

## THE CHALLENGE

"Friday night's dream on Saturday told  
Is sure to come true, be it never so old"

(Mother Goose)

## 1.

I've Read A Book! I've Read A Book!

Ellie was a pallid, wispy looking little girl — about eight years old, I'd say. Hearing running feet as I reached the top step, I looked up and there she was, dashing towards me down the long, windy hallway of the little rural school. It was a blustery, biting cold November day. I was making my second visit there in 1944 to change the small collection of library books I had left as a deposit the preceding month.

I had never seen Ellie before, I am sure — this thinly clad, unkempt-looking child. Just before reaching the spot where I had stopped in surprise, she stubbed her toe on the uneven floor, sprawling at my feet. If she hurt herself or if the cold winds penetrated her cotton dress, she seemingly did not know it. I was momentarily speechless with surprise. She looked up at me from the floor with a great something in her eyes and said:

"Oh, lady, lady, I've read a book! I've read a book!"

I actually had begun to feel a little guilty as I stooped down to lift her up and hug her to me, because I was warmly dressed, even wearing boots as I customarily did since I was outside walking on the cold, damp ground so much. She seemed ill-clad for winter. I looked at this child and thought: **She has true warmth. It is in the heart; for she has been handed the key to a whole new world and can hardly contain the joy of her discovery.** I asked her what book had made her jump up and down with joy. "It was about a horse," she said, still too excited to contain her happiness. I put my arm across Ellie's thin shoulders and walked her back to her schoolroom where the pot-bellied stove at least would temporarily salve my conscience about Ellie, promising to keep the books coming so she could read and read and read.

Any remaining doubt hiding in some corner of my consciousness, that perhaps I had made a mistake in forsaking my beloved teaching profession to pioneer in rural librarianship, or that I was not even

proceeding properly in my chosen method of initiating the new library service, vanished forever as I saw the stars in Ellie's eyes and witnessed the miracle of one's awakening to the wonderment of reading for one's self — a book of one's choice.

While driving on to my next book center, I continued to think about what happened. I reminded myself that several factors had contributed to my becoming a public librarian with a very special purpose in mind, and how I had arrived at my own method of establishing a rural library system.

My appearance on the library scene had occurred in the summer of 1943 with an invitation from Dr. Tommie Dora Barker, Dean of the Library School at Emory University, and Miss Sarah Jones, Chief Library Consultant, Georgia Department of Education, to join two other women chosen at the same time to work in a library program newly conceived and set up by the Georgia Department of Education. Both Sarah and Dr. Barker felt the Public Library cause could best be served by experienced teachers with a good teaching background, who loved books and people, and who possessed the potential to try out new methods which would veer from the hacknied procedures of traditional programs toward new concepts of service by librarians. I was told that I would have to take the time off though to earn a degree in librarianship if I wished to accept the challenge.

At the time this urgent plea came, I had just completed my second year as Head of the English Department at Gordon Lee Memorial Boarding School in Chickamauga, Georgia; furthermore, I had also received the offer of a teaching fellowship at the University of Alabama, secured for me by Wightman F. Melton, then Georgia's Poet Laureate. Dr. Melton had encouraged me to pursue my aspiration to become a creative writer — a poet. Of course I knew that the University of Alabama was renowned at the time for producing good writers, and I was seriously considering going there to continue my graduate studies.

Now I was being offered a magnificent scholarship to work at Emory towards a library degree with a definite innovative career role in view: Rural Librarianship. It had a strong appeal! I was in a quandry, however, about changing my profession. It was a big decision for me to make.

My family encouraged me to give careful consideration to the Emory University offer, especially since I had made it clear that I wanted life to present me with great challenges. I loved teaching. I had grown up in a home where such an atmosphere predominated. My mother was a teacher of unusual ability who preferred working with

young children. My bent from my days as a school child was towards teaching high school English. As I mulled over what to do, my mother did not say: "But you are a teacher!" Instead, she encouraged me to go where the challenge was.

I agreed to accept the offer to attend Emory University and to find an area in our state to set up and administer a rural library system — provided that Superintendent Patterson at Chickamauga would release me from my current teaching contract. This was worked out by the Dean of Library School at Emory, and I entered the wonderful world of librarianship.

From time to time my heart throbbed at the strangeness and bigness of the undertaking. Both during my long months of study at Emory and in the early weeks as I began to plan a rural library program, I frequently quailed as I questioned myself: "What are you doing out of the teaching profession?" "Are you creative enough and strong-willed enough to pioneer, to withstand all adversity, to build a structure of library service that will endure and become a truly fine program?"

Rural Librarianship — indeed, Rural Library Systems — were not then considered a responsibility of government — county, state, or federal. We "guinea pigs" were to point the way, in Georgia, for all the nation to follow . . . in this new area of library service.

I cannot say truly which gift was the more significant that cold, cold, day in November, 1944 — Ellie's or mine. I was an instrument in broadening and enriching her life because of the way I initiated our service; she unknowingly was the instrument in dispelling any lingering doubt in my mind that I was moving in the right direction to accomplish my purpose and touch the lives of many "Ellies". I moved ahead thereafter with confidence unshaken, no matter what problems presented themselves.

Very little at that time had been written about REGIONAL LIBRARIES formed across county lines; in fact, even county units nation-wide were scarce outside of the larger metropolitan areas. Under WPA some progress had been made but primarily at town sites through Federal funding rather than local support. Rural people did not generally have public libraries, nor did they have access to any public library facilities. When I began, Georgia had only two Library Systems cutting across county lines — at Athens and at Lafayette; however, consistent tax support for such programs was non-existent even though Georgia was (and is) crisscrossed with numerous small counties, whose governments customarily have zealously guarded their own prerogatives. Slowly but surely, we were to prove through the development of our

Rural Library Systems (as has the Georgia Health Program and other fine agencies in recent years) that services can cross county lines without depriving any county of its own rights or responsibilities. Slowly — but just as surely — we were to receive the good will and the solid support of taxing agencies within the counties involved.

When I began as Director, The Carroll-Heard Regional Library had no staff, no books, no library, no bookmobile, no equipment — but in thirty-two years this dream was to evolve into a five-county library service area comprising Carroll, Douglas, Haralson, Heard, and Paulding Counties and become known as the WEST GEORGIA REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEM. By 1976 its combined collections would number over 190,000 volumes and also include microfilm, recordings, films, filmstrips, slides, cassettes, and reprints of art masterpieces. This service agency of eight branches and seventy-two library deposit centers in homes, hospitals, industries, day care centers, courthouses — has grown to a staff of twenty-eight full or parttime workers and contains a wide range of equipment such as copy machines, projectors, cameras, microfilm readers and printers, and laminating machines. The regional system's magnificent headquarters — The Neva Lomason Memorial Library — alone comprises 25,000 square feet of floor space and is sited on two and a quarter acres, with its buildings and equipment alone valued at over two million dollars.

As marvelous as all this growth and stability are, the true heart of this library's story is to be found in the breadth of its program that extends across five counties, and in the fact that it continues to demonstrate and punctuate its initial purpose: to touch the lives of the people through a broad pattern of library services, whenever, however, wherever the need is felt or the opportunity is discovered . . . to enrich and enhance every segment of our area's society.

This dream that came true was moved off dead center on a bitterly cold November day by the ecstatic experiences of a little child who never before had lovingly read a library book!

## 2.

### “Cast Down Your Bucket”

Reverend Zach Hayes, former pastor of Carrollton's FIRST METHODIST CHURCH, reached out and put his arm around me.

“Dr. Parker,” he said to the gentleman standing with him, “this is our Emory girl. She's over there taking her library degree.”



Dr. Parker, with something of a sparkle in his eyes, turned to me and in a confidential manner as he put an arm around me, gave an important pronouncement:

"You'll make it. I know at times you will have your doubts; however, before you know it, you will be in the graduation parade. I assure you, you will live through it."

"How can you be so positive?" I asked him, laughingly hiding my fears.

"My daughter walked your same path. Margaret frequently had her doubts too, but of course she came through — and so will you."

For the first time, I realized that the Margaret Parker I had come to know and respect as a member of the Faculty Library Staff at Emory University, was also the daughter of this same Dr. Parker, Dean of Emory University's SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY.

You see, Dr. Parker was the guest minister for my Carrollton church's annual Homecoming Day in 1944. I had dared leave the EMORY LIBRARY SCHOOL for an overnight bus trip home to participate in the festivities at my home church. Now I was wondering whether or not I had a perpetual sleepy or tired look that was perceived by both Zach and Dr. Parker. I recalled having talked with our own minister about my proposed year of study. I felt that my trips home would be few and far between while I was pursuing my studies at the University. More than likely Dr. Parker's teasing remarks stemmed from his awareness that going to a Library School at Emory was indeed an experience!

For example, my very first assignment in Cataloging Class was: "take this card, go to the catalog in the main Emory Library, check to determine what is odd about it. Don't ask the librarians to help." I knew that most other students had worked in a library of some sort even though parttime in most cases; but had I? **No. Never.** So what, I said to myself, is unique about this card? I saw what I later learned to identify as necessary catalog data (even proper spacing): the "Call Number"; the Author's Last Name; Given Names; the Title; Annotations; the Publisher; the Copyright Date; the Subject Headings. After thirty minutes, I gave up. Listening next day to the lecture, I said to myself: **So what is unique about this card? What a great beginning for organizing and operating a rural library system! What am I (a perfectly good English teacher?) doing trying to determine something unique about a catalog card?** I never did find out about my particular strange card to my satisfaction but I decided then that this cataloging business was going to challenge me to the core. This was only the

beginning of **Beaucoup** experiences in Cataloging Class, as well as in other courses as I progressed from the status of a poor little plain would-be library novice through the Emory University experience.

Soon after my arrival at Emory, I began re-tooling my thinking processes to concentrate and to make my stay at the University a whole life in itself. By this time I knew that I must trade off my know-how on diagraming as an English teacher for acquiring or creating some idea on blueprinting an as-yet untried library program. Ah, but I loved Emory!

In the 1940's there was a splendid atmosphere about the campus. This predated the day that changed the University from "male" to "coeducational". There were few women on the campus — most of us in the SCHOOLS of NURSING or LIBRARIANSHIP. At the time I was there during 1943-44, the sailors in the V12 program were on campus. I used to leave my preoccupation with study each afternoon to stand at the west windows on the top floor of the main library so I could watch the trainees carry out retreat at 5 p.m. on the quadrangle. I always experienced a very special sense of deep love for my country's history at that time. It also gave me a pause to think about the beauty of the campus and our world. It refreshed my spirit, as I looked across the space of expansive sward, of flower beds, of trees marching down the slopes as far as the eye could see, the lingering sunset — sometimes afire, often glowing softly into coming darkness. Alone with my thoughts, I would seriously consider what was expected of me: a different sort of pioneering.

During these times I slowly thought to the point of conviction: I will do the best I can to prepare myself for pioneering in RURAL LIBRARIANSHIP: Turning the foundation of everyday living from the small communities on out across the miles of open areas to plant ideas, to offer opportunity for learning, for enrichment, for upgrading the quality of life for many people. I knew I must justify the faith placed in me. I decided to select my geographical area of service (as I have been promised I could do) and stay with it for the test of time.

There frequently came to mind early that fall a thought-provoking statement made by Booker T. Washington at the ATLANTA EXPOSITION in 1895, referred to in my presence not long ago by the late Dr. Irvine S. Ingram, PRESIDENT OF WEST GEORGIA COLLEGE as he was addressing a group of young adults: "cast down your bucket where you are." I remembered his stirring challenge to young people mostly from rural communities, not necessarily to turn their backs on home. It is all a matter of perspective.

This idea now seized hold of my imagination as a great challenge. Why not "go home again" to Carrollton to set up the LIBRARY SYSTEM, including Carroll and Heard Counties in my experiment? This had been the locale chosen by my father to set up his medical practice in 1908. All my beautiful days of childhood and early youth had been there, I was happy to remind myself.

So it was that I began to type "Carroll-Heard Regional Library" in the left-hand top corner of every paper I handed in at Emory. For a long while nothing was said about it; then one day as I was propped up alone in the LOUNGE in the LIBRARY SCHOOL'S QUARTERS, pouring over notes and getting my thoughts together for a quiz, in walked Miss Nancy Day, our Professor who taught REFERENCE.

"Edith", she said, teasingly, "you are the only student ever in the history of EMORY LIBRARY SCHOOL who arrived knowing not only the type of librarianship she would follow but also just **where** she would pursue it."

As I have said, there were three of us in Emory Library School at the same time who were committed to a career of RURAL LIBRARY SERVICE. We became very close friends — Byrd Ivester, Margaret Woodall, and I. The three of us devoted nearly all our time to study, to serious talks about our developing PHILOSOPHY OF LIBRARIANSHIP and to sitting in on copious meetings of educational import, sponsored usually by the GEORGIA DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION or EMORY UNIVERSITY.

Byrd, Margaret, and I constituted a minority in our library-training life. Of all things! We weren't interested in becoming College Librarians or Public Librarians in a city. Imagine **choosing** to live "in the country"! Oh, but the whole class was close-knit, sharing, commiserating together, plotting advantageous situations, and testing the faculty at the slightest provocation.

I remember once we decided to shop around Atlanta to find a large apple to polish for Miss Nancy Day who had a delightful sense of humor but was "death-on-wheels" when it came to tests. The class asked the three of us to find the apple. We found one all right and bought it, paying the exorbitant price of 25 cents! It was the most colossal pome of the genus that we had ever beheld. Several of us polished it till she could have seen how to powder her nose by its brilliance. Then one of the few good typists in the group prepared a message: "We love teacher." (With invisible ink we added: "Quit being so tough!")

Well, this was the day of our fall exam. We placed the plea-to-have-mercy gift on Professor Day's desk. Each of us was seated in her respective assigned chair, as the "authority in REFERENCE AND RESEARCH" swept in right past the apple, passing out a set of the exam papers to each student, standing among us as she outlined the test procedure we were to follow. We agreed later that it was difficult to concentrate on instructions, as our precious offering was to go begging.

Then still talking and smiling as though she had a few tricks up her sleeve, Professor Day spotted the apple and laughed so heartily we were afraid the DEAN might come running to discover the cause of the uproar.

The next day I was in the LOUNGE by myself, studying, when Miss Day looked in on me, laughing brown eyes sparkling, and informed me that they (the faculty) all enjoyed the apple "at tea". It was so big that everyone had a slice, she told me, adding that they knew who thought that one up. I grinned and said, "I want to ask a question in behalf of the class. Was it sour?"

During the final quarter, the three of us worked in various branches of the ATLANTA CARNEGIE LIBRARY (now ATLANTA PUBLIC LIBRARY); observing SCHOOL LIBRARIES in action; participating in seminars whereby we displayed our skill (or lack thereof) reviewing books, performing reference, and story-telling.

We frequently accompanied either Miss Barker or Miss Sarah Jones to attend special conferences or institutes — usually downtown somewhere. I began to notice a fine-looking man who was nearly always present at these conferences. This puzzled me somewhat, as there was usually a great variation in participants at the meetings. One day Sarah Jones and I happened to be sitting together at a session. As I glanced around and saw this man who so often turned up at these affairs, I pointed him out to Sarah. "Who is he?" I asked.

"Oh," she laughed. "That's Alvin Rogers, SUPERINTENDENT OF HEARD COUNTY SCHOOLS. He has had his eye on you ever since we told him you seemed determined to organize a CARROLL-HEARD COUNTY REGIONAL LIBRARY. He, Dr. Ingram, and Joe McGiboney, the SUPERINTENDENT OF CARROLL COUNTY SCHOOLS, are going to make you an offer later on. We think you will get your chance to set up the CARROLL-HEARD REGIONAL LIBRARY very soon." **Was I happy!!!**

The offer materialized and my own resolution was firm by mid-winter. Dr. Ingram offered me free space in the basement of the

College Library when I was ready. He also promised to have an ADVISORY BOARD appointed and to help me set up the initial operating budget.

In late winter I asked for and received permission to survey Carroll and Heard Counties before beginning to write my MASTER'S THESIS. This survey then was given to me as a specific assignment, since by that time, it had been decided that I would set up a RURAL LIBRARY SYSTEM with CARROLLTON as the center of service.

Before springtime came and went, however, I was to be urged, stirred, intrigued, pushed. I was to become, not efficient — not even adequate — but passing fair at typewriter (I had no choice: All the papers had to be typed). I was to learn to escape encompassing tensions by indulging in quiet moments in the Emory woodlands or in the Sanctuary of GLENN MEMORIAL CHURCH. I would learn to make do with four hours of sleep if necessary.

My Emory Thesis was titled (to no one's great surprise): "Organization of the Carroll-Heard Regional Library." This included the preliminaries (such as surveying thoroughly the area to be involved, meeting the leadership on the local levels) and the specifics of ADMINISTRATIVE responsibilities in program development, in BOOK SELECTION, in REFERENCE AND RESEARCH, in CATALOGING AND CLASSIFICATION, and in CIRCULATING MATERIALS, etc.

At my high school graduation I had felt my importance (who doesn't?). My undergraduate degree from LaGRANGE COLLEGE found me sure "the world was my oyster" and all I had to do was open it up. I had judgement enough to realize the day I graduated from Emory University that I did not know much and must continue day-by-day to seek answers. In a sense, I still had to find out what was "odd" about that CATALOG CARD.

Sarah Jones, said to me after I left Emory and was about to set up my office for business:

"You have worked under great pressure. I know at times you wondered about learning so much that you would never use. Everything you have experienced will fall into proper prospective as the need arises."

"Actually you are pioneering. We will observe you, note your problems and how you handle them, listen to your observations, and help you in any way we can. We have faith in you."

Miss Nancy Day also gave me a word of encouragement as I left Emory: "We are sure you will succeed in your library effort. We will follow you with interest as you develop your program."

In 1944 my THESIS PREMIS was (as in my philosophy today), "the public library is an educational institution. The effort of the library staff is not limited to checking books in and out; rather, to go beyond the walls of the institution to the crossroads of life, to make the library the center of community activity, to serve."

Thus the challenge began.

### 3.

## GEORGIA DESIGN

"Help me to decide on sex instruction for my son" . . . "I need a book of Parliamentary law" . . . "my daughter in Junior College is writing a paper on the organization of our state government" . . . "What was Georgia's role in the Revolutionary War?" From the very beginning the pleas for help confronted me as soon as the CARROLL-HEARD REGIONAL LIBRARY began its first chapter in library history.

Early in the fall of 1944, I called the LIBRARY EXTENSION AGENCY in the GEORGIA DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION and explained to Beverly Wheatcroft that I disliked turning anyone away with needs unanswered. For ordinary reference questions I explained that I could use the collection of the SANFORD LIBRARY at WEST GEORGIA COLLEGE, housed on the floor above the little nook which served as my system's first headquarters. I could borrow from their collection as well; but I simply could not scatter the college's books over my two counties. I was ordering, processing, and cataloging materials as rapidly as I could; however, nonfiction titles were so expensive that the money could not be stretched to purchase even the books that were requested. After all, I was starting "from scratch"!

"Come on up," she said. "You may select as many books as you want from the WPA collection, which we have been dismantling. They have been picked over so much that I am not certain you will want what you find; but you can surely have all you wish to take from what is left." In addition to that, she agreed to lend the library a large number of books to keep till I had a chance to build up our own collection.



So from the very beginning, particularly for adults and young adults, I found the READERS SERVICES, as well as other units of our state's PUBLIC LIBRARY AGENCY to be the "good right arm" to undergird and assist in doing a credible job for the people. It was more than the embodiment of a spirit of cooperation; it was a functional party of our service *per se*. The PUBLIC LIBRARY DIVISION has worked so quietly, without publicity, that the true significance of their wonderful work has often been unheeded by our state's citizens. I myself as a novice rural librarian, however, turned my face to the center of this great support and thereafter never turned away. As in the beginning, so was it to the end of my tenure.

Lamar Plunkett of Bowdon (serving for years recently on the BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA) called me for help one day just before I retired. "I always turn to your library," he said, "because you answer every expressed need. We appreciate the fine service and the pleasant attitude of the library staff in carrying out their jobs." He continued on by saying, "I am adding six young men to the SALES DEPARTMENT of the LAMAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY, they will be here in about two weeks. I am now in the process of planning an on-the-job training program for them. Though the young men can turn to any source for material, naturally I thought of the NEVA LOMASON LIBRARY. I know they will show up over there. Can you help us?"

Well, the topics were industry-related — such as: Salesmanship, Business Management, Energy in Industry, Marketing Trends, Conversion to the Metric System and Its Relationship To Industry. Rudene Hollingsworth researched the library's own material first and then called Barbara Bronson, REFERENCE SPECIALIST, at the GEORGIA DIVISION OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE, she in turn, immediately had all the topics thoroughly researched and quickly mailed a large loan collection to our library. By the time the young men "hove into sight", we were ready for them. They expressed amazement at the fine material available "right on their own doorstep". The STATE AGENCY'S REFERENCE assistance reached unparalleled heights in the Sixties and Seventies under the guidance of Barbara Bronson, a very unassuming, quiet, self-contained person, who was, in the true sense of the word, an expert in her field. We just never did "stump" her with any of our requests.

Our library could also insure instant assistance from the STATE AGENCY by using GLIN (the GEORGIA LIBRARY INFORMATION NETWORK), an immediate telephone medium made possible through a joint project of STATE and FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS

under the LIBRARY SERVICES AND CONSTRUCTION ACT. WATS LINES to the DIVISION OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE enabled us to have almost instant contact with their consultative help. What we ever did without this, I don't know. With GLIN, our reference efficiency in technical areas increased beyond belief and put us in immediate contact with institutions such as Emory, Agnes Scott, Georgia Tech, etc., as well as the larger public libraries, and all governmental libraries and offices in the STATE.

Another consultant from the division, Raye Osborn, was indispensable in getting and maintaining diversified, quality service to the local libraries. I say, "diversified" for it reached (as does today) into so many different avenues of the lives of our people. Her program consisted of extended summer reading programs for children, in-service training programs for people wishing to keep up with the current trends, credit courses or instruction on the high school and college levels, community development, work with the disadvantaged and/or handicapped, seasonable or special projects . . . just to enumerate a few.

One of the earliest services extended by the new GEORGIA PUBLIC LIBRARY STATE UNIT was a CENTRALIZED CATALOGING DEPARTMENT. The prime mover in its development was VIRGINIA McJENKIN, SUPERVISOR, FULTON COUNTY SCHOOL LIBRARIES, who saw the need for simplified cataloging at a nominal cost for school and public libraries. A committee including Clyde Pettus, of the EMORY LIBRARY SCHOOL FACULTY, worked it out. We in the new REGIONAL LIBRARY program availed ourselves of this fine EXTENSION SERVICE since it freed us to spend more time initiating and developing programs for our area.

With the coming of FEDERAL funding under the LIBRARY SERVICES AND CONSTRUCTION ACT, we directors turned more frequently to Elizabeth Cole, Lucile Nix, and Carlton Thaxton of the PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES DIVISION to give us invaluable tips on setting up guidelines as well as evaluation acceptable in format to HEW'S OFFICE of EDUCATION. This preparation and training under their tutelage played a viable part in our annual plans and the later formulation of reports and — to my way of thinking — in measuring and making known our own performance at home.

Over the years, I particularly appreciated the STATE AGENCY'S willingness to sponsor workshops, institutes, and conferences which kept us knowledgeable and alert to innovations in our profession, enabling us to share ideas and experiences. When we held our own workshops on the local level, we could always count on our state

consultants to participate and provide leadership. There was never and semblance of a power play; in fact, I never experienced anything but understanding and dedicated assistance from one and all, at workshops or anywhere else. Some of the AGENCY personnel became close friends: Sarah Jones, Lucile Nix, Carlton Thaxton, Lila Rice — the last named in charge of the FILM LIBRARY AND BUILDING PROGRAMS DEPARTMENT.

The FILM LIBRARY was a circulating collection, from which we requested particular films for specific dates. Each local librarian was furnished a catalog listing with very fine annotations for guidance in choosing films. We were also asked to participate in the selection of the new films to be purchased annually. Lila was our advisor — and a good one — not only in the area of film services but also with our building programs.

Lila was very knowledgeable about the FEDERAL and STATE AUTHORITY building requirements and regulations, as well as the buildings themselves, their structure, their composition, the types of materials, the various costs, and the hidden problems. She was a good judge of building sites, and in her mind could see the completed library resting on the selected lot.

Programs for the blind and physically handicapped also were provided by the PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES DIVISION. These important programs were made not only effective but seemingly without perceptible curtailment because of the joint FEDERAL AND STATE funding. For many years now the PUBLIC LIBRARIES have served as the liaison between the STATE AGENCY and the blind or handicapped person. Once a person is signed up by the local library to borrow materials and equipment, the service is direct from the STATE, at no cost to the patron, and includes talking books, players, books and periodicals in braille, large print books, and other.

Under STATE law, our PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES bears the responsibility for guiding and reinforcing adequate service to local libraries and library systems. Considerable stimulation and assistance came from our STATE AGENCY, beginning in 1944, the year the STATE PROGRAM was established to aid in the development of REGIONAL SYSTEMS.

Preparation and impetus for this unique first basic promotion of library development throughout the state came about because of the perceptions and actions of the GEORGIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, its subsequent approval by the GEORGIA DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION, and the cooperation of EMORY UNIVERSITY'S SCHOOL OF LIBRARIANSHIP.

Actually Georgia was the first Southeastern state to recognize a state's responsibility to provide free public library service for everyone. The GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY of 1897 created a library commission composed of four citizens appointed by Governor William Yates Atkinson. Since the original act provided no funds, the commission carried on its activities without funding until the law was amended in 1919 to provide an annual appropriation. The active work of the commission actually began in January, 1920.

A MUNICIPAL LIBRARY LAW was enacted in 1901, but the rapid development of PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE over Georgia demanded that additional library laws be passed. The GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY then authorized POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS to "establish and maintain PUBLIC LIBRARIES for purposes of education and to support such libraries by current revenue." This law was altered later to allow contractual agreements across county lines, which eventually led to the development of our REGIONAL, or MULTI-COUNTY, LIBRARIES.

A state law was passed during the depression (1937) for the certification of libraries. President Roosevelt's NEW DEAL program, which established all public assistance services including WPA — allocated a small number of dollars to open and support PUBLIC LIBRARIES over the country. The law required that **professionally trained librarians** be added as consultants to STATE AGENCIES and sent out to supervise the setting up of the libraries and to provide periodic workshops for training non-professionals who would serve as librarians in local operations.

With the phasing out of WPA in the early forties, there was no money available to maintain these PUBLIC LIBRARY PROGRAMS over the STATE; hence many of the newer, small libraries closed, dealing a devastating blow to people in the rural areas. Complaints soon poured in from all over Georgia to the GEORGIA LIBRARY COMMISSION and to various GOVERNMENTAL agencies. Pressure was so great from the powerful FARM BUREAU AND HOME DEMONSTRATION CLUBS that professional attention was attracted to the problem, and the GEORGIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION spearheaded this campaign.

Wendell Smiley, president of the GEORGIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION during the 1941-43 biennium, called a meeting at the ATLANTA PUBLIC LIBRARY to explore ways and means to initiate a program of development that would continue to promote PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE all over Georgia. The recommendation coming from this GLA conference was brilliant: abolish the GEORGIA

LIBRARY COMMISSION and set up a LIBRARY EXTENSION UNIT under the STATE'S DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

Sarah Jones, IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT OF GLA, who was CHIEF SCHOOL LIBRARY CONSULTANT, GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, was asked by the committee to approach Dr. M. D. Collins, STATE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT, about its recommendation. Sarah, with great understanding of the validity and wisdom of the proposal, discussed the whole matter with Dr. Collins, who approved it. Dr. C. S. Hubbard, HEAD OF THE TEXTBOOK AND SCHOOL LIBRARIES UNIT, became the first official DIRECTOR OF THE DIVISION OF TEXTS AND LIBRARY SERVICES. The GEORGIA LIBRARY COMMISSION, heartily agreeing with the adopted proposal, asked to be dissolved.

The STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S FY 1944 budget contained funds for planning and organizing MULTI-COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES, and developing REGIONAL SYSTEMS. This budget assured the creation of a state-wide program whereby rural areas as well as municipalities would eventually have access to the best of PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES and MATERIALS under the direction of professional librarians and constituted boards of trustees.

EMORY UNIVERSITY assisted the STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S program by securing ROSENWALD GRANTS so that scholarships leading to degrees in librarianship could be offered to each individual who agreed to complete a library degree and initiate a REGIONAL OR RURAL SYSTEM. All recipients were expected to remain in Georgia for at least two years.

This fine STATE-AID SERVICE planned under the guidance of GLA members representing all sizes and types of libraries, the TEXTBOOK AND LIBRARY DIVISION personnel, and EMORY UNIVERSITY'S LIBRARY SCHOOL staff, expanded and continued into the Seventies, when it was finally phased out because there was no longer a shortage of professionally trained librarians in Georgia.

As well as any PUBLIC LIBRARIAN in GEORGIA and better than most DIRECTORS OF THE REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEMS, I can speak with knowledge and honesty regarding the vitality and importance of the PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES DIVISION of the STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, because I "was there" at the beginning of its program and continued for thirty-two years.

It is my belief that our DIVISION OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES is under the aegis of the one agency which should guide and maintain it — the GEORGIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. The PUBLIC LIBRARY today is an educational institution but no such entity should stand alone. There should be a correlation of goals and purposes of all library services — PUBLIC, SCHOOL, COLLEGE, AND SPECIAL — so as better to serve our whole citizenry, to save time and money, and to coordinate all programming. Each type of library has its own specific role to play but each should work within the framework of a whole pattern of services covering the gamut of the needs and interests of all the people — the individual, the organization, the institution, the public agency, the municipality. Scattered as our PUBLIC LIBRARIES are across Georgia, they need a cohesive element. The STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES DIVISION fosters this cohesiveness. Its design is strong, pertinent, and effective.

#### 4.

### A SURVEY AND A PROMISE

In the late summer of 1944, I asked Mayor T. J. Lawler of Carrollton, to “bear with me, please, with faith, as I have nothing at all to offer at the moment. I intend eventually to create a structure of merit. It will take time. Some day we will all be working together in a broad library service area, with a fine headquarters building in Carrollton, with good facilities, and a comprehensive collection of materials, as well as a program of services to enrich total community life.” I had approached him to explain the STATE AGENCY’S proposal to develop PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEMS across Georgia and to offer assurance that though I must extend service into the outlying areas of Carroll and HEARD COUNTIES to be certain of developing a rural program according to the plan, that Carrollton some day would have to assume the leadership role and become the center for the services of the area involved. The Mayor did not say much; however, I knew him to be a man of few words.

“It will be interesting to watch you do this,” he finally concluded. Not long before his death in 1970, Mr. Lawler approached me at a Rotary Club meeting where I was speaking and confided, “You did exactly what you said you would do.” This was certainly sweet music to my ears.



Since there was no library building anywhere in the area in the fall of 1944, I was pleased to take advantage of the generous offer of WEST GEORGIA COLLEGE to operate out of the basement of its SANFORD LIBRARY, located one mile from CARROLLTON'S SQUARE. I soon initiated an outreach service: via car to the rural communities using a deposit system, and to the small branch at City Hall in downtown Carrollton.

Though I had never been given any firm advice by my EMORY teachers or the STATE DEPARTMENT'S consultants concerning the methods of setting up a LIBRARY SYSTEM or of singling out specific counties, I followed an idea that I picked up from readings and discussions in my LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION classes: that it was imperative to know the community if one was to provide library service. To discover more about the WEST GEORGIA area, I was convinced I needed to make a careful survey, it did not have to be a complicated survey; but from it hopefully, I could interpret the findings and by studying the data, more wisely serve the interest and the needs of the people.

During this period WEST GEORGIA COLLEGE was a two year junior college, with a third year for teachers who, after completing their work required for receiving their junior college diplomas, were asked to return for an additional year of study. It was to this class that I turned for help in the spring of my EMORY year. Dr. George Kerry Smith on the faculty, had agreed to guide the students in this data gathering effort for me.

I prepared a questionnaire to be used to collect the information and turned it over to Kerry Smith and his students, who not only compiled statistics from printed materials but also went off the campus across CARROLL AND HEARD COUNTIES to get facts such as: BARRIERS TO CROSSING COUNTY LINES? INDUSTRIES? TYPES OF BUSINESSES? POPULATION PATTERNS? SERVICES AVAILABLE? CIVIL AND/OR OTHER CLUBS? TYPES OF COUNTY MANAGEMENT? LOCATION AND SIZE OF SCHOOLS? RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS REPRESENTED? LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE? LIBRARY RESOURCES? PER CAPITA INCOME? USEABLE HIGHWAYS?

Summed up, I needed to know (1) THE PEOPLE (2) THE EDUCATIONAL PICTURE (3) COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND ACTIVITY and (4) THE GEOGRAPHY. Utilizing the data gathered, I incorporated them into my thesis and subsequently used the thesis as the basis for initiating and implementing the service after I became DIRECTOR of CARROLL-HEARD REGIONAL LIBRARY.

This survey was definitely the key to our start in the right direction, as time has proven. With this basic knowledge in hand, I was ready to move ahead expeditiously, gleaned added information from personal interviews with government officials, superintendents and school faculties, club leaders, as well as people from all walks of life that I talked with as I traveled the many miles around the two counties. From the survey and my conversations I was able to pinpoint significant factors which determined the format for library service, as well as its initial distribution points.

Luckily I found no opposition to crossing county lines and there were no geographic barriers. The only foreseeable problem to total service for the area was the segregation of races which would present problems I felt I could, with patience and time, handle. There was only one graduate librarian in both counties, Anne Weaver, LIBRARIAN at WEST GEORGIA COLLEGE, who was to become a strong ally and friend. I also learned that the two regular meeting places in the rural areas were the church and the school.

Up till this time there had never been a public library in HEARD COUNTY and a very small library in CARROLLTON'S CITY HALL, set up as a WPA PROJECT, that merely circulated books from its small collection. This type of public library service, was typical of the few librarians in the small and medium-sized towns throughout the United States.

I noted with pleasure that this little CARROLLTON LIBRARY UNIT was somewhat improved over what it had been during my own childhood days. When I was a child haunting the library, many of the books had been "donated", which of course in many cases means the donor no longer wants the books but is loath to throw them away. I as a youngster had read everything in that collection more than once before I finished CARROLLTON HIGH SCHOOL and went away to college.

I recall the early joy of discovering the poems of James Whitcomb Riley, the many fairy tales, TOM SAWYER, the Hardy Boys, THE SECRET GARDEN, FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS. Later on, I was introduced to GIRL OF THE LIMBERLOST, FRECKLES, THE HARVESTER, the Zane Grey books, everything about GREAT MEN IN HISTORY, and — THREE WEEKS by Elinor Glyn — the last being a rather "daring" adult book with a love theme. By today's standards and movies it would not offend even a piety devotee; however, we young teenagers of long ago wore that "risque" book out. I can still see the condition of THREE WEEKS: all its pages were loose, requiring us to lift very carefully and turn each page to avoid

losing part of the story. Miss Lula Baskin, the CITY LIBRARIAN during the late Nineteen Tens and Twenties, was a "volunteer", with no training as a librarian but highly intelligent and capable of keeping the collection together. We youngsters roamed up and down the old sagging book stacks, hunting something "new" or something more enlightening than THREE WEEKS.

In 1976 even numerous rural patrons displayed no hesitancy at all in asking for JOY OF SEX; but I can remember being notified to appear before a school board in 1945 for letting a rather simple adult western with little purpose and some expletives circulate in one of the county high schools. (It was left there by an adult for the bookmobile pick-up.) I refused to go before the board to justify having the book, telling the superintendent to explain it any way he chose, later he laughingly said he had mollified them: by saying, "that lady can't possibly read all the books she buys!"

The first PUBLIC LIBRARY in the WEST GEORGIA REGION and the forerunner of the CARROLLTON CITY HALL depository of books, was supported by paid memberships (a la Ben Franklin's subscription library) \$2.00 per year (much less than Ben's social library's \$25.00). It was not open to the public until 1913 when the woman's club (LIT MU) took an avid interest in the library. Simultaneously the CARROLLTON CITY GOVERNMENT began to fund a small amount of money for books and magazines and Miss Baskin became "librarian".

Following Miss Baskin's death in 1930, the library was closed until 1936 under the WPA PROGRAM. Margaret Foster (my mother) was drafted (without pay) to serve as chairman of the committee to reestablish the library. In the fall, when Mother returned to her duties as PRINCIPAL OF COLLEGE STREET SCHOOL, Myrtle Lou Sears was hired to serve as librarian. She was followed in 1944 by Lillie Digby (Mrs. Bill), a very popular choice, who later in 1958 joined the REGIONAL STAFF when CARROLLTON'S LIBRARY was absorbed totally into the REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS LIBRARY.

During the late THIRTIES all technical processing was carried out by WPA staff since there was only one librarian on the CITY HALL LIBRARY STAFF. To keep the procedure as simple and brief as possible, the Card Catalog consisted of a Title Card and a Shelf Card only. When we closed the CITY HALL BRANCH in 1958, total cataloging of the local collection was done by the REGIONAL STAFF at Headquarters.

From WPA days this small library had grown and expanded, but even in 1944 without a professionally trained librarian to set up and develop a program and a budget, the library could not take a leading role in enriching community life. Its primary function necessarily was to furnish books for recreational reading, which certainly has its proper place in all public libraries; but this was the only service it could really accomplish.

So I began the REGIONAL LIBRARY operation from the WEST GEORGIA COLLEGE CAMPUS knowing the institution had a real commitment to broaden the educational opportunities of the local population. The two COUNTY BOARDS OF EDUCATION also promised financial support which indicated to me a real need for our service in the rural areas. Even though I knew few materials would be available for a long while, I could not risk the absorption of separate libraries into any one service point. If I was to initiate a REGIONAL program successfully, I had to provide all counties with equal service and local resources.

This proved to be the correct procedure. I found loyal support from clubs, organizations, institutions, and individuals in my home town, as well as the STATE GOVERNMENT and WEST GEORGIA COLLEGE, all during my career. The challenge of beginning with 1,000 borrowed books and no government support was accepted and many strong hands reached out to make the young effort a cooperative adventure.

The CARROLL BOARD OF EDUCATION, with the approval of GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, agreed to serve as our first legal board until an administrative board could be appointed, with members selected from both counties. I was permitted to maintain our financial records in the office of the SUPERINTENDENT OF THE COUNTY SCHOOLS. I did not want to write the checks; so we made an agreement that the CARROLL COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS would assume the position of TREASURER for the REGIONAL LIBRARY BOARD and to keep the books posted, ready for the state auditor. Maida Rose Thomason (Webb) who started out as the fine bookkeeper in 1944 continuing through the 1970's, when she retired, was considered by the STATE AUDITORS as one of the finest bookkeepers in Georgia.

This entire arrangement was a valuable service offered by SUPERINTENDENT JOE McGIBONEY and the CARROLL COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION. Succeeding superintendents have been just as kind and considerate; in fact, not only SUPERINTENDENTS but also principals and teachers in counties and towns

have been friends of our program and have supported us in word and deed — and I might add, in **need**, as you will see.

This connection with the county board, for a number of reasons, has proven to be most helpful in our library development. The cooperating agencies are aware that the **PUBLIC LIBRARY** is an **EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION**. The close relationship between the **PUBLIC LIBRARY** on one hand and both **SCHOOL** and **COLLEGE LIBRARIES** on the other has been the envy of many another **PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM**, not only in Georgia but also across the nation. This joint cooperation indicates even today that we are a part of the total educational effort, as we have been since the inception of the library's program.

Having no local tax support from county commissioners in the initial stages did not upset my equilibrium. I clung to my confidence through some serious times. One might say that during the first two decades we got the program underway and began to expand, and even long after tax support was assured, I was never far away from my "tin cup". The guaranteed budget was simply not sufficient to support the growth in demands for materials and services.

True to their promises to help me get underway, Irvine S. Ingram, **PRESIDENT OF WEST GEORGIA COLLEGE**, Joe McGiboney, **SUPERINTENDENT OF THE CARROLL COUNTY SCHOOLS**, and Alvin Rogers, **SUPERINTENDENT OF THE HEARD COUNTY SCHOOLS**, made it possible for our library experiment to materialize. All three, together with George Kerry Smith, **CHAIRMAN OF THE DIVISION OF LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND THE ARTS AT WEST GEORGIA COLLEGE**, carried the yeoman's responsibility in securing operating funds for the initial budget. Dr. Smith and Dr. Ingram also approached such clubs as the **STATE ROTARY** and **LIONS ORGANIZATIONS, INDUSTRIES, and WELL-ESTABLISHED FOUNDATIONS TO SECURE FUNDS**. Such avid interest and generous assistance enabled us to move along with confidence, operating "in the black" for the first two years.

Since I was under the aegis of the **STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**, my base salary was paid by the department, as was the case with teachers in public schools. The allocation for my salary was \$2,100.00. The college secured a Rosenwall Grant in the same amount for me to use in meeting operational expenses. Mr. McGiboney with the approval of his board also allocated \$2,000.00. Mr. Rogers matched it with \$1,000.00 from the **HEARD COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION**. The **GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION** sent down \$500.00 the first year earmarked for books. Civic clubs in

Carrollton also began their financial support that very first year. Altogether, I had a budget of slightly over \$10,000.00 — money in hand — with which to begin. In addition to this, WEST GEORGIA COLLEGE furnished space, heat, lights, maid service, a surplus range of book stacks, and a car to be used as a traveling library unit, with gasoline (by agreement) to be taken care of by the college for the first two years.

The last named bit of assistance required an interesting maneuver almost daily. At that time the Georgia Board of Regents permitted the units of the university system to own and use vehicles in all sorts of educational activities. WEST GEORGIA had a large pool of cars. Each user rushed to grab the best vehicle first. This early morning madhouse run must have resembled the scramble of fighter pilots about to take off to do combat in the wild blue yonder. Sometimes I made it in time to get a beatup old STATIONWAGON, which lent itself pretty well to holding boxes of books for delivery. Other times I had to settle for a limping vintage STUDEBAKER or a FORD or CHEVROLET of a delicate age. You simply don't look a gift TIN LIZZIE in the radiator. You just get in, hope it cranks, and take off with high hopes!

I particularly recall a trip I made one spring. I was driving the old "Stude" down the ROCKRIDGE-ROOPVILLE ROAD in CARROLL COUNTY. Returning from the long day's work I was tearing along at top speed — about forty miles per hour — when suddenly the left front tire blew! I fought the wheel for some distance before I could come to a safe stop. Fortunately I was in front of a house where young men accustomed to shifting tires, lived. To this day I recall the magnificent field of daffodils in bloom beside the house as vividly as the panic I felt when the car went out of control.

On the other days I used the old family DESOTO, which also had seen better days. I used it so much that the springs sagged and gave way to groaning hopelessness under the weight of boxes of books. (My Family out of necessity became devoted to the library effort.)