

Oral History Interview
with

Frances Lomas Feldman
Pasadena, California

July 21 and 28, 1997

Interviewed by Emilie Stoltzfus

Changes and Emendations

Frances Lomas Feldman read an earlier transcription of these interviews and made a number of deletions, clarifications, and corrections, as well as pointing out typographical errors. With one exception these changes were relatively minor.

In a December 13, 1997 letter Mrs. Feldman wrote:

After we'd talked, I had the unhappy feeling I had substituted one name for another – and see I *did*. When I spoke of the National Manpower Council, [see page 10] I said Katherine *Lenroot* and I really meant Katherine Oettinger. *She* was the Catholic, somewhat extreme lady. I'm sorry to have maligned Lenroot! So (thanks for bringing this up)[see page 40], will you refer to Oettinger wherever I mentioned the other Katherine? I do apologize – to you *and* Lenroot!

[July 21, 1997. Begin Tape 1, Side A]

[Editor's note: The following two interviews were conducted with Frances Feldman in her home in Pasadena, California. Mrs. Feldman knew my major topic of interest was child care centers in California, and she began with little prompting.]

Feldman: I haven't looked at anything for a long time. But it was a very interesting period in the Forties. I was then director of the largest family district of Public Welfare in Los Angeles. There were then not very many—it's not organized in the same way today. But we had the largest—east Los Angeles, Belvedere, Whittier, all of those towns around there. When the war began people who had been thought to be quite unemployable were able to get jobs. If they could breathe they got a job.

One of the problems that was very apparent was that the women had no one with whom to leave the children so that they could work. So that you found, not only among families that were dependent on welfare, but others too, that the husbands and wives—if they could both get a job, and the jobs were available—worked on separate shifts so they could take care of the children serially. It wasn't a very satisfactory kind of arrangement.

Stoltzfus: Right.

Feldman: But we had very few child care facilities in the whole Los Angeles region. I should tell you that at the same time I was chairing the Welfare Planning Council, Child Welfare Division, which is also one way I was getting involved in all of this. I did that for I don't remember how many years. And I stayed with the Los Angeles Bureau of Public Assistance until we went to Chicago to do our advanced work in 1950. I went on a leave, but I never went back to that agency.

But we had very few child care, day care facilities. A few religious organizations had some. The Lutheran group had a very small one. These were licensed by the State Department of Social Welfare, which had not really gotten into day care. It had never really been thought of as a need. The Catholic church was very opposed to mothers working and so the Catholic Charities, which was a large organization and operated a very large institution for orphans, had no facilities even if a woman had to work because she was the only adult in the family. They had a day nursery—the day nurseries were licensed also by the State Department of Social Welfare—but if I remember correctly it only accommodated about 20 children, which in all of Los Angeles county really didn't amount to very much. The schools had no after-care program of any kind. Salvation Army had a small facility but it was really for emergency care. The Family Service of Los Angeles had worked out—before I went to the public agency I set this up for them at Family Service—a homemaker service, patterned to a large extent on the housekeeping services of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Finding women who for a reasonable salary would go into a home and keep the family together while the mother was recovering or until the father came

back—to make the family an intact unit. But they had very little money and so it was a very small program. There were makeshift kinds of arrangements like that but nothing that would take care of the large numbers of women who moved into war industry. And the Lanham Act was the savior for that.

Stoltzfus: Do you mind if I just go ahead and ask you some of these questions because I think we'll incorporate some of that stuff?

Feldman: I don't care; you can interrupt me any time.

Stoltzfus: I did want to start because you started right in as being a social worker and I wanted to know just about your self, how did you choose that profession?

Feldman: [Laughing.] By accident.

Stoltzfus: By accident?

Feldman: Yes, it was purely accidental. I was a pre-medical student and I was scheduled to go into medical school in September [1934] but I needed a job that summer because, while I had some fellowship help, it would not be enough. And a friend who was a fellow pre-med called me and said take off your lipstick and put on some glasses—which then I didn't yet own—and wear some flat shoes and go and see this woman at this address and she'll give you a job as a social worker. And I said "What is a social worker?" I remember that question very well. And he said "Oh somebody who works for the city or the county or the state and helps people." So I went the next day and I was interviewed, and I was told to report to work the following day. But I had to have a car with a valid driver's license and I didn't know how to drive.

Stoltzfus: Oh dear.

Feldman: This was in the depths of the Depression and one of my brothers who was in medical school was working as a library assistant until 10 o'clock then he'd come home and study. I called him and said I could have a job if I have a car. He said "I'll be right home." So he came rushing home with the car. My mother was widowed and there were just the two of us living with her. He showed me how to operate the car. He took me down to the motor vehicle's office to get a license. And then they didn't have tests, drivers test; they had a practical test. Some poor brave man would come out and take you through the motions. And he said to me "Where are you from?" I said "Philadelphia." And he said well, so was he. I'm convinced that that's why I got a driver's license.

Stoltzfus: How old were you then?

Feldman: Well I was twenty. So the next morning I reported to work with my car.

Stoltzfus: And were you not wearing lipstick and wearing glasses? I'm curious about why a social worker—

- Feldman: I was wearing lipstick; I didn't take the lipstick off. And I wasn't wearing glasses because in those days I wasn't yet having to—in fact it's only the last four years that I've been wearing glasses.
- Stoltzfus: Wow.
- Feldman: Yes, and so that's how I started. I realized that what I was doing was something I liked to do. This was the State Relief Administration, which was just getting under way. It was very chaotic. Very few people knew really what they were doing; except that they had the means to do things. You followed the regulations that came from the federal government through the FERA [Federal Emergency Relief Administration] and were transmitted by the state to the local offices. But it was still pretty chaotic. And within a few weeks I knew social work really was what I wanted to do.
- Stoltzfus: So you always thought of yourself as going to be a professional woman? I mean originally you were going to be a medical doctor.
- Feldman: Oh yes. There was no doubt and my brothers who were all physicians really, even when we went to Chicago in 1950, sixteen years later, to get advanced degrees in social work, they were saying "Yes but you're making the break, why don't you go to the medical school there?" So they never really gave it up. One of them had married one of the four women who had been accepted to the school, and she and the other two never forgave me because—
- Stoltzfus: What school?
- Feldman: —it was the first time there'd be so many at USC [University of Southern California], and there would have been four women to have an anatomy table, no fellows, and I didn't do it.
- Stoltzfus: Oh yes. [laughing]
- Feldman: My [future] husband was a research chemist. He was working. He had graduated from Johns Hopkins and he'd gotten work immediately. But they only worked one or two days a week because things were tough. He'd come over to see me every evening and I'd tell him about all these exciting things I was doing, and he wondered if he couldn't get a job like that. So he went down and got one too and we never left the field.
- Stoltzfus: That's very interesting.
- Feldman: In those days most people I think who entered social work—there were relatively few exceptions—did it accidentally as I did.
- Stoltzfus: Now when you were talking before, and also on your sheet, you mentioned that you were a caseworker and director of the Homemaker Service when the U.S. entered World War II. Is that right?

- Feldman: Yes, that is right. I started in 1942 and I left in October '43 to go to the county agency.
- Stoltzfus: Okay. And you also mentioned the kinds of families that you sought to serve. Did that change at all with the war? I mean, was there suggestion that homemaker services should also provide maybe service for a working—
- Feldman: No, they didn't. I went back quite a few times to Family Service as a consultant. As long as they had the homemaker service, which continued to about 1955 I think, they didn't change their policy. They really saw it as a way of providing help during emergency periods. No long-term care. They didn't have the means for during that. They saw it as a necessity but they didn't have the wherewithal to follow through on that.
- Stoltzfus: And that was a live-in situation?
- Feldman: Yes. Yes. Then the woman would live in the home for as long as it was necessary.
- Stoltzfus: And how did you become involved in the—I don't know whether it was county or state—Child Care Coordinating Committee?
- Feldman: Well, I started with the county. First I was concerned because of what was happening in my own district. And we had an interesting arrangement in that district. There were very few voluntary non-profit agencies serving that whole area. They stopped with the city line. And we went to the county line. Salvation Army might come out and give some emergency care, Catholic Charities had an institution in that area, but there were not agencies that provided service to families or children. I had worked out a unique arrangement with the county counsel of Los Angeles that it would be legal for us—there was a question raised about this some years later—that it would be legal for us to provide service where financial aid was not needed, in these unincorporated areas as long as there were no other agencies to provide service. He worked pretty hard to find case precedents [chuckling] to permit us to do that. So that we were already providing a lot of service to families that were not economically dependent on the public agency. We could see what was happening there. At the same time I was chairing the Child Welfare Division of the Welfare Planning Council so I could bring these together. I was meeting with those agencies that did exist, not only professionals, but lay-people who were leaders—because that's what the Welfare Planning Council did; you probably know that. In various ways there was continuing attention to the fact that delinquency was rising among children, that the schools could not take care of them. And we really had no facilities except the Lanham Act. We were very apprehensive when the Lanham Act funding was disappearing.
- Stoltzfus: Just jumping back. At the beginning it was maybe 1942 or '43 when you got involved with the Child Care Coordinating Committee that was concerned with the Lanham Act.

Feldman: Yes.

Stoltzfus: As I understood from the George Nickel oral history [Frances Lomas Feldman. *Portrait of A Gentle Man: George D. Nickel*. Los Angeles: California Social Welfare Archives, USC, 1991.] that you were on the committee with him and maybe some other people?

Feldman: Yes. In the Welfare Planning Council, we set up a Child Welfare Coordinating Committee—I think that's what it was called. It may have been called "child care." I don't think the word "welfare" was in it. But the intent was to see what could be done. George and I—he's the one who walked me down to the Civil Service Commission to make an application for the county agency, because they were looking for new blood and he thought I should be doing that. If it hadn't been for him, I would never have gotten involved in any of this.

But in his company he had a great deal of freedom. The Beneficial Management Corporation was very generous about his being involved in any social action that he wanted. As long as he took care of their business, which he did very easily, he could devote his time to other things. He was on our Child—that's what it was—Child Care Coordinating Committee. He and Whitt Pfeiffer, who was the executive of the agency [the Welfare Planning Council] sat on that too. We would talk about doing something about children, not only while school hours were on, but after school; really to continue to preserve the Lanham Act funds. Getting the legislature to do that was difficult. George did all the work—as a lobbyist with the legislature. There were some who were very interested. Only the State of Washington, if I remember correctly, had continued to operate Lanham Act funds—but didn't continue very long. It gave it up.

And we had a conflict between the State Department of Social Welfare and the State Department of Education—was this education or was it child care?

Stoltzfus: Yes. And what was that conflict about?

Feldman: Well, the State Department of Social Welfare had the licensing authority for child care facilities—foster homes, day home care, as well as 24-hour care. The Board of Education didn't have any responsibility. But some people in the Board of Education and in the school system generally—the State Education Department, as well as the Los Angeles City Board of Education—felt that this was really an educational activity, that they are the ones who should be involved. There were people in the legislature who were on either side.

The most difficult opposition really came from the Catholic Church, because there still was the idea that women should be at home caring for their children. And it's true that that was one of the premises for setting up the Aid for Families with Dependent Children program. But no one had foreseen so many women going into industry—and staying there. This wasn't just a temporary matter but a long-time arrangement. We had to reconcile attitudes

in the State Department of Social Welfare: if we wanted to have after-school care and pre-school care on the grounds of the school system it would have to be under the education label. And I believe that seemed the most practical; then we could get support from a lot of people for it.

Stoltzfus: How did that come about that it came under—I guess the Lanham program had been supervised primarily through the schools—but I would have imagined that there would have been social welfare agencies who might have also sought to get Lanham funding. But is that not true?

Feldman: Well, they wanted it, they wanted it. And they were very competitive about this. That was one of the issues. We had representatives from both in our Welfare Planning Council committee. And they could argue very vehemently on either side.

Stoltzfus: What were the arguments? Why did the social welfare people claim it?

Feldman: Control, it was a matter of control primarily.

Stoltzfus: But did they think that Education handled the program improperly or left parts of the program out?

Feldman: No. No. They thought that it was more than education in the school system. They thought it was a matter of family preservation, that there were problems when children were out of the home for the day, that there were problems in the household and they didn't end when the child went to school or came home and they were concerned about the social issues that might be involved, including problems of health in the family and among the children. The school system was not prepared to deal with health issues. At that time in most of our schools, maybe in all of them, I don't really remember, there were doctors and nurses available. Our Parent-Teachers Association had developed into a very important caregiving facility. They paid for the doctors and the nurses in the school system, not the Board of Education. So there was already a hybrid situation.

Stoltzfus: So the educators who would have argued for the program argued for having the program on what basis?

Feldman: On the basis that it was educational. That they could teach children, pre-school, as well as school-age children, and the after-school program would be education-oriented. That was their primary mission.

Stoltzfus: And this conflict was a problem in the legislature as well? There were people who took sides of different agencies?

Feldman: Social Welfare didn't have a great support in the legislature; the Board of Education did have. But there were some legislators who were very involved in the social issues. Assemblyman Augustus Hawkins [D- Los Angeles city] who then later became a [U.S.] congressman was very active in the committee. Frank Lanterman [R-Los Angeles county], who was George's

[Nickel] assemblyman was very active. And they were both deeply concerned about the social issues. They thought education was important but there were things happening in families that needed social work attention.

Stoltzfus: And what about Assembly member Ernest Geddes [R-D - Los Angeles county] ?

Feldman: Ernest Geddes was very active.

Stoltzfus: Did he fall in the education camp or—

Feldman: No he was on the social welfare side.

Stoltzfus: Okay.

Feldman: He was a strong supporter of anything George Nickel had to say.

Stoltzfus: And did the social welfare camp advocate—I notice in addition to the question of permanency, was the question of who was eligible for the service—the means test. What was the social welfare camp's feeling about the means test?

Feldman: Well, it was not different from the Board of Education. It always surprised me that the educational group would hold out for a means test, but I think that that was the way they saw it getting through the legislature: that people who didn't need to be confronted with the means test probably could pay for care privately. And that was really one of the big compromises in getting it into the Board of Education.

Stoltzfus: Getting the Board of Education to agree to the means test?

Feldman: Yes; uh huh.

Stoltzfus: And that would have been something that you, for instance, would have agreed with? The idea of having a means test?

Feldman: Well personally I thought there oughtn't to be a means test. I think anybody who needed it should have this service available. But I went along with the importance of having a means test because, in the first place, there were not have been enough money to take care of an undifferentiated group, and I think that was an overriding factor. I'm not hot on means tests. I'm very devoted to dealing with problems regardless of what the money involved is.

Stoltzfus: Okay. I'm very interested as well in—the biggest opposition in terms of wanting to kill the program entirely, you're saying, was the Catholic Church?

Feldman: Yes. There probably were—I've often thought about this but I've never come to any conclusions—that there probably were also some other religious groups but they were not vocal.

- Stoltzfus: How was the Catholic Church vocal?
- Feldman: Well Monsignor Thomas O'Dwyer was the spokesman. He made it clear to the Board of Education, he made it clear to the Assembly and the State Senate, but mostly the Assembly, which is where this was being fought out—that women should be at home. He would approach the County Board of Supervisors and remind them that one reason for AFDC, called just ADC [Aid to Dependent Children] then, was to make it possible for women to take care of their children at home. He also had support from the U.S. Children's Bureau because the focus was on women being with their children.
- Stoltzfus: In the postwar period as well, the Children's Bureau still—?
- Feldman: It went on for quite a while. Actually it subsided and then it was reinstated in the mid-1950s—when Katherine Oettinger became the chief, because she was an ardent Catholic. [Editor's note: See Changes and Emendations page regarding this story.]
- Stoltzfus: Oh that's interesting.
- Feldman: And I came across her in a very different context and learned about this. Do you want me to digress?
- Stoltzfus: I would love to hear about this. Yes.
- Feldman: The National Manpower Council, which was a Ford Foundation-funded organization at Columbia University, had been looking at what they called womenpower. In 1957 I had published my first book which was on the family in the money world. [Frances Lomas Feldman, *The Family in a Money World*. New York: Family Service Association of America, 1957.] My interest growing out of my early public welfare experience was in the meanings of money and work in family life. And so their big conference was held a few months after that; they asked me to give one of the papers. I prepared a working paper. There were four women in this group of 65 people on this conference on womanpower, [smiling]. The rest were all men either in government—like the head of the Department of Labor—or in industry. And the four of us felt really quite isolated.

One evening Dr. Oettinger was the speaker. She was the Chief of the U.S. Children's Bureau. I think not very long, but I don't really remember how long it had been. It was the first time I had seen her though I knew her name. She presented a paper, which everyone was horrified to hear because most of it had been taken from my working paper. Some staff person had done her a real disservice and not realized that I was there. And everybody had read this paper, so it was very embarrassing. And somebody challenged her in this evening meeting about—my paper had been on work in the life of married women—and so she amplified what she had been saying about the importance of women staying at home. And she developed that thesis. It was an inappropriate place—well, her presentation had been inappropriate because these men had been assembled to see how they could recruit women

into their respective industries, especially the ones who were involved in the developing field of electronics and they needed the dexterity of women to deal with certain kinds of things. And this was what they wanted. So I was astonished to hear her expound on the idea that women should be at home, and that all this matter of developing child care facilities was against family life.

Stoltzfus: And she was able to use parts of your paper but turn it

[Tape cuts off]

[Begin Tape one, Side B]

Feldman: She read her whole paper and about three-fourths of it had simply been copied from mine.

Stoltzfus: And so she gave that presentation, then she was answering questions—

Feldman: There was a question period.

Stoltzfus: —and then in the questions, she basically said that women should stay at home?

Feldman: She said women should stay at home.

Stoltzfus: Because it was a bad thing for the family?

Feldman: Yes, and she said, that was one of the purposes of the Children's Bureau—it really was not, it was just an incidental thing.

Stoltzfus: One of the purposes of the Children's Bureau was to—?

Feldman: to make it possible for women to stay at home. But it really it was not.

Stoltzfus: And you would attribute that to her strong Catholicism?

Feldman: Yes. She said it was a religious basis, and then I inquired and found that she was a very devout Catholic. So I put them together.

Stoltzfus: And so was most of the Catholic opposition in California from the LA Archdiocese or was also around San Francisco—I mean was it a statewide Catholic Bishops or—

Feldman: There was some activity in San Francisco but I think it was led also by O'Dwyer.

Stoltzfus: Okay.

Feldman: I really have never thought that the lay public, Catholic public, supported him.

Stoltzfus: Uh hmm. Okay. And —

Feldman: There were too many Catholic women who were working.

Stoltzfus: So other than that opposition and this dispute between the welfare side and the education side, were there other obstacles to—I mean what were other reasons that—

Feldman: There were a number of people in the Assembly who worried about the cost of starting a program that would then remain forever and the taxpayer would have to support it. But no different then all of the arguments that come up about such things. It was really on a financial basis and not on a basis of what was right for families.

Stoltzfus: So were there legislators who were actively opposed—who would agree with O’Dwyer and spout that?

Feldman: Oh yes. Whether they agreed with him philosophically or on religious basis, or because they didn’t want to confront him. But [when] he appeared before the [state legislative] committee, the committee took no action.

Stoltzfus: How did the Catholic Church have this power?

Feldman: Well it always has had in California.

Stoltzfus: Really?

Feldman: Yeah, yeah.

Stoltzfus: So historically it’s been very politically important in the state.

Feldman: Oh yes. You know, when you think that we had —you know Los Angeles isn’t that old—that when we had our first social agency, when we had our first hospital, it was formed by six nuns who had come across the isthmus and then by horse and buggy from San Pedro to set up St. Vincent’s hospital. And they immediately became very important in the whole social welfare fabric of southern California. And that always remained a very important thing. The Catholic Charities could be relied on to help any Catholic family that was in need even when there were no agencies to help other families in need. You could always count on the Jewish Family Service and the Catholic Charities.

Stoltzfus: Yes, I noticed there was quite a lot of mention of Catholic involvement with the Welfare Planning Council but I also noticed that it continued to advocate the child care center program, and I wondered how that was possible. I think O’Dwyer was on the Executive Board.

Feldman: Yes he was; he was. He was an interesting man and so were some of his colleagues. He had a great sense of humor. After my daughter was born and I still for many years had been working under my maiden name, he’d come

into a meeting and the larger the meeting the better, he'd come in and he'd say, "Well, Miss Lomas, and how is your daughter today?" [Stoltzfus: laughs] And you know people would look at me because you didn't have children out of wedlock. And he knew my husband very well too. But he had a keen sense of humor. Just as when George said, "Just don't go to the meeting." He found that he was committed that day. He simply couldn't go. He had really quite an interesting sense of humor.

Stoltzfus: Now, what I found is that the legislation actually became permanent in 1957, so there was a continuation of this incremental, year by year funding.

Feldman: Ah yes that was a terrible thing. For many years our legislature met only every other year to deal with budget matters and in the intervening year they dealt with program. So when they would agree, it was always on a temporary basis and it would be than for two years. So every two years you were rushing before the assembly committee to try to get this through for another two years. After the war we had a slight depression. It really was called a recession, but it was quite severe, and they were reluctant then to do anything about funding the program. We were still on an alternate year kind of thing. It wasn't until the '50s that they finally agreed that it would be a permanent program.

Stoltzfus: Now would you have still been involved in lobbying as late as 1957.

Feldman: Yes. I was gone from 1950 to 1953.

Stoltzfus: Okay.

Feldman: But the minute I came back I was again involved in it.

Stoltzfus: Okay, okay.

Feldman: This time I had an advantage because I was at the university [University of Southern California], [pause] accidentally.

Stoltzfus: How did that—accidentally—you can't accidentally get a job?

Feldman: Well I hadn't planned to be in an academic institution, but [USC] Dean [Arlie] Johnson came over. I was doing projects at home, making up my mind whether I would go back to the county. I didn't like the direction they were moving, and I really was free to make up my own mind. But Arlie Johnson came over one day and sat right here and she said she wants me to come and teach. And I said "I don't want to teach." I'd been teaching part-time ever since I'd got my masters degree [in 1940]. I'd been teaching one or two courses every semester until I went to Chicago. I picked up again as soon as I came back with this part-time thing, but I was not seeing myself as a full-time academic. She said, "Well John Milner wants to go on a trip around the world and if you don't come, he can't go." John Milner was a very good friend. I said all right, I'd come for the time he was gone. But, like being a social worker, I never left.

Stoltzfus: Okay.

Feldman: So it was an accident, too.

Stoltzfus: Okay, but you would have been going either with George [Nickel] or continuing this lobbying for the child care program after you came back?

Feldman: Yes. Not just for child care but I was also involved then in mental health and I saw the two of them as related.

Stoltzfus: How did you see them as related?

Feldman: Because of the stress on families of not having adequate care and the stress on children in being out without any supervision.

Stoltzfus: So it would have been Governor [Goodwin] Knight then [R] who signed—

Feldman: Yes, Governor Knight

Stoltzfus: Who signed this in.

Feldman: Yes. And Governor Knight is also the one who signed the Short-Doyle Act for community mental health.

Stoltzfus: Okay. So was he fairly active. I mean, did he follow in sort of the [Governor Earl] Warren [R] tradition?

Feldman: He wasn't so active. He really went along with things that Warren had been very interested in. And Warren was very interested in child care and in mental health. My husband's field was mental health so I was very involved in it that way too. And Knight simply signed the legislation. I think he had conviction or he would not have signed.

Stoltzfus: Yes, I was reading, in Sacramento, some of Earl Warren's papers and he got literally boxes of letters about the child care centers

Feldman: Yes, sure.

Stoltzfus: And I believe it was in 1950 that he supported making them permanent.

Feldman: That's right. And in that same period we had another development affecting children (and I was still involved in that) and that was that we modified our state laws on adoption. Until 1950, 1949 actually, we had only two agencies in the entire state that could handle adoptions. And one of them, the Sons and Daughters of the Golden West had gone out of business, but by charter they could still do it. This left only the Children's Home Society. So people were going East and any place they could get children often on black market basis. We had another committee that was chaired by Jim Ludlum, who was in private practice as an attorney. Then we got Charles Schottland to do what

George had been doing with child care. And Charles handled the adoption thing. So that in 1950, with Warren's great support, we also go through this reform legislation on adoption. I think it's not by accident that we had child care and adoption and then mental health matter coming to the fore at about the same time.

Stoltzfus: Were there other groups, active, for instance parents groups, who lobbied or called for the child care centers to continue?

Feldman: There were small groups in various communities and I don't really remember much about them because I had very little to do with them. I knew they were there. The League of Women Voters had supported it. And they—not only the Los Angeles Council—but they had leagues all over the state. And I think some of them were supportive.

Stoltzfus: What about labor, labor unions?

Feldman: We already had in Los Angeles the AFL-CIO Council that came out in support. But I don't know which other unions in the federation did support it. Sue Adams was the woman who was heading the Council.

Stoltzfus: The labor person?

Feldman: Pardon?

Stoltzfus: The labor person?

Feldman: Yeah, she was very active. And what she did—if I remember correctly, and I may not remember correctly. But I think—Susan Adams—that one of the things that she did was to get the Amalgamated Clothing Workers involved. She had come out of that union into the Council and I think she got them involved. And they certainly needed to have day care. But I don't remember what else she did. She was a busy person.

Stoltzfus: So it wasn't necessarily just support in name only, these groups, like your talking about the League of Women Voters and the Council actually maybe did some lobbying as well?

Feldman: The League of Women Voters in California has always had the position that they did not lobby on anything but members would know what the attitude was and could then do something about it. We had a lot of little welfare planning councils around the county too. The one in Los Angeles, later, in the Sixties, really became the focal point for all of them but the city of Pasadena for example, had its own welfare planning council. Long Beach had a very active one. Those were the two large ones. There was one in Burbank, where Lockheed was located; this and other welfare councils were small. The big ones were Los Angeles—Los Angeles by far the biggest—but Pasadena and Long Beach. They also were very active in supporting child care.

- Stoltzfus: Okay. Let me see. [Pause. Looking through notes.] I guess I wanted to ask, I'm not sure if we'd covered this. What rationale, on what basis did you argue for public funding of child care?
- Feldman: California, and especially southern California, unlike eastern and midwestern cities, didn't have a substantial source of private funding. Where in Chicago, for example, a need would become evident, there were immediately lots of people who were putting money into it. And the same thing in New York and other places. Families with long roots in those communities would support philanthropy. We didn't have that tradition in the West. We went in a different direction, because people were coming here but they were supporting the agencies in the communities they came from. It's only in the last 25 years that we've had a difference in that. So that if a program was to be supported—San Francisco was different, San Francisco also had the deep roots attitude, but they started long before Los Angeles did—but in southern California if you didn't have public funds you really couldn't get anything started. It was the only practical way.
- Stoltzfus: Okay. And that was the argument that you would make to the legislature?
- Feldman: Yes. The fact was that if they didn't want to be worrying about delinquency control and health problems and all of these things that happen to families when children go unsupervised, then public money would have to be put into it. And you could make a case for public money because the health problems that would develop would require public money; mental health problems would require public money.
- Stoltzfus: And I mean as a welfare group did you also mention possible education values or did you leave that—
- Feldman: Oh yes, we included that but we didn't have to stress it because the educators were doing that.
- Stoltzfus: Okay. [Pause.] Was there anyone who was suggesting—I know this would have been very financially difficult—but did anyone suggest that it should be a program for everybody? That child care should—
- Feldman: I don't remember hearing that, which doesn't mean that it wasn't said. But if it was said it didn't sink into my consciousness
- Stoltzfus: What about the fee system for child care. Was that unique to have a kind of special service, or an education service—either one—to pay for it in part?
- Feldman: It wasn't common, but it's something that I believed in, as did George and others. Because in my own research about meanings of money, I had long ago discovered the principal that people valued what they pay something for. We operated on that. And it also was a point that appealed to legislators.
- Stoltzfus: Right, that people actually paid something for the service.

Feldman: Yeah.

Stoltzfus: And how were the fees determined?

Feldman: There was a committee that did that with the legislature (or maybe the legislature was advisory—I can't remember how that worked) in educational circles who developed, on the basis of what the median income was, what it cost to take care of children and so forth. And what it would cost the schools to operate the plan and how much subsidy could they expect. I don't really remember much. I wasn't very much involved in that except in the idea.

Stoltzfus: Okay. But you're saying that it was actually out of the education community that the standard budget, the median income was determined?

Feldman: Yes.

Stoltzfus: Not out of the social welfare?

Feldman: No. Social welfare was no longer really involved in it because fairly early it was decided that this program would best be located in a school setting.

Stoltzfus: So the role of the social welfare community, for instance in Los Angeles, was simply to encourage the program to continue?

Feldman: That's right.

Stoltzfus: But not necessarily to define what the program would be?

Feldman: That's right.

Stoltzfus: [Short pause.] I noted there was a directory of full-time day care programs in Los Angeles county that was done in like 1962, and there seemed to me to be a lot of full-time care.

Feldman: Well by 1962, yes. That was not the case 20 years earlier, or even ten years earlier.

Stoltzfus: So do you believe that the public program helped spawn some of private [growth]?

Feldman: Yes, I think so. Also there was a movement afoot for awhile that some of the women who really wanted to work and had skills only in child care could set up day care resources. They would have to be licensed by the State Department of Social Welfare, because they're not focused on education but on child care. That's the arrangement that we have now. When we looked, for example, at what kinds of jobs women on welfare could carry, it seemed very possible that they could take care of children in their own homes—if the homes were licensed. I don't know whether Ruth Britton showed you the report of a project we called Project 220 that was in the LA County Department of Public Welfare in [thinks aloud through some years]'62. Yes.

it started in '62 and ran for two years after the Watts riots in '65. The county had asked me to organize and run that as a demonstration project—we had federal and state money, as well as county money—to see what could be done in the way of providing services on a different basis in a public agency. We set up demonstration offices in a couple of the housing projects. And one of our faculty—Norris Class—looked at the portion that had to do with child care—his field was children's services. We were in the midst of this when the Watts riots occurred so it would be around 1965. Norrie wrote a very interesting report on what was needed by the women in these two major housing projects, where the riots subsequently erupted, in the way of child care. He pointed out that there were not women in those projects who were prepared to take care of other children, of other women's children. And he made some recommendations about that. Ruth has that report.

Stoltzfus: I should ask about that. Project 220?

Feldman: It's Project 220 and it was in two volumes. The first volume deals entirely with the demonstration project; the second volume has papers by several of the specialists we used and among those is one by Norrie Class on child care. At that time there were limited resources, private resources, for the care of children. One of the things that had seemed very possible is that women on welfare could be trained to take care of children in group facilities and they could then be licensed and supervised by the State Department of Social Welfare. In fact this happened in a number of occasions. I have no idea how many, but it was being done.

Stoltzfus: So this would be a separate sort of program than an education program?

Feldman: Yes. Yes. And sometimes it would be for children in families that were just above the income level that was acceptable in the school-oriented system. And sometimes for children with special problems that couldn't fit into the other. Teachers and others had a place, they had a priority in the state program, but there were many others who didn't have.

Stoltzfus: Was the [income] cut off fairly low?

Feldman: It was low.

Stoltzfus: It was low. So someone who would have been using the service who wasn't a teacher or a defense worker—or whatever the categories were. Would have been—

Feldman: Their income would have been really quite low.

Stoltzfus: —considered very low.

Feldman: And sometimes as husband and wife both working they still fell into that.

Stoltzfus: Right, was it primarily for sole parents, or you know, sole support?

- Feldman: Not necessarily. I don't recall that it ever was designed really just for single-parent families, but rather where the family income was at a certain level. There were a lot of families where one parent was sick and the other was working. That was long-time disability in some and I don't think that was ever an issue in child care.
- Stoltzfus: Do you recall when the permanent legislation happened? Why 1957?
- Feldman: I'm surprised that it was '57, I thought earlier in '53.
- Stoltzfus: Well, yes. Everything that I've seen has said 1957. And I saw a Social Legislation Committee Bulletin from 1955 from the Welfare Planning [Council], in which it said, that once again the legislation, the part about the permanent thing had been taken out. And then everything that I've read other than that—that's the last bulletin I saw from them—everything I read other than that said it was 1957.
- Feldman: Yes, well the date's not very clear in my mind. But I think people simply got tired. They looked back at all these years it was coming up again and again. It took a lot of time and energy of legislators to always be reviewing it and come to the same conclusion. And by this time there was no opposition from the church, there just wasn't any opposition—
- Stoltzfus: The Catholic Church didn't care anymore?
- Feldman: Yeah. That's right. There was no opposition so this could become permanent without any counter action.
- Stoltzfus: Why didn't the Catholic Church care anymore?
- Feldman: I think the reality was that there were so many women working and delinquency had become a great problem and I think that was very telling factor.
- Stoltzfus: So what about the Korean War and the defense industry in California, do you think that contributed to keeping the program going?
- Feldman: To some extent but I think it was already pretty well set by then so that it was ready to take on the people who needed to be in the war industry.
- Stoltzfus: Okay. I noted, I wanted to know about your own child and I noted that she was born

[Tape cuts off]

[Begin Tape two, Side A]

Stoltzfus: So I was asking you about your own child care arrangements when your child was born [in March 1945].

Feldman: When my child was born, my husband was overseas in the Army. And I thought a lot about how I was going to manage because it never occurred to me—or to anyone else—that I would stop working. So I searched for somebody. I had some strange experiences in the matter of recruitment but what I had decided I wanted was a real nursemaid who would live with me until my husband came home. And actually—well I had somebody who lived with me for Dona's first year and a half. And my plan was that I would feed Dona in the morning before I went to work, and I'd get home in time to feed her again. And that was the way it worked out.

But it was very difficult to find someone and I never knew how I found the woman—how she found me. The last week before Dona was born I had agreed to stay with my sister-in-law; all the men in our family were overseas. And she didn't like my living alone. I agreed I would go there. She worked under her maiden name, had an unlisted home telephone number. And I worked under my maiden name. The first night I was at Stella's a woman called and asked for Mrs. Feldman; she called on this unlisted number. Somebody had told her that I needed a nursemaid. She couldn't remember who it was, or how she got [the] number or my married name; we never found that out.

She'd come from the Philippines for a visit to her family in Ohio. Her husband was an importer living in the Philippines and while she was visiting her relatives, the Japanese had moved in and her husband and two sons were interned. So she had come to the place that was the closest to the Philippines. Her training and her early work had been as a nursemaid. So she came. We never figured out how it happened.

I was going to work one morning with my sister-in-law, a physician, who I'd never been able to convince to drive a car—though her husband and then I had taught her how; she ran women's and children's diseases for the city's Health Department. I would drop her off and I'd go on to Belvedere to my job. On that morning I said, I think I'd better go to the hospital instead and she said, "Move over," and she took the wheel. She drove me. She stopped to call the doctor and he said come right away. So I went right in and within a week I was home and Libby was there already.

It was a time of great activity in the county department because people were being repatriated from the Philippines and that area. They were coming back without any place to go, and the emergency relief had to be provided by the county. So that actually I began to work on a 24-hour basis because I was in charge of the program. We'd get a list of passengers on a ship. Then we'd have to find arrangements for them immediately, at least temporary until they could make other arrangements. About three months after this started one of the manifests had the name of three Gessemeyers on it. And I realized this was Libby's family coming back on the Gripsholme. First I called my landlady. I lived in an upstairs flat in Hollywood. And my landlady was very

devoted to us. I said I thought Libby's family was there and did she know a place where they could live. She said, "I'll evict the people down below you." She had been planning to do that anyhow. And so she did then I told Libby her family was coming; they all lived downstairs from me for a year and a half, two years and—then they were ready to go back to the Philippines and I got somebody else who stayed with me until we went to Chicago.

Stoltzfus: Okay. Okay so you barely took a week off of work it sounds like?

Feldman: That's right, that was about ten days, I think.

Stoltzfus: Wow. So conventional history has it that in the 1950s, women, particularly middle-class women, felt some sort of societal call to go home and take care of their children.

Feldman: Oh yes. In an anticipation of this manpower council meeting where my subject was work in the lives of married women, I went around the university talking to [Phone rings] women in various places.

[Tape turned off]

[Tape turned on]

Feldman: Oh I started to tell you that I went around the university and I talked to people in different kinds of jobs—married women—to find out about how they happened to be working and what they thought about it. I talked to janitresses and women in the cafeteria, I talked to a professor of economics, and various other people around, like secretaries. And I was impressed with the fact that almost all of them said that they worked because of the money. They needed to have the income to maintain their families. I thought this was very interesting because even the professional women were saying that and yet as I looked at this professor of economics, who became a very renowned person—she went up to [the University of California at] Davis shortly after—it didn't seem possible that it was the money, because she had invested too much in developing her career. And she also had an affluent husband. So it wasn't even that she had those kinds of responsibilities.

I concluded that it was simply not acceptable to say that you worked because you wanted to. There were a few people who had great trouble at home and one way of escaping was to work. But they were a small proportion; the others all said they needed to work because they needed the money.

Many years later I asked this woman economist if she still would say the same thing—because when she went up to Davis we wrote to each other, and once in a great while we'd meet. I reminded her about that survey, and she said: "Well, what else could I say? It simply wasn't acceptable to work because I wanted to." Well you know it wasn't, acceptable to me to *not* say it because I worked because I wanted to; there was no question about that among my relatives and friends. We believed in careers for women, if we wanted careers. Otherwise if we want to stay home, we could stay home. But

the general community attitude was censorship when a woman who left her family and went to work.

Stoltzfus: So do you think that was unique? What was unique about your family? Why did your family have this idea that women should work?

Feldman: Well, I'll tell you that my name Frances was given to me because it means freedom. And my parents thought I should be free. They reminded me of that. I had five older brothers and they all subscribed to this. Whatever I felt I wanted to do—practically it might not be valid, which they would point out with alacrity [Stoltzfus: laughs]—but never was there any censorship about what I wanted to do. And they were always supportive. Why they had this, I don't know.

Stoltzfus: What about your husband? I mean sometimes. . . was he supportive of your work as well?

Feldman: Oh yes, yes. In fact he took a great deal of pleasure in the things that I did. We did many projects together. And never any question. I mentioned this sister-in-law who became a physician. Her husband—my brother—felt the same way. There was never any question about her doing whatever she wanted to do. And the wives of all my brothers were professional people. No queries were ever posed about why. A couple of them were teachers, that was very acceptable.

Stoltzfus: Okay. So this was a project that you were doing on your own—

Feldman: Pardon?

Stoltzfus: This was a project you were doing on your own, asking women about why they worked?

Feldman: Oh yes; well, you see, I had already done a lot of research which had been published on work and money in the lives of families. But this particular conference at Arden House was going to be on work in the lives of married women. I decided that what I had been doing had not been focused enough on married women and so I undertook to do a polling.

Stoltzfus: So this was in preparation for your womanpower working paper presentation.

Feldman: Yes.

Stoltzfus: That's very interesting. In your mind, when did that community attitude begin to change?

Feldman: Oh I think not until the Sixties.

Stoltzfus: Early or—

Feldman: No, late.

- Stoltzfus: late?
- Feldman: Late in the Sixties. And what changed it, I really don't know. But you saw more and more women going into education. I think the number of women who were seeking careers in educational institutions increased very much, at that time. I really think it was kind of a slow process, but it became very evident.
- Stoltzfus: Hmm. Okay. Um [Thinking. Pause]
- Feldman: I should also say that I think that there was more of that freedom for women to work in the West—because at one time [to herself](Now why did I do this?) Yeah I was so definite about this being later in the Sixties. In 1961 and 1962 I did a series of articles for the *Ladies Home Journal*. It was a very peculiar kind of thing. The editors selected, through local Chambers of Commerce or Junior Chambers of Commerce, families or individuals, in different parts of the United States, [who were] outstanding in one way or another. Then they would have a reporter interview the family in-depth. Then they would send me the article, and it would be up to me to go and see the family, to see how they handled their money, and what their attitudes were about it. It was quite interesting because in the process of that I found families who needed the money but it was simply not acceptable either to the husband or to the community for the wife to go to work. I became very impressed with that on top of the other survey that I had done in '57 or '58, that there was this continuing attitude. Now I was seeing it from a different standpoint. But during that series, which ended in December of '62, that was a pretty prevalent attitude. It was some time after that that you began to see less censorship of women going to work.
- Stoltzfus: Okay.
- Feldman: And more girls going through career paths in college.
- Stoltzfus: Um hnm. Hmm. That's interesting. I wanted to ask—this is sort of shifting topics again, I was looking at some of the—from the Welfare Planning Council—some of the information about standard budgets. And I also actually did look at your book—*The Family in a Money World*—and I wondered if you could explain to me the purposes of a standard budget and are there different kinds of standard budgets? Like is there a standard budget for people who are possibly very low income and then there's a standard budget for aspiring professionals? Do you know what I mean?
- Feldman: Yes. All of that really came out of the Department of Labor. There were a lot of studies being done at the time about cost of living and cost of living as it affected various levels of families. In California, also, we had in the State Department of Social Welfare, a very important home economist—Mrs. Stebbins. She would work on—pricing—what an ordinary person needed to have to meet usual kinds of obligations and what somebody a little more affluent would need. Then she would relate this to welfare families, by size,

and age, and sex of members. There had long been a plan that was standard—ever since Harry Hopkins [FERA Administrator] started this. He had maintained that families with similar composition needed to have the same kinds of items in their budget; a budget could vary in total amount but its elements had to be uniform. Budgets were really developed on that basis. In Los Angeles County it took ten years to catch up with that. When I went to the department, they had a standard budget but they gave 20 percent less to the black family and another five percent off of that to the Hispanic family—because everybody “knew” that they only ate beans and stuff like that. Several of us protested that in 1943 and got a uniform standard budget—

Stoltzfus: Soon after that—or ten years later you’re saying.

Feldman: No that’s when it started.

Stoltzfus: Oh 1943

Feldman: The standard budget idea had been advocated by Harry Hopkins in 1934.

Stoltzfus: Yes.

Feldman: We did away with that in Los Angeles County. I don’t think they had it anyplace else in the state because other counties weren’t as beset with problems of racial differences as here.

But the standard budget was geared to different levels of need and classification by work. The blue collar worker—and I often thought this was very odd because some blue collar workers made a lot more money than white collar workers—could expect to have a budget that was so many percentile points above the welfare family, and a white collar worker still more. Very artificial.

Stoltzfus: And what were those budgets—again explain to me, what did they mean.

Feldman: That was simply a way of arriving at what an average family would need in the way of income and then, eventually, these were used for deciding what the poverty line would be.

Stoltzfus: Oh okay. So it was assumed that a blue-collar worker maybe had less clothing cost or there was some reason that they would be several percentile lower than—

Feldman: Yeah. But they might have adolescent children who would eat more than children in latency age. I don’t know if that’s really true but in theory—

Stoltzfus: Okay.

Feldman: That was the home economics point of view.

Stoltzfus: Okay. Well that was interesting. That's a very interesting thing that you brought up about the racial composition of LA county and I wondered about the administration of the child care centers. If there was any segregation of the centers or any—who staffed the centers? That kind of thing.

Feldman: I never heard of it. I never heard of any. Primarily, of course, the child care centers were in schools that were in disadvantaged areas, where they'd have a larger population of mixed ethnic groups. But I never heard of any questions being raised. When public housing started in 1939, slum clearance projects, before the war, and then became war housing projects, the issues around who would have priority and what about race became a very important one. It was decided then that the selected minority tenants would be entirely dependent on their proportion in what the neighborhood [short pause]

Stoltzfus: composition

Feldman: pattern was.

Stoltzfus: Okay.

Feldman: But that's the only time I heard it mentioned. It really was not much of an issue.

Stoltzfus: I noted that the Child Welfare Division of the Welfare Planning Council spent some time and effort working—now this would have been private institutions—but working on allowing African-American children to be part of—

Feldman: institutional care.

Stoltzfus: children's institutions.

Feldman: Yes. We did a survey (we did several surveys) but still by the middle fifties, I think as late as 1955, there were only two or three black children in all of the institutions in Los Angeles county. John Milner—whom I'd mentioned as having made it possible for him to go traveling—was on the committee looking at that. The committee in the Welfare Planning Council thought that it was a disgraceful situation but none of the institutions—there weren't a great many of them—but the ones that there were didn't want to take black children. No question was raised about Hispanics because no one ever thought about them going to institutions. The Asians—after the war the Japanese children, Japanese Children's House—I can't think of what the exact title was, was created to take care of children who were coming out of Manzanar and other relocation centers. So there was no question being raised. The Chinese never had any facilities for care; they never turned to agencies at all. The families [pause]

Stoltzfus: handled that?

- Feldman: Their family organizations—they had a special name for them—took care of whatever needs there were. It was primarily the black children who were at issue. John went to Vista Del Mar, which was a Jewish agency, and said how about taking some black children and they said, “Sure.” They took three or four, I don’t remember the number, and kept them in the institution. They did as well as anybody else. But it also set a model for some of the others—there still were not very many. It took a number of years before you could get black children into institutions.
- Stoltzfus: So when you said that the Latinos, it was not an issue, that was because they were already in the institutions or because. . . ?
- Feldman: No, usually relatives had them up.
- Stoltzfus: Oh, I see.
- Feldman: The largest number were Catholic children and they would be in a Catholic orphanage. There was no problem about that. But the Catholic orphanage didn’t have any black children.
- Stoltzfus: Okay. That’s interesting.
- Feldman: But they had lots of Hispanic children.
- Stoltzfus: Um, I think that’s all the questions. I know this is sort of winding down in a strange way—that I have right now. But I was hoping—I’m going to turn this off.

[End First Interview, Tape off]

[Second Interview, July 28, 1997, Begin Tape 2, Side B]

Stoltzfus: I listened to the tapes and I thought that I got a lot of information. I'm just curious about a few more things.

Feldman: Um hmm.

Stoltzfus: I didn't ask you what you did for the State Relief Administration. You said that your job was so much fun [Feldman: chuckles] that your husband—your future husband—wanted to do it. What was a typical day like?

Feldman: I started as a caseworker, an untrained caseworker. And families that were dependent on the system—this was a time of tremendous unemployment and it was the first program that there was to give assistance to people who were without employment. My job was to see what they needed, and using a schedule—this was one of [FERA Administrator] Harry Hopkins' innovations—to provide cash assistance to them to be sure their rents were paid because the landlords were losing their property. Landlords were badly hit and welfare to families meant that landlords also were able to survive, and the businesses around. So it was an interesting chain of activity.

My job was to see what people needed. We were very lucky in that time too. We've not had the same good fortune since and currently, and that is when there were health problems you could provide health care. It was very clear that a person whose health was failing would not be able to get a job, even if one became available. And there was a point even when we could get psychiatric services. That was very early. You know, before World War II you didn't hear very much—except in novels—about psychiatric services. In the State Relief Administration we had a very forward program and, whatever the needs were, the family and I worked together on them.

I was a caseworker for about a year and then I became the intake supervisor, which was in many ways a very different kind of program. It meant that all of the staff and the office where I was—we had 14 caseworkers and I was the supervisor—we were the first point of contact, other than the receptionist. We not only had to know that eligibility was being determined and that you weren't overlooking things—either positive or negative things—but also there was a strong distinction made between the people who were employable and the ones who were not. Poor relief, the old-fashioned program of poor relief was supposedly available in some counties in California for people who were indigent but were not really employable: the people who were quite elderly and would not be able to get jobs; or were in very poor health. Sometimes a woman with a string of children would be in that position too—be unable to provide care for them in order to work. If she had any work experience, there might be a job. There was a constant negotiation between the county and the state as to whether a person were unemployable. If they were unemployable they could not get assistance from the state, they had to rely on poor relief; (I've been losing my voice for two days, [Stoltzfus: Oh dear.] so if it suddenly disappears. . .) But what's sad about that is we did have the

beginnings in California of categorical assistance: aid to the blind, aid to the aged, and aid to dependent children, which was financed by federal and state money—not much federal yet; that really came along in the Social Security Act in 1935—but until then it was largely money from the state and county. If the county executives were short on tax funds, because they could only use local property tax, then they gave no assistance. It was common to find in a county like Los Angeles, that people were coming from other parts of the state so that they could survive. The only assistance they could get if they didn't qualify [for categorical assistance] was general or poor relief. The requirement for old-age assistance was 15 years of residence, instead of the present nine, and a woman with children had to be widowed. There was no other condition—separation didn't matter; the husband had to be deceased. Other people could only depend on [county welfare programs]. They couldn't actually depend on it, they only had access, erratically, to county welfare programs.

Stoltzfus: Okay.

Feldman: And that continued for a long time; when Social Security Act went into effect it took care of a lot of the problem.

Stoltzfus: That changed with the Social Security Act?

Feldman: To some extent.

Stoltzfus: To some extent.

Feldman: But the Social Security Act was enacted in 1935 and it became effective in 1939. Then the eligibility for public assistance, the categorical assistance program, became more generous.

Stoltzfus: Okay. And I was wondering when you were a caseworker did you go to people's homes or did they come to you?

Feldman: Oh yes.

Stoltzfus: You went to people's homes.

Feldman: Yes I went to people's homes.

Stoltzfus: And as an intake person, they came to you?

Feldman: They came to the office to ask for help. But you had to go to their home, to know where they lived. I told you how my husband got into the job of social worker.

Stoltzfus: You said that he liked your stories.

Feldman: Yeah, so he decided to get a job too. When he died I got a fascinating letter, forwarded by the Pasadena press to me. It had been sent to them. And it was

from someone who signed himself as a priest. Didn't give his address except that it was in New Mexico. But he said if the Dr. Feldman who was reported as having died in the [*Pasadena*] *Star-News* was a red-haired man with a little green car then this letter is for you. And that was it. And he describes in this letter the fact that. . . Well you have to have known what Los Angeles was like. This was a state of great flux, it was very different than it is now. The railroad and the brickmakers had brought in Mexicans from many parts of Mexico and had provided them with housing of a kind. They lived in little huts under what is now the Fourth Street Bridge in central Los Angeles. That area was called Fickett Hollow.

Stoltzfus: Thicket Hollow?

Feldman: Fickett Hollow. And that's what it was. It was a hollow with the railroad tracks running along it and the workers living in little shanties on the sides. And that was my husband's district. And he would evidently go there and park his car and then go see families. Well this man describes his father weeping and saying to Mr. Feldman that a father should be able to give his children care and he can't do that. He doesn't have a job; can't find one. And your Mr. Feldman said, "He can give them love and he can make sure they get an education." And all their lives, they heard about that. So that all five children received education, all went to college. And all his life he heard that Mr. Feldman said this and this is what he repeats in the letter. Two of his sisters had become teachers, two brothers were businessmen and he had joined the Catholic priesthood.

Stoltzfus: What a very nice story to get.

Feldman: It was. It was really quite terrific. I didn't know how to find him. A friend of mine was the Director of the Department of Mental Health for the State of New Mexico; his wife and he both were psychologists. She spent six months out of every year going around to Indian reservations. She said she would look for him. Sure enough she found him in a little church outside Gallup, New Mexico, with an entirely Indian population. So I was able to write to him after that.

But it tells you something about how desperate people were and the kinds of ingenuity you needed to keep their hopes up. What did we do? We helped people as best as we could.

Stoltzfus: Okay. That's very interesting. When you went to work for the county, first as the—

Feldman: Oh well I didn't work for the county until October of 1943.

Stoltzfus: Were you doing, were the program's substantially different then? You worked as deputy director and then director of the county public welfare?

Feldman: I was district director and then deputy director for the county of Los Angeles. Yes, it was very different. The whole administrative structure had changed:

the whole fiscal relationship between the state and the federal government, and the county fitting in with the state. Unlike some of the other states, California is a state-supervised but county-administered program. So the state enters certain basic laws in the statutes but it's up to the county to develop the details of those. There has been less flexibility in more recent years, but the counties had a great deal of say about what they would do. For many years some counties had no general relief at all. A family eligible for categorical assistance couldn't get any preliminary help until usually six [pause to think] six weeks to three months required to establish eligibility; all kinds of things had to be proved.

There was much more structure when I went back into public social work. There still was not as much as there was later because gradually there was an overlay of rules and regulations so that the work really became very routinized to some extent. There were times when you were allowed to give services and there were times when you were not. And the Social Security Act would change. You could provide services or you could not.

That varied very much and that was one of the devastating things, really, about the program. If you had to separate services from assistance you had no way of reaching out to people. On the other hand there were some people who would say you have to have services. Of course you know that people can't use services that they don't want, so that would be a waste of effort. But there were enough negatives in that, enough people who were concerned that services were being imposed on clients that it was separated entirely.

Stoltzfus: What kinds of services would be imposed?

Feldman: Well, if you had parent-children relationships that were difficult, or delinquency on the part of a child, or the mother was not getting along with the children or the husband, or she had a problem of mental health or physical health—you couldn't offer them any services. And yet unless you could be available and make the services accessible to those who saw some need for them and could use them, they had little chance of really becoming independent. That's part of what we're bothered by now, you see. It's that overlay of attitudes that governs how you give help to people. That has been one of the negatives from the past.

Stoltzfus: I'm trying to understand it, because I don't exactly understand—

Feldman: It's very complex.

Stoltzfus: the overlap between, your saying, between assistance and between services and how were they divided again? Instead of a whole how did it become separate?

Feldman: Assistance was limited to financial eligibility—so much rent, so much for clothing, so much for food. When Medicaid came in, Title XIX, which was in the late Sixties, when that came in medical care could become available. But up to then between 1962 all these things changed with the Social Security

Amendments of 1962. When services were removed health care also was removed. If there happened to be an agency in the community that could be helpful then you would be lucky. But our voluntary agencies were never well funded in southern California. You could get emergency care through the Salvation Army or Goodwill Industries, but if a family needed more than that, they needed someone to hold them together and give them the kind of courage they would need to keep looking for a way of improving their situation, to have that kind of service was no longer possible.

- Stoltzfus: So basically social workers ended up with a lot less discretion about what they could offer?
- Feldman: Yes. And what happened then was that social workers with training moved out of the public field, except for children's services—because in children's services you could still work out arrangements for care. You had to because when children were suddenly without a home or without a parent, or were clearly delinquent, something had to be done, and people could respond to those. So children's services then really became this separate program and didn't get mixed up with the attitudes about assistance in the form of financial aid. Social workers moved into children's services but they moved out of public welfare and public assistance workers tended to be largely eligibility workers and that was all.
- Stoltzfus: Okay. So you were at the county from 1943 to 1950, and was the aid to needy children program one of the larger programs at that time?
- Feldman: Oh yes, yes it was. Already by then it was not only widowed mothers who could be helped but those who had been clearly deserted, whether divorced or separated, but there was definitely no husband in the picture; he was long gone. They could receive assistance too. So that there were many categories of Aid to Dependent Children. We always had a very large program of foster family care.
- Stoltzfus: That was related to the Aid to Dependent Children program or just part of your children's services?
- Feldman: We had both. A large part of it was Aid to Dependent Children but we also had a large foster family care program of children who had no visible means of support.
- Stoltzfus: Relative to other counties, and maybe to other states—I'm not sure if you would know that—did the LA county Aid to Needy children benefits, were they adequate. Were they reasonable, average, above average?
- Feldman: They weren't above average but they were adequate. They were devised on the basis of the home economists' report of what was needed. Pricing surveys that were done, looking at the cost of housing. They were adequate. They were certainly not more than adequate. But they were adequate in Los Angeles county. In some of the other counties, like San Diego, or San Francisco, their programs were similar to Los Angeles. But in the agricultural

counties where the population depended on labor, farm labor, they did whatever they could to making it so uncomfortable that they would prefer to work—which I always thought was very interesting, because the people wanted to work anyhow. And many of them would live on practically nothing but would survive between crops until the next crop would be available for them.

- Stoltzfus: So I was just wondering, if a mother who was raising children alone, was receiving those benefits, Aid to Dependent Children, would her income be comparable to a mother who had a basic job, in the same circumstance [raising children along]—
- Feldman: No.
- Stoltzfus: and was putting her children at a child care center.
- Feldman: No, we had a policy for a long time that held that—at least in Los Angeles county, but I think it was in other places too—that a family could not receive (I have to put that the other way around) a family had to be in receipt of income that was at least \$5 a month less than a person who was fully employed. And it didn't matter what the size of the family was, but there was a differential always.
- Stoltzfus: So a mother who was able to use a child care center, for instance, would have been—may have been financially better off—although if she was paying a fee for the child care service it might have been a wash?
- Feldman: Yes.
- Stoltzfus: And the benefits, the Aid to Needy Children—is that the same as Aid to Dependent Children?
- Feldman: Yes it was called Aid to Needy Children, then Aid to Dependent Children and now its Aid to Families with Dependent Children. You see we keep sneaking some new ideas in all the time.
- Stoltzfus: Okay [laughing]. So in the time that you were at the county did the benefits keep up relatively well with the cost of living? There was a pretty sharp rise, I think after the—
- Feldman: No, there was always a differential when I was in the county program. The average income, what was regarded as a poverty level income, was higher than what was available in the form of assistance. Gradually that changed a little. The federal government began to develop poverty levels in budgets and began to use those as guidelines. But they still—the amount of assistance rarely equaled the poverty level. That really was geared to the low-income working family.
- Stoltzfus: (Let me just make sure we have tape. Yes.) You had mentioned that one of Monsignor O'Dwyer's objections to the child care program was that there

was public money for these children and their mothers in the Aid to Needy Children program. And I wondered how you responded to that argument? How did you respond?

Feldman: Well, the principle on which the ADC program was founded was clearly to make it possible for women to stay at home. They were *widow's* pensions. And they were to enable to mother to be at home and care for her children. I never had any argument with that. My argument really was of a different order and that is that as women began to go into industry and preferred to work that they were going to work whether or not they got help. And if they preferred to work and earn you weren't going to keep them at home no matter where the money came from. So that it wasn't that it was public or private money; it was the principal of who is helped. And our mores were changing so much. Monsignor simply was behind the times.

Stoltzfus: Okay. [Pause] And is that the kind of response that George Nickel would have given as well?

Feldman: Yes his position was that it wasn't whether we thought a woman should work or not, but if she decided she was going to, our concern had to be the welfare of the children and the supervision of those children.

Stoltzfus: So whether women worked or not was beside the point.

Feldman: That's right.

Stoltzfus: The point was—

Feldman: Because if they were not working and stayed at home that was perfectly okay. There was never any effort to make women go into industry. Of course there was a great deal of effort during the war years to get them into the industry, but there was almost as much effort to get them home again, afterwards. Except that many had become emancipated and they weren't about to go home. So it wasn't an issue of the sources of money or whether a woman should or should not work, but rather what she and her family decided they would do.

Stoltzfus: [Brief pause.] I'm going to change this tape because it is so near the end.

[Tape off]

[Begin Tape Three, Side A]

Stoltzfus: The very interesting story that you told about Monsignor O'Dwyer in the George Nickel tribute. That would have happened before you went to Chicago?

Feldman: Yes. Oh yes.

- Stoltzfus: And there was going to be a hearing that some committee was holding and. . .
- Feldman: Oh yes. I was still in Los Angeles and it would have been in the late 1940s. Well it was shortly after the war when the Lanham Act funds were going out.
- Stoltzfus: Okay. So there would have been a committee coming to hold hearings and to discuss the child care issue. And in the past. . .
- Feldman: There were two kinds of committees. There was the committee that the Welfare Planning Council had, which was purely a volunteer effort. There were the legislative committees in the Assembly. And there were several of them. There were Ways and Means committee and one on Child Care. It was the Ways and Means committee—see the Child Care committee was all for child care centers. But the Ways and Means committee, which would decide the Ways and Means of financing it, was the key one and that's where Monsignor had his clout.
- Stoltzfus: I see. That's very interesting. [Pause] Your sense then was that by the time then you came back from Chicago, for instance, the Catholic church or the Monsignor had become less interested or simply were losing the battle?
- Feldman: Well he wasn't as active. I saw him because I came back several times while we were living in Chicago, and I continued to do some projects from Chicago for Los Angeles. I then moved right back into the Welfare Planning Council to do some research projects for them. Monsignor was still very actively supporting the idea of women being at home. No one argued with that; you see, that was really not the issue. It was what about these women who did work and whose children were unsupervised. He never changed his position. He simply did not prosecute it as intently after that.
- Stoltzfus: Well what about the argument that if you provide this kind of service you're encouraging women to leave home?
- Feldman: Well, I don't remember ever hearing him raise that though I think some people might certainly have held that. I think it's a rather specious argument because you don't encourage women to work, just by having child care for them; there have to be other elements involved.
- Stoltzfus: You mentioned to that when you came back from Chicago, one of the reasons that you ended up not going back to the county was that you weren't necessarily happy with the direction the agency was taking?
- Feldman: No it wasn't just that. I was always very intrigued because I'm a fighter and if I didn't like the direction they were going in I would have been willing to put up an effort to change it. No, when I came back my daughter had just turned eight and I thought that perhaps it would be well if I worked at home and were there when she came home from school even if she paid no attention to me whatsoever. But I would be there. And [phone rings] I had enough projects.

[Tape off]

[Tape on]

Feldman: . . . thought I'd like to be at home with Dona. And when I think about it now, she really didn't need me at home, but I thought she did. I had a number of projects on which I had been working. . . While we were in Chicago I had been handling the refugee program under the Displaced Persons Act of 1949. I had agreed to write that project up when I came home and I had other things that I was doing at the Welfare Planning Council: research projects. I went back to the Homemaker Service to give them a shot in the arm because it had been lagging and the agency wanted to know what they could do. So I went back there for part-time. I did all these part-time things. My husband said one day, "Do you know how much time you're spending on these part-time jobs?" He had been keeping track. He said I was now spending the equivalent of two full-time jobs [Stoltzfus: laughs] and maybe I better think about taking a regular job. It was just at that time that Arlien Johnson wanted me to teach for one semester, but I still didn't want to be an academic. So it was convenient to take that.

Stoltzfus: I see.

Feldman: But it was because of all these other things that were so interesting that I didn't go back to the county. They asked me several times. And finally I said I really didn't see myself doing that because it was too confining.

Stoltzfus: Okay. This is also switching. I wondered if, you described setting up or the possibility of day care that would be operated by the Social Welfare Department, and I wondered what differences in a program operated by the Social Welfare Department versus the Department of Education; what would be the . . . ?

Feldman: You mean the State Department of Social Welfare?

Stoltzfus: Yes.

Feldman: Yes. Because in theory—whether in practice it would have been different I don't know—in theory a department of social services should be able to help the family deal with personal problems or family problems. The Department of Education would not be expected to do that. I'm sure they couldn't help but become involved because you can't see kids coming in having problems and then just ignore them, no matter where they are. But it wouldn't have been their function.

Stoltzfus: Okay. So casework would be a primary difference?

Feldman: Yes.

Stoltzfus: And was there any suggestion that the child care program, you know, maybe there would be an adjunct part of it, a casework part of it?

- Feldman: of social work connected with it.
- Stoltzfus: Yes.
- Feldman: It was talked about. I thought that they ought to have a staff of social workers that they could call on, but no one would raise the money. In Los Angeles we actually were able to develop something different. Not child care center, but our PTA in the school system had begun a mental health clinic. And it was possible then if there were a disturbed child or parent in the day care center, in the child care center for service to be made available through the PTA Guidance Clinic. We had the only one of its kind and it was never big enough. Oh it became a very large program eventually, but not enough to give everybody service who would need it. That met many of the needs.
- Stoltzfus: So there wouldn't really necessarily be a difference in the clientele served by a Social Welfare or the Department of Education.
- Feldman: Oh no. That's why it was very easy to make a compromise and just get the money whichever department it would be in.
- Stoltzfus: Okay. You mentioned a convergence of a number of issues in the Fifties, the child care, the adoption—the changes to adoptions, some mental health legislation and you said that you didn't think it was an accident that all of this was happening at once, and I wondered what about that time period that brought those things together? Were those issues that people were pushing? Or how did . . .?
- Feldman: Well, they kind of developed separately, but they joined forces in a way. Just before I left for Chicago we had gotten through the adoption legislation, and that was the first big push, statewide, to have uniform adoption laws and to have resources available for adoption purposes. In a sense it also dealt with mental health because of the problems that came up when adopting parents would go East and get a child through the black market or some other way. They often turned out very unhappy. So there was that. I have to give you more family history.
- Stoltzfus: Okay.
- Feldman: We came back to Los Angeles sooner than we expected. Al was writing a dissertation early in 1953. And we were planning to come back that summer. But Whitt Pfeiffer, who was the director of the Welfare Planning Council came to Chicago specifically to try to talk Al in to coming into the Welfare Planning Council. He had been in the Planning Council before we went to Chicago but he had done different kinds of things. Mostly he was in research. But Whitt wanted him to come back because he felt that there had to be some change in the Health Division of the Welfare Planning Council, that there needed to be reorganization. And Al had often talked about the need for mental health services and nobody was doing anything about them. So Whitt knew what he was doing when he convinced my husband that he should come

back, and we came back then in March instead of the end of the summer. So that he could—the Community Chest was undergoing a reorganization they wanted to do all of this at one time. So he would take over an enlarged division of health and mental health and see what needed to be done in the community about mental health. It's not an accident that he was involved in this because my brother was a psychiatrist, and among the very few people who gave service to community agencies.

Stoltzfus: Oh, okay.

Feldman: Psychiatrists didn't have time to do that, you know, [smiling] fifty-minute hours, you only had ten minutes in between. But my brother Jack was a great one for helping out agencies and seeing patients and so forth. And my husband said he thought we ought to have some kind of a community mental health program. When he came back to Los Angeles. He began to look at what needed to be done about mental health; what did we have? Nobody knew what we had. So one of the projects I did when we came back was for the Research Division of the Welfare Planning Council, to examine the minutes of all their Mental Health Committee meetings. They had mental health committees for about 15 years but they would start, and they might do something and then new people would come in and there was no continuity. The dean [Arlie Johnson] of the school [USC] the same one who talked me in to coming, had come from the State of Washington where they had an active mental health program. She was horrified to find how little there was in Los Angeles, and she wanted a strong mental hygiene society. That was our term then, you don't hear that anymore. She wanted a strong mental hygiene society of lay people and professionals who could see what the community needed and start some services and so she was instrumental in getting the Los Angeles Psychiatric Clinic started. We already had a child guidance clinic but that's the only one we had. And my husband began to look with her at this. I then went back to all the minutes from, I think, 1938 or 1939 and analyzed all the minutes of the mental hygiene committee to see what had been done, what was thought about, and what seemed to be the need. The report that we published then became a backdrop for planning mental health.

Then my husband had the idea that we had to do something about community organization for mental health and he devised an idea that nobody except I thought would work. (A few other people did think so too!) He thought that if he could get a group of volunteers, a sizable group, to examine what existed in all parts of this county—we had then, I can't remember if it was 79 or 89 incorporated towns or many more and unincorporated named areas too—that we could do something about knowing what there was (The report that I had already written showed how little there was.) and what there actually was that people didn't know about. He had this idea of a community organization for mental health activity. But nobody would fund it. He went to the State Department of Mental Hygiene, to Portia Hume who was director of community services. She had been toying with the idea of community mental health legislation [phone rings] and so the two of them got together and developed a project.

[Tape off]

[Tape on]

Feldman: [Portia Hume] did two things. She made federal money that she had in the State available for this project and she also began to formulate the Short-Doyle Act for Mental Health. It wasn't an accident. [State Senator] Alan Short [D-San Joaquin county] was her cousin; you see she could get that through.

Stoltzfus: Sure.

Feldman: But she got the money to my husband for this very expensive program and he got Wayne McMillan from the University of Chicago, an expert in both research and community organization, to operate the program. He had about 7,000 volunteers in the county of Los Angeles. They did a remarkable job of seeing in every corner of the county private enterprise—well the police department, business, and so forth—what there was, and developed a blueprint for action. That project ran for about three years. Yeah, I guess three years, maybe closer to four, but I think three. And it touched various parts of needs of people, including child care, and public welfare. Because now the idea of mental health was being brought into the various dimensions of society. At the same time the Short-Doyle Act went through and it was voluntary—it wasn't as big as our present mental health program, it was the beginning of making mental health services available in local communities with state money. These two things were happening together and child care was one of the considerations also. Then the Community Mental Health project ended with 99 recommendations. Wayne McMillan said it has to be either 99 or 101; it can't be an even 100 and he decided on 99. My husband went back to the university [USC] then—he'd been on and off part-time but now they got him to come full-time. And because his project was ended; and that's what he had set out to do. But then the federal government decided to fund a mental health development commission to put these 99 recommendations into effect, and so he went back to that for five years before again returning to stay at the university.

But all of these activities really tie together a variety of aspects of human need. And that's how you get them all together.

Stoltzfus: I just have a few very scattered things now, about three more questions. One was do you remember discussion of child care needs for migrant workers—

Feldman: Oh yes.

Stoltzfus: as separate from other. . .

Feldman: Separate from child care centers?

Stoltzfus: Um hmm.

Feldman: Oh yes. That was a very difficult problem to work out because there were no facilities as a rule. The children tagged along with the parents in the fields. And [pause] shall I digress, something else?

Stoltzfus: Please, sure.

Feldman: This time it's about Martha Branscombe who was chief of the U.S. Children's Bureau. We had come to know her very well in Chicago. When we were there, she was head of the McCormick Foundation.

Stoltzfus: What was her name, Martha Branscombe?

Feldman: Branscombe. B-R-A-N-S-C-O-M-B-E.

Stoltzfus: And she was at the U.S. Children's Bureau?

Feldman: Yeah, yeah.

Stoltzfus: Okay.

Feldman: She was the first person in the United Nations handling Children's Services there. She was from Alabama and I can't remember how she happened—I was writing a paper for her. Somebody had done a study and didn't finish it—this was when we were in Chicago. And she talked me into finishing the study [chuckling] and writing the report and it had to do with children. It had reminded her of a situation of her own. She had been working with Grace Abbott. Martha was then the assistant director of the Children's Bureau, and Grace Abbott was the director of the U.S. Children's Bureau. Martha had inherited some property in Alabama, a peanut farm. She had gone down to see what was going on and was horrified. Here she was working all of her life in child labor prevention problems and here on her own peanut farm were these women with all these little kids tagging along. And then she began to look at what could they do. And she realized that there was no way of taking care of the children, that they were better off with the mothers in the fields, eating the peanuts [chuckling] then they were just being left uncared for. She sold the peanut farm. I noted. But she was caught in this dilemma, what do you do? Well that's what used to happen in our inner valleys and even in some parts of Los Angeles County when it was still much more agricultural as it was during the World War II. There was no place to keep children; they went into the fields with the parents. And there was no way of convincing anybody that they should have child care; the employers didn't even bother about the kind of housing they lived in. They weren't going to do something like child care. So this was a serious problem in all the agricultural areas. We had a graduate Faustina Solis, who did a lot of work among the Mexican farmworkers she was with the State Department of Public Health. She did a great deal of work in trying to bring health care to them and also child care. She never succeeded. She recently retired as the provost for the University of California in San Diego. She had moved along into other arenas. But she always felt defeated by this.

Stoltzfus: So it was a separate issue because these children were not in schools in the same way that other—

Feldman: That's right.

Stoltzfus: Okay, so it wasn't just a matter—

Feldman: They didn't have regular school hours; it was kind of hit or miss. There was no great effort to keep them in any kind of a school program.

Stoltzfus: So maybe it would have also involved even building the facilities, as opposed to. . .

Feldman: That's right. The larger towns, like Fresno, would have things, in the city, but not in the agricultural areas which was where most of the people work.

[SEE CHANGES AND EMENDATIONS]

Stoltzfus: Okay. So I just had one more thing and it's just a clarification. We were talking, the last time you were telling me that very interesting story about the womanpower conference and your paper I was trying to remember the head of the Children's Bureau. Now it was Katherine Lenroot. . .

Feldman: Katherine Lenroot

Stoltzfus: But then somewhere around in the time you're talking about there is a new Katherine, and her name is Katherine Oettinger. O-E-T—

Feldman: Oh, Katherine Oettinger.

Stoltzfus: Oettinger

Feldman: O-E-T-T-I-N-G-E-R. She came in afterwards.

Stoltzfus: So the woman that you're talking about is Katherine Lenroot.

Feldman: Yes. Katherine Lenroot. Not Katherine Oettinger she was a very different kind of a person.

Stoltzfus: She was different. All right. That's just what I wanted to make clear. I think that's all the questions I have to ask. Is there, I know there is so much about—I wish I had like 20 hours and I could do it—your life story because it's a very interesting story. Is there anything else that you feel that I should have touched on.

Feldman: I think you really have gotten at what you were looking for which is the child care centers.

Stoltzfus: Okay. All right I'm going to turn this off.

[Tape off, Interview ends.]