

TAPING: Edna Gerstel interviewing Marian Peterson.  
LOCATION: Home of Marian Peterson, Torrance, CA.  
DATE: 13 May 1987.

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

GERSTEL: Marian, why don't we start with you reviewing the agencies that you worked for and the positions you held.

PETERSON: Well, this is a long, drawn out sort of thing.  
In 1932 I was doing my field work, completing the work for my Certificate of Social Work, with full intentions of eventually, probably, going east for my Master's degree. My field placement was in the Bureau of Public Assistance. I'm not sure that that was the exact title...

GERSTEL: Bureau of Indigent Relief.

Los Angeles County, Bureau of Indigent Relief,  
Inglewood, 1932-42

PETERSON: Probably it was Bureau of Indigent Relief. My supervisor was Genevieve Kelly. It was in downtown Los Angeles. I didn't have a car, and I was not the only worker that didn't go every place on public transportation; most of us did. If I recall correctly, we wore hats and gloves, which sounds ridiculous.

This was public assistance, working with the families. Before I had completed my field placement they wanted me to go to work for the agency. I refused to accept any salary until I had completed sufficient time for my field placement without salary, although the latter part of my field placement was in the Inglewood office, where I was to have my appointment.

At that time it was a probationary appointment for something like six months before you even applied for a case work position; it was a temporary at the fabulous salary of \$86.90 a month.

I stayed there in the Inglewood office for some time. The WPA was getting underway. In fact there were work orders at that time. Then an employment

PETERSON: office was started there (this was before SRA) to facilitate work orders, and so forth. And in the rush I was assigned over there.

Then, I preferred--as SRA was starting--to remain with Los Angeles County because I wanted more of a casework experience than simply unemployment and work projects. Bea Copeland came to work at that point in time in the Inglewood office. That must have been about 1933 or '34, I'm not sure which. She came to work for SRA. This, as I recall, was her first assignment with SRA. I got acquainted with her. Some of us used to have lunch together in the park. But I wasn't interested in going with SRA. I wanted to stay with the County and have more of a family and children's experience.

At that point in time I met Louis, and we were married in 1933 which ended my plan to go east for a Master's degree. I continued to work in the Inglewood office until Thelma Shanks became the director and [she] had a strong feeling that no worker should ever work in the district in which she lived, and for this reason I should be transferred to another district because I lived in Inglewood. Interestingly enough, I was the only worker working there who lived in Inglewood. Clerical staff did, but not the social workers. That's interesting.

GERSTEL:  
PETERSON:

The people in the office were all, should I say, political appointments or had happened into social work because there weren't other positions available, but were good, conscientious workers. The fact that I had had any training at all was a novelty, sometimes the butt of jokes, and sometimes I was asked questions about different things.

I continued with the Department, as it assumed its various names, from 1932 until 1942. During that period of time I had two maternity leaves, one in 1936 and one in 1938, each time coming back to a different office.

My assignments varied during that period of time from AFDC, some old age assistance someplace along the way...all types, general relief, all types of experiences during that period of time.

During the time that I was with the County, which was up until 1942, I had extremely varied experiences. My last experience was in child welfare, which I thoroughly enjoyed. For six months, during that period of time, however, I worked in a single men's division. Wanda Nichols became the director there and asked if I would come to that office, and thought that it would be a good experience. I found that it was. I worked on skid row during that six months and interviewed in the linen room usually, in a flop house, because it was the only place there was any privacy. [I]

PETERSON: handed out meal tickets, lodging tickets. They were standing in line for both of these during that period of time because of conditions as they were. Certainly there were an enormous number of homeless people at that time.

Prior to my experience in the small child welfare district that they had at that time I had had the opportunity to be involved in the placement of a few children. At that time Gertrude Logan was the assistant director of the Department... or the Bureau. I think it was a bureau at that time. They had a case conference in Gertrude Logan's office in which the worker, I assume the supervisor (although I don't recall)--a child welfare worker and Gertrude Logan--discussed the case to see whether or not placement was indicated. The decision to place or not to place was made in that conference, and the placement was decided upon usually in that conference also...that is, either an institution or a foster home.

Welfare Planning Council: Welfare Information Service, 1942-45

In 1942 I left the Bureau--feeling as though I were leaving home because this had been my social work experience for so long--to start the Welfare Information Service at the Welfare Planning Council. Or, rather, it was with the Welfare Planning Council but under the Community Welfare Federation. I'm not sure whether that was the exact title at that time or not, but it was the Welfare Federation.

At that point their thrust was to let the donors--particularly the large donors or those responsible for large groups such as presidents of corporations and so forth--know that the services were not only for the indigent but that there were social services and that such things as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts were not the only kinds of things that touched employees, but there were other services that might be helpful if they had employee problems at various times or people retiring and so forth.

And so appointments were made for me with these various people in the community. And, coming from not-too-well-furnished welfare offices, I was practically overwhelmed when I walked into some of these enormous, beautifully appointed offices. I discovered that those with whom appointments were made (the president of the Edison Company, the president of Southern California Gas, and so forth, the telephone company) were interested and that they usually were asking questions and willing to spend more time than the allotted time to know more about

PETERSON:

services.

I didn't have very many brush-offs during that period of time. I was amazed at the amount of interest there was. This well may be that the appointments were made with those [companies] that were the larger donors, for starts. But the interesting thing is that I had call-backs from people like the personnel director of some of the department stores (Bullock's and so forth) to meet with personnel people, to discuss the types of problems that they encounter in personnel and the sorts of things that agencies might have to offer. It was an extremely interesting experience.

At that particular time the aircraft companies were hiring...at that time they weren't as much hiring consultants...I don't recall the title they used.

GERSTEL:

Counselors?

PETERSON:

Counselors...as using somebody in personnel for that function, and then rather quickly hiring counselors to handle employee problems. It was interesting to find that so many of the employee problems were those same problems that we had found in public assistance--and some of the same people were working now because employment was more plentiful--and having the same problems on the job that they had had in the community, including high absenteeism.

At that time child care was an enormous problem. The questions arose as to where child care could best be provided in or near the place of employment or in and near where the mother worked. It was this time that we were able to get into the hopper some of the legislation in regard to child care centers and some of the funding for child care centers and so forth. This was at about the time of the birth of child care centers.

Under my Baily Wood Fair (for some unknown reason) was the Social Service Exchange, which was staffed by clerical people, it had an advisory committee, [and] was attached to the Welfare Planning Council. This was the clearing house which made it possible for agencies to learn whether a family was known or an individual was known to another agency or not. There were mixed feelings about this, although most felt that it was extremely important.

At this point in time in social work many were feeling that this is the kind of information that you can get from the client if you had a good relationship with the client. It wasn't necessary to use an outside source. Others felt that it was an enormous waste of money to not have an outside source to prevent the duplication of aid. So there were strong feeling[s] on both sides.

However, in the years that followed the public agency was offering to include the Social Service

PETERSON:

Exchange in their confidential index. Because of the funding problems for the Social Service Exchange, this was looked upon with favor by some as the funding being provided in the public sector. Others felt that it would be an unfortunate move because there would be a loss of the confidentiality that some of the private agencies felt was extremely important. From my point of view, unfortunately, the public agency assumed this and, actually, Social Service Exchange disappeared completely in terms of availability to private agencies.

I was at the Welfare Planning Council with Welfare Information Service for more than three years, and then resigned in order to come home and have another baby, and thought at that point that I would stay at home with the family and possibly do part time work.

I think the only point in time at which I really [thought] a difference was made between women workers and men workers was when a higher salary was offered to the person who followed me because he was a man and because--he was returning from the service--they felt they could not get him without offering a higher salary...not very much higher but enough higher.

I think this is the only point in my professional career that I felt keenly the discrimination against women. In civil service if you pass an examination you are in a classification and you are offered an appointment depending on where you are in that classification. I was fortunate enough to be able to get positions in that way. I think I'd better stop and get a drink...

I worked for the Welfare Planning Council until the end of September in 1945. Then I remained at home for some time, had a baby in 1946, and did some part-time jobs.

Part-Time Jobs: Children's Bureau of Los Angeles, State Personnel Board, Agency Studies, 1949

In the meantime I was at the Children's Bureau of Los Angeles for six months, starting in January of '49 because the executive had had his application at the U.S. Children's Bureau for a long time, was accepted, but the appointment was one that would have to be filled immediately. Unless he could report immediately it was lost, he wouldn't get it.

So, he told me if I could just be there half time, just to see that things were rolling and have conferences with staff, and so forth, this is all that would be necessary until the new executive arrived. Well, I discovered that it was one of those things that well could have taken all day. I tried to limit it as much as possible but it was another one of those with part-time pay and full-

PETERSON: time job if you did what really needed to be done. And when Clyde Getz left he hadn't had time to write his annual report. So among other things I had to pull things together and do an annual report and prepare an annual meeting for the Children's Bureau of Los Angeles. Very interesting times.

That is when Clyde Pritchard came to Children's Bureau of Los Angeles to be the executive. I was there for, I think, roughly six months.

In the meantime, before and after that, I had done some temporary assignments for the State Personnel Board, interviewing for their merit system. They were responsible for the merit system, lists, and so forth, for the counties that did not have their own civil service. So I would go from county to county and interview the candidates. It was very interesting. The counties at that time had everything from some professionally qualified workers to many situations where a secretary or a clerk had been given the responsibility of the caseload, whatever it was. Concern as to whether or not these people could be qualified for the position. A very interesting time.

In one county the county attorney and his wife were responsible for the caseload of the county.

GERSTEL: That's an interesting point.

PETERSON: Very interesting, varying from county to county with requests from some to be sure and quality so-and-so. It was kind of one of those situations where you used your tape recorder and the Board (there was an interviewing board) and made the best decision that you could possibly make...

GERSTEL: With much tact.

PETERSON: With much tact, and reviewed it carefully when you returned to the home office. These were some really very interesting experiences and an opportunity to get a bird's eye-view of public social work in California, at least in the outlying counties. The majority of them didn't have their own civil service at that time.

Well, also during that period of time I helped with a number of agency studies. I did the case reading for Faber Stevenson when he studied the United Seamen's Service. I did the study of the Volunteers of America, Family Department when there were questions about the Family Department and funding and so forth, the British Benevolence Society. A very interesting variety of agencies. [I] came up with findings on which committees could get what information they might to make whatever decisions they might in working with the agency.

Also at that time--and this was probably late in 1946--I did the community study in San Bernardino

PETERSON: that preceded the establishment of the family agency in San Bernardino. This was the study of community needs, community resources, community leadership, community interest in such an agency, and whatever could be done in regard to the community to help make a sound decision as to whether this was the place to start an agency or not. A family agency was started there.

Many of these were very interesting, very time-consuming at the time, but you were through when you were through. But the majority of part time work that I attempted was involving so much time away from the family that I decided that full time work provided a better opportunity for time with the family and time at work and a more structured setting for both.

USC, Creation of Division of Child Welfare Services and Department of Adoptions

PETERSON: So I went back to the Welfare Planning Council on March the 1st of 1950. I stayed there until September 20th of 1953. During that period of time I had decided that I probably would be working indefinitely and that I certainly was not going east to get my Master's degree. USC had a good program and I had the opportunity of getting a child welfare scholarship at the time that the federal scholarships were available. So, this was approved and I went to USC for my graduate work.

One of my field placements was in the School Guidance Clinic, which was an excellent experience, and from there to the State Department of Mental Hygiene where I was at what was known then as Pacific State Hospital. The reason I mention this: I was extremely anxious to have some case work experience after my graduate degree (before I got into administration again), and so secured approval and stayed at Pacific State Hospital for a year doing psychiatric case work there. Excellent experience with the patients and with the guidance clinic that they had. There have been many changes, I'm sure, since that time.

I don't know what I can say about that particular period. It was a fairly good one in terms of the services that were offered. Not enough staffing for the need that was there, obviously, but a relatively good service and a good experience.

From there I came back to Los Angeles County as the child welfare consultant and was available to go to the different districts for consultation.

At that time there was no Child Welfare District, there was no Division of Child Welfare. There was a Child Welfare director, Harriet Erickson, and units with supervisors in the various

PETERSON: offices. But Harriet's role was a consultive role as mine was. What was very noticeable was the vast difference in services that were available in the various districts and really the need for some centralized child welfare service that could focus on the needs of the children and the services that were required to meet those needs. It was the result of recommendations at that time that we'd made that the Division of Child Welfare Services came into being, which was certainly a step in the right direction.

There was discussion at that time with the probation department (and there had been earlier) about the need for services for children that were centralized and all-inclusive. For example, for the dependent children--dependent/non-delinquent children that were in the probation department--the placements that were needed for those children, and the public assistance, and the adoption cases.

The Department of Adoptions came into being at that time...I don't remember the exact date. I should but I don't remember. But it was during that period of time. [It] unfortunately developed as a separate department, but the interest was in adoptions, and the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors was particularly interested in adoptions. So, the time was right to at least get one department that focused solely on children. It was an improvement to have a division of child welfare services rather than simply a consultive role because policies could be more uniform for children throughout the department.

When the Child Welfare District was formed Harriet was the director and I was the assistant director, and this is the way it remained as long as we had the District. From the District federal money was available for protective services in the community, and it was decided that there should be a project at least for community protective services. I was given the opportunity of heading up that project. It was a project because it was federally funded. It was more than a project in terms of the fact that it was to be a permanent part of the Department. In other words, that it should lead to...

The concern at that time on the part of some people was that professional services were being provided for protective nature for the community when children who were receiving AFDC were not receiving sufficient services. During that period of time, too, the dependent/non-delinquent children became the responsibility of the Department.

At that time the dependent/non-delinquent children, the majority of whom were in placement--



PETERSON: all of them were in placement, I'm sure, at that particular time--instead of going into a child welfare district were placed in the district offices with a unit to provide services for the dependent children of the court.

The trend, the thrust at that time was for services for all "public welfare children" receiving AFDC, in need of protective services, and the Community Protective Services was the luxury that the Department could not afford.

At the time that we had the Community Protective Services we were able to attract professionally qualified people who were able to pull together a good staff. We found that professional, qualified people were definitely interested in services in the public agency. However, when this became diffuse, when it went into the districts as part of a structure that was responsible for financial assistance and services and...the whole shmeat, some of these people left the Department for other places. Many of them moved up to more desirable, better paying positions in administration and so forth, in the hospital system, and with them the public assistance system--into administrative spots. So, some of those that were recruited at that time we were able to hang on to; some of them unfortunately lost interest and left.

#### Community Workers

So, when the community protective service program was dissolved I was given the assignment of [a] variety of services that included the community workers, the homemaking service, and the volunteer services.

GERSTEL: Would you explain what community workers are?  
PETERSON: This is what I really wanted to start with.

During the time that we had the community protective services we were able to hire the community workers, some of them indigent people, who could start on help as an aid (working with a worker) could complete enough education in adult school to qualify for an examination and hopefully spots could be made in the career ladder so that they could climb and secure permanent civil service positions. Actually their status as community workers was a civil service status but without the opportunity of progressing unless the other positions were open to them. Some of them we were able to open.

PETERSON: Interestingly enough in this year, 1987, I met one of these community workers, who is still working for the Department and has child welfare responsibilities, and I'm sure is an excellent

worker: Martha Walker.

GERSTEL: I don't know her, but the ones on my staff were very good, very confident.

PETERSON: We had excellent people. They saw things that the social workers sometimes didn't see.

One of the social workers mentioned a family not ever eating together. The community worker pointed out that they had only one pan to cook in so they couldn't cook enough for the whole family at one time.

GERSTEL: A simple thing...

PETERSON: So silly and so obvious, but who looked in cupboards, you know? We were accused of it but didn't really do it.

[Pause]

PETERSON: This is picking up after a week or two or three...  
...I'm not sure how long.

GERSTEL: Two weeks, I think. Maybe more.

Corrections and Recapitulation, Norris Class,  
USC Training Unit

PETERSON: Listening to the very last of this to see where we were, I realized that I am referring to Child Welfare District when it is really a division. So where I have said Child Welfare District I am really talking about the Child Welfare Division. I don't recall the year--that's something that's available and that I could get later--that the Division was dissolved.

In all of this thrust for putting services and economic...well, welfare aid, and everything together in one package, it was felt that the luxury of a Child Welfare Division could no longer be afforded, that this would have to be dispersed and be part of the regular services of the Department.

Incidentally, the time at which these dependent/non-delinquent children were transferred to the Department of Public Social Services the Division was in existence. This was set up with special units in the district for these cases rather than strengthening the Division, which indicates again the trend toward integrating everything rather than having any kind of specialized services.

GERSTEL: Yes. Definitely.

PETERSON: It was at that time that it was felt, although not completely put down in policy, that voluntary placements could not be made. I understand now that there are no voluntary placements.

GERSTEL: That's my understanding.

PETERSON: I'm not sure, I haven't verified that. But it's my impression that there are no voluntary placements. They really cork placements. So, that's where the child welfare services were at that time.

PETERSON: I ~~wanted~~ wanted to go back a little bit because I thought of a number of things that I did not include, of whatever value they may be.

I'm thinking of my first stint with the Department of Public Social Services from 1932 'til '42. The last, probably, year and a half I had a student training unit (students from USC). And I recall we were on Santee Street most of that time. But part of that time may have been on San Pedro [Street] and the office there, I don't know.

And that's about the time that Norrie Class came to USC and worked with us with the training unit. Alice Mertz had the other training unit. There were two training units, both in the same location. We spread out over quite a geographical area in terms of the assignment of cases. I believe that Ruby Inlow was working with us at that time also. This is about the time I think that Ruby came to USC, although I don't recall specifically.

GERSTEL: She told me that she was the first one to come to USC before Arlien Johnson.

PETERSON: I'm sure. Yes, she was there before Norrie Class.

GERSTEL: She was the first.

PETERSON: I worked with Ruby before I worked with Norrie Class. ...I shouldn't digress. Norrie Class was from my mother's home town, Chagrin Falls, that nobody else had ever heard of.

GERSTEL: I've never heard of it.

PETERSON: It's a very tiny place. [Laughter]

Then I moved from the student training unit to the Welfare Federation and Welfare Planning Council where I started the Welfare Information Service, and happened to pick up (as I was looking back through my material) the report of the first six months in that. It's very interesting because it indicates the trend at that time.

We were working closely with the community. I think I mentioned earlier on the tape that I talked with the business people in the community to indicate that there were social services other than Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and so forth, and some that might be of value to their employees.

Industry and Social Work, Day Care

PETERSON: It was at this particular time that industry was hiring many people, this wartime, including many women, more women than they had hired before. They were having counselors and industrial relations workers and so forth in industry who were extremely interested in talking with us about services that might be available.

GERSTEL: Oh, during the war they did that. I didn't realize that.

PETERSON: Yes. They were realizing the need for counselors and industrial relations departments. Some social workers were hired in industry at that time. I think that's a chapter that somehow we have sort of lost. Of course, people were presenting the same problems that they were when they were receiving public assistance.

GERSTEL: Surprise, surprise... [Laughter]

PETERSON: They were no longer needing the financial assistance but they still had their social problems. This was affecting their attendance on the job. I noticed one place I said, "There's more in common between industry and social work than appears on the surface because industry's primary social function is the efficient production of goods which involves capital and labor. Their success is dependent upon harmonious conditions within and a large active market without."

Although the motives are different, they and social workers are both concerned with the well-being of the individual.

So there were plans for hospitalization, medical care, safety, group insurance, welfare funds, absentee calls. They were all developed in different degrees in the various established industries. One of the very predominant things at that time was the need for day care for children.

GERSTEL: Oh, yes. It still goes on.

PETERSON: It still goes on. We campaigned there and through the Welfare Planning Council for day care centers and so forth. It was during that period of time that day care centers were first established in the schools.

The schools at first were very, very reluctant to take this on, saying that their role was that of educator and not a babysitter. Then those interested in nursery school education came to the foreground and endeavored to impress education with the importance of this early "education" for children. That's a little chapter that I didn't mention before.

GERSTEL: Well, that's important. I'm glad you remembered it.

PETERSON: I can Xerox a copy of this if it would be of any value. I think it's interesting in terms of the fact that we talk about our relationship with industry as relatively new...

GERSTEL: Yes.

PETERSON: ...industry and business.

GERSTEL: I think the Archives would like a copy of that.

PETERSON: And at that time it was alive and well and just beginning. I wish I could remember the names of some of the social workers that were hired at that time... But there were some.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

[About 10-12 minutes of blank tape]

Legislation, Protective Services for Children

PETERSON: During the time working with the community workers and with the community protective services we were able to get some legislation through, working with John Venneman, for protective services in California. I wish I had that bill so I could be more specific about it. It was to provide protective services for children.

GERSTEL: Well, if you ever come across it...

PETERSON: I probably have it somewhere, I don't know. I'll look and see.

Essentially that's what it was: that protective services for children are needed. So we did many things, including going to Sacramento and testifying regarding our experiences and the need for protective services across the board. Our inquiries came from all areas, including Beverly Hills.

GERSTEL: That's interesting.

PETERSON: It was very interesting that we provided two units in Watts because we were interested in providing as much work for community workers as possible as well as providing protective services. The comment of the community workers was, "Why two units in Watts?-- protective services are needed just as much in Beverly Hills as they are here--and let us tell you..." And they told us some of their experiences because they had worked in Beverly Hills with families of children being left alone, abused, the gamut of experiences.

I might add--as long as we're talking about legislature--that during the period of working with Welfare Information Service the need for child care centers was very obvious. We had committees working on that, going to Sacramento (we supported that in every way), and did secure the publicly funded child care centers.

So, there is a response to need if somebody is willing to take the time to point it up and to follow through so that it gets into the right hands.

Let's see, what else can I say? The homemaking service was very limited, but a valuable service. The volunteer services for the Department of Public Services has continued to expand and has been off to a very good start.

GERSTEL: What would you say is your most satisfying experience?

PETERSON: My most satisfying experience...

GERSTEL: Or your most frustrating. Either or both.  
PETERSON: I'll start with my most frustrating first.  
[Laughter] I'll be utterly frank. I don't know.  
[Laughter] This is being recorded.

Politics in Public Welfare, Young Social Workers,  
Frustrations, Pioneering Programs

PETERSON: I became thoroughly frustrated with the amount of politics involved in public welfare, particularly in the fiscal departments. It reached the stage where I felt it was almost impossible to find a spot where you could provide a good program, period.

GERSTEL: I think you would find company in that feeling, too.  
PETERSON: So, one day I said, "I know what I'm going to do, I'm going to retire," which wasn't the solution that some of them wanted to hear.

I think the very sad thing about it was that some of the young workers were wishing that they were old enough to retire. All that I could think of was that I certainly came into social work at the right time to have the exciting and challenging experiences. I would not have thought of retiring along the way with the challenges that were there and the opportunities that there were to meet them to a certain extent. That's my most frustrating: to see the community protective services program dissolved when it really hadn't gotten into a good demonstration operational form because of the interference at that time and knowing full well that there was still federal funding available for such a program. I think that was extremely frustrating.

So, to see it dropped without really coming through with the kind of services that--with the professional workers we had--we could have provided, was one of the sad points.

I think the opportunity that I've had of pioneering along the way has probably been the most challenging.

GERSTEL: You did have quite an opportunity.

PETERSON: I don't know. I guess it was being in the right spot at the right time, but having the opportunity of pioneering the Welfare Information Service, and during that period of time I think we really had the first (and there were some) professionally qualified workers in industry. They did hire a few professionally qualified workers. This was really exciting, to see the opportunities.

The motives, as far as social work in industry, were to bolster production and to take care of the profits by having the number of workers that they needed there at the time that they needed them. At the same time, even with these motives, there was the opportunity of securing provision for the

PETERSON: services that people needed in order to work (and some of them definitely needed to work) and to provide good services for the children.

Being in the Department at the time that we at least got a division of child welfare services together and were able to launch a good enough program so that we were accepted membership in the Child Welfare League of America was really a very exciting period...discouraging when we saw it diffused into the districts with no one really keeping the home fires burning as far as standards and what is needed to meet the needs of children. That was the sad, sad part of it.

Dear, there have been so many high spots and, along with the low spots, it's kind of hard to hit them all.

GERSTEL: I guess all in all you would say it was pretty satisfying..

PETERSON: Very, very, very, very satisfying. I was certainly delighted that I had selected social work as my profession.

GERSTEL: Well, that's a good note to end on. Thank you. If you find that you have any documents or papers or what have you, we'd be glad to have them.

PETERSON: I probably have. As I said I threw a lot of them away...

GERSTEL: Well, you might find some.

PETERSON: Even though I am a "keeper" I decided I couldn't keep everything.

[More blank tape]

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

DATE: 4 August 1987

PETERSON: Shall I start?

GERSTEL: Go ahead, Marian.

PETERSON: Okay. I'm not sure what I said at the very last of the other tape and so this may be repetitious.

Norris E. Class, Case Recording

PETERSON: In looking back, the last two years with the Public Social Services, back in '32 to '42. I had one of the training units. As I recall at that time there were two training units, and Alice Mertz had the other. I had worked with Ruby Inlow from the School [of Social Work at USC]. Then it was at about that time that Norrie Class arrived.

[Long Pause]

PETERSON: About that time Norrie Class arrived and I thoroughly enjoyed working with him. Some of those that were students at that time were Marguerite Tandowsky and Peg Deitrich Dickenson and a number with whom I have associated since that time.

I also found and have given to Edna a report of the first six weeks of Welfare Information Service in 1942. I included that only because I think some of the things well may be significant in looking back in terms of the need for day care and what was being done at that time and our affiliation with industry. Some of the comments in that report may be significant now.

Then, during the period that I was helping with some agency studies, I pulled out a few things that I have given to Edna. One of them is the study of the United Seamen's Service that I did with Faber Stevenson, and one or two others of that particular time period. Then I thought it might be interesting...

In 1960 and '61--it probably culminated in '61--we were doing quite a little bit with case recording and had a Child Welfare League committee locally tied in with the national Child Welfare League Committee looking at case recording. I've included notes from an institute that I did with Reuben Pannor. We did several institutes on case recording. I think the material that I've given to Edna is in regard to the one that we did in San Francisco at that time. We also did an article that was published in the Child Welfare



PETERSON: League publication.\* I don't know that I have a copy of that right now but I'm sure one is available.

It was a very interesting experience and a careful look at what we were putting into records (the notes will probably take care of that phase).

Social Services for Children in New York City and Los Angeles

PETERSON: Then in 1966 and '67 I had the privilege of serving on the practice commission of the Child Welfare League of America on foster care. I'm sure I mentioned that when we were talking before, Edna.

One thing that I think, probably--it has at least impressed me as we've been thinking back over this--was the contrast between our public welfare, social services for children, in the west and those in the east, and the opportunities that we have had for developing the good sound professional program in the public agency and some of the needs that it could meet that were not being met in the east.

In the east, specifically in New York City, there were good placement services for children, however, traditionally they have been the responsibility of private agencies, and still are, which in many ways is very good. But the problem is that the public agency has been responsible only for the immediate shelter care, the immediate services. Elaborate shelter cares have been built, but as you go through the shelter cares at any time you can see who the leftover children are, having Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish agencies, primarily the Protestant agency taking the non-sectarian children. It means that a large number of those left over were the black children for whom they said that they had no placement facilities, they didn't have the foster homes to take care of them.

It was interesting that just before one of my treks to New York City for a meeting of the Commission there had been a strike of workers in the shelter care facilities--in other words, in the large shelter care in New York City. When I asked what was done with the children during that period of time they said they were all moved temporarily into private homes, foster homes. When I asked why they couldn't remain they said that they didn't have agencies and homes that could take the children on any basis other than that particular emergency.

They were very much interested in the fact that we had child welfare workers with Master's degrees

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\*Reuben Pannor and Marian V. Peterson, "Current Trends in Case Recording," Child Welfare 42 (1963): 230-34.

PETERSON: and that we were developing the professional placement services. I think that has some significance for us now because the thing that binds them in the east is really tradition and the funding that has been traditionally carried out by families and interests in the east. It's very difficult to give up these interests and these practices. While in the west we don't have that kind of tradition to combat. So that's one way in which we may have an advantage in developing foster care. With the problems that we've had recently it certainly isn't the only one.

The Role of Districts, Placement

PETERSON: I'm not sure whether I, in talking about the sequence of experiences in child welfare, did anything historically with the children's services. There was, when I was first with the Agency in 1932, a small child welfare unit that was county-wide for placed children, and children were placed in foster care from the districts. After a placement conference...

GERSTEL: That you mentioned.

PETERSON: ...Gertrude Logan (and I think I did mention that)... However, the thing that was very fuzzy was the responsibility of the districts and the responsibility of the child welfare unit. By in large, that responsibility was to go back to the district. But this was a very fuzzy area and districts were certainly not clear on their role in this placement process.

At the time that this child welfare unit was abandoned, was dissolved, there was no continued item for a child welfare director. And Josephine at that time was placed in a district, I believe Santa Monica District, with the Department saying there was nothing else they could do. She had not been "fired" but her position had been abolished.

The next step was the child welfare services in the districts. I think I mentioned the disadvantages of this as well as the advantages. At least it was clear that they were district responsibilities, but obviously the difference in policies between districts--in terms of when a child went into placement and out of placement and what happened during--were so different that consultation wasn't the answer. It was at that point that the Division was established.

I think those are the things, as I was thinking back over what I had said, that I had left out, just highlights. And that's probably it, Edna.

GERSTEL: Very good. I thank you. The Committee thanks you.

[About 30-35 minutes of blank tape]

[Tape 2, Side A completes the interview]