

MANY MICKLES MAKE A MUCKLE

I recall a conversation in the 1950's at the American Library Association's Mid-Winter Conference. Lucile Nix and I were standing talking with Grace Stevenson, the Deputy Director of ALA, about things that were happening in Georgia. Grace said:

"You know, ALA standards indicate that good public library service can't be given for less than \$3.50 per capita; yet you people in Georgia are doing it on less than \$1.00, making us out liars."

Of course \$3.50 was needed! We just didn't have that kind of financial support. The exciting development of public libraries in recent years to meet the needs of the people has been made possible through substantial State as well as Federal support. In our own state (beginning in the mid forties) great effort has been exerted to find money for library materials, then needed equipment, then fine buildings, and in recent years, the development of more services. Local support is necessary; but the State Government has previously shared its tax revenue with us on the local level through allocations based on formulas which are fair and equitable.

The Federal Government for many years also had a hand in our progress through funds earmarked for public libraries and allocated to the State Department of Education's Division of Public Libraries, which then distributes these funds via fair formulas to the regional systems. Excellent services such as GLIN (Georgia Library Information Network) and work with the blind and physically handicapped have resulted when some federal funds were kept at the Division of Public Library Services.

While the Governor, the Legislature, the State Board of Education have all generously worked to broaden and increase our support from the State, Federal Grants have given great impetus to experiment, at the same time local government agencies have also begun seriously to supplement our budget needs. Local support has not always been

there. Those of us who experimented and sacrificed to set up the first systems in Georgia, operating mainly on faith and determination, bore the brunt of "taking a 'tater and waitin'." Had we failed — who knows? — perhaps Georgia would never have earned its distinguished place in the public library sun. Perhaps the tin cup really did play a significant role in developing programs and the people ultimately insured financial support to the extent that today public libraries in Georgia receive more revenue from local support than from the combined aid from State and federal funding sources.

I did not begrudge the time-consuming effort it took to find money in those early years. We had a "selling" job on our hands — far more significant than people realized then.

During the first two years that I served as Director of Carroll-Heard Regional Library, I was so busy traveling the area, meeting key people, talking to groups at clubs, at schools and at churches, that dealing with financial matters took only a small part of my time. Our money needs were little in the beginning. With those first years of growth behind us, however, and with the promise of wide acceptance as well as with many new demands for services, I was suddenly brought up short. The whole program was confronted with a serious financial problem .

At the beginning of our organizational planning, we had asked the Georgia State Department of Education, Public Library Division, to allow the Carroll County Board of Education to serve as the legal board of trustees until an appointed board could be named and oriented. This request was granted; however, almost immediately a Regional Library Board was also organized, which met once a month in the early years. On this first board were a rural minister, a farmer, a club leader (woman), superintendents of the contracting school systems, a rural mail carrier (woman), a public school teacher, an attorney, a watch repairman, an industrialist, and a county newspaper publisher.

None of us expected the blow that came at the end of the second year when the Carroll County Board of Education suddenly decided to drop the contract for public library services, over the protest of Carroll County's School Commissioner Joe McGiboney, the stated reason being ,as the Chairman of the Carroll County Board of Education put it: "We're \$17,000 in debt and need to cut expenses somewhere." He led his board to revoke the contract. The public was not informed. I did not know of the decision myself for several days until Dr. Ingram after church on Sunday opened the following conversation:

"I did my best to convince the Carroll Board of Education not to take action and told them they were hurting one of the most important educational opportunities ever begun here."

"I don't understand, Mr. Ingram. What are you saying?"

"You haven't been told your county contract has been dropped? I couldn't stop it," he said. "If you will check with the State Department of Education about placing you elsewhere temporarily, I will store all your books until we can get the program going again; then you come back and start over."

"No, sir," I firmly but rather in a state of shock, replied. "I am not closing up."

"How do you expect to keep going without that financial support?"

"I don't know, but I will," I answered him.

"The college is behind you," he assured me.

I quickly reported the situation to our State Consultants.

"I am determined," I said. "I will **not** give up."

"We believe in you," they said. "See what you can do. If there are additional State funds available anywhere, we will try to make a special allotment for your program. Of course in the end, your official board will have to make the decision whether your Regional Library is to remain open or is to close. We can send you as Director to set up a demonstration in some other area if the project there fails because of lack of financial support."

As a matter of fact, I was already pressured by some key citizens in the South Georgia area to come down there and develop a system around a fine county library unit already in existence. I never seriously considered the offer because I wanted to develop our Regional Library based on my own philosophy — and to help "home folks."

I believe the Good Lord was looking with favor on our effort, for amazing help was forthcoming. I asked permission of Joe McGiboney to speak to the Carroll County Principals Association and explain our plight and our determination to raise the money. The principals, led by N. V. Dyer, Superintendent of Villa Rica Schools, committed themselves right then and there to help us keep the public library program going. They went back to their own communities and discussed the matter with the teachers, the children, the P.T.A. members, and the local school trustees (In those days, prior to consolidation, every school had its own local board). All agreed that they wanted to see something done at once to help take care of the financial

needs until the Carroll Board of Education could be convinced that what they were doing to the library services constituted false economy. My faith had paid off!

What followed is one of the most heart-warming experiences of our entire history! The schools could not carry the total fund-raising responsibility, but they would finance a major part of our needs. All over Carroll County were presented such events as Donkey Ball Bames, Street Dances, Beauty Contests, Fashion Shows, moving picture benefit shows, even a play directed by Guess Who (Yours Truly!) with star performers from Radio Station WLBB (I worked all day so we practiced at night). The proceeds from all these events went to the Traveling Library Fund; so with the aid of the public schools and others, the funds raised assured that we could stay in business for at least three years.

During this period I often thought of my Grandma Byrom, who had told her grandchildren over and over as we were growing up: "Many Mickles Make a Muckle!" The little mickles that came in from east, west, north and south in Carroll County added up to the muckles needed to keep the Library-On-Wheels turning. I can never know all the individuals who put in the "mickles".

One young man not long ago, seeing me in a local restaurant, came over to my table and sat down.

"Miss Foster," he opened the conversation, "you won't know me, but I was in the fifth grade at Villa Rica when the library system lost its funding for the Bookmobile service. You couldn't possibly know this but I regularly gave up my lunch money to help. A lot of the kids did — You just can't imagine what those books meant to us."

"What a heartwarming story!" I told him. "I am almost thankful we had that financial set-back because it certainly pulled us all together on the library cause."

Many other deeply moving stories have come to light. Another young man who is now a college professor told me he did odd chores to make money for "the library pot." He said as he smiled with mischief in his eyes, "My father would take a strap to me if he found me reading a book; but I was determined to read all I could. Many a time I slipped a library book under the pillow on my bed, waiting for the house to become totally still before I'd pull my book out and begin to read."

One of the most exciting episodes involving a person changing his attitude toward reading occurred during hard-pressed years of poor financial support. The only public meeting place in this community

of about 100 people was the school, which at that time, included first through ninth grades. We were serving the school needs through the grade centers, but we also had set up a public center in the home of one of the community leaders. She was proud to serve as the community "librarian". Her door was always open. When she was not at home for our scheduled visit to replace the books, she invariably left a "hello" note for us with instructions to look in the "frig" for milk or soft drinks and chicken salad sandwiches or datenut bread or something or other.

One spring day she called to tell me we had a problem. A venerable, influential old gentleman (a Primitive Baptist) was upset upon learning that "reading books" were scattered throughout the homes and as he saw it, leading the children down the path of sin and degradation. To make matters worse, here we were asking for dollars to spread such nonsense!

My community helper had talked with this man's grown sons and daughters, who had always used the library freely. They devised a scheme and asked that I would bring to them a Bible story book written on the young adult level, that sticks closely to the Scriptures. In discussing it over the phone, my helper said, "The daughter is going to carry this book home and casually lay it down where the old man will see it. She will say nothing and see what happens." I carefully selected a very lovely one and left it there at the home center for my helper to handle. I had another call from my helper, who very matter-of-factly said: "Could you bring another book, say a collection of Bible stories?"

I burst out laughing, "Hallelulah! You don't mean it worked!"

"It did," she said. "He picked the book up, read it, mulled over it, and said:

" 'That lady must not be so bad. Take this dollar over to Miss May's for that Book Lady.' "

Believe it or not, by the end of the summer, that fine old patriarch and his wonderful family down to the third generation were reading aloud — guess what — **Tow Sawyer!** "Not so bad" indeed!

The next year I was asked not to get out and campaign for funds but to let Carroll Service Council include us in the Community Chest Fund. This was during Fiscal year 1947-49. I disagreed strongly because I did not like the connotation of having the public library budget dependent upon or tied in with other fund-raising budgets. My official Board approved the proposal, however, and I was bound to abide by our decision. I understood the motive. I have always believed, however,

that had we made direct appeals, our annual budget would have been more substantial.

I supported the Carroll Service Council, however, serving on its board of directors, as a matter of fact. Hindsight is often better than foresight, as in this case, because I am positive that I should have organized a Friends of the of the Library Association to plan and manage the "selling" and "raising" load. Plainly speaking, I had a service to offer and did not have adequate time to raise money.

The schools needed so many things for their other programs that I was embarrassed to continue asking them for funds to support the public library system even though we did provide them with materials in their grade centers. I again confronted the Carroll County Board of Education with the challenge to face up to its responsibility to the Regional Library. I was very optimistic about our chances of changing the Board's earlier decision because of the turnover of its members. My library board concurred, that now was the time to plead our cause again.

I walked in on the Carroll Board of Education in session. The chairman and all other members rose, greeted me courteously and warmly, then asked me how they could help me. Shaking a little in my boots, I said:

"Gentlemen, it has been five years since I began our library program, with no books, no staff, no bookmobile, no library, no equipment. Five years. It hasn't been easy, but I think you know what we have been doing for your schools and your little communities. You know our contract with the Board was canceled over three years ago, but we kept right on serving the schools even though you were not supporting our library program.

"Now you might think I have been directing our library alone; but that isn't so: I have had a partner. I can see how you could refuse to sign our contract if I were alone, but how you can refuse my Partner Upstairs?" I left on that note. By the time I returned to my office at West Georgia College, the phone was ringing. It was "Mr. Joe":

"Edith, I wanted to tell you that your contract has been renewed. Before you got out of sight of the Courthouse (where the Board met), one of the members said:

"Let's give that woman that contract!"

It was a unanimous vote of confidence and support that has been there ever since that day.

Securing the Carroll Board of Education contract as a permanent allocation to our budget did not mean we had achieved even minimal financial security. For years and years we had to raise money to finance first one thing, then another. I was always talking books out of one side of my mouth and the need for the Green Stuff out of the other.

The Carrollton Lions Club sent a check annually for many years to pay for all the periodicals placed in the Carrollton Branch Library. The Carrollton Rotary Club secured a healthy grant from Georgia Rotary for our first budget. The Carrollton Kiwanis Club assisted us in our effort to secure the first local tax support from Carroll County Commissioner Raymond Muse.

In the fall of 1949 we finally agreed to petition library funds from Carroll County. Sparked by our very fine Board chairman J. Hubert Griffin, the members got to work spreading the word. To bolster the Board members' efforts, I explained our need at PTA meetings, at church services, at schools, at community and neighborhood group meetings. We felt confident that with support of the people county-wide, we could be successful our first go-around. The members of the Carrollton Kiwanis Club meantime had volunteered to take the petition "in person" to the Commissioner's office in the courthouse, accompanied by Chairman Griffin of the Library Board, a small delegation of other Board members, a group of leaders from over the county, and me.

We presented the petition and the Commissioner agreed to give us initial tax support up to one-quarter of a mill; so we left the courthouse within thirty minutes. It was one of the most exciting events of my professional life!

As each additional county joined the region, of course our budget was increased with local and state allocations. I must say that the most serious recurring threat to the program did not emanate from local vision and understanding. Economy-minded legislators and a Governor or two seemed determined to throw the Rural Library System out the window in the name of economy. Senator Ebb Duncan of the Thirtieth Senatorial District, then a member of the Georgia House of Representatives who recognized the cultural and educational potential of the Rural Library Program, gave us his valuable support. I am positive there was no member of either House more informed on matters of concern to Georgians or more dedicated to carrying out every commitment he made on behalf of his constituents, than was Senator Duncan, who at the time of his death was Majority Whip of the Senate.

I should have kept a diary of the number of visits two or three of us Regional Directors made to the State Capitol over the early years to plead the case of Regional Libraries. In the beginning years I frequently went up alone. As our state program expanded across the state, board members, interested citizens, as well as Directors of other systems, joined with me at the Capitol to speak up for our rural systems. Most of the time I did not come away in dismay or experience any shocked feeling towards anyone; but once the effort against our program was so utterly flagrant I became too disturbed to sleep well at night.

I had just gone into office as President of Georgia Library Association and had not had sufficient time to name my committees; hence I had to bear the brunt of an episode which had all the earmarks of a Regional Library slaughter.

A key legislator (NOT one from our area) discovered first-hand a plot which would eventually spell doom for the Georgia Public Library Educational Program. He quickly contacted me as President of Georgia Library Association. I immediately did three things: first, I called Dr. John Clouse of Griffin, President of the Georgia Citizens Library Committee (this pre-dated the Georgia Trustees Association), one of the hardest working independent citizens' organizations in Georgia, alerting him to the possible need for action; second, I sent out a Memo to all public library directors in the state, asking for no action unless advised but urging them to communicate the threat to their Library Boards; third, I took my Board Chairman, J. Hubert Griffin, with me to ask the advice of J. Ebb Duncan, who then was not serving as a Legislator. Ebb asked us who was chairman of the Committee on Education. When I told him, he said to call and talk with the Chairman about the seriousness of the proposed legislation. I tried frequently to do this but never could get the gentleman to the telephone.

Then the cyclone hit. Several friends called to say "Turn your TV on Channel 11!" I did and discovered that C. S. Hubbard and Lucile Nix were on camera with members of the Committee on Education who were all but scalping two administrators. They accused Lucile and C. S. of falsifying statements about the affect the legislation would have on the library program. We librarians were classified as "liars" by one outspoken Legislator. The truth is that neither Mr. Hubbard nor Miss Nix had anything to do with the fact-finding about the deplorable situation. I had been the culprit.

Chaos followed. My phone rang off the hook. I was belittled, pressured, shamed; but I never betrayed our Legislator friend. "You

just don't realize how serious this is," one Legislator said. "You are defying authority." "Miss Foster, I am surprised at you . . ." "You have hurt some of the oldest Legislators who have been your friends. They have a right to know who told you this lie" . . . On and on . . .

Finally, I said to the Chairman of the Committee when he called me, "Sir, you will never get the name from me. I give you my word the leak did not come to me through Mr. Hubbard or Miss Nix. You are crucifying the wrong people . . . I am dedicating my life to the library program, serving my state with all I am and have . . . Now some of you lawmakers keep trying to destroy one of the quality service programs Georgia's librarians have developed. I say this with all my determination — you will do this over my dead body!"

Isn't it interesting that during the two weeks of this horrible experience, I was never once asked to appear before the State Committee on Education to testify?

Suddenly all effort to squelch us ceased. The League of Women Voters and Georgia Citizens Library Committee acted promptly and positively. After some two weeks of wrangling, I received a call from the Chairman of the Education Committee, who said:

"I just want to congratulate you. You are truly a person of high principles. I am proud of you. In your place, I would have acted just as you did. I will tell you honestly that we were trying to economize and we turned to the Public Library Program as a place to do this. You were right — and you were right to do what you did."

I have never seen this man face to face, but I wish him well wherever he is. What he did in making a personal apology to me was not necessary, but I truly appreciated it and respected him for it.

Since that time, key Legislators have been solidly behind us — as have been the officials of the State Board of Education. In my opinion not all Governors have been 100% supporters of our program, perhaps not knowing enough about libraries to recognize the quality of service. Governor Busbee has been and is a warm friend; as a matter of fact, he worked in our behalf before he assumed his present high executive state office.

I recall hearing Senator Herman Talmadge say publicly on more than one occasion when he was Governor of Georgia: "Of every dollar expended for public services, the State has received the greatest returns from the public library dollar."

I am positive that somewhere in the Golden Book of Records will be found the name of Speaker of the Georgia House of Represent-

atives, Tom Murphy — one of the most powerful men in Georgia governmental affairs. He is also one of the most courteous in welcoming those of high and low estate to his office, at the Capitol and at home in Bremen, where he invariably lends an attentive ear. As Director of West Georgia Regional Library, I was always comfortable when I approached him to discuss matters of importance not only to our own Region but also to all other public library systems in the state.

When Tom became Floor Leader of the Georgia House of Representatives, his interest in public libraries increased. He was becoming aware of our successes, our failures, our problems. He helped to stir the concern of his fellow legislators. Of course he is a native of Haralson County, a part of our own service region; hence I kept him informed even of our frustrations.

I let him know that we were in constant touch with our own State Board of Education, which also were alerted to problems we had to face.

By the time Tom became Speaker Pro Tempore, he really had "taken us on" as one of his "pet" educational programs to be protected and promoted. It was about this time that we made our initial plea for a more fair Maintenance and Operations state funds for public library systems. As Speaker of the House, he has proven to be superlative in handling governmental legislation and he is never too busy to listen. He quickly lets all who pay attention know where he stands on all issues of importance. Two years ago he handled the M & O budget with finesse in the House and we had no problem there. Governor Busbee had already assured us that if our piece of legislation came to his desk for consideration, he would sign it into law, and he did!

One day in early February, 1974, while Legislature was in session, I scribbled a note to the late Honorable James Floyd.

"Jim, just outside the doors to the House of Representatives sits your former English teacher. Have a minute to spare?"

I did not sign it, though I had not even seen him for over thirty years. Here he came, coattails standing straight out, flying out of the House Session like a turkey with his feathers on fire! Throwing his arms around me, he kissed me, saying: "You know, I showed the guys around me your note and said 'That lady gets **all** my attention! That's **one** person who never called me Sloppy'."

"What can I do for you?" he asked me.

"First I want to tell you something I know about you," I answered as I looked him straight in the eye. "Your occasional speech in low-level vernacular doesn't fool me. I taught you good English in Trion — and I taught you well. Do you recall that you always made A's on your work?"

"Yes," he laughed. "You made us work and like it."

"Well, now to a matter that needs your support — one close to my heart. You may not realize that I left the teaching profession to become a rural librarian. I am nearing the end of my career; but before I retire, I'd like to have a hand in securing our first State allocations for Maintenance and Operation (really services). We have been asking for this for two or three years. The planning committee (of which I am a member) asked me to approach you for help since you are Chairman of the Appropriations Committee. I grinned with delight at this assignment. You know why? I expect to give you an "A" for effort in this vital project." I explained our proposal, discussing a bit of background of our State program.

"Tell me what you want and I promise to do my best," he said.

"We are asking for 25¢ per capita but of course are ready to take slightly less than this on the first go-around. We just need to break the ice and get started."

"All right," he promised. "I'll fight for it."

Later in the week, when the Appropriations Committee repaired to the Conference Room to adopt the Budget in its final form, I happened to be sitting in Speaker Pro-Tem Tom Murphy's office. George Busbee, then Majority Leader of the House came in and as he passed by, he saw me and turned back to say: "I want you to know Sloppy Floyd really tried hard to get M & O for you this year but didn't make it. Don't give up. Come back next year and try again. It may be a different story." (As Governor of Georgia he always gave great support to our Regional Library Systems.)

By the time of the next Legislative Session, Jim Floyd had died of a heart attack. Entirely apart from any specific professional interest, I felt a keen personal sorrow at this loss to the state. He was rather conservative but fair, and a lovable, knowledgeable person in government. He literally gave of himself to the people of Georgia. Some did not agree with his overpowering persuasiveness not to spend state money; but all respected him. He was fun to be with, his colleagues told me. He was fun as a high school student. His mischief as a youngster was guiltless and his loyalty to school, faculty, football team were of the highest degree.

At the next Legislative Session we almost missed the boat, discovering very late that the Education Budget going up for consideration did not stress the need of M & O for the Regional Library Systems. Leroy Childs, Deputy Director of West Georgia Regional Library, and I called on Senator Ebb Duncan for help. Four or five other Directors also were at the Capitol trying to make a break-through for M & O, but Ebb "belonged" to us; besides, we had noted that pieces of legislation he pushed, usually passed. We had utmost faith in his integrity to do exactly what he said he would.

"It's late," he said. "It may be too late; but I promise to take it on as a priority project, and you know this means I'll fight to get M & O included in the Budget and given serious consideration. I also will talk with key legislators, including members of the Appropriation Committee. I have six or seven other strong interests, but I am for this library program — have always been — and I'll fight for M & O."

Senator Ebb Duncan was true to his word. Frail in stature, he was a dynamo in action. There were a few other Senators who took up the cudgel, too, and the leadership in the House; however, I think all key Legislators — especially those powerful members of the Appropriations Committee — will acknowledge that he almost laid his life down for us. Though quite ill (ordered to bed by his doctors) he remained at the Capitol, literally into the wee hours till the matter of M & O was taken up and approved by the Appropriations Committee. He did a masterful job for us. His year-in year-out support of Georgia's Public Library Program is a bright spot in our history.

At this point I want to make it crystal clear that with the passage of the Federal Library Service Act, Regional Libraries have been able to develop and expand services across America's rural and urban areas. This is **one** Federally supported program which has no so-called "axe to grind". Its purpose is to reach out and serve all the people, regardless of race, color, creed, or source of origin.

The 1963 altering of the Library Services Act to include construction, and the broadening of LSCA in 1966 to include Inter-library Cooperation, Institutions, and Services for the Blind and Handicapped, really has given tremendous impetus to the development of public libraries over America. In Georgia, as elsewhere, it has meant construction of many excellent buildings, including headquarters and branches, as well as the expansion of regions, geographically speaking, and the heretofore mentioned extension of work into a specific problem or unserved area.

Georgia's plan for allocating funds for construction of public libraries was activated in the mid-Sixties and has continued. All over

the state you will come upon library construction made possible by our Georgia Legislature. There is just no state in America working harder to provide public library services for all than Georgia.

The annual budget adopted by Georgia Legislature now includes funds for all our qualifying library systems, involving professional salaries, travel, materials, maintenance and operation (services), and building new libraries.

With the 1967 funding of the Appalachia program which was passed by Congress in 1966, making it permissive for part of the funds to go for public library use, the setting up of budgets adequate at least to a reasonable degree to get a credible library program accomplished, became a fact. Our Federal tax money was coming back to be used in our state. Since it involved required matching funds, more local support was forthcoming all over Georgia.

The justification of such a budget as ours (which by library standards is still low for five counties) is reflected in earlier and later sections. It is not possible to evaluate such a far-reaching and significant service in dollars and cents, nor even in statistics; but without reasonable financial support, in this day of rapid change and vast individual demands, the public library would soon lose the essence of its true character. Heaven forbid! Yes, out here in the West Georgia area we outgrew and exchanged our "tin cup" for government contracts on all levels — local, state, national. The truth of the matter is, however, that with greater and greater demands for buildings, services, equipment, materials — all the allocations in our Regional budgets put together are mickles. We must keep on pushing till the "many mickles make a muckle."