

Aneita Tidball and
Clyde Pritchard
Interviewed by John Milner
1979

ABSTRACT:

At the time of this interview, Mrs. Tidball was Director of the Traveler's Aid Society in Los Angeles, having held similar positions in Chicago and other major cities; she went on to become the National Director of Traveler's Aid. At the time of this interview, Clyde Pritchard was Director of the Los Angeles Children's Bureau. Both had worked with John Milner during the time discussed in this interview; he began his social service career in Idaho's Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Mr. Pritchard and Mr. Milner were natives of Idaho. This interview reminisces about the experiences of the three in Idaho during the years of the Great Depression and then about their subsequent experiences in the field of social work.

MILNER: Mrs. Tidball, you were the first social work director in the State of Idaho?

TIDBALL: That's right

MILNER: What was the date that you came to Idaho?

TIDBALL: In June of 1934.

MILNER: June of 1934. How did you ever happen to come to the State of Idaho? I understood you were a resident of Washington.

TIDBALL: I was back at the National Conference of Social Work in Kansas City, and I think that Aubrey Williams, who was the transient director of the Federal Transient Service, and Harry Hopkins' assistant in the FERA program, had been to Idaho and advised Governor Ross that it would be essential for him to have a social service department. Idaho was then receiving a lot of money from the Federal government. They felt it was very important to have a social service department. On this basis, Mr. Hersfeld, who was the State Director or Administrative Director of Idaho Emergency Relief, had gone back to Kansas City to see what the various programs were, upon

suggestion of Aubrey Williams. While he was back there, he realized that it was a program they had overlooked and needed. He took along with him a woman from Idaho, who was a director of what they called “Woman’s Work” at that time in Idaho.

MILNER: Woman’s Work.

TIDBALL: Woman’s Work. It was a program of employment for women. When they returned, Mr. Hersfald did advise the governor that he felt it was important that they establish a social service program. My name had been given to them by a federal official as a possibility of a person who had experience, and might be someone who would take the assignment.

MILNER: Mr. Pritchard, you were one of the early social workers in Idaho. I wonder, at what time you came with their public welfare program?

PRITCHARD: I started in September of 1934.

MILNER: Yes, 1934. Where were you sent when you first came to Idaho to work?

PRITCHARD: I was sent to Pocatella to work in the transient program.

MILNER: In the Federal Transient Program?

PRITCHARD: Yes.

MILNER: That was your home community, wasn’t it?

PRITCHARD: That was my home.

MILNER: What was your particular assignment there?

PRITCHARD: I was the caseworker for what we called the Treatment Center, and this was the place where all the transient men and boys came to register for food, lodging, and help. I was also the caseworker for the work shelter we had up in the mountain. We were trying to keep the transients from moving on, to stabilize them.

MILNER: I see. How many shelters were there in the State of Idaho at that time? Do you remember?

PRITCHARD: I don't remember. I think, probably, only two.

MILNER: Didn't Sandpoint have one?

PRITCHARD: Sandpoint had one, but at a later time.

MILNER: This is true.

PRITCHARD: Pocatello was such a railroad center, and this is probably the reason that they had the first Treatment Center, as they called it during the War. I believe that was the beginning.

TIDBALL: Clyde, could you describe for us how the men came in on boxcars and flat cars and came into Pocatello?

PRITCHARD: They came – anyplace that they could find a ride on a train, they would be there. They were riding underneath, on the rods. They'd be on top of the boxcars, on top of freight cars, and then they would get into empty cars. By the time they arrived in Pocatello, they were very, very hungry and exhausted. Some of them had been on the cars without any food or water for over 24 hours when they stopped there.

MILNER: These were really the victims of the Depression.

PRITCHARD: These were really the victims of the Depression. These were not the hobos. We had a wide variety there. It was amazing, the number of Ph.D.s that I registered and interviewed at that time; even some doctors of medicine.

MILNER: Were there whole families coming together?

PRITCHARD: Yes, and we also had a family transient program, and there were whole families. But families usually were coming in by car. The single man and boys were the

ones who were coming in on the railroad. I worked in the men's division, not with the families.

MILNER: What was your responsibility to them?

PRITCHARD: My responsibility was to first of all register them, see that they had food, get cleaned up and have clothing, and a place to rest and sleep. My responsibility was to see if we could possibly stop them from continuing on the road, and we did have the work program, which was up in the work camp. This was very similar to the type of work that the CCCs were doing. They were working up in the mountain, they were working in the forest, and they were building camps, which the people could use. They were building actual roads into the mountains.

TIDBALL: Forest fire control.

PRITCHARD: Yes, forest fire control was another thing they were working on. Once we could get them stopped from riding on railroad cars, after a period of time, which I no longer remember, they would be eligible to stay on the regular relief program. Our great purpose there was to try and stop this movement, because it was so futile. It was like a wave of people through the whole United States. It was a tremendous wave.

My memory of the men is such an extremely positive one. These were men who felt they could not do anything where they lived, and they were doing their damndest to improve their own lot. They were men of courage and men of ambition. They were not men who were trying to duck out.

TIDBALL: I think the reason they had the transient program – wasn't it because of our state residence laws? They either had to stay put where they were and face defeat and disaster, or they had to get out on the road. Once they got on the road and across the state

line, they were ineligible for any type of assistance at all. The federal government stepped in and established the Federal Transient Program, so that all persons, in the country, could eat and have a place to sleep, and so forth. At that point, we still had residence laws that decided whether you ate or not.

PRITCHARD: Yes. We also had medical care for them. We had a treatment program for them. In Pocatello, we actually had an infirmary, and we had nurses. Sick transients could be treated medically.

MILNER: This was a federal program. I wonder, was it under the jurisdiction of the State Welfare Program?

TIDBALL: Yes. As State Director, I was responsible to the federal program. These were under the State Department of Social Services. In actuality, we had a State Social Services Director who operated the program independently, but within the federal framework of regulations. There was more elasticity in the program, so we could do things for people that we couldn't do for sick residents. Many of them, of course, needed more attention, because, as we said, they were away from home and were without resources of any kind. They couldn't call on family or relative resources. The Federal Transient Program was developed so that these people, who really tried to improve themselves, would not starve to death. That was really the basis of it.

MILNER: Now, here was a state that had no social work or very limited, private agencies, and, I expect, no professionally trained social workers at the time you came. I'm wondering what the attitude about social was when you came in. Had people ever heard of it? Did they have any idea what it was as a profession?

TIDBALL: I think the Red Cross had done a very good job in Idaho in terms of early programs. The Red Cross program and the use of volunteers had exposed some people to the art and desire to help people. The philosophy was inherent there. I met several old Red Cross workers who had settled in Idaho. They were very understanding and helpful. But that was not in terms of a vast national emergency such as we now were into. They were understanding, and they wanted to help, but the concept of what was a big mess such as the unemployment program was, was hard for anyone to conceive. The farmers, themselves had bank loans, in terms of crops, in terms of seed loans, in terms of everything. The banks owned everything. The farmers didn't own property at all. There was really no social service any place. Idaho was highly political. The governor and the politicians had been running it. So when social service came in, it was through the back door. The program was already operating on a basis that made it difficult to push yourself forward and do a job.

MILNER: Do you mean there was political corruption in the state?

TIDBALL: I would say that political corruption was very high, extremely high. The need for the family was not paramount; it was the need for the party. If you knew the manager or the party boss or the party buddy, you could eat. Otherwise, you found it pretty difficult.

It was interesting, however, when I left, I got letters from a great many people who wrote and said that the social service way was the only equitable way to take care of people in an emergency like this.

MILNER: Who was governor at that time?

TIDBALL: Governor Ross.

MILNER: Governor C. Ben Ross?

TIDBALL: Yes, C. Ben Ross, yes.

MILNER: I understand that his wife had quite an influence on what he did as governor.

TIDBALL: Yes, his wife was very active in the Lady Macabees. She used the Lady Macabees as a vote force for getting votes for Governor Ross to get him elected.

MILNER: Who were the Lady Macabees?

TIDBALL: Well, that's a Lodge. I really don't know what the Lodge is, but it's a Lodge. I remember shortly after the election, one of the politicians in the state office came to me with a long list of pages, and wanted me to sign it. "Why should I sign it?" He said, "You have the biggest payroll in the state. These people have to be paid." I said, "Why should they be on my payroll?" He said, "You could just go ahead and sign it." I said, "Well, we're spending federal money, and I could be indicted for signing payroll to pay Lady Macabees who had just gone out to elect Governor Ross." I didn't sign it, of course, and I reprimanded the gentleman who presented this payroll about why he'd even think I'd sign it. That is a good example of how very corrupt it was. Politics was foremost.

MILNER: What party was the party in power at that time?

PRITCHARD: Democrats.

TIDBALL: Democrats. This was when they were trying to oust Borah.

MILNER: Get rid of Idaho Senator Borah.

TIDBALL. Right. They didn't want him around. He was kind of a menace. I guess he talked a little bit, and they didn't like him. (Laughter)

MILNER: It was rumored, I know, that Governor Ross was influenced in a decision he made by a fortuneteller in Pocatello, Idaho. Mr. Pritchard, could you tell us about that.

PRITCHARD: Indeed I can. (Laughter) Her name was Minnie, and she read fortunes by vibrations. She held these large group meetings in her home, and each person would give Minnie something that had been on his person: a ring, a wristwatch, something like that. These were always returned, by the way. There was no question about her keeping any of them. She would pick these up, and from the vibration, she would tell the fortune of each individual. I don't know how she secured her influence on Ross, but she did.

Every major decision he made in politics, as far as I know, he always consulted Minnie.

MILNER: Did she have a last name?

PRITCHARD: I can't remember the last name. It's been too many years. But she was the one, for example, who told him that if he would drill for water just south of Pocatello – and this was during a period of great drought, and we were rationing water all summer long – he would find it. Actually, where he drilled, there were some old Indian petrofacts, which indicated the presence of water. These petrofacts were from the lava rock just south of Pocatello. Ross's Mayor began the drilling, and it was called "Ross's folly." But he hit an inexhaustible supply of water for Pocatello, which still keeps Pocatello blooming. (Laughter)

MILNER: Some of these decisions were wisely made, based on that experience. Amen.

PRITCHARD: He was in Boise most of the time, after he became Governor, but he brought Minnie up there, and he did consult her.

MILNER: Wasn't she on relief herself?

PRITCHARD: I don't remember that. She could have been, but I honestly don't remember that. She did very well on the fortune telling, I must admit.

MILNER: Mrs. Tidball, what were your responsibilities when you first took over as State Director? What were some of the major responsibilities you had?

TIDBALL: The major responsibility was to assess the personnel. That was the first: assess how the personnel was operating and to see, if possible, what personnel would like to continue on and would be capable of continuing on and carry the program forward. I think the second major thing, in addition to assessing the ERA personnel in the Social Service Department, which was mediocre – for instance, you had 2,000 families and two workers, so the personnel was not very numerous. The second was to assess the community in terms of resources available. That is, what agencies were operating and existing, and could be called in to give additional resources. The third, in terms of personnel, was to try and obtain an application blank since nobody knew who was who. We wanted to obtain an application blank on everybody that was on the payroll and see who they were and why they were on the payroll and what their jobs were. That was really the first thing to do. It became very evident, early, as the personnel was assessed that it was necessary to set up records as to who was receiving the relief. I remember in the first assessment that there were 500 cards, I believe, in the Boise office alone that were marked as receiving relief, and yet when visitors went out to call on them, they were very incensed. They had never received anything. So nobody really knew who the 500 were who got the relief or if the 500 were supposed to be getting relief.

MILNER: So you never knew where this public money went. There was no accountability, whatever.

TIDBALL: No accountability at all. It was amazing to me that the department, the auditing department where they were spending mostly federal funds, would have been so lax in not wanting to know who these people were. Yet the County Manager was the one who certified them and put them on relief or work relief, whatever it was. Of course, there was no rhyme or reason for the selection, or whether you had two kids or eight kids. Maybe you got the same budget, or maybe the one with two kids got more than the one with eight children. There was no budget, so, of course, then the fourth thing was, if possible, have a budget. So the first person I really hired was a trained home economist who had been with the Federal Smith-Hughes program in Idaho, knew food, was well qualified and well trained, and she set up a budget.

MILNER: What was her name?

TIDBALL: Her name was Marie Smith, and she set up a system as to how much food a family of two should have, and four, and so forth, and how much rent they should pay, and clothing, and so forth. Well done. The families on relief appreciated that. They saw for the first time that they were being individualized in terms of their needs.

MILNER: Prior to this, the decision as to who might be eligible to get relief, was determined by the County Manager and their political clout. Were these political appointees through the state? Were the managers politically appointed?

TIDBALL: I really don't know. I suspect that they must have had a long political record of some sort, either in the state or the county, and probably both. I was too busy to really run down the politics, except that I was dealing with it every day.

MILNER: You must have needed to recruit a staff in order to develop a social service department, Mrs. Tidball. I wonder, where did you find the people to work for you as social workers?

TIDBALL: There was a great deal of criticism in the beginning. In the first place, Governor Ross said, at the time the program was initiated that only Idaho people could be employed. All the jobs were for Idaho people. In turn, I had to reflect on that and see where you could hire the kind of persons who might accept training. It was obvious that there were only maybe two trained workers in the state, and you would have to run training courses. The very first emphasis, the objective in the program, was to recruit people who would be trained or trainable. As I saw the application blanks when they came in, it was obvious that most of them would not be interested in training. Yet as I saw some of the new ones coming in – they were young people, and I already had made up my mind that the people to recruit were the young college group. In the Depression, they couldn't get jobs and they were the potential group to try to recruit to come into the program and we would run special training courses to train them. The first person I was able to bring into the program was a trained social worker from Cleveland. She had expected to work for me in Seattle, and they referred her to me when I went to Idaho, because she was from Idaho. So I hired her as the training specialist, and she set up training courses immediately. After about three months, we had training courses running to train people in the basics of how you really can help people over and above budgets. There were certain methods by which you could help people, and other methods which would not.

MILNER: And what was her name?

TIDBALL: Her name was Lois Porterfield, and she was from Western Reserve. She a was well-qualified, excellent person. I had met her originally in Kansas City. She was going to come on to Seattle then and work, and yet she was delighted to come to Idaho and take the position. She did a marvelous job of training.

MILNER: Were there others that you were able to bring from outside the state since the Governor objected to this idea?

TIDBALL: No, only in terms of the Federal program. The Federal Transient Program was open. The Governor had no control over that. He could have none, because it was one hundred percent federally financed. He could not restrict outsiders, so the head of the Transient Social Service Program was from out of state. Another time, the Governor got into a bind over Wallace and Kellum, where they finally killed the Governor over a strike in mines up there. Is that right? The Governor was subsequently killed up there.

MILNER: Yes, that's right.

TIDBALL: He was afraid of this, and he sent me, saying it was my job. It was a real hot spot. The program was being run by ex-mine employees who knew everybody.

If you had been a good employee, according to their frame of reference, you ate. If not, you didn't get anything. The U.S. Employment Labor Department came out and protested this vigorously. When I went up there at the Governor's request, it was true that it should have been protested, and the mine owners were willing to accept an outsider. The new Governor did not protest it, because he wanted that situation taken care of. In fact, he was just afraid of it. They had killed one Governor, and he didn't really choose to get that deep into it again. So this one person came in for a long period to clean up a really very bad mess.

MILNER: What was the name of that person?

TIDBALL: That person was Elsie Schumer.

MILNER: Elsie Schumer?

TIDBALL: Yes, Elsie Schumer. She was not a trained worker, but she was an excellent community organization person, in that she was able to work with people. I had worked with her over there in terms of coal mines and other areas, and I knew what she could do with lay people. She did a good job, and then she left and went home. We then tried to train local workers to take it over, which they did.

MILNER: What were the names of some of the Idaho people, the young people, which you recruited to come into the program.

TIDBALL: Well, one of them was Mr. John Milner. I really didn't recruit him, but he was in the program, and his application came in. It was evident that Mr. Milner was a qualified young man who, in the Depression, had just finished Stanford, and probably couldn't get a job for some time. Nobody could get a job during this period. I wanted to meet him, and I had him come in from up in the sticks, as I did with all the young ones. I wanted to know who was available, because they were the ones I was counting on to build the Idaho program. I was only there for one year.

MILNER: Any other names you recall?

TIDBALL: Clyde Pritchard. Clyde Pritchard came in the program in terms of the Transient Program of Pocatello, and he did a beautiful job there. The only thing Clyde did that caused a little rumpus was that the doctor who was in charge of the transient camps was a state senator, and Clyde called me one day and said what was he going to do? The doctor had left the transient camp with all the medical problems and gone to the

state legislature in Boise, and he had no doctor and no replacement had been planned. I suddenly realized that he was on my payroll, so I said to just take him off the payroll, and for Clyde to hire somebody else. Just then, this word got to the Governor that the doctor had been taken off the payroll, and the whole dome of the capitol in Boise began to rock and roll. (Laughter) All hell broke loose.

MILNER: Mr. Pritchard, being one of the early social workers and continuing your career in social work gives you some understanding of the changes that come and responsibilities of the caseworkers or practitioners who were at that time called “home visitors,” weren’t they? I wonder if you would describe a little what a home visitor did.

PRITCHARD: I didn’t operate in residents relief program. I only worked in the transient program. If I remember correctly, the home visitors actually did two major things.

Originally, when social service was finally established, they took the application from the client, and, if in their judgment immediate relief was necessary, they were able to secure vouchers, for example, for food or even lodging, or that type of thing. Then the home visitor actually made a visit to the home of the client and talked to the family. During this visit, the visitor would try to see what resources might be possible for the family to use. He also would see what the family actually needed, not only in the way of food, but also in clothing, in bedding, and that type of thing. Then we did have programs in addition to the relief. Some relief was given in cash. Some, in order to give immediate needs, were vouchers, which were issued to the stores, which the stores honored. Then we had what was called a Surplus Commodity Division, in which we had food. It was surplus food from different parts of the country. This would vary according to the different seasons, but there was always some food available there. I remember one time

there were an awful lot of oranges. You'd see oranges in the stores in Pocatello. Then we had set up what was called "sewing rooms." Women were employed and were paid according to budget and family size and composition, and clothing was actually made for the relief client. The visitor could send in a clothing order to the sewing room, and clothing could thus be secured without having to purchase it.

During the time the client would go on the relief, there were periodic visits to the home. Clients did come in to see their visitors when emergencies and crises would come about.

MILNER: In a state that had never known social services, it must have been difficult to really get acceptance of this profession and to develop programs in relation to the needs of the state. I'm wondering, Mrs. Tidball, what were the organizations that tended to possibly block the development of social services within the state, such as political organizations or religious organizations or whatever else?

TIDBALL: I think there's no question that -and I admit probably in error or maybe not - I had to start on the basis that the program would be accepted. By going ahead on that premise, that it was possible to initiate certain provisos in a program that you knew, basically, was going to be accepted on the long term, but not immediately, that is, what Mr. Pritchard has said in terms of the home visiting, and all of that. You knew immediately when this venture was set up and when visitors went out, that they couldn't be trained as you wanted them to be trained, and you knew that without it, they couldn't do the job that you wanted to have done. But on the other hand, you had to start someplace, and by starting on this premise, with a great positive attitude towards eligibility and towards helping people, you at least got the start of infancy, of social

service coming into play. Really, individualization was as basic as it could be. To individualize families and have respect for the families, these were the basic things that you could start with. They, in turn, could move into a real social service program.

I think that the old employees, who had been in the program, answering questions specifically, resented this. No question about it; they resented it. They resented the social service coming in because they saw this as having a power and authority that they did not have. They really recognized that it was federal money being spent, and these people were antagonistic toward determining the needs of people on an individual basis. They resented the authority being taken away from them. Administratively, what happened was that the administrator, the State Administrator, was responsible to the Governor. He was hired by the Governor, and there was no social service or no civil service or anything like that. He was hired by the Governor, and he didn't send out word to the counties that they were to follow any routine or anything: he just let the chips fall where they may. That was the task for the social services.

MILNER: The very idea of giving anyone relief or welfare to anyone, must have been a shock to a state that always prided itself on its independence of this type of thing. For example, I know there was a large population of Latter Day Saints or Mormons in the State of Idaho, and it's been my understanding that this Church has always claimed to have taken care of its own people. I wonder if this was true in the Depression years.

TIDBALL: I believe Mr. Pritchard has said, "No," and I say, "No, no." There's no question about the fact that the Mormons were taxed beyond their capacity, and they couldn't possibly take care of the needs of their people. Now a new surplus commodities system did come out of Depression this in many of the counties, including southern

counties in Idaho. The surplus commodities were given out in the Mormon Churches. The Mormons came to the Church. Now whether the people thought the Church was giving them the commodities, I don't know. I do know that on the Flying Squadron survey we made, many people expressed the idea that they didn't get their surplus commodities from the government, but that they got them from the Mormon Church. That's not in doubt, because they were given out through the Church. Also, they gave a collection to the Church when they picked up their surplus commodities.

MILNER: You mean they gave money to the Church when they got their commodities? Would you like to tell me about that, Mr. Pritchard?

PRITCHARD: One of the problems that we had in at least one Southern Idaho County was that we had a Bishop who was head of our County Welfare Program.

MILNER: A Mormon Bishop?

PRITCHARD: A Mormon Bishop. He was taking tithing from the relief checks. He had been stopped by a Mr. Milner at one point, and later on was stopped by a Mr. Pritchard. (Laughter) He took ten percent of the welfare checks that the clients received.

MILNER: Did any percentage of this go to him personally?

PRITCHARD: Not as far as I know. I think it really went to the Church. I never questioned his honesty. It was a difficult thing for him to accept that he didn't have a right as a Bishop to demand tithing, because this is what the Mormons expected of everybody. It was not for him as a person: it was for his Church.

TIDBALL: That is even though the government was supplying the money, it was still considered money from the Church.

I know another case in Idaho Falls where there two lines of people who had been waiting for hours, and I said to Marge, the Director, “Can’t you organize this better? Why do people have to stand in line for so long, and why do you have two lines?” She said, “One line is to get their checks, and then they have to stand in line for the County Manager, who is a Mormon Bishop, to take out the tithes. So they have to have two lines.” This is the same county where I was assigned.

TIDBALL: It was Idaho Falls.

MILNER: Yes. Were there many Mormons on public welfare?

PRITCHARD: Yes, there were many, many in Southern Idaho. In the county seat, Mormons were close to 100 percent of the population. Again, no church could possibly have picked up the load there. They did help out; they had what they called, “canning plant.” People could bring in their fruit and vegetables and can them, and then they would give a certain percentage to be distributed to the poor. They were very generous in that one area. But as far as any real financial assistance or underwriting a family, it just wasn’t possible. I always felt badly that the Church had to take the stand that we’re doing our best. Everybody understood that nobody could have done that at that time.

TIDBALL: They did continue their medical program, though. When babies were born, they would take the patients into their homes and take care of the – you know, there were midwives for the birth – and they had a great big medical program. But as Mr. Pritchard said, they weren’t equal to it. Nobody was equal to it: not even the Federal Government.

MILNER: Mrs. Tidball, you were in the State of Idaho for one year, and I wondered what led to your leaving. You really plowed the ground for social services in that State and these have continued through the years since. I wonder why you left so soon.

TIDBALL: I left unexpectedly, because the Governor requested my departure.

MILNER: You mean you were fired?

TIDBALL: Well, yes, gently. I told the Governor that when I went, I was to be there one year, but when the dome of the Capitol began to rock and we took the doctor off the payroll, the Legislature was in session. All the politicians from all over Idaho descended, and talked about that social services program and all it had done to their clout in their cities. The Governor called the State Administrator and told him he'd have to fire me. I very patiently told the State Administrator he couldn't fire me, because I'd been hired by the Governor, and it was understood that I would be there for a year. Then the Governor called me back and he said I would have to go, because he couldn't take the pressure anymore. So I was fired. I was there only ten months.

MILNER: Well, about a ten-months period on that? Where did you go from Idaho?

TIDBALL: I went to California, and I was hired there. I tried to resign several times, but the Federal agency knew that someone had to stay with this program as long as possible. They agreed that if I would stay, they would take care of me when the time came. I knew, and they knew, that it couldn't last.

MILNER: That is, staying in Idaho.

TIDBALL: They knew, and I knew that I couldn't stay in Idaho, because we were trying to do something that was so unheard of. So I came to California and was hired by Charles Schottland. California was having the same sort of thing. They had divided Los Angeles County into five regions to try to get a hold on it, because it was such a mess. I was then assigned to Pasadena, then Pomona, Alhambra, and Lincoln Districts to try and clean those up. So the struggle began all over again.

MILNER: But you were now experienced.

TIDBALL: No, I'd now retired. (Laughter)

MILNER: Who replaced you in Idaho after you left?

TIDBALL: At the time I left, I don't know. I don't know who: there was no replacement. The Governor said he was going to try to provide food, and I understood that there were donations, and so forth. At the time I left there, the Governor assigned two young men, Mr. Peter Cohen and Mr. Orville Peat to help me, and they were helpful. They set up various programs and that was very helpful. I believe – I'm not sure, but I believe Mr. Cohen was appointed as the director after I left, but I'm not sure. When I leave a job, I always leave it. The history subsequent to my departure is never clear.

PRITCHARD: Mr. Cohen did succeed Mrs. Tidball. He actually succeeded the head of the Transient Bureau in Idaho, a man under whom I worked, and then he was fired. He (Cohen) took his job. Then when Aneita had left, he was appointed in her position, and another man named Kenneth Tipton – I beg your pardon. Peter Cohen headed up the Emergency Relief Program. He did not take the position Anita held. Mr. Cohen appointed Kenneth Tipton to head the social service department. This was a man who was completely untrained in social work.

MILNER: He was untrained as a social worker, and yet was made State Director of Social Work. Was that a political appointment?

PRITCHARD: I honestly don't know. He was a friend of Mr. Cohen's. I know that. I was unaware of any political power that Mr. Tipton may have had. Pete Cohen had political power.

TIDBALL: Where did Tipton come from?

PRITCHARD: I don't know. I thought originally he came from Boise.

MILNER: Did you want to add something?

PRITCHARD: The thing I really want to comment upon is not the responsibility of the advocates. It didn't occur to anyone I ever knew, working in the program as a social worker, that any individual or family could be blamed for the situation in which they were caught. We therefore, maybe naively, went in really very non-judgmentally and open to hear what the family had to say. It wasn't until we had worked for quite some time that we came aware of the different kinds of individual problems that existed. But we did go in on this non-judgmental basis, and we were accepted. I believe this was the reason that we were. We saw so many of our own friends who needed help, and we saw men who had actually made fortunes, who now had to have relief. We saw people who had been most prudent and wise in saving and conserving, and everything was being wiped out. When the banks had gone broke, the dedication of the workers at that time was quite remarkable, wasn't it, in terms of giving time. Oh, the hours that we used to work! There were days when I and many other workers put in twenty hours a day in order to help these people who so desperately needed help. I remember my first traveling job - and it's true of John Milner too - it never occurred to us to travel on our working time. We'd travel to get there when the office opened, then we'd work in the evening, and then we'd travel to the next place at night or early in the morning. To travel on working time would have been unthinkable.

TIDBALL: I think this is all very true, Mr. Pritchard, but in the State Office, I really had some very flagrant examples of workers being unable to individualize. I remember, specifically, calls from the northern part of Idaho; the staff wondered where the five

children could be taken, because the parents were not good parents. They were going to take the five children away from the parents, and they wondered about a specific institution. If that was a good one, would it be all right to take the children there, and would the institution take the five children? I said, "Well, why are you calling here?" They said the supervisor didn't think they should take the children away from the parents. I said "Well, why do you think they should take them away?" "Well, because their house is dirty, and they don't keep it clean, or anything. The children would be much better off in an institution." Well, of course, my reply was that they hold everything until we could talk. Of course, it went back to the District Supervisor.

Some workers were very zealous in taking action, and they saw very superficially what their jobs were. But this was inevitable. You couldn't just bring people in off the street and turn them loose with that much authority and not have some pretty bad decisions made.

MILNER: There was no professional training. I wondered what your beginning salary was as State Director. Can you remember that, Mrs. Tidball?

TIDBALL: Yes. I was the high-priced woman from Seattle. I was in the press all the time as "the high-priced woman from Seattle." I was paid \$350 a month.

MILNER: Three hundred and fifty dollars a month! How about you, Mr. Pritchard, what was your first salary?

PRITCHARD: Seventeen dollars and fifty cents a week.

MILNER: A week. Seventeen-fifty a week. These were considered good salaries during the Depression Days, you feel?

PRITCHARD: Well, they were salaries. Let me put it that way. Anyone who had a job during those days was considered very lucky.

TIDBALL: I think that those of us who supposedly had some training, and our training certainly was, at least then, on the job training – my training was with the Family Service, where they took you in as an apprentice. You got up to \$125 a month, and then you'd reach the peak. You were really an experienced, trained worker. That was all the background we had when we took on these jobs. We were not equal to the jobs; we weren't trained well enough for them. But there was nothing better afloat, so they hired us. Three-fifty a month was certainly a good salary – considered a good salary. I was paid practically the same – a little bit more – when I came to California with a comparable job. That was the Regional Office of Los Angeles County, at \$375 a month.

MILNER: I assume that at that time it was felt that when the Depression was over there would be no further need for social services and that it was a temporary type of service and that social services was inevitably to end. Of course, this was not true over the years. Because it was thought temporary, I assume they accorded you temporary kinds of offices. I wonder if you could describe the working conditions you experienced.

PRITCHARD: I'll always remember my first office. I had an old kitchen table for a desk, and the chair I had was a very large Primex can. Every time I moved, it popped. (Laughter) It took me several weeks before I could get a real chair to sit in. (Laughter) I'd like to make a pun: that's can to can. I used to make many puns, which I can't on this recording. (Laughter)

MILNER: What were the building like then?

PRITCHARD: Well, it was an old two-story building. I think it had been a rooming house at one time. They did remodel it for the Transient Center. It was extremely bleak. One of our constant problems was the bed bugs in the building. When I would return home – I was living with my family at that time – I had to undress completely on the back porch, and leave all my clothes out there before I would be allowed to enter the house.

We tried many ways of getting rid of the bed bugs. An old friend of mine told me there was only one way to get rid of them that worked. I valued her judgment, so I carried this out, and why we weren't destroyed, I don't know. I took gasoline and poured it behind every mopboard in every room in the building. We didn't burn down, and it did get rid of the bed bugs.

MILNER: Where were the State offices located, Mrs. Tidball?

TIDBALL: The State offices were in an office building in the downtown part of Boise, and the quarters were really very pleasant. We had good accommodations. The worst social work accommodations I had, personally, was when I was with the Family Society in Seattle. It was one of my first jobs, and we were in a coal yard out in West Seattle. When you walked across the floor, the whole building shook. It was just an old coal yard, and there were terrible conditions; awful working conditions. Other than that, I've had very good working conditions.

PRITCHARD: I might comment on some of my experiences in regard to this. The office in Twin Falls, Idaho was located in an abandoned mortuary. The County Commissioner even refused to paint out the sign "Mortuary" on the welfare office. We found a skeleton in a basket in the basement; it had been there for months before we got the coroner to

remove it. I remember that in Salmon City I worked in a building where the offices were located over a saloon. The back of the upstairs was a Holy Roller Church. On Saturday nights, they used to shoot up through the floor of the saloon. So we couldn't do any night work on Saturday night. On Sunday, the Holy Rollers carried on, so we couldn't do any work on Sundays, even though we were seven-day workers.

MILNER: Mrs. Tidball, at the time you came to Idaho, you were considered to be a professional social worker. I wonder, what were your qualifications at that time, for being called that?

TIDBALL: In those days, there were no schools in the West at all*: no schools of social work. The Family Society in Seattle, once a year – no, every two years – took five potentials. We were “students in training.” We were given the caseload to carry with very strict supervision. I was accepted one year for that. I had been a volunteer in the Family Society, and it was then called, “The Social Welfare League.” That's how I happened to be selected. We trained, and we carried a caseload of five, and then we got to a caseload of ten. We had to drive our own cars, and we were paid \$50 a month. The training was for two years. Then we were called “trained social workers.” We were then given the maximum salary of \$125 and given a load of 25 cases in the Family Society.

In the meantime, after a period of service of two-and-one-half to three years, I served only as a substitute worker for Family Service, because I had a child with whom I need to be with. So I substituted when they had vacation leaves and that sort of thing, in the Family Agency. Then the Depression came, and the Social Welfare League wanted me to come in and organize the City of Seattle, downtown, and work with the volunteers

*The only school of social work west of Chicago was established in 1920 at University of Southern California.

to carry the relief. Relief was given only in the form of food that was brought in. The City gave out fish and cabbage, whatever people donated, and clothes. Most of the volunteers were people who had no jobs. So it was the unemployed, and the social unemployed; the Junior League.

This went on, and gradually developed first into the City of Seattle Emergency Relief, and then went into the County. Next we organized the State of Washington ERA. Then we became King County Emergency Relief. My next job was with Family Services, and then I became the Assistant County Director. I was this when I took the job in Idaho.

MILNER: After Idaho, you said that you had come to California, and you described some of your work here. But after leaving California, where did you go?

TIDBALL: I didn't work at all for three years until my husband died. At that time, I went back to graduate school, to the University of Washington.

MILNER: The University of Washington?

TIDBALL: Yes, the University of Washington. Then, while I was there, I also served as Secretary of the Washington State Conference of Social Work, which had an office attached to the University of Washington. Then, from there, I became national director, the executive of the Traveler's Aid Society. I had just enough academic training at the University of Washington to realize that what I wanted was some eastern exposure and also some intensified psychiatric experience. So I applied at the University of Chicago and the New York School and enrolled at the New York School of Social Work, then at Columbia Univeristy. Subsequently, from the New York School, I went to Chicago as the Executive Director of Traveler's Aid Society there. I was there during World War II,

and the following years, during the Displaced Persons program when the legislation was enacted in 1949.

MILNER: This was as the Executive Director of Traveler's Aid? Wasn't that the largest traveler's aid in America?

TIDBALL: Yes, that's right. Also, at the same time, I took graduate courses at the University of Chicago, completing practically two-and-one-half years of graduate study, all told. But I never gained my masters degree.

In Chicago, I had to take a year off because of fatigue – physical – and was sent to Australia as a representative of the Traveler's Aid Society of America, to a world conference on transient people. Subsequently, I accepted a position as a director for UCDS of the nine western states, coordinating the national agencies that were affiliated with UCDS during the Korean War. This program dealt entirely with communities of war-impact that had no programs of any kind -- such as Barstow and San Bernardino, where basic community organization was required and needed. I would make a preliminary survey, and then the national agency would send in my report and recommendation of which national agency seemed most suited to do the pioneer field work in the community. Often this required conferences with several national agencies. All of them were, naturally, interested in taking some leadership. The purpose of UCDS was definitely to try to avoid the rushing in of all national agencies, and attempt to have just one go into the small communities.

From that assignment, I then went to the Los Angeles County Children's Program as a caseworker. I only stayed one year, as I could not take the quality of the program and the treatment offered to families and children. So I left. Then I went as Director of

the Volunteer Bureau in Pasadena, and operated a Welfare Information Service in cooperation with Barbara Thiess of the Los Angeles Welfare Planning Council's Welfare Information Service.

From there, I went to the City of Pasadena Welfare Department, and was a caseworker there for four-and-one-half years. Then I retired. Subsequently, I took a part-time job with the Pasadena Day Nursery as a caseworker, working with the parents and teachers who had problem children. This was a part-time job. In the meantime, I had done lots of volunteer work and had been very active.

MILNER: You continued to make your home in Pasadena?

TIDBALL: Yes, I continued to live in Pasadena.

MILNER: Mr. Pritchard, you continued to work in Idaho. I wonder if you could describe what your positions were in that state, and what your career has been since then.

PRITCHARD: I worked in the Transient Program starting in September of 1934. I started as a caseworker, then was the supervisor. For the last several months, I was executive of the work camp and the treatment center and the social service department. The Transient Program was phased out in September or October of 1935. I then worked very, very briefly with the WPA in Pocatello. At that time, they were starting the first child welfare service in Idaho. I was asked to come into that program, which I did. That was in, I think, February of 1936. In September of 1936, I went back to Chicago, but only for a quarter, because the State called me back to do some special work in Idaho. I worked in the Child Welfare Program in Idaho in December of 1937, and then returned to the University of Chicago, where I majored in Psychiatric Social Work in the School of Social Service Administration. I finished my work in January of 1939, returned to Idaho

in February of 1939 in a position which was a combination of what we called a field representative for the Public Assistance Programs, and also the Supervisor of the Child Welfare Service Programs in the northern counties of Idaho. When the Director of Child Welfare Services returned for further social work education in December of 1939, I was appointed Acting Child Welfare Director. I stayed in that position until June of 1941. I then accepted a position, teaching at the University of Washington Graduate School of Social Work.

When I first started out, for the first two quarters I was actually half time at the University and half time as intake supervisor for the Washington Children's Home Society. I taught casework and child welfare and supervised students. I became a full-time faculty member at the University of Washington in September of that year, and I stayed on until February of 1945. I ended up, the last two years I was there, in what they called the Child Welfare Sequence.

In February of 1945, I came to Oakland to organize a children's agency. This I did, and stayed with that agency until May of 1948. I then was asked to apply for the position of Executive of the Children's Bureau of Los Angeles. I applied and was appointed Director, and I stayed there for 25 years.

TIDBALL: That's a good record.

PRITCHARD: I retired in June of 1973. The only professional work I did after my retirement was that for about a year-and-a-half, I served as a consultant to an attorney in San Francisco on problem cases she was handling in custody and adoption.

MILNER: Thank you both.

