orthopedist, and had told me about the job, followed me in his car to the new office in Lincoln heights, a district of the newly established California State Relief Administration, which was part of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration.

I got there and it was chaotic. Harry Hopkins, who was the FERA Administrator under Roosevelt, had said that in order to keep politics out of the welfare program there had to be a trained worker in every office. There was one here, a graduate of the New York School, who had recently transferred to California. My first client-family was in financial need because the husband, a street-car conductor who, like his fellow workers, was out because of a nation-wide railroad strike. Everybody who worked on the Los Angeles City lines as well as in interstate transportation, was on strike. They had been for a number of months and were having financial difficulty. This was also the time when Harry Hopkins said the FERA will "not aid strikers, but we will aid their families." So their families were to be helped. My director, Alice Orans, handed me a grocery order and said, "Deliver it." I didn't know what to do with it, but the instructions were on the back of the order. But my first task was to get myself in my car to the address of the family.

HAMOVITCH: Where did you get the car?

FELDMAN: It was the family car. My brother just used it to go to medical school and to his after-school job, and he could manage without it. I got the car. It was a hand-me-down which we had acquired from our other brother, Jack, who had just finished medical school and who was interning. He was earning ten dollars a month. With that ten dollars a month, of course, he had room and board as an intern; he was married, and his wife was a school teacher. They had bought a new car and Max and I acquired the old car. That was a pretty normal way of acquiring things in that period.

When I reached the client's address, I sat outside at the top of the hill. The street ended there and there was a field on the other side. I began to read the instructions in fine print on the back of the grocery order, when a car pulled up behind me and a woman stepped out. She had seen me arrive in the office, and sent out. She gave me my first instructions: how you know whether a family is in need and how you get them to tell you their problems. She had had some ten years' experience within the county's welfare program. About ten years later, she was working for me. I had never forgotten her kindness in following me, because I obviously didn't know what I was doing. Then I also had the help of the family. They didn't know, either. We read the instructions together. (They kept in touch with me for a long time afterwards.) That was a really critical beginning. When I left the home, I had to work my way around the top of the hill in my car and down the steep street. I had one foot on the clutch and one on the brake, not knowing that with pressure on the clutch, you just rolled. I came to a miraculous stop at the bottom of the hill. I never had any fears about driving after that. Once you get past that crisis, you can get past anything.

I didn't have any anxieties about interviewing. It was very exciting because you had such visible evidence that you were being helpful. When Al was courting me, he would walk three miles to my house every night. He was a research chemist, just out of Johns Hopkins. (He had a job as a chemist, but he was were working only two or three days a week during the Depression.) Research chemistry didn't have the excitement I had in my job. I would tell him about my clients. He said, "Do you think I could get a job like that?" He went down and got one in a different district of the FERA. He became a social worker and he, too, never looked back. For both of us, it was really the right field. Lola Selby worked in his district, and Jo DiPaola and others you know, were in mine.

HAMOVITCH: Well, what happened in 1934?

FELDMAN: Well, actually, I got fired. I began on June 21, and I was fired on November 1 because somebody discovered I wasn't twenty-one. I could not legally sign certain documents. Alice Orans referred me to the Torrance Recreation Department where they had some federal money for story tellers. I worked as a story teller on the playground in Torrance until my birthday on December 3, when I was notified to come back to work, but assigned to a different district. So I returned after--I think it was about five weeks. That was the only time in my life I've been fired. It wasn't really my first experience as a story teller, although I didn't remember this until just a couple of years ago. When we came to California, I was eight. On our second day in California, my brother had discovered the public library, and we spent a lot of time there. The librarian suggested that I could spend my Saturdays very productively if I were to read to children in the Orthopedic Hospital or tell them stories. I began as a story teller at the Orthopedic Hospital. I sometimes wonder that my mother let me take a street car, when I was eight years old, to the Orthopedic Hospital, which was quite a distance from where we lived. I did that all through elementary school. I still went to the Orthopedic Hospital when I started junior high school. I stopped only when I got to senior high school. I don't remember why, but it didn't work out after that.

HAMOVITCH: So you did have some background?

FELDMAN: I had that, yes.

HAMOVITCH: When you got re-hired, what did you do and how long was it before you began with the graduate social work program?

FELDMAN: Actually, I had begun to take courses to have some more systematic understanding of what I was doing and of human behavior. You learn a great deal from literature about human behavior. I'd been interested in human behavior in different time periods and how the environment can influence it. It gave me a very good start at understanding things I was seeing as a social worker, but I missed having a systematic understanding. So I began to take courses at USC. There was a master of science in social work, which was under the department of sociology. I took courses in interviewing (from Bessie McClenahan) and research (from Erle Young) from whom I really didn't learn anything because the professor was not interested in teaching research, but, rather, how to build mud houses. I took several courses in race relations from Emory Bogardus. I was very interested at that time, also, in his theory of social distance, for which he later became renowned. We became very good friends around race relations. I completed pretty much the first year. So did Al.

Al and I had decided that--we had been married now for several years--it was time for me to move on. We really approached the idea of professional education systematically. I would be first, and he would be second, and that's the way it would work out. He continued to work while I went to school. Arlien Johnson was coming to start up the two-year MSW program. Ruby Inlow had come that summer of 1939 as a consultant to Family Service of Los Angeles and was to be on the faculty in September. I had a field placement that summer at Family Service. I had completed a whole first year and the first year of my field work instruction. In September, I came back to school for my second year, one of the four people who were full time in the second-year program.

HAMOVITCH: How many were in the first year?

FELDMAN: We were the only full-time ones in the second year and there was a new group in the first year. There couldn't have been very many because I got my MSW in June of 1940, one of five. Al got his MSW the following year, and he was the only graduate that year. He had seriously thought about not going to commencement exercises. Ruby Inlow said it was going to be up to her to call on the graduates and if none were there, she would have no one to stand up, and so he changed his mind and went to the commencement exercises. I don't know how many students there were in the School. We finished writing our theses and this was something that was very difficult for many students, but I don't know.

HAMOVITCH: So you graduated in 1940? When did Al start going?

FELDMAN: Al also had been taking courses part time. Sometimes we were in the same classes and sometimes, not. He had completed a whole first year, which was great. In the summer of 1939--the same summer--he began to do field work in the research department of the Welfare Planning Council. The next year they hired him, and he worked there. He worked there part time while he was going to school. When he finished in 1941, he had been going full time.

HAMOVITCH: So he started a while ago.

FELDMAN: Yes, and he was there until he went into military service in March of 1942. Pearl Harbor was in December of 1941. Then, when he finished his military service in 1945, he returned to the Council.

HAMOVITCH: In the meantime, after he graduated, what did you do?

FELDMAN: Well, after I graduated, I had....

HAMOVITCH: You had quit your job?

FELDMAN: Yes, I had quit in 1939 to become a full-time student. I had quit at a very good time because a lot of political manipulation had begun to take place. In almost every office in the State, the people who were the administrators were people who had come out of politics or military service. They hired other people who had other important political connections. Al and I had married only with the knowledge of all our relatives and friends, but not our work officials because Charles Schottland, the Director of the State Relief Administration, and George Nickel, who was the State Director of Social Services in the SRA, thought that there would be a time when nepotism would be an ugly word. Charles had told Al that he thought we should not make any official announcements. So we didn’t. We announced it, in fact, when we got married again in Los Angeles four years later. At that time, it would appear officially in the press. So we were married twice. Shortly after I left, nepotism did become a very significant term. Milton Chernin, then in Berkeley's Public Administration Institute, was married to a social worker. In a large community meeting, he said, "Who would marry a social worker but another social worker?" He thought it was unrealistic that social workers married to each other should not be in the same organization; but it now was officially against policy. We escaped the problem in that because I had already left. I hadn't foreseen the future, though Charles Schottland predicted it.

HAMOVITCH: So he was director more than once?

FELDMAN: Yes, he was director of the State Relief Administration, then went into private law practice, and then he headed up the Jewish Welfare Federation in Los Angeles. He became the director of the State Department of Social Welfare following Martha Chickering and Al Wollenberg. Martha Chickering was a social worker, but Wollenberg was a political person. Charles came in really to reorganize the state department at Governor Warren's request.

HAMOVITCH: And George Nickel, who ran the Social Services?

FELDMAN: He was an early graduate of USC, I think 1926. While I was in the State Relief Administration, I had been a case worker for less than a year and then was made a supervisor. Then I was moved up to the next level which was head supervisor. The offices were gigantic. Aside from supervising the intake staff; my recurring responsibility was to meet every week with the County Welfare Department intake supervisor. It was then called the Bureau of Indigent Relief. It retained that name until I want to the County some years later as the district director of Belvedere District, and we were able to change the Bureau's name to Bureau of Public

Assistance. As an intake supervisor in SRA, I would meet every week with the people of the public county agency which had the early categorical aids and poor relief. Their responsibility was to give help to people who were indigent, poor, and unemployable; they also administered the Old Age Assistance program and the Aid to the Blind and the beginning of Aid to Dependent Children. There were no federal funds for those programs. The costs were divided between state and county, with all non-categorical aid funds coming out of the general county taxes. Their job was to shrink the case load, to take only those people who truly were unemployable. The State Relief Administration could not aid people who were not employable. This was a very serious problem because many people had been independent until the Depression struck; they had never thought of themselves as anything but employable. Now the likelihood for many of them ever going back into the labor force was very small. To persuade the county to take them, with their never-ending problems, was difficult. We had very few voluntary agencies at the time, and they rarely gave financial assistance: the Salvation Army, in certain parts of the city, Volunteers of America, in certain parts. This was a major task that I had until I left in 1939.

HAMOVITCH: So then you went to school, and then you got your degree.

FELDMAN: Then I got a job. In fact, I think that Arlien Johnson referred me to it, or it to me. The United Way, then the Community Chest, was having some trouble raising funds, and the board of directors had decided that it was important to see if any of the agencies that were in the Community Chest were actually helping people who should be aided by the public agencies. So they conducted a study known as the Loebeke study. Loebeke was on the Community Chest Board, and still is as far as I know. He found funds himself for this study because the

Community Chest didn't have any. I worked for three months on that study. For me this was a very valuable experience because I went to every agency that had any kind of funds from the Community Chest and I examined their intake policies.

HAMOVITCH: By this time your driving skills made it possible to drive all over the place?

FELDMAN: Yes, it was great. I knew how to drive my way around Los Angeles. At that time the Community Chest covered only Los Angeles City and none of the other nearby towns. Los Angeles was pretty big because San Pedro was part of it and Lancaster was part of it. It was a gigantic area without any of the incorporated cities. It was a fascinating experience because I learned things not only about the way agencies operated, but also why the Community Chest gave money to some where you really saw no contemporary problem that would be connected with helping people, but rather because they had always been given Chest money and because somebody on the board of the agency was very influential with the Community Chest. You saw agencies that really needed a lot more help but were limited in what was available to them because the total goal of the Community Chest was pretty low. You saw behavior among agencies that made you wonder. One, for example, was a mission in San Pedro. I have forgotten the name of it. It primarily served sailors. They were all "John Does." They all had to go to church services before they could get breakfast or before they had lunch or before they had a bed at night. The director was very conscientious about clearing every one of those with the Social Service Exchange. They would clear all these John Does with the Social Service Exchange to get that pink or yellow slip, showing that there were no other agencies involved in aiding the particular person. At one point he had about eight John Does at the same time, none of them having had "service" elsewhere. All were seamen.

Al, at this time, had just gone to the Research Division of the Planning Council. I had been telling him about this mission, and he became interested in how agencies viewed the Social Service Exchange. It had a function in the Nineteenth Century that no longer was suitable. That eventually led to a discontinuance of the Social Service Exchange, a cost that had no justification.

After the Loebeke study, Arlien Johnson prevailed on me to go to the Los Angeles City Housing Authority. In 1939 the Federal Housing Administration was created, and Los Angeles City was one of the first to establish a Public Housing Authority to set up a program for slum clearance and construction of public housing. I became director of Tenant Selection and Slum Clearance. Now I learned a very different side of Los Angeles, both geographically and "horrifically." We had the task of helping families to find other housing so that the area where they lived could be demolished and a new slum clearance housing project put in. We had actually built the first housing project--Ramona Gardens--in an area that was cleared land, and families had not had to be moved. That's where my office was. It was especially interesting because the Taxpayers Association was very strong in its opposition. They were saying that "these people" won't know how to live in a housing project, and the Association would fight us. The families wouldn't know what to do: they would store coal in the bath tubs. Clearly the Association had been in touch with its New York counterparts and simply adapted their protests to southern California. I saw families move in to Ramona Gardens, immediately hanging their dingy laundry on the outside clothes lines. And when we saw the same laundry week after week, it was turning white. They had not had any hot water before. You saw a change in lifestyle and it was quite interesting. I used to talk about it with taxpayer groups. Every now and then there would be a press release about what the effect was on the families living there. Afterwards, at the end of 1941, and by the beginning of 1942, the program had become war housing. I was not interested in staying there.

Family Service of Los Angeles offered me a job. So I left the Housing Authority. This was now in January of 1942. Al had been working at the Research Division of the Planning Council. By February of 1942, he was in military service and was there until November of 1945. Then he went back to the Planning Council, at that time to the Research Division. He also had the job of demolishing the Social Service Exchange. In lieu of that, he set up the Welfare Information Service. He started and operated that, which now is the LA County InfoLine. I went to Los Angeles Family Service as a caseworker, but within two months I was setting up the first Homemaker Service in Los Angeles. I find that anything I do is interesting: I tend to do it because I think it is going to be interesting. Homemaker Service was something that I had really picked up in the State Relief Administration, where there was a Housekeeping Project. You may remember that under FERA (the parent agency of SRA), there were work projects. The Housekeeper Service had been developed as a way of assigning work for women who had never done anything except be at home, but would know about keeping house. These women began getting jobs. SRA had Housekeeping Projects so that the housekeepers could help people who were sick; they could take care of them. SRA also had the first adult education courses, which led to developing skills among people who had never worked. That had appealed to me, because I saw people who were so thrilled at being able to use the skills they had acquired, if only to just care for their own families.

During the war, there was a problem in how to help families where the husband was in service, the mother might have to work, or the wife became sick; what was to be done with the children? So we developed a Homemaker Service in Family Service. It turned out that in New York, the Jewish family agency had such a program, and I began to write to them when, eventually, I learned about it. The idea had come to me really out of the Housekeeping Project: we set up a Homemaker Program where we recruited and trained women who could go as substitute mothers into homes where only one parent was available and needed help. Or there might be two parents, but one was sick. It was to keep the family intact. This program continued for a few years. Sometime later, I went back to give them some help in retraining some of the women. When Al and I came back from Chicago in 1953, the program was still operating. They had run into some kind of a snag. I don't really remember now what it was, but I went back for six months to help them reorganize it and get it back on track.

HAMOVITCH: Well yes, of course it is back. There are a number of similar programs available now for the elderly and disabled.

FELDMAN: They are similar. The FSA Homemaker Service was a forerunner. So I did that. George Nickel, whose path had crossed mine so many times, was on the board of Family Service of Los Angeles. He was the chair of their personnel committee. Sometimes after the board meetings, we would have lunch together. One day he said, "The County is going to reorganize its public welfare program, and they are looking for new blood, and you should apply." I was really not interested. This was in 1943. Al was stationed up at Berkeley. He was being trained to drop behind the German lines, knowing any dialect of German that was indigenous to the area. I would go up to Berkeley if I could afford it. I never had enough rationed gas to drive there. I would go every couple of weeks by bus and train and spend the weekend. Al would still be on duty, but I would see him there for a while. I wasn't about to make a change in my schedule. One day George Nickel said, "Let's have lunch at Philippe's." We went there, and he carefully walked me back by way of the County Administration Building and stood there while I made an application for district director in what was still the Bureau of Indigent Relief. I really did it because of him. I had no expectation that they would be interested in me, but I began to read more about what they were doing. I still had the great interest in public welfare which had developed earlier, as you know. I had no preparation for the examination, and it was a written examination with a section of essays for which three hours was allowed. There also were a lot of questions, you know: multiple choice and that kind of thing.

HAMOVITCH: You had just made your application, and you had that three-hour essay to write.

FELDMAN: Yes, and I didn't hear anything for a couple of months. I really forgot about it. One day I received a telephone call at Family Service from a woman named Alice Mertz. She said, "Who the hell are your?" I had never heard of her before. I said, "Well, you asked for me by my name, so you must know." She said, "How did this happen that you were number one on the list?" I did not know that on Tuesdays, when the list was posted, the Civil Service Commission reported on the first three people on the list for public knowledge. I was number one on that list. She asked if I was going to take the job, and I told her I didn't know and that nobody had offered it to me. She called me every day for a week to find out if anyone had called me. I did get a call from Beulah Lewis. She was a graduate of this School in the early 'Thirties. She had been with Medical Social Service at the County Hospital as Chief of Social

Services. Arthur Will had become the Superintendent of Charities and, at that time, had responsibility for all public welfare and for all health services–not public health, but medical health services. He had now talked Beulah into heading up the Bureau of Indigent Relief. He was a man who believed very much in standards. He had now been head of the department for a couple of years; prior management had largely been political appointees and the department was rife with politics. He had gone to the Board of Supervisors and insisted that there had to be new standards. Professional, qualified people had to be in the department, that this in the long run would be a favor not only to human lives but money, too. They had allowed him to go ahead.

There were fourteen districts in the Bureau of Indigent Relief. Everybody, in effect, was there because of political appointment. They also had tenure. He was able to reorganize the department. There had been different public assistance offices for aid to the aged and the blind, and Aid to Dependent Children (ADC). These now had federal as well as state money. The ADC offices had also included general relief clients. All were in separate offices, and Will combined them into single districts, serving a geographic area and in that way, was able to open up three director positions. He took in three people with social work degrees. The others (Honora Costigan and Opal Cundiff) also were graduates of this School. They had been graduated with MSSWs and had a lot of experience. I was the youngest of the three. I was the youngest district director in the county. Beulah Lewis talked with me first, and she was very excited about everything. Then I talked with Mr. Will. He asked me some interesting questions. How long I had been on the job? How long I had been married? How long I had lived at the same address? He was looking for stability. Then he asked me if it worried me to be on the receiving end of criticism. I didn’t think it did, but I really didn’t know because I hadn’t had that experience. This was October of 1943.

HAMOVITCH: How did Al feel about it?

FELDMAN: Al was at Berkeley, and I had been writing to him. He thought it was exciting. He said this is “something you gotta do.” Beulah Lewis and I became good friends. Will later became County Administrative Officer (and he was followed by his son). He called me in one day and said that I better go see my husband that weekend. Why? Will said Al was going to be moving out. He knew that because his son’s unit was moving in. So I did go and see Al at Camp Cook, where he’d been transferred after completing the German training. A few days after I was there, Al left.

My daughter was born in 1945. I was at California Lutheran Hospital. I couldn’t understand why my room was filled with flowers. All the men in my family were overseas. The only person who was around was Stella, (my brother Max’s wife), and I had stayed with her for several days before going to the Hospital. To my surprise, the superintendent of the Hospital came in every day to see how I was. Then I discovered that Arthur Will had called him and told him to take care of me. So even though it was war-time, I was there for two weeks (instead of the war-time 3 days), and that man came to see me every day.

Arthur Will would show up nearly every day. He was a very cold kind of person on the outside, but he was really warm and generous. He was very conservative, but you could move him in a more liberal direction. If you gave him enough of a reason, then he would help you carry out your wishes. Because he was conservative, was really why he had gotten the appointment to begin with. His conviction about the importance of human services and the importance of standards really carried him a long way. He and I and Beulah became very good friends. This was in 1945. Now it was the Bureau of Public Assistance. In the position of District Director, I had a lot of opportunity to talk with him about needs of people.

When I went into the district, it was the largest family district in the agency. It was an amalgam of three offices. People from different offices didn't talk to each other. My office was in the East LA Health Center. The previous director had a very large office with a wood paneled wall which divided his office from a very large room in which one hundred workers' desks were located. There were some other rooms also with one hundred desks. My predecessor had removed one of those panels, so he could watch what everybody was doing. I put the panel back. People wondered "how come" when they came to my office. I was not about to spy on them.

Those who had come from Old Age Assistance, still didn't talk to the people who had come out of ADC or general relief. I had my first real experience in how you get a staff of people to work together. It turned out to be a very simple thing. I set up a committee involving people from these different segments and the clerical staff--because this man's idea had been that the social workers had been there only to carry out things that the clerical staff did; they were the ones who were "at the top." We had to really build the social worker's self esteem as a professional staff and get them on an even level. So we set up a committee. I had trouble at first getting some people to serve on it. Until after I found out whose interests were what, I had made some mistakes, but then I could correct them by adding more people. The committee would have two tasks. One was to help me plan an agenda for Friday morning meetings which everybody had to attend. The other task was to arrange for coffee at those meetings. Over coffee they couldn't fight. It was really a phenomenal experience. It took quite a while, but it worked very well.

We set up different kinds of committees. I would meet regularly with the clerical personnel to help them understand that they could not leave certain things out of the dictation just because it was something they already knew. I tried to explain to them that certain kinds of behavior which the worker would note, were significant because it would help us understand what to do to help these people to behave differently. I conducted an educational program for clerical staff along with one for the others. Being located in the county health building, I began also to work with the medical staff and students from the Health Department, and with Zdenka Buben, who was head of the Health Department's Social Services Bureau--though located in their central office. Then I set up a community-wide committee. It included Welfare and Health Department people, representatives of the Sheriff's Department, the local Coordinating Committee (accountable then to the Probation Department), and several community people. We then set up the Delinquency Control Committee. All were very interested in juvenile delinquency, for the Belvedere area was the heart of the Zoot Suit riots. While I was getting my MSW, I also had taken courses in public administration. Except for writing the thesis, I had completed all of my work for a master's degree there. I had come to know John Pfiffner very well. He and Norrie Class had become interested increasingly in delinquency control and some of the needs in my gigantic district which had many named communities and much unincorporated area as far as the County line.

HAMOVITCH: Now, Norrie came to this School in 1941?

FELDMAN: Yes, and I had known him before.

HAMOVITCH: So you took courses before?

FELDMAN: No, I knew him because when I was writing my thesis, which was on training and public welfare, Arlien had suggested that I write to him. He handled child welfare in Oregon. We became pen pals. Then he came down to Los Angeles for an interview about coming to this School. He stayed with Al and me. I had not met him before except through correspondence. That's when we became friends. Then he came in 1941 because I was still with the slum clearance program . He didn't like my leaving it because he said they were going to need people like me, but I just didn't want to be in war housing. Then he was already talking about what could be done about delinquency control. I had been telling Norrie about Captain Stallings in the sheriff's office, who had begun to develop a very active program with me around East Los Angeles area. (He was to become an important member of the USC Delinquency Control Institute Planning Committee). Norrie and Pfiffner and I met and then we--primarily Pfiffner--brought other people onto a committee. He especially involved Commander Lester of the Los Angeles Police Department--and that's how the Delinquency Control Institute idea started. We met every week for a couple of years, every Thursday. It started in 1945. Al was overseas at the time. I had begun to teach courses in public administration, in 1940, as soon as I got my MSW (and, also, University College social work courses at Arlien's invitation). I taught supervisory training for public administration and those courses attracted men returning form military service and entering--or returning to--law enforcement organizations. So I already knew some law-enforcement people.

HAMOVITCH: Tell me about your affiliation with USC from the non-student end of things. You were district director, and then you were deputy director of the bureau from when to when?

FELDMAN: I was district director for the Belvedere District of the Bureau from October 1943 until March 1945. Then I became deputy director for the county. I did that for a year. I found that too difficult because Dona had been born, and I had felt it was very important that I be with her. (Al was still overseas) and I was with her not only before I went to work, but also, when I got home. Arthur Will would call me at five o'clock and say, "Will you go with so and so to such and such a place and give them a talk about something." He might do this four times a week, which would cut into my evenings. I found that I just couldn't do that. I went back to Belvedere, and I stayed there until 1948. In that year, there was a referendum to transfer the aged and blind categorical aid programs from County to State administration. (The aforementioned George McLain spearheaded this). I had always thought that state administration was better than local administration of welfare--with their special local interests. I took a leave of absence from the County and became State Social Services Officer for twenty counties. I learned a lot of things. One was that state administration was not good. Norris Class and I had a bet; he said that the referendum would not pass, and I thought it would. We bet five dollars (he was at the U of Chicago), and he sent me a check for $4.95, deducting the cost of the airmail stamp. The next year there were a number of petitions to return these two programs to the counties (which I now favored!), and another referendum in 1949 did this. Again, Norrie and I had bet $5.00 on the outcome. Now he sent me the full five dollars because he was overdue in meeting this obligation!

I went back to Los Angeles County and had responsibility now for the Metropolitan District. This district was largely focused on old age and blind programs. I stayed there until we decided to go to Chicago in 1950. So I was in that office for a year. I took a leave from the County because I thought we were only going to be one year on our "educational vacation."

Then, when I realized we would be there another year, I asked for an extension, which they gave me. After two years I realized I could not go back to being the way I was. I wanted to do something else. So I resigned from the County and that experience, but not before we had really done a lot of things. When in the Belvedere District, I had been able to persuade Arthur Will that because there were so few volunteer agencies serving that area from the city line to the county line, that we ought to have well-trained staff there to do some of the things voluntary agencies do. So we created a new category of senior social workers, people with a Master's degree. We experimented with them in Belvedere. Among them were Wayne Davidson and Marion Copleston, USC MSWs. These also encouraged others there to seek professional training: Sylvia Nichols Novak, June Brown, Ione Grannis, and others. One of the senior workers, Ellis (Pat) Murphy, a Missouri MSW, later became director of the whole Bureau.

We also got a County Counsel opinion that we, in the absence of voluntary agencies in the region, could provide services even when there was no eligibility for public assistance per se: protective services and foster placements, for example. (Incidentally, a number of years later, as special consultant to USC President Hubbard, I had occasion to confer with this attorney on a USC matter; we were astonished to see each other: he had known me by my maiden name, which I used until we went to Chicago, and he was now a primary attorney for USC. He told me how hard he had had to work to discover a precedent that would permit the exception to state and county policy.)

HAMOVITCH: June didn't have a Master's degree?

FELDMAN: No, she came in as a public assistance worker in child welfare, but she worked with several of these people who were trained, and she began to see that there were similarities.

June also was the first black person in that area. Belvedere District had a lot of lower class, hard-hat people. It also had one of the largest Mexican population outside of Mexico City, the Maravilla area. Immediately adjoining that was a very disruptive conservative group. We could not bring a black person into that district without causing a lot of problems. I kept looking for someone with qualities I thought suitable. Civil Service regulations required that only two names could be excluded from a list of eligibles, and I had been sent a steady stream of African-Americans and others from the list, but I didn't think they would fit, and I had quite a time persuading them not to consider this district (mostly convincing them we were too far away). I really had to talk some out of the appointment. Some of these people also spoke Spanish, which we needed. June was referred; she had been a Spanish major at UCLA. I couldn't hire her because she wasn't yet of age! She thought that I wasn't taking her because I didn't like her. But on her 21st birthday, I sent her a telegram (reminiscent of when I had been re-hired on my first social work job). She came to work on her 21st birthday. She was the first black in that area, and people liked her and she was very good. She also really picked up some of the sense of importance of social work education.

HAMOVITCH: The way she tells the story is that the way she picked it up is by you pushing her.

FELDMAN: I pushed her. I pushed quite a few of those people and quite a few of those people actually went on to get an education in social work, either here or someplace else. We had a very good staff. They did a wonderful job of service and we did a lot of good things. We had the senior workers. I used to have the staff give me memos about problems they encountered. One of our big problems was the County Store. There was no mandatory requirement that ADC families have a clothing allowance, which I thought desirable (and later was mandated by federal and state regulation). The man who ran the County, the Chief Administrative Officer (Arthur Will's predecessor), not only thought the County Store was an economy for the County, but proudly proclaimed that as a child, he had walked barefoot for five miles to get to school. He saw no reason to permit families to buy shoes when they were available in the County Store. Then we had a couple of children run away because they didn't want to go to school where, when they undressed for gym, they were wearing the kinds of underclothes that marked them as "County Store children." I had the staff write these memos; I would send them on to Arthur Will, and he really tried to abolish the Store in favor of clothing allowances. As Superintendent of Charities, he couldn't do it because, for one thing, women who had no experience, could work as seamstresses and make these clothes, thus working out their welfare budgets. So you had a sewing process which produced sometimes-gigantic and sometimes-miniature clothes; here were all these kids suffering as a result of this often-inept (but not always) sewing process where the Store would buy thousands of yards of identical material. You knew who was getting welfare! The idea of confidentiality was not yet popular. When Pat Murphy became director of public welfare, he gathered together those old memos. Now Arthur Will was the Chief Administrative Officer. Together they took this matter to the Board of Supervisors and got rid of the County Store. That was 18 years ago.

HAMOVITCH: That's a beautiful story.

FELDMAN: You sometimes think that you don't really see how some things are going to end, but that if you keep talking about something, it will happen. Belvedere was a really marvelous experience. We tried a lot of other things. The Friar's Club would have a Thanksgiving celebration. We had three thousand children in foster care in Belvedere. Somebody from the Friar’s Club called once and said they would like to have as many children as we wanted to come to a Thanksgiving lunch. I thought about that lunch, and I decided that would be fine. They said they would give each a present; I hoped they might give them something that the children, who were in institutions and foster family care, would like to have--rather than standard items like candy, pencils, crayons, etc. We set a date, and the children’s workers compiled lists of “wishes” of the children. I can’t remember where the luncheon was, but they had eighteen hundred children. They gave every one of them a present: roller skates and other items. From one of the workers, I had learned abut a child who was in a Catholic institution in Belvedere (I can’t remember the name of it) who wanted a pair of red socks because she always had to wear black with her uniforms. I had told this to the Friars’ president. Every kid had bright-colored socks. The president brought me money left over from the members’ contributions after the gifts and luncheon costs had been met. They gave me two thousand dollars. Our Districts were not allowed to have cash. There had to be a special action by the Board of Supervisors for us to keep this for use as petty cash in our office safe. There were special instances of need among children in foster family or institutional care, and we were able to meet these. (Friars Club made this an annual event while I was with the County.)

Pat Murphy had a family with which he worked for over a year. The parents and two children had been away from home when there was a fire, and five children in the home died. The father could not bring himself to leave the house after that. He lost his job, he couldn’t work. Pat Murphy worked with him, and finally got him to walk around the corner and then the block and then he began to look for a job. He found one; he was a welder. He could only go back to work if he could pay the reinstatement fee to the Union. We could use our petty cash fund, but such an item did not fit--the man was not a child in foster or institutional care! I telephoned Will for an okay to take the twelve dollars form the petty cash fund for the Union dues. Will hated to have anything in writing. He said, "Well, do it if you want to, but don't ask me in writing." Instead, I sent him a confirmation of what we had done. I was ready to pay the twelve dollars myself, but we paid it out of petty cash. The man got the job and the family was off relief. For ten years I personally, every year, would get a notice from the county auditor's office for the twelve dollars, which grew in interest; it was an illegal expenditure. I refused to pay it. How important was twelve dollars? It was a matter of principle. Finally, when Pat Murphy became the director, I now owed nineteen dollars and something. It had grown over the years. He went to the Board of Supervisors and said, "Can't you do something about this costly dunning?" That was the way the county operated. Everything was dictated, but you could find ways of getting around things, and we really gave wonderful service--not everybody and not to everybody, but really good service.

HAMOVITCH: All right, so that went until?

FELDMAN: I worked there until we went to Chicago in September of 1950.

HAMOVITCH: You came back from Chicago in 1953?

FELDMAN: Yes, in March, 1953. In Chicago I worked for the Jewish Family and Community Service. I started there as a caseworker, hoping that I could also take whatever classes at the University of Chicago I wanted. I went to school full time, and I worked for JFCS full time. The agency was very generous about my time. The agency was in the midst of implementing the Displaced Persons Act of 1949, taking families from Europe or from Asia, in some instances, who had been in concentration or displaced persons camps. By January I was directing their Displaced Persons Program. I continued that until we left. Before we left Chicago, I had agreed to write a history of the agency. I gathered all the materials, and I wrote it in Los Angeles and sent it back. That also gave me the idea that I could do part-time things and be at home when Dona came home from school. She was then eight. The word got around to organizations that were interested in someone like me doing part-time things. Al, after a year said, "You know, you are doing the equivalent of two and a half full-time jobs." I thought about that and I agreed that he was right; I wasn't going to do it anymore. That's when Arlien asked me to come back full time.

HAMOVITCH: That was 1954?

FELDMAN: Yes. I had been teaching part time all along, too, both in public administration and social work from the day I got my MSW in 1940.

HAMOVITCH: You came in teaching casework, right?

FELDMAN: Yes, when I was in Chicago, although I had taken a number of courses to complete the Third-Year Certificate --mostly, courses they had in the doctoral program, I had also taken Helen Harris Pearlman in third-year casework and Charlotte Towle's teaching theory. When I came back, Arlien saw me as a casework teacher, although I had been teaching administration and supervision for her in the University College Extension Program. My interests still were social problems and policies. I did start my full-time teaching in casework. I guess I did that for a couple of years.

HAMOVITCH: There was a period, I know, when you were very active in the Welfare Planning Council, and you chaired a number of committees including the Management Council.

Can you share a little bit of that and also tell us about some of the people who served on a couple of your committees. You were saying earlier that you had to fight with some of them at one point, but somehow or another over the years, you had them on your side, and they were serving on your committees and lots of people were involved.

FELDMAN: This does remind me: My first experiences with the Taxpayers Association really were when I went into the housing program because they were fighting tooth and nail the plans for public housing. When I learned about my appointment with the County program, and I had been interviewed, I had no confirmation about the appointment as district director, I was driving my car, and I turned the news on. There was a man whom I had never heard of before, but he turned out to be George McLain, who was the leader of the senior citizens group, and later pushed through that referendum change. I heard him say, "And now that Will has the audacity to hire three women for the County of Los Angeles, and they are just going to be as terrible as everybody else." Then he named them. That's how I heard that I had been hired. I never got along with George McLain. He never asked us what we believed in. I thought he was a great exploiter. There was something about his personality that I found very objectionable, and he was one of the few people where I felt I had to really watch what I was saying because I would react negatively to him. I would feel myself becoming impatient, and I had to watch that.

I had a lot of experience with the Taxpayers Association when I was in the public agency. Sometimes, I couldn't persuade them to my way of thinking. Some of them would come to the agency and object to some "giving" policies (actually dictated by the federal and/or state levels). Confidentiality was a serious thing, but it was not very controlled. Sometimes I would ask somebody from the Taxpayers Association to go with a worker to the family, not selecting the family, but selecting the worker. This was really a tremendous thing. I think I must have done that maybe ten or twelve times, altogether.

HAMOVITCH: That was a terrific idea.

FELDMAN: It really worked, and we got some very important people on our side, including the man who was then the head of the Merchants and Manufactures Association. I can't think of his name. Eventually his daughter became a social worker. When I was district director in Belvedere, we had the largest number, among all the districts, of families and children's cases. The Welfare Planning Council, where I had done odds and ends in research from time to time, with Elizabeth Frank and Genevieve Carter, asked me to chair the Child Welfare Division, headed by Irene Liggett. So I did. I was in that division for quite a while because it was while I was there that we began to examine whether minorities were being accepted into children's institutions. Also, the big problems had begun to emerge with adoption. We set up a committee to examine these adoption issues, then set up a county commission which was chaired by Jim Ludlum. Then a statewide committee emerged from that which was chaired by Charles Schottland. These two committees dealt with issues around independent adoptions, where people were rushing back to The Cradle to take children. The black market babies were a serious issue. The result of these two committees was that there were changes in state legislation in 1950, expanding the number of voluntary agencies in the field; and the public agencies could not become adoption agencies. Then we moved from having just the Children's Home Society and the Sons and Daughters of the Golden West. Those were the only two adoption facilities in California. As a result of the activities of that division, other things also improved. I remained active; and when I came back from Chicago, I chaired several committees.

When we came back from Chicago, Al became director of the Health Division. In fact, Whitt Pfeiffer had come to Chicago a couple of months earlier because there was to be a reorganization of the Welfare Planning Council, and Whitt was very anxious that Al be in place. He persuaded Al to return before he had finished his doctoral dissertation. One of the things that I was asked to do when we came back, by Elizabeth Frank, was to review the material on the Welfare Planning Council's experiences in mental health and prepare a history of their mental health activity. I did that, going back over the minutes form the earlier days. Several things emerged. One was that something would be started and then be dropped. Things would begin, like the Los Angeles County Mental Health Association and the Los Angeles Psychiatric Clinic, Arlien Johnson was involved in those. The committees would run out of interest and steam so there was always something starting and ending. They were without any kind of a pattern or a plan for what there was or should be. Al had said that before and now, reviewing my report, he decided that we needed a group in Los Angeles County to develop a blueprint of mental health needs and services in Los Angeles County. He wanted a study, using community organization techniques, to involve people in every aspect of the study so they would themselves be in place and ready to implement any recommendation. I worked with him on that, but not very much. It really grew out of this other report. He was convinced that this was absolutely essential and everyone said he could never get it funded. He went to see Portia Hume, who was the Director of Community Services in the State Department of Mental Health. She was very interested, so he submitted a proposal that she funded with NIMH money given to California (Arlien was on the approving State committee). This took a couple of years; meanwhile, he began to mobilize people interested in it. The study started around 1958. Al was not able to find a social worker to direct this, though he thought social workers with community organization skills were absolutely necessary. It was also a matter of research. He interviewed a number of people from around the country. He couldn't really find the kind of person that appealed to him as able to do this. I went to a National Conference on Health and Welfare in St. Louis, and while I was there, I bumped into Wayne Macmillen. I had not known Wayne in Chicago; I had only known of him. Al had known him, and it occurred to me that he might have all the skills that Al was looking for.

HAMOVITCH: He had taught community organization and research and statistics at the University of Chicago.

FELDMAN: Yes, and he had been involved in politics in Chicago, so he knew how to deal with political emphasis. I phoned Al from St. Louis, and I asked him whether he had thought about Wayne and he hadn't. He called Wayne, who became very excited about the prospect. He was ready to leave Chicago because his mother had died. That's what really made me think of his availability. Thus he came to work to head the project, which was a tremendous activity and, as you know, it set the pattern for similar studies in other cities.

HAMOVITCH: That was a real pace-setter, that whole experience. The results of that lasted years and years.

FELDMAN: Some of the activities are still ongoing. You asked me about my involvement in the Welfare Planning Council and so forth. I picked up some parts of that study. Somebody else had done a report on the psychiatric court of Los Angeles and then suddenly didn't want to do anything more on it, so I pitched in and finished that. I wrote that chapter. You remember you and I worked together on public health and mental health. The study was published in 1961. It came out with 99 recommendations and the question was, how do you implement them? Al had prepared a proposal to NIMH to create the Mental Health Development Commission, and they funded that for five years. Al, meanwhile, had come to USC to work in the Ford-financed Youth Studies Center, and there he was, using his community organization skills. They were working in Santa Monica and trying to mobilize the Santa Monica community as an example, really a demonstration area, for delinquency control. He wasn't too happy with that particular job because he found it too confining. When NIMH then funded his proposal, he went back to the Welfare Planning Council and he created and directed the Mental Health Development Commission. He did that for five years. I chaired a couple of the committees in that process, one on public health and one on industries, and I did something with the police and sheriff's department. There were three aspects of it at different times.

Al had arranged from the outset with a professor at UCLA to do the evaluation. Five years later, this man not only had done nothing, but he didn't want to. Here the process was finished and there were pretty full records of what had happened in the past; I was conscripted to service. I did that report with a committee, and we learned quite a lot from doing it; how you examine minutes and how you evaluate people who were part of the process. So that was the mental health project. In the course of that project--really, the earlier Mental Health Survey--Al had begun to work with Portia Hume on passage of what later became the Short-Doyle Community Mental Health Services Act. (Senator Alan Short was her cousin.) The first proposal, which had been in 1955, when Al approached her to support his survey, was known as the Hume Bill. It did not get out of committee because of vocal anti-mental health forces, including various city and county medical associations and people already protesting fluoridation of water, and also vivisection. She had tried again in 1957, and this time it did pass. There was a tremendous amount of good in that, including setting up local commissions. Al had also, without any problem, persuaded my brother, Jack Lomas, to get a committee set up in the County Medical Society. This met with some difficulty because the State Medical Society was unwilling to tackle anything on mental health. It was such a network of negative forces. The leader of this anti-mental measure was in Chicago, the step-father of Nancy Reagan. A neurologist, he had been influential in keeping state and county medical associations from endorsing anything. Al and Jack together decided that the person in the County Medical Society who probably, if he could be persuaded to do something about this activity, could be most influential, was Dr. Louis Bullock. I remember him very well because several times when I had made reports for committees to the Board of the Welfare Planning Council, he would be very attacking, no matter the subject. He was like this with everyone. He was always on the opposite side. Al decided that if he could persuade Louie Bullock to support this program, he would have to do it by telling him that all these other people were against it. Louis could be the perfect person. That was a very ticklish time. He was the president of the Tuberculosis Association and also been President of the Heart Association. Al's doctor, who was our very good friend, was active in those organizations and had a lot of influence with Louie Bullock and so Al went to see him. Dr. Cherry thought it was a good idea to get Louie Bullock involved, and he was also very influential in both State and County Medical Associations. He got Louie Bullock to talk to Al about all these people who were against this, and Louie Bullock, of course, would therefore be for it. So Jack and Al got Bullock interested.

Bullock thought it was terrible the way all these people were treating Al. So he and Al then met with Jack. Jack said he thought maybe Louie could get a mental health committee set up in County Medical Association. Bullock declared if anybody could do it, he could--and would. And he did. He set up the committee with Jack as his chairman. Meanwhile, Al created a task force with Bullock as its chairman. Their task was to persuade the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors to take on the Short-Doyle Act, which then was voluntary. They were working on strategy when Al had a massive coronary. This was in mid-1958. What Al kept worrying about in the hospital was his task force. They were to meet and who was going to help Louie be on the right track? Al had had his attack the morning of the USC commencement exercises. I remember coming for commencement and sitting in the office worrying about Al. That night I said, “Would you feel better if I took on the committee?” So I staffed the committee that summer and worked closely with Louie Bullock and Roger Egeberg, the director of the County Hospital. He had been very devoted to Al. They had put on several projects at the County Hospital. One was a demonstration on home care. There was some good chemistry between them. It was really very interesting. When Al got out of the hospital and came home, Roger Egeberg came to see him almost every day for those three months when Al had to be at home. I could hear him coming because he would park his car down on the street, and as he walked up the driveway, he would shout, “Where is that son of a bitch? Where is that malingerer?” All the neighbors would hear. By the time he’d get to the house, Al would just be dissolved in laughter. I worked with Egeberg, and he really worked with Louie Bullock to keep him on the right path.

At the end of that summer, Roger had agreed to serve as the temporary mental health director for Short-Doyle program while still director of County Hospital. My brother, Jack, was appointed by the Board of Supervisors as the chair of the new Mental Health Advisory Committee. He did that for twelve years. Until Al was able to get back to work, it was a very exciting time. I did a lot of talking in the community. It showed how useful some of the knowledge of social work history is because I remember being before a group of "Minute Women." They are the ones who really kept the mental health legislation from passing, and they were proud of being Daughters of the Revolution. I had agreed to speak to a luncheon group in Pasadena, and when I walked in, I recognized ladies I had seen before. I started thinking, "I'm not up to this." All I could think of was the way they had behaved before the Board of Supervisors. I had just come from my class in social welfare history, and I asked how many of the Minute Women had ever heard of Benjamin Rush. Well, several had. How many of them were Daughters of the Revolution? All raised their hands. Did they know that Benjamin Rush was the father of psychiatry in America? They couldn't believe it. He had signed the Declaration of Independence. It was a crucial period because these women were among the leaders who were saying that all psychiatrists were Jews, that all Jew psychiatrists were brainwashing people, and that you could expect that if this Act passed, there would be a knock on somebody's door in the middle of the night and the person would be whisked off to Alaska. Do you remember how that was? At that time Congress was considering a neuro-psychiatric institute in Anchorage, which was a territory of the United States. These people somehow had tied together all kinds of strange pieces to mean that nobody would be safe. They were simply floored by the fact that Benjamin Rush, the father of psychiatry and the signer of the Declaration of Independence, would be linked with this other thing. It was a fascinating meeting. I often thought after how useful tidbits of social welfare history can be. That was the most thrilling thing for me.

Getting back to the Welfare Planning Council, Maury, in 1956 you were on the committee, and I think you were chairman of the Research Division. You did a study of Panorama City and found that many of the problems there were centered around money management. The committee wanted the Division to do something about a more comprehensive study on money management and education. I had long been interested in money. George Nickel again came into the picture. I used to tell hm about the fact that when I started in the State Relief Administration, I was always impressed by the number of people who couldn't ask for relief but who would say, "I need a loan until I get a job." Everything centered on their sense of adequacy related to work and what the money meant to them. I had begun to read what I could find, which was not a great deal. Some psychiatrists had done a little writing, but it was really not much. It was an interest in value, but it didn't have any lasting effect. George's company, Beneficial Management, would make a grant for $10,000 available to the Welfare Planning Council to do this kind of a study. I was asked if I would be interested, and I was, but they decided on somebody else.

HAMOVITCH: I didn't know that.

FELDMAN: Janet Nolan--who was with the Pasadena Family Agency. I don't know what the reasons were for selecting Janet, except that her live-in partner, Gertrude Hengerer, was on the committee, which had already been set up. Something happened and that fell through, and I don't know why. So again, I was approached, but this time it was a definite offer. These are the years when I had been doing all these part-time things at home. That was exciting because there was such variety though Al was sure that I was putting in too much time on them. I guess he was really right, but you know my pattern of fast sleeping. I have lots of waking hours to do things. I didn't really have a sense that I was putting in that much time. I was very interested in this project, and George was delighted because he knew me and my interests. A committee was then set up in the Welfare Planning Council, and he was the chairman. We worked out what the scope of the project would be. Elizabeth Frank was then the director of the Research Division. We developed some consultants who looked in their own special fields for whatever there was. I did a lot of interviewing in agencies and with individuals. It was a very interesting project in a number of ways because, for example, when I called the executive of the Assistance League to see whether I could meet with the staff and talk about their experiences and reactions, she said they don't deal with money at all and preferred not to talk about it. I knew that they didn't give much in the way of relief, but that was not what I was interested in. I asked if there were any problems among their clients and the adolescents about allowances. She didn't think so, but she agreed to my meeting with the staff because she was a long-time friend. On that basis, she said that I could meet with her staff. There were two men on this staff and about fifteen women. All the women were knitting and the executive was knitting. Every now and then somebody would evidently make a mistake or get stuck, and she would take time out and go over to show that person how to handle the knitting. It was a strange experience. I realized what this said about how one denies the importance of money. In actuality, the staff became very interested. They gave me some very good case material.

Then, in another agency, I made the appointment, and they were very receptive about it, but when I arrived, they said I couldn't record the meeting because they had no electrical outlet in the room. At that time, recording machines had to be plugged in. They did not run on batteries. The executive said they had no way of connecting a recording machine in any office large enough to accommodate the whole staff. So I said, all right, I would just take notes. We went into their library and under my chair was an outlet. I waited until the meeting started and then asked if they knew that there was an outlet that was hidden by the chair. The executive was clearly embarrassed, but I behaved as though it was news to them. I then asked if anybody would object if I connected my little machine to it. Well, nobody objected. These are the kinds of things that came up. They were very intriguing, their ingenious ways people would avoid either letting you have materials that for some reason they felt would be critical of them, or because they felt at a loss, or because one just didn't talk about money! It was a very subjective experience, going through all of these agencies now in a different way than when I had gone in 1940 for the Community Chest to some of the same agencies. All that we were then required to do was to prepare reports. I thought there was much more now than just a report that could be used.

George Nickel had been talking to Family Service of America about the project. There was a national conference in the beginning of May. I guess it was a Health and Welfare Conference in Atlantic City. I had been asked to give a paper on the meanings of money, which I had agreed to do. Cora Kassius invited me. Then she said that George Nickel thought there was a book in this, but she didn't think there was that much on the subject. She liked my paper, and she liked the things that it touched on. She said if I could give her five chapters of a book by July Fourth, she would read them on her way to Holland. If she didn't read them on her way to Holland, then she wouldn't have time later. She wasn't about to "buy a pig in a poke." I never will forget that. I had not yet given my paper when she was asking this. At lunch she said, "Are you going to have a drink?" I told her I wouldn't That was good, because she said she didn't want me to have a drink before I gave my paper. By the time she had her third martini, she was telling me again about not buying the pig in the poke, but I could try to get five chapters to her by July Fourth. I thought, how can I get five chapters to you by July Fourth? Well, I did. When she came back from Holland, she said, "Now you remember, I am not buying a pig in the poke, but if you give me the other chapters, I will read them." So I gave her the other chapters by the end of the summer. That was the fastest writing job I ever did.

HAMOVITCH: Nobody was that fast.

FELDMAN: Well, of course you know I put in a lot of hours during the day, and I had all the material. Even so, I never had a chance to go back and review what I had written because it always had to go right off. They published that in 1957. So that's how "The Family in a Money World" came to be.

HAMOVITCH: That was a great book. Then, of course, you wrote a revised edition of that. As I recall, that has been used an awful lot. Well, obviously, or else they wouldn't have asked you later to revise it.

FELDMAN: It has been used a lot. I have not done any rewriting of it since the 1967 edition. Family Service, last year, asked me if I would, but I didn't think that I wanted to embark on that. Two years ago, a group of college instructors and money management counselors who have an association that's a couple of years old, had their annual meeting in Anaheim, and I gave the keynote address. I was astonished to find the number of people who use it as a text, still. I gave the copyright and any proceeds to Family Service of America, but form time to time, they send me a report on the number sold each year.

HAMOVITCH: That is remarkable.

FELDMAN: It is remarkable because there still has been so little done along this line. You get a lot of books now on how to spend your money and sometimes they have a little in them about the psychological and social meanings, but not a great deal. The book that did the most on that was by a psychiatrist named Knight, who was the head of Psychiatry at Tulane Medical School and had been a minister before; he had done hospital counseling. He was involved in one of the Mental Health Development Commission's activities. Al was trying to get ministers around the community involved in mental health counseling. This man had come out here to meet with Al and to meet with a group of pastors Al had convened here. Knight expressed a lot of interest in the education on money in family life. About two years later, Family Service asked me if I had seen his book called "For the Love of Money." I hadn't, so I went out and bought one. In "For the Love of Money," he had one chapter which is copied word-for-word from "The Family in the Money World." He used quotation marks at its beginning and end. Another, on the older person, is word-for-word, with no quotation marks and no credit. He had never sought permission. Family Service had picked that up and had sued him for it. I don't know what came of it, finally. Here was this psychiatrist with a religious background, who flagrantly plagiarized two chapters. He never let me know that he had written it, although he had written several times and asked me questions. I thought that was really an interesting use of "The Family in the Money World." In my mail this morning was a letter from the National Council of Jewish Women; the executive and the associate executive had signed the letter. They were involved in some project in helping women to manage investments. They had read this book and wanted me to meet with them to talk about it. Interesting things still come up.

HAMOVITCH: There are several options. I think we are going to have to meet another time because there are a lot more questions that I have to ask you.

FELDMAN: I've had a long life.

HAMOVITCH: Well, not just the long life--there are a lot of things that you have done. There were other projects like the Demonstration Project in Alaska. The whole thing you were involved in. The Cancer Studies.

HAMOVITCH: This is October 31 at 10:00 in the morning. This is a continuation of the oral history of Professor Feldman, which began last week on October 24. We had ended the last session with the discussion of the Mental Health Study of the Welfare Planning Council and the study on "The Family in the Money World." Today we will move on to other projects that Professor Feldman has been involved with. What I wanted to ask you about is, as I recall, the Alaska Project began somewhere around 1967. Would you share it with us, your experiences on that?

FELDMAN: I always thought that the Alaska Project was a result, in a sense, of what I had done earlier. I had worked at one time with the Department of Public Services under its different name, Indigent Relief. The person who was now the director of the County Welfare Department, Pat Murphy (whose real name is Ellis P. Murphy); had started his social work career in Belvedere District when I was director a number of years before. In the early 'Sixties, he became concerned over the fact that there seemed to be a number of problems in the Public

Welfare Department, for which they had no answers. They had no data on which to base answers. He asked me, at that time, if I would undertake a project which would have several dimensions. One would be to see what was happening to contracts which the department had let to two group work agencies under the revised Social Security Act Amendments of 1962, where they could demonstrate the use of purchase of services by public agencies from voluntary agencies. They had let out two contracts, but didn't know what was happening as a result of them. Another was to see whether there would be any merit in setting up some kind of a locally-based office of social services in a couple of the housing projects, very large housing projects that already were known to have delinquency problems. I was especially interested because of my early experiences with slum clearance projects. He would leave to me how that would be done. The other dimension would be how community organization techniques could be used to involve people in some communities in the interest of really furthering the mission of public welfare.

The Board of Supervisors, accordingly, wrote a contract with me personally, because they couldn't see doing it with an institution. A number of our faculty, and some of our doctoral students became involved and, in actuality, a couple of former students also became involved. Nancy Humphries, for example, who is now Dean of the School of Social Work in Connecticut, was very interested in the community organization aspect. So we developed that with her to see how she could reach out to some of the Southwest Los Angeles disadvantaged communities and get agencies as well as community leaders involved. She worked out of her car because there was no office that she could use. Over several years she did that, and quite successfully. I evaluated the two agencies' contracts to see what had worked and what had not. It shows the kinds of hazards that face the contracting agency. One agency was in the central district of Los Angeles, South Central, the other was out towards San Pedro. Both of them were agencies headed by minority personnel. This was one reason that Pat had been interested in their doing these projects. The purpose in each was that they would try a variety of new or innovative services to families. This would include group work services and educational programs for the families. It was left to the agencies to decide how they would do these projects. A grant of money was provided. They were supposed to account to the County Department for what they did, but no reports had ever come. I will take a couple of minutes, if it is all right with you, because some of the later changes in the Social Security Act about demonstrations, about the purchase of services, resulted from the recommendations that came out of these. The first project that....

HAMOVITCH: Did you indicate what year this was?

FELDMAN: This would have started around 1963 because the Amendments permitted demonstrations of purchase of services when the ‘62 amendments became effective in January of 1963. These projects had been in process for six or eight months, I’m not sure. My contract was written with the Board of Supervisors for the fiscal year, beginning July First of that year. I was to have complete freedom and, also, as much cooperation as I needed. I did get a lot of cooperation from the Department, but none from the two agencies involved. I made an appointment with the director of the first one, the long established settlement house in South Central. She had some difficulty working out an appointment time. We thought a lot in those days, as we still do, about what contributes to hostility and how is it handled, and it was very clear: she was doing her best not to talk with me. It finally took a letter form the Board of Supervisors, really written by Pat Murphy, with the Board's OK, and a threat to withdraw the money if there could be no discussion about what they were doing. I made an appointment with her, and I told her the kinds of things we were interested in: namely, how many families and individuals had they been able to serve as a result of this contract? What kinds of services did they give? What did she and her staff think were the outcomes of these? How many additional staff had been employed with the new money? Very simple kinds of questions. We talked about them, and she said they had served a lot of families and she would get the figures for me if I insisted. I told her I would like not only to know the numbers, but I would like to read a sample of the records. I made an appointment to come back. She called me and said the records were not available yet because the persons responsible had been out ill. I left it to her to tell me when the records would be available, and she set a date, two weeks hence. In that interval, I went to the other agency, and I encountered the same kind of experience. I went back to agency number one on the day appointed. They had a stack of long-hand records, all written in the same handwriting, yet there were supposed to be eight different people doing them. There was no variation. Someone had clearly sat down and written a number of similar records. I used the schedule to try to find out what had been done, why it had been done, how long it took, and these kinds of things. You couldn't pick that information out. What became evident was that these were not new clients; the agency had not reached out. They were using the county's money to support the program they had been operating. I was never able to change my view on that because I couldn't get any evidence. The same thing happened in the other agency. The county's money was being used not to demonstrate anything. This isn't to say that what they did wasn't good, but it was not the intent of the demonstration. I didn't pursue this with either of them; I wrote a confidential report to Pat Murphy and gave him my observations and the basis for them. I recommended at that time that they use a set of guidelines for deciding who should have a contract, how to decide whether the guidelines were being fulfilled, and whether, in fact, the objective of having additional services of a certain kind was met. For example, there were to be in both of those projects outreach activities to mothers in disadvantaged areas, to help them in their housekeeping functions, how to simplify these, how to meet certain needs of children. None of that was ever done. This was traditional recreation for children after school. I can't, at the moment, recall all ten recommendations. In 1965, the Social Security Act modified the terms for contract to purchase private agency services, and they incorporated in their guidelines eight of the ten recommendations that had been made. These became regulations authorized by the Social Security Act. I never did any follow-up to see whether they were really practical and effective. Evidently, there was some thinking that these two experiences were worth noting. That was the purchase of services part.

Nancy was quite effective in getting a number of agencies to collaborate with the public agency in providing a variety of services. That worked pretty well. She did what she was expected to do. We were able, in the final report on Project 220, (which was the way it was labeled by the Board of Supervisors), to enunciate the community organization principles on which these activities were based, and how they had worked.

The third aspect of this project, I think from my standpoint, was really the most important. That was to set up an office in each of two housing projects to see whether trust could be established between staff and residents, whether they would begin voluntarily to come in to use services. We developed a plan for group work services, for day care, for children whose mothers might be able to be helped to find work without having to worry about who took care of them, whatever kinds of services came up. Project 220 didn't limit itself to just residents of the Projects who were recipients of public welfare, although the original idea was they would be Aid to Dependent Children cases. There was no limit set. Our project personnel didn't do the service aspect; agency staff did that. I conducted training programs with them in collaboration with departmental training staff. Our staff for the project then provided consultation and evaluation. Elizabeth McBroom was involved. Helen Northen was involved. Norrie Class worked on the child care part of this. Rino Patti, now our Dean, did some case review. He was a doctoral student. Helen Olander, also a doctoral student, worked on it. We had really a very prestigious group. The statistical part was done by Frank Peirce, who was a doctoral student at that time. The report then was sent not only to the Department of Public Welfare, but also the State Department of Social Welfare, which provided some additional funds. This was so that we could do the evaluation part. Hence in three different summers, we paid extra to these people out of State Department money, whereas the original contract with me was County Welfare Department money, local tax money. The State Department....

HAMOVITCH: Did you get these subsidies from the federal government?

FELDMAN: Sure, most of it came from the federal government, but they always made a point of telling me these were county taxes. I didn't argue even though I knew how county taxes came into the picture. It was an exciting project. A great deal was learned from having the two on-site offices. We did learn that if you had thoughtful warm interested social workers in the project, that the initial suspicion that the families would feel, could be dispelled. How important this is, I think, is shown by the fact that the Watts Riots occurred in 1964, when we were two years into that project. It centered in the two projects where we had on-site offices. A lot of people were very afraid to go into the Watts area. A couple of people on our project were a little fearful. We made it possible for them not to go, but most went. The families were in those two projects, Jordan Downs and Hawaiian Gardens, a little further north but at the same time, not as bad a locality as Jordan Downs. The families were very protective of the staff. You could see them coming around and milling around outside of the office as a barrier to any negative force that might be there. It was really an astonishing experience. Of course, around the University itself, as you will remember, buildings were burned and windows were broken on three sides of the campus. The fourth side was the Park, so it didn't count. Not a building or window was touched on the campus. Now that was not our doing, but I think it is of interest that there was concern about the University and, also, about our USC project staff.

The Governor appointed the McCone Commission to investigate what had started the riots and what should be done about them. I was asked to serve the Commission as their social welfare consultant. They had one for housing, one for health, they had another one for economics, and one for social welfare. While I worked with the staff of attorneys who staffed the Commission, they really left it to me to decide how I would gather the data that I would present to them and on which I would base my recommendations. I used some of the Project 220 data, but I did a number of interviews with people who were regarded as leaders and non-leaders in the Watts area. I was very well received. Outside people could not believe that I was going down there, but I had worked with them long enough and, by this time, I was known to a number. There was no problem. We gathered some new data and some data that supported what we already had. I presented the report over two days, two full days of meetings with the McCone Commission. Those were really very interesting meetings because Mr. McCone, formerly of the CIA, had asked in the meeting why there were so many people there in Watts without work. He said, "After all, my wife tries to get somebody to come and help her, and she can't get anybody to come. And you say there are all these people who want to work." This was reflected by several of the people on the committee.

There was a lot of evidence that it was hard for people to get to a job, to a place where they might even look for a job, if you had to spend two hours on a street car or a bus just to reach some place. Transportation was very bad. It was almost an impossible task for women with children to leave them when there was no one to care for them. An occasional relative might be in the picture. They just couldn't do much. Illness was a serious problem. They had no way of getting to the County Hospital except on street cars, going several hours each way and paying what was then a lot of money. It might cost a woman $1.50 just for herself each way, dragging several children along with her. One of the things that came out of the McCone Commission--not my report--but the McCone Commission, was the importance of having a county-financed hospital in the area. That led to the Martin Luther King Hospital being established in that area, which presumably made some difference.

We had a number of recommendations. I actually didn't work by myself. I did the work; but I asked several people to serve as consultants with me. This was to be sure that I wasn't just going off in the direction that seemed right to me but might not seem right to others. I had a group of faculty from here, from USC and from UCLA, who met with me several times to make sure I wasn't being overly biased. I was biased to some extent. I don't know if I could have helped that. They tried to help me to be objective. The McCone Commission did not like my report. They didn't like the report on health that was done by a couple of UCLA people. The Commission was supposed to publish the reports of the academic consultants as an addendum to the McCone Commission report itself. They didn't like my report because I didn't think the people in Watts were to blame for everything. They didn't like the health report for the same reason. They did not publish the promised addendum, and so NASW published my report along with another report. Joe Boskin had done one on the history of riots. NASW put these two reports together and released those. The American Public Health Association published the one on health, and the housing report never got published at all. What I always felt was that the Commission itself, even though in some ways they were enlightened, could not bring themselves to change some basic attitudes that they held.

One of the things that happened was that a man who was a member of the Chamber of Commerce of Los Angeles decided that people needed jobs and that the Chamber of Commerce had to do something about that. On his own, he went into the Watts area and began to check to see what kinds of jobs, what he could get industry to do to increase the number of jobs. He persisted in that. That led to the Business Council of Private Industry, which produced some jobs. Just recently, to the board of the California Social Welfare Archives, we elected John Kulli, who is working on an offshoot of that business project--to help young people in schools to be prepared to take jobs, to cut down on drop-outs. They have a council called the Business Council, which is now located in the Board of Education, sponsored by the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. John was formally the director of marketing for all of Sears, nationally. He was involved in the Chamber effort to help people. I met him in Pasadena some years ago.

He has been deeply interested in how to help families by reaching the parents so that they will keep the children in school. Over the years, he has decided that when children are in high school, the approach to parents is too late. He has moved down to junior high and elementary grades. They have a project now where they provide education for parents whose children are about to start school. He has 2,500 businessmen in Los Angeles County who work with him and go out to the schools to help young people understand why they should not drop out. He is also now involved in our School's efforts to do something in the School of Social Work. We seem to have come full circle, but he had been involved in that offshoot of the McCone Commission.

I think that it is a result of Project 220 that HEW initiated the Alaska contract with me. The regional director, located in San Francisco, asked me on the telephone if I had ever heard of Rural Alaska. I had to laugh because I thought all Alaska was rural. I had been in Alaska on a short trip in 1964, and I had seen nothing to tell me it was not rural. He said, "Oh no, that wasn't rural." The Federal Government had made a substantial sum of money available to the State of Alaska to try to recruit and train Eskimos in very remote villages in Southwest Alaska to recognize individual problems and to see what they could do about improving the conditions in their villages. The State of Alaska, with HEW, had employed an anthropologist to undertake this study, but after two months, they realized this was not the right discipline because the anthropologist developed a system for looking at what implements these people used in these villages for everyday living. That wasn't what they wanted. So in some fashion, they got to me. I couldn't see myself going to Alaska, but I was interested in what they were telling me. Since I was going to be in San Francisco for a Cancer Board meeting, I agreed that I would meet with the representatives of Alaska and this man from HEW to talk about it and see whether I could think of anybody who might do this job. I thought I could come back to the School and everybody here would have great ideas and I would say, “Here is a list of people to contact.”

The conference turned out to be with two people from the Alaska Department of Public Welfare and two people from HEW. They had brought one Eskimo along. They told me about the kinds of problems they had in the Southwest part of Alaska: one hundred thousand square miles of tundra with no communication outside of the town of Bethel, which was in the center and had eighteen hundred people and could be reached by airplane once a week from Anchorage. This was only when the weather permitted. I was really very touched by their interest and their sincerity about wanting to do something. I knew I was not the person to do it. I came home and talked to my husband about it to see if he knew anybody to name. He said, “Make up your mind, you won’t find anybody. You will do it yourself.” That’s the way it turned out. What we did then was to write two contracts. One was a personal one with me, and one was with what was being developed then as our Social Welfare Research Institute, which Genevieve Carter was coming in from Washington to direct. I would like them to have had the whole contract. It would have been the first with the institute, but there were problems around that. One problem was really with HEW. They wanted to have direct access to the person they were hiring as consultant. The other was a University logistical problem. At that time, the University would pay travel funds for one way. Do you remember that one-way policy? I was always puzzled. How did you get the person back? Or was this the return and the person had to pay to go? Well, the costs in Alaska were a problem as were all other costs there. It seemed expedient to write two contracts. In my contract would be my personal reimbursement and compensation and supplies and, also, the cost of compensation and transportation for all of the consultants. The statistical data phase of the project, otherwise, would be under the direction of the Institute. It was a peculiar kind of arrangement, but it worked out pretty well.

We had several aspects to that project and, again, faculty worked with me on it. This was an area where there had been an anthropologist who had lived in one village for one year with his family, the village of Napaskiak; Dr. Oswald, who was at UCLA. I met with him, and I got his perceptions of what it was like in that region. Also, he discouraged me because he thought it was an impossible task. Well, you know me well enough to know it was the same reason Al said I would do it. When somebody tells me something is impossible there is something in me that says there has to be a way. We developed a good team on that. All the research that was a compilation of the research data we gathered and also the development of the research design for evaluation, would be with the Research Institute. One of the conditions that I had set up, which I have always thought was pretty good, with the Alaska Department--my contacts actually were limited with HEW: they were with the Alaska Department--was that instead of having an evaluation at the end, which was the original idea of HEW, we would do ongoing evaluations so that as we found that some things worked and some things did not, we could modify. Also they would have feedback as we went along. They could use it wherever and however they wanted to. That really worked well. There was no recorded history at all of any of the sixty villages. The fact is that fewer than half of the people who lived in them spoke much English, and they had no recorded language. The University of Alaska was working on developing one. Everything had historically been simply passed on by word of mouth.

There was no way to get a hold on what the problems were except as you could elicit some comments from these people. I found very early that certain conceptual words that we used had no meaning. For example, I met one day in Anchorage with all of the people who had been recruited. There were nineteen who had been screened and interested. I told one I hoped that he would be able to tell me what he thought was the most serious problem in the five villages he had. He was a man who lived in a village on the Bering Sea. Three of the villages were near him, within 200-300 miles, and one was on St. Lawrence Island, which was the closest U.S. point to Siberia. He looked at me and he didn't say anything. I already had learned several things about the Eskimos. One is that they use silence to express a great deal. It can be respect, that you don't talk back to an older person, and I was older. They use silence to express hostility, and they use silence if they just don't know what the answer is. He said nothing, and I couldn't decide which of these three it might be, but I didn't pursue it. I saw him two months later, and he said to me in his broken English (he was about thirty years old), "You ask me problem. I know problem." He had not known the word. Now he could concretize it because in his villages, they had a special problem in having oil, which could carry them through the winter. Just in the time between my two contacts with him, four men from his village had gone out in a boat on the Kuskoquim River, which cuts through that whole area and is very sandy. They had fallen into the river because their boat was overloaded with drums of oil they were bringing back from this town of Bethel. (They also may have gotten drunk in Bethel, a common occurrence.) They wear this very heavy clothing. It is always cold there. They would have about one week of summer in that region. The minute they are in this sandy water, they are gone; there is no easy way to get them out. Larry (Eskimo Aide) had decided since they had so many such deaths, that what they needed was to have oil storage so that it would not be necessary to go for it as these men had done.

That is a difficult matter, he had not understood the word problem. I thought about that. How do we get them to communicate with us? How would I know what was happening? Genevieve Carter and I came up with the idea of buying nineteen instamatic cameras, which had just come on the market. I supplied each one with a camera and rolls of film. I showed those who needed to know how to operate them; mostly they did know. They were very clever at mechanical things; they knew much more about it than I did. I asked them to take pictures of what they saw and what they did. They would send me rolls of film via the Department in Anchorage. The agency would send them all to me. I'd have slides developed for my own use, and one for the Department. I would have prints made and send them back to the Eskimos. It might take five months before they got them because the area froze. By the middle or end of September, it was completely frozen, including the Kuskoquim. They didn't have breakup until May, sometimes June. In between, you might get some communication through, but it was not likely. The first few rolls that I got from most of the Eskimos puzzled me because all I saw on them was white snow and a sky beyond; or it would show brown tundra because there was no snow, and the sky. No buildings, no people, no animals, nothing. The first time I went back, I said to a couple of them, "Tell me what you see in these pictures." They would say, "This is where the bear are; this is where we cut holes in the ground to get fish when everything is iced over, this is where the elk moose are." To them, there was a great deal of meaning in all of those. They did then come to make pictures of people and of structures and a variety of things that to us were meaningful. I have often thought how different our cultural perceptions are because they thought I would see all of this in these pictures. You can see it was a fascinating project.

A number of things resulted. There had been no radio or telephone communication, but now they were able to bring in radio communication. The first time I went on a trip to a village, the bush pilot couldn't take me to the one where I had an appointment because the weather was bad. After a couple of hours of waiting in the town of Bethel, he said if I wanted to, he would take me up river because the weather was clear. I decided I might as well go up river, even though it costs $180 an hour, but I was having to pay him anyhow, whether I sat in the Welfare Office or went in his plane. When we arrived at this village, Mission Village, on the Kuskoquim, we could look down and see people lining up on the shore, waiting for us. They had heard us. There was no way to let them know we were coming, but they heard the plane from afar. They had a very sick baby. They wanted to know whether we would take the baby and grandmother back to Bethel where there was a U.S. Public Health Hospital that had thirty beds. It was just fortuity that we went there. They had no way of letting anybody know about this. Actually, the baby did die the next day. Infant mortality, or death up to the age of two, was very high. It still is, but it was worse then because they had no way of providing health care. When they got these radio telephones set up in some of these villages, they would then call every morning to this hospital in Bethel, give the symptoms, and the doctor or nurse would suggest what they might do. The Aides did a lot of things there in terms of education and in terms of just day-by-day living. The project ended in 1971, and our feedback made it possible for the State of Alaska to decide that this was something they wanted to extend to the next disadvantaged area, which was Nome. The oil money came in a year or two later. Then they extended the project further; it was very successful. The University of Florida in 1975 did an evaluation of the HEW demonstration projects. They selected what they called the ten most successful demonstrations funded by the HEW. This was one that they included. All of that material now is with the USC Archivist. It was an exciting and productive project.

HAMOVITCH: I remember that and all the excitement you had all the way through it all.

FELDMAN: It was wonderful. I said there was no recorded history. Mary Lou Somers, who used to be on our faculty, and was then at the University of Chicago, came in three successive summers to do a history of the villages. That history has been used by scholars in various places because she did interviews. Well, we asked the people to write out or get somebody to write out for them how the village started and all these other things that we have no other way of picking up otherwise. Why it started. Why it is located where it is. Mary Lou designed that part of the project.

HAMOVITCH: This is November 3. This is the continuation of the oral history with Professor Frances Lomas Feldman. We ended the last session with a report on Mary Lou Somers' contribution to the Alaska Project, and we are going to pick up on that now.

FELDMAN: I think we left off with the contribution of Mary Lou Somers and the village history. I think there are only a few points more that are worth noting, really so that they can encourage other people that when a study is done, it isn't just filed away. The Alaska project had some surprising results, not just in Southeast Alaska, but they extended it to other sections of Alaska. Two summers ago I had occasion to be in Mali in West Africa with Elizabeth McBroom and had been asked to spend two days in consultation with AID people there. It had not been clear to me what it was that they wanted to consult with me about, except that I was going to be there anyhow, so I was interested. It developed that the two people who were to spend time with me have their Doctorates in Education from USC. They both had gone to the Sorbonne for their earlier work. One of those two people had had occasion to read the Alaska Report. She was very interested in it because in Mali, there was an effort to improve conditions of the people in the rural areas. They had realized that they had to develop a common language and a written language. This was one of the problems that had been true of the Eskimos. They had a common language, which is not true in Mali; they didn't have a written language and everything had come by word of mouth over time. In Mali, there were seven major tribes with different languages. These two women had developed, with AID funds, a written language for three of those. They hoped to continue with the others, but they also were needing to reach the people in their various villages. They had trained a group of teachers to use this new written language. Now the teachers were teaching village women, because all the work in Mali seems to be done by the women in those villages. They were using learning the language as a channel for communicating information about health and child care, agriculture--because the women did all the agricultural work--and in a variety of ways to improve their conditions. They had wanted to consult with me about how we went about helping the Eskimos to recognize problems and do something about them in the absence of a written language. So here the Alaska Project had an international impact, which was an exciting thing to discover.

Now the material, and a lot of the material, especially the village histories which Mary Lou had developed, had quite a lot of attention from anthropologists in various places. These are now all with the USC Archivist, who told me very recently about someone from Minnesota who has expressed interest in seeing them. He also has copies of the report. He has all the slides that were made from the films that the Eskimos had taken. The Cinema Department had put together a narrative with the films which is also available there. It was a very exciting project.

HAMOVITCH: It was. I do recall. I think we covered before about how the faculty, as colleagues, we couldn't believe that you were the one who was going and doing all of those things. Just a couple of the events that you mentioned about jail, about sleeping on the floor.

FELDMAN: I think that may be the biggest shock. For me, maybe the hardest thing, turned out not to be the fact that you had to sleep on the floor and climb into the jail in order to get water, to fly in bush pilot planes in hazardous weather, but the astonishing thing to me was to come to a village where the Eskimo Human Services Aide was about twenty-six. Because he wasn't old, he was therefore not to be as much respected as a person with more years. But he was a well-known hunter and this made up for his age. The first time I went to the village, he and several men had just come back with a great brown bear, which they had just trapped and trussed up. It was dead. They had trussed it up on a big frame. As an honor for me, in front of the entire village, the Aide cut off one paw with its claws and handed it to me, with blood oozing over my gloves. I was trying to keep from showing the nausea I felt. I could hardly wait to leave that village and then give this paw to the pilot, who was delighted to have it. It was quite an experience and I am squeamish.

HAMOVITCH: Well, weren't you glad you were a pre-med student?

FELDMAN: Well yes, but it was all the blood that deterred me from that. This was a thrilling project.

HAMOVITCH: It was and it made a real contribution. Tell us about your involvement with the Cancer Society in California and your studies.

FELDMAN: About 1960, I think it was, an oncologist in Los Angeles, who was a member of the board of the California Division, Robert McKenna, was complaining to them about the fact that he had some patients who had difficulty keeping their jobs. This wasn't because they weren't well enough; they were, but because employers were very leery of people with cancer. He had encouraged patients to write to him and to the Cancer Society about their experiences. As a consequence of Bob McKenna's interest, a committee was set up in the California Division, and I was asked to join that committee. It was chaired by Lester Breslow, who was then the Director of Public Health for the State of California. It had six oncologists and several other professionals. I was the only non-physician on the committee. Especially the radiologists, they really couldn't see any reason for dealing with the psycho-social aspects of cancer. As far as they were concerned, you took x-rays and you gave x-ray treatment and that was it. Some of the other physicians were quite receptive. They thought because I was a social worker, I was going to advocate only socialized medicine. In fact, one of them, when I made a report to the board of the Cancer Society, came right out and said that. Yet he worked in a medical school that was a public institution. I think I won some of the others over by making a comment about that being more socialized than what we were trying to advocate, which was just to have a study. They did appropriate some money. Lester Breslow actually made the presentation to the board but had asked me to help because then we represented two disciplines. They arranged a survey of people who had had cancer. They found some of the problems there were in getting jobs. The California Division made some use of that, but they could never get the American Cancer Society to express any interest because they were entirely focused on hard science and medicine. These other psycho-social economic aspects were of no interest to them. That's not where they wanted their money to go.

In 1975, the division had some salary savings of approximately $10,000. I had chaired their statewide Service Committee for several years and had been on the Board after the other study had been done in 1960. I guess I had been almost continuously connected with them as a result of that earlier study. They asked if I would undertake a study with Al that would identify some of the problems that patients have in getting jobs. What they wanted was a study of discrimination. We said we would undertake it if we could look at all job experiences, whether positive or not, if we could have freedom in how we used the money. Ten thousand dollars clearly wasn't going to go very far. We thought that its best use would be in hiring good interviewers. We were very lucky that the Cancer Surveillance Program of the Comprehensive Cancer Center at USC, which is in the Medical School, had just been established, became interested, and was willing to work with us because we were in a sister school in the University. We were able to develop a good scientific study, using a lot of volunteer help, but also, paying for some of the interviewing. We were able to develop a study that focused entirely on white collar because we didn't have enough money to go beyond that and, generally, these would have the best access to jobs. The study had a lot of complications in it because this was being started at a time when confidentiality was getting a great deal of protected attention, as it should. Doctors were being faced with malpractice suits and increased insurance rates. They were very leery about talking to anyone about a patient. In the middle of that study, Al died. Colleagues in the School pitched in and picked up the parts that he was doing. So we had a variety of barriers to deal with. Nevertheless, we were able to get very good material.

HAMOVITCH: What date was this?

FELDMAN: This study started in early 1975, and we completed it in 1976. We interviewed. What we had to do was to first get a count of the number of patients after we selected the kinds of sites that we would be interested in; that were within in age limits so that we were talking about employable people--not retirees--and whose employability was demonstrated by the fact that they were actually employed at the time the diagnosis was made. We got counts, by hospital, from the Cancer Surveillance Center. Then we had to write to each hospital to get permission to draw the names. In almost every instance, I had to meet with a committee of the hospital to explain the purpose and process of the study. In one hospital there were as many as seven committees. This was very time-consuming. Then, when we had permission, we would write to the doctor to explain what we were doing, to ask for permission to contact the patients. Some refused, for a variety of reasons. Most were very cooperative. Then we had to write to the patient for permission. By this time, you see, it is narrowing down in terms of numbers, but we still had a reasonable sample. So we interviewed patients. We interviewed a sample of employers, the actual employers, whether they had been positive or negative experiences. Sometimes, we couldn’t get permission to interview the employer; the patient was anxious about that, so we would take similar kinds of employers and see what their practices were. We did a sample of interviews with doctors about what they told their patients. It was a very productive study and on the basis of that first study, California modified its Fair Employment Practices Laws and several other states did also. We also turned attention to the insurance problem. Many of these people found their insurance was dropped.

Now the Cancer Society was able to raise enough money so that we could do the next unit--blue collar workers--patterned on the first one of white collar workers. I had been struck by the fact that among the white collar workers, while about twenty percent belonged to unions, no one ever gave the union as a source of help or said they had even consulted the union. So, in the blue collar study, we selected not only a sample of employers, but also, a sample of unions. Then we also had a sample of doctors there. We then did a third study, which dealt with youths who had been between the ages of thirteen and twenty-three at the time of the cancer diagnosis. Many of them were still in school. We found that they had severe problems in the school. Teachers sometimes separated them from other children, but there were also very positive school experiences.

HAMOVITCH: Was this because they were worried about contamination?

FELDMAN: Yes. For example, one fourteen-year-old boy with Hodgkin's Disease returned to school, and the teacher put him at a desk by himself over by the window where he would be surrounded by air which would take the germs away and the other students would not be contaminated. In the youth study, we also interviewed a sample of school personnel: teachers, nurses, principals; as well as doctors and employers. So we had a variety of aspects of what was involved for these young people. A lot of interesting things developed from it. Several organizations tried to replicate our studies, but without success. They found it very difficult. They didn't have the same access to hospitals and names as we did through the Cancer Surveillance program. Moreover, we were patient. I was willing to start with the Children's Hospital, for example, two years before we were going to do the youth study. We could begin to go through the process of committees in order that when we were actually ready to begin, they were ready to let us begin. It took a lot of careful working with them. Now the Children's Hospital, interestingly enough, is replicating a portion of the youth study that we did. They are doing it in tandem with Massachusetts General. They have each taken a group of two hundred and fifty survivors and are looking at the kinds of work experiences and insurance experiences they've had. That will be ready probably by this next year. They found a lot of the same problems even though they were their own patients that they were following up. The studies are interesting too. I have been a consultant on the one here, not on Massachusetts'. In looking at the material here, you also see the Massachusetts material. Evidently, the young people in Massachusetts have a less difficult time in getting established in work than the ones in California. It is interesting that the pattern seems to persist. Now they are quite concerned at Children's Hospital about how do they interpret to doctors who often are the ones who say about a person, "I can't tell you what the prognosis would be." Scientifically, they can, but psychologically and socially, they can't. So it is intriguing to see the efforts that are being made. There has been no real study of employability since ours. Ours still stand as the primary source and are cited quite often.

After the three major studies, I did do one as a kind of offshoot or postscript. I was asked to do something for a special edition of Health, published by Hayworth Press. They were devoting an issue to women and health. I had been asked to write a piece about women and cancer. I thought of writing about women not only as patients, but as caregivers and what their employment experiences are. I went back to our original interviews, where we had a number of caregivers, either for their children or their husbands, or a sibling, and, very often, for a parent-in-law of the woman. I had quite lengthy interviews with twenty-five I could reach; I couldn’t reach all of them by telephone. I was very interested to find how often they reported having problems in the work place not just because they would be absent to take care of the person who was sick, but because they were viewed with some suspicion by fellow workers or employers as communicable contacts with somebody with cancer. It was less so when the patient was a child--that evoked sympathy; but if it was an adult patient, then some faced some very difficult times. We have a lot left to do in that field. The last of the studies was finished in 1982; the caretakers inquiry in 1986.

HAMOVITCH: My recollection is that they have been cited very frequently and still are.

FELDMAN: In two different years, I have participated in the American Cancer Society’s annual seminar, which aims to bring the latest data on cancer research to people in the news media. The last one I was in was 1986. They still had no other studies to use along this line. There have been some efforts also to do studies about insurance experiences. In the middle ‘80s, I had a call from Princeton, the Gallop Poll people. They had decided to make a study. They knew that Mayo had done one, following up on a group of their own patients. That wasn’t hard; they could get the information from their own files and patients. But they couldn’t get any information from the insurance companies. The Gallop Poll inquiry was funded by the U.S. Labor Department. It was the Labor Department that put the Gallop Poll people in touch with me to find out how I had reached employers. They had one thousand insurance companies, and they had gotten responses from only six. Well, I couldn’t help. You know they are very self-protective. They just don’t want to make any statements. It shows how hard it is to get data.

HAMOVITCH: We talked about the Industrial Social Work Project, and I would like to conclude on the study you did with TRW and Security Personnel at USC in relation to mental distress in the workplace and how they coped.

FELDMAN: As I think is pretty evident, my interest for a great many years--from the time I started in social work--was how people related to money and work. This has been the theme through almost all of my studies. In the early ‘Sixties, shortly after “The Family in the Money World” came out, I had begun to get calls from some industries, particularly aircraft as well as others. I don’t think we mentioned this. Some of the industries were having to lay off people because they had a policy that if there were two or three garnishments of wages, they had to fire the person. These concerns were losing some of their very good highly experienced and trained personnel because they didn’t recognize early enough the problems of over-expenditures that led to garnishments, or the problems that would come up as marital discord and separation, with money often the culprit. Sometimes, the wife would arrange for garnishing the husband’s wages in order to get child support or alimony, or whatever. Because of those calls, George Nickel and I brought together a group of people from industry; personnel directors and industrial relations directors. They were identified not only from the calls that came to me, but also by Bob Dockson who was then Dean of the USC School of Business. He had also been interested in this subject and had referred some of the calls to me. The committee developed an Institute for Management Personnel on Money Management Among Employers.

HAMOVITCH: This was when?

FELDMAN: 1960, 1961, and 1962. We had three of them in three years. The School of Business was involved with me in those. Those were aimed at management personnel to recognize some of the meanings of money to people and how they did or could deal with the subject--what could they do to help these people through their departments or individual companies. Some began to refer employees to voluntary agencies for counsel to try to avoid or lighten some of these situations. We had three really very interesting money management institutes, as we called them. Then the year after those were over, Bob Dockson persuaded me to be part of a team for the John Hancock Insurance Company. Did you know about this? John Hancock had set up a series of meetings that they called "Seminars for Bread Winners and Homemakers." They had a team of four women who went two times a year to different cities in the country. One was a vice president of the John Hancock Insurance Company; she would talk about the importance to the women of insurance. One was Charlotte Montgomery, who was a writer for Good Housekeeping Magazine. She would talk about the importance of planning whether you were in a home or on a job. One was Julia Montgomery Walsh, who was the first woman member of the American Stock Exchange, who urged the women to invest in the stock market or bonds. She had been widowed with twelve children. She had first worked as a probation officer in Seattle, then joined the Information Service in the Diplomatic Corps overseas. She was in iron curtain countries and decided that she believed in capitalism and should do something about that. She went to Harvard and got a Master's in Business Administration and became a stock broker. She would talk to the women about the importance of their understanding and investing in equities. My task, persuaded by Bob Dockson, was to deal with the related family questions that the participants would have. I did this for five years. There would be two hundred women in each of these seminars. In the morning, we each did a presentation. The afternoon was devoted to answering questions. A lot of the questions that they asked me had to do with how to deal with their husband's work or how to get into the work force and how to deal with problems in the work place. These experiences were part of the long thread of experiences that start with my own observation of people saying, "I need only a loan. I am going to be working again." Then the Money Management Institutes and these Hancock seminars had convinced me that there had to be some place for social workers in industry to help both clients and employers deal with work-related problems. There had been, of course, some social workers in industry during World War II, but as soon as the war was over, there was no longer anything much being done about it. I was very convinced that there was a role for social workers in industry. That is really how I became involved in trying to get something set up here in the school. This was also at the time when I had been putting supposedly half-time into working with the president and the executive vice president of the University. The president was retiring, and he asked me, "Now what are you going to do with all the time you have left?" I said, "What I would like to do is focus on how we get social workers and industry together." His response was why should I look at industry? The University was a big employer: ten thousand employees. Why didn't I start here? That's how we got the impetus to start both our Faculty/Staff Counseling Center and to move into the industrial social work activity. My own interest in industrial social work grew out of these things I had been doing all of those years.

HAMOVITCH: Well, then you got studying.

FELDMAN: We started the Staff/Faculty Counseling Center with the expectation of some money from the University. Suddenly, it wasn't available, so we were using volunteers--alumni, faculty, doctoral students--to do the counseling. We had begun to operate earlier than we might have, because Christmas was coming and Christmas was such a traumatic time for many people.

We thought we ought to be on tap before then. This was Christmas of 1980. We had been operating for about three days when I was waited upon by two people from the University's Security Office; a woman lieutenant and a male sergeant. They said their security officers have a lot of problems and could we do something special for them. They were a little uneasy about coming to a counseling service. Could we do some special training for them? And they described a number of instances of stress related to the kind of work they were doing. They gave me some very graphic examples. I didn't know whether they really spoke just for themselves or for everybody. I suggested that they each give me a group of four people including one line officer and one higher rank officer. I would get some of our faculty to meet with each of those groups so we could see what kinds of problems they had, and then decide what we could do that would be geared to their particular needs.

That's what happened. I asked for volunteers from the faculty and about six people came to each of those meetings. We got a very good picture of the kinds of problems the officers had and worked out a training program for them. In the process of doing that, it seemed useful to identify what the mental health needs of security personnel were. I had, meanwhile, talked with some people at TRW and found similar problems to those of our security personnel. I had looked at the literature around the country; I sent letters to every university that had its own security department rather than public police forces to get some idea of what their problems were and how those differed between public and private universities. Then we developed a study that would give us information. It was a study in which Patrick McCarthy, who was on our faculty at that time, was very interested. He took a major part in designing this. It consisted of several segments. One would be workshops of different kinds so we could compare the findings at

TRW, and here at USC. He made a group of video tapes for dealing with stress. One workshop, for example, in each locality, would show those and see what the officers could pick up without any discussion. Actually, that didn't work. Patrick had left by then, so I picked up those workshops. I realized that the officers both here and at TRW were interested, but if nobody talked with them, they became very bored. When the tape would end, then they wanted to talk. So we revised the procedure in order to have some showing of a tape and some discussion of the implications. Then they were very successful. We tried to develop a workshop in each locality where the spouse would be present. That also didn't work out because you couldn't get spouses to come regularly, some spouses were working, and they didn't want to come al all. Also, the officers were too "macho" to share with their spouses. Although we had some very skilled faculty conducting these, it was clear that it couldn't be done this way. So we had a lot of negative as well as positive learnings. We had a series of workshops, ten sessions in each workshop. We had five workshops at USC and five at TRW. At USC, the officers were not as receptive as TRW's; there was a lot of problem here between the different levels of staff which had not been resolved, and we couldn't do anything about those. Those were working conditions over which we could exercise no effect. At TRW, people were told to come, but they were paid for the time that they spent with us. If they didn't want to come, they didn't have to. Those were interesting sessions and employees were so interested that we had a follow-up workshop for those who wanted to continue.

In each instance, we administered a group of tests before the workshop started, four weeks before, then the week before, and then a month after the workshops. This was just before the 1984 Olympics. We finished the last of the workshops six months before the Olympics when security conditions were becoming really important. We did another series and a battery of tests immediately after to see whether there was any continuity and/or improved performance. There was at TRW. It was not discernible at USC, again, because of the internal conflicts. Then there were some administrative changes here which probably helped. Individuals at USC, who early had not felt that they could come to a counseling session, did begin to come. Quite a few of the USC personnel who were troubled, used the workshops as the springboard to get to counseling. We learned quite a lot about the mental health aspects, although the USC workshops themselves were not very successful. The reason they weren't, we were able to share with the top administration. That led to some administrative changes. At TRW, they changed some of their orientation practices and, in some instances, they changed the way that troubled security officers could get help--things like they would be expected to make an investigation of every group in the building. They wore no special protective clothing for these investigations, and yet they knew that during the day, all people working in those particular groups, had to wear special protective clothing. So the officers would be scared to death. They didn't know what they were getting into in some of those secret working groups. This had to be dealt with. There were a lot of management practices that were changed. Whether the front line security personnel ever realized how much change there was, I don't know. It did result in some discernible change. It was a worthwhile project, I think.

HAMOVITCH: I would like to ask you a couple of summarizing, ending kinds of questions. As you think back over your career in social work, what would you say are some of the major changes brought about in social work in California? What are some of the disappointments?

FELDMAN: A lot of changes that occurred, some of which I helped with, some of which Al helped with, and some where we both were involved. They didn't always stick because of political conditions.

HAMOVITCH: You and/or Al had a big impact.

FELDMAN: I think for a while we were instrumental in changing some of the policies in public health and welfare and mental health, sometimes, by fighting against something that was presented. For example, the new Board of Social Welfare that had been appointed by Mr. Reagan had on it several people who had listened with great interest to what a state senator for Orange County proposed; namely, that out-of-wedlock children be removed from the family home and placed in foster care or for adoption. I was chairing a county committee on families and children, mandated by the 1962 Social Security Act Amendments. The committee, supported by our faculty, protested this proposal and was successful in bringing to it community ridicule that led it to be dismissed.