

## OF AND FOR THE PEOPLE

“Lack of space has often been suggested as a reason for limiting library services. I grant you that it must be a comforting thought to have a fine library building with beautifully equipped departments to house books, films, people, and other . . . I am wondering whether some of us may not have forgotten that an institution of learning might better have a program . . . If libraries do not become the workshop, as it were, of democracy, who will do the job? . . .”

(From my address before ALA at Los Angeles in June, 1953)

We began with the idea that the **people** matter most. Around this basic premise we shaped and developed our library program. In the initial years we were an institution in name only. In the beginning, we went to the institutions and to the organized civic, cultural, and educational groups whenever and wherever the latchstring was outside the door. There we found the individual. As we grew, we tried to set our goals and outline our philosophy so as to provide good library service for all the people in the West Georgia Reginal Library's geographic area. In a real sense our public library has been a workshop of democracy and we long ago based our program on the major premise that social changes, longevity of life, individual reading habits, the world war II population boom, increased education, industrial expansion, adult education per se, and working women demanded that we alter our library program regularly. People of all ages and persuasions have been served whether brown, yellow, white, or black.

Very early I sensed that people were dissatisfied, feeling a need for more individual fulfillment. We were confronted daily with challenging ideas calling for creative adventure and we saw the Regional Library as the best medium to assist the people in attaining personal satisfaction.

Somewhere I recall coming upon these words: “The one great measuring device at hand throughout life is **reading**. No other tool

is so all-embracing as the printed page." The library staff has seen so much good come from our having placed needed reading material into hands reaching out that we are completely in agreement with that statement.

I recall something the late Dr. L. E. Roberts, president of Middle Georgia College at Cochran (then Dean of West Georgia College) said to me as he prepared to leave Carrollton to assume his new duties at Cochran:

"I want to thank you and your staff," he said, "for the reading guidance you gave my son, Ned, over the years. Through your efforts he became an avid reader and something of a scholar in American History. We give you the credit for awakening in him the white-heat desire to learn." (Ned was to become a history professor on a university staff in New Mexico.) Even as a child, he was touched by the world of books and at some magic moment discovered his potential.

The same book magic touched the lives of children whose homes were in remote areas. Take Mary, for example.

Mary was in the seventh grade of a small rural school that day she opened her heart to me as I was at work on the Bookmobile. She had no reading matter in her home when we started the Bookmobile Service, she confided to me, except the Bible, a mail-order catalog, and a cheap, lurid magazine which her sister brought home to read. The first year of our rural library program was Mary's first year in school and her first opportunity to have a real book in her home. Seven years later she had already read 741 library books.

"What sort of books do you enjoy?" I asked her.

"Oh, I prefer books about real people who do things. Right now I am reading the best book you have ever brought us."

"What is it?"

"The Life of Helen Keller. It is wonderful," she said in estatic tones, "Just think how she got over her hurt. There are so many hurt people."

As I stepped out of the Bookmobile I encountered the school principal who said, "I heard what Mary said. There is more to this story than she has told you."

I returned to the back of the Bookmobile, telling Mary how happy we were to "discover" her.

"By the way," I said, "thousands of youngsters over the years have read the book you are enjoying about Helen Keller and been moved by her heroic life; but you seem more affected than most thirteen or fourteen year old girls. I have found in my own case that I must tell others about any book that moves me deeply or that influences my thinking in some way or another. Have you felt the same way?"

"Oh, yes'm. We talk at home about what I learn in the books. They asked what all you have and I said just about anything. We'd been talking real draperies for our rooms; so I asked for a book on that. You all brought two books the very next visit and I took them home and Mama and Janie (her sister) looked at them so much I was afraid they'd get dirty or torn. We've already made new curtains for our bedrooms. You just won't believe how pretty the rooms look now. It makes me so proud to have books."

"Mary, tell me smething. Next to reading and having library books for yourself, what gives you the greatest pleasure in knowing you have this Traveling Library come to visit?"

"Well," she said, "there's a retired school teacher who lives about two miles down below us — that is, if I take the short-cut through the woods. She's in a wheelchair now because when she fell, they didn't set her hip right. I take her some books down there after the Bookmobile comes every time. We talk about our books, and she keeps telling me to stay in school and go on and make something out of myself. You know — she's got me believing I can. She says keep on right on through school, that she could see what books were doing for me."

"Two miles down there through the woods, you say. How do you get there?"

"I walk," she said. "I don't mind. Sometimes I read every lick of the way. Of course I can't do that when it's raining, 'cause I might ruin the books. I go though, rain or shine."

Well, she did "go on", finishing her training at a school of nursing. The Bookmobile had placed in her hand a magic key and the guidance she needed came from an understanding retired, crippled teacher, who loved books and children.

Mary's awakening is only one of many instances that we encountered over the years, bringing home the fact that our influence was immeasurable. We did things and "forgot" them as we moved on to some other chance — only occasionally discovering that what we librarians "did" was a momentous event in another's life.

Recently I was reminded of this when a patron of Neva Lomason Memorial Library casually mentioned to Doris Kaylor of the Circulation Department, on duty at the time:

"Miss Foster just went by and grinned that grin at me, waved, and rushed on. Sometime when she isn't going or coming in a great hurry, I want to tell her something."

"Well," Doris said, "I think she would want to see you now. Let me see whether or not she can come to the front."

Of course I went to the Direct Service Area of the library at once.

"Do you recall an incident that happened beside a country road?" she asked me.

"No, I don't think so," I had to admit while racking my brain to recall some special event.

"I was five years old at the time this happened. It was summertime and I was barefooted. My sister and some neighbors were with me sitting on the bank by the road, waiting for the Bookmobile to come. You were driving that little Traveling Library, you remember, the Station Wagon with the homemade shelving in it. I had just lost my nickel as you came up, and I was crying my heart out."

"What's wrong, Dale?" you asked me, and I told you about the new toothbrush I wanted but I couldn't get, 'cause I'd lost my nickel!"

"Just a minute," you said and crawled back into that car and returned, handing me a nickel. "Now you don't have to cry anymore, darling. Come on. Let's get some books before the Rolling Store gets here."

Dale went on to say, "You mended my broken heart that day . . . Now I have three growing daughters who are real library users. I have brought them up in this wonderful library. I use it all the time, especially now that I am working on my degree in English at West Georgia College."

Fannie Mae Davis one of our most efficient branch librarians, who is in charge of Public Services at Douglas County Public Library, recalls such a moving experience.

Nina, a very bright youngster, used the branch library regularly. It so happened that two students were in there asking for the summer jobs one afternoon when Nina was sitting nearby reading. After the students had gone, she went over to the desk and asked about working. Fannie Mae explained to Nina that she lived too far to be walking home alone late in the afternoon and that there was not much pay

involved — only fifty cents an hour. The child did not say much but left immediately.

The next day she was back. "Mother said she would bring me to work and I can ride home with Daddy," she said. Her father was a delivery man and helper for a grocery in town. Fannie Mae could not resist her pleadings; so she put her to work.

Nina worked all summer quite well, and the following three summers. As the library use grew, she helped on Saturdays and through school holidays, acquiring additional skills as she went along. Fannie Mae learned a great deal about her, including the fact that she was determined to go to college. The librarian knew that Nina would have to have a better paying job with college in mind. Without the child's knowledge, she went to see the Director of the Head Start program in Douglas County about putting Nina to work there during the summer. She did continue to work in the library on short vacation periods (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Spring Holidays, etc.) during the year.

Upon entering college she applied for a work scholarship in the college library, graduated and is now teaching in a North Georgia High School.

We can't be sure to what degree Nina's life was affected or her horizons broadened by the kindness and help of our librarian in Douglasville, but we know she is most appreciative today.

As I have mentioned earlier, very shortly after the system was organized, it became our policy to hold book-mending and repair clinics for Girl and Boy Scouts (earning Merit badges), for student assistance club members in our high schools, for public library aides in elementary schools. Some of them became quite skillful in the craft.

One young girl came in every summer to help at Headquarters till her high school graduation. Near graduation she told me she would be going to Young Harris College if she could find financial help. I suggested that we get in touch with Margaret Woodall (my very good friend and roommate during Emory days) Director of Young Harris Regional Library, about her ability to repair books. We worked this out for my young friend and she was put in the technical processing staff as a part time student assistant. She was so efficient, however, that the college soon offered her a scholarship to work in the College library. She completed her college work and returned to teach in Carroll County. Her keen interest in library work prompted her to take the required library science courses qualifying her to begin her role as a librarian at Mt. Zion High School.

It was always exciting to us when a "special case" was called to our attention at some school in the area. Often it involved a child, a teacher, and members of a family, as well as our library staff. There was Joline . . .

Joline was in the fifth grade, a rather large girl for her age. Though she had a sweet, polite manner, she just had no friends. My heart used to ache when I was visiting the school, to see her standing alone at recess when other children were playing and laughing together.

"You know," her teacher told me, "I think it is just her clothes. Children can be so cruel. I have never seen her when her petticoat was not showing."

I was standing in the door. With that, I turned to look at Joline, and sure enough, there she was, leaning against the wall, her slip hanging down.

Then one day an amazing transformation began to take place. Her grandfather had bought a record player, we later learned and Joline asked her teacher to get the Bookmobile to bring some recordings of folk music for Grandpa. Among the ones we carried out there was the well-known **Skip to my Lou**. Joline joined in, learning to square dance at little neighborhood gatherings.

The teacher asked us to rush books on folk games and music, as well as recordings to her. Carrying her own record player to school, she asked Joline to help her organize a small "folk" circle; then she complimented her before all the youngsters. She was not exaggerating. That child could really "skip to my Lou"! She had no trouble getting partners. She was such an authority that always the boys chose her first. The library had a part in changing this young lady for the better.

A little seven-year old came up to the Circulation Desk at the Neva Lomason Library one day, plopped his book down, and said he'd been reading up on the history of football. "Did you know the first football was made out of the bladder of a pig!" he exclaimed to Doris Kaylor, on duty at the time. She laughingly told me later that she and Tom carried on quite a conversation about the pig's anatomy.

You see, even checking books in and out sometimes involved little dramas of a sort. Little nine year old Robert ran into Lithia Springs Public Library one day, shedding copious tears, greeting Betty Hagler, our Librarian:

"Oh, Miz Betty," he said, putting his torn-to-shreds book down on the desk, "It won't happen again. It won't, Miz Betty."

"I'm sure you will try to be extra careful, Robert. You must take care of the library books. This costs your mother money, you know. Don't worry about it. Go on and check out another book.

"Miz Betty, my dog won't mess up anymore books 'cause my mother runned over him and he's dead." So we discovered he was probably crying about the dog, not the book.

It is a delightful experience to discover a very young child who obviously has had reading aloud experiences as a part of daily living. I recall a joyous experience I had a number of years ago when Alice Rowland, four years old, walked up to the Circulation Desk alone. I happened to be taking a turn in Circulation at the time. Alice peeped at me over the top of the desk. "I want a library card, please," she said.

"Darling," I said, "you'll need to wait just a while longer till you learn how to read."

"I can read," she said. I was taken a-back. (Eventually I was to lose such naivety.) Anyway, nonplussed, I said, "Alice, prove it." Getting a picture book off the Children's Shelves, I handed it to her — and she promptly read it to me! Needless to say, she got the Library Card. In telling her mother about it I laughed and said:

"Little Miss Exception has proved the rule."

Actually, she explained, Alice had learned to read "on her own," mainly because Uncle Joe McGiboney had taken so much time sharing books with her.

We finally accepted the fact (Why did it take so long?) that a child is at his brightest, his keenest at that early, early age. He does not have "to study" then to learn; rather, by some process comparable to osmosis, his mind absorbs bits and pieces of his environment without any effort in these impressionable years.

One of the brightest, cutest little five year old girls I ever saw came up with her mother to the Circulation Desk one time just after she had been signed up for a kindergarten school.

"Thank God," she said, "I am old enough to go to kindergarten so I won't grow up to be so dumb . . . I aim to be a 'library girl' . . . pay all my bills"

Turning to look up at her mother, she asked, "When I grow up, you think I'll be able to handle all this business?" I'd bet on it!

One of the most effective programs we ever devised was the Magic Candle Story Hour for the little "darlings" in the three to four year old bracket. Edith Morehead, Children's Librarian, has the knack of working with the small children. Somehow she always gets off on the right foot with them.

I remember one patron, who every year had a child in the story hour. Every time she came, she had a number of her children with her — several quite small but always orderly and quiet. One day I asked her about how she kept them to "taw."

"Oh, law," she laughed, "I give 'em castor oil and whup 'em ever now and them."

I'd be quiet too — wouldn't you? — at least when she was within earshot.

It is really quite thrilling to realize that over the years we had a part in helping thousands of youngsters in their first experiences with reading for themselves. I saw little ones touch lovingly and with wild-eyed wonder the books, such as Beatrix Potter's **The Tale of Peter Rabbit**, or Dr. Seuss' **The Cat in the Hat**, or Lois Lenski's **Papa Small**. They do learn at some early time that books are "there" as a magic key to the whole universe of adventure. What a marvelous experience it was for me to see the reader keep nourishing his mind and spirit, whether he was reaching out from his farmhouse in the valley of his cottage near the crossroads store of his mansion in town, to the wonderful world of books!

Ned and Bill, brothers were sort of rough and ready kids, twelve and thirteen, who were always scuffling and teasing. They had scorned "readin' books" till one day at school they came across a library book about Billy the Kid. They checked it out to carry home. Time passed and they just kept putting off returning the book. I asked them about it over and over again but got little satisfaction as to just why they continued to keep it.

Finally one day their teacher called to ask me to come out to the school because Ned and Bill wanted to tell me something. The three of us walked out of the small school down to a sittin' log and made ourselves comfortable under the trees. The book was not, up to this point, mentioned. Suddenly, without any lead-in, Ned said:

"That book's a gonner!"

"Well," I said, "Ned, lots of books are gonners. I don't cry about it. What happened?"



"We'uz on the way to school one morning goin' thru the woods and went by Pa's vat where he has his mash. Bill had the book in his shirt. He leant over too far and that book fell in. It was plumb ruint."

I laughed so loud they heard me in the school. I said, "That mash probably took on an added kick!" Let's forget the book. Tell you what. Let's find something on the Bookmobile today that you will like and get you fixed up with another book. Just don't lean over the vat this time." I asked the teacher to let the boys do some chores to serve as pay for the "gonner" and to let them carry books for me to the Bookmobile. Somehow I just did not want to face the parents with a bill and as a result the boys and I became good friends.

One young mother told me about how anxiously her little Tricia waited for her seventh birthday so she could have her Very Own Library Card! Shirley Yancey, her mother came to see us one day just before Christmas, to beg us to prepare the card a little early so she could surprise Tricia by putting it in the bottom of her Christmas stocking. We obliged. Shirley said:

"I wish you could have seen the joy on her face when she came up on The Card."

"'Oh, Mother'," she said, "'just look . . . my very own Library Card . . . When can we go to the Library?'"

Norma Fulbright is a "professional" without conceit or ostentation. In her assignment as Coordinator of Carrollton Public School Kindergarten Program, she explained to Leroy Childs and me one day that her philosophy calls for reaching "the total child." This pretty much seems to me to characterize the goal and purpose of Principal C. B. Ward and his entire staff of eighteen teachers and assistant teachers, handpicked to develop and carry out a readiness program offering enrichment and broad experiences to the five year old youngsters in the City Kindergarten.

At the library we were happy to note that all the faculty members were making good use of our library materials. Customarily, they scheduled visits, sending one or two classes at a time and inviting the parents to meet them at the Neva Lomason Library. Beforehand, the teachers had instructed the parents to ask for Library Cards and also encouraged them to follow up by taking their children "on their own" to the Neva Lomason Library regularly.

It was certainly a help to us to have Norma get the point across, how important it is that the child should learn to handle books for himself.

Visitors are welcomed at the school; so Leroy and I enjoyed their hospitality one morning at an eight o'clock breakfast. It is the custom, weather permitting, for the children to have the experience of sharing breakfast prepared and served by their parents there on a patio at the school, at which time two little ones are hosts at each table.

I asked Norma at the time: "What are you doing? Tie it up in a few words for me."

"We are trying to give the child a good feeling about himself (herself). . . We want his first school experience to be happy ones . . ."

I asked: "You borrowed a great deal of material on Indians very soon after we got underway with our County Sesquicentennial Year What did you do with it?"

"We spent a week on the subject, then had **Indian Day**. All the teachers and the children came dressed as Indians that day. We served mush and popped popcorn. All the children participated in Indian games. We talked about the books and filmstrips we had used. We 'made' our own book, telling a story, glamorized by the children's art work."

"Another time we had an Hawaiian luau, preparing for it by borrowing all sorts of materials from your library. We had a 'real live pig' brought in before Luau Day; then it was brought cooked in the kitchen at school. We even explored a volcano that day. We made a filmstrip of that experience — and slides. It was quite an adventure."

"Once in a while we encounter some difficulty in handling an individual child," she said. "In that event, the parents are contacted for a conference. We explain to them what is wrong. We want any parent so consulted to have a good feeling about what we say and do and to help the child."

"How do you measure yourselves?" I frequently was asked. "How do you tell when all your programs are effective?"

As for measurement, we evaluated our own programs carefully every spring, to determine the effectiveness of each aspect, even sharing specific personal experiences; then we set our priorities for the coming year, spelling out in some detail our objectives and how the programs would be implemented to meet these objectives.

We were also very careful about selecting "volunteers" — both adults and teenagers. The staff always trained the volunteers who assisted us through personal discussions, clinics, and workshops.

To work better with young people and to make use of their ideas and dreams we organized a Young Adult Council made up of appointees from surrounding high schools, leaders on campus and in community life. This idea sprang from our concern over prolific use of drugs by our youth. With help of the Kiwanians we bought five graphic films as well as copious printed matter — all for loan to schools, to churches, to clubs, to institutions, in fact to any agency concerned seriously about drug abuse and adolescents.

Our Youth Council broadened its scope. We had felt the need to set up a program using Mini-Shelves for placement in spots to reach the unreached, such as Convalescent Homes, Hospitals, and Industrial Plants. Our Council acted as liaison with the Industrial Arts Classes at Carrollton High School and as a result we soon had some twenty-four Mini-Shelves, made by members of the Industrial Arts Classes, at a nominal cost. We placed these all over the Region. The collections were changed regularly by Staff or volunteers.

We set up a church library at the Bremen United Methodist Church; a library for the prisoners at the Carroll County Barracks — (we were assisted financially by the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce.) To serve the people more systematically and totally, we set up eight branch libraries in our system where none had existed previously.

As we checked up on ourselves one year we discovered we had conducted the following "programs": Story-telling Workshop (1), Baby Sitting Workshop (4), Youth Forum (1), Youth Art Show, Carroll County Art Show, Douglas County Arts and Crafts Ceramics Show, Volunteers Workshop (1), Christmas Decoration Workshop (1), Rocking Chair Travelers Visits (4), Family Christmas Program, Magic Candle Story Hour for Three and Four Year Olds (18), Head Start Story Hours (7), Young Adult Council Discussions (6), Senior Adult Coordinating Council (12), West Georgia College and Regional Library Joint Conference (1), Negro History Program (4), Negro History Planning Conference (1), Civic Club Public Programs (7), Public School Groups for Study — Teachers (14), Girl Scouts Programs (3), E.M.R. Orientation and Programs (8), Boy Scout Groups (3), Gifted Students Groups (3), Chamber of Commerce Sponsored Industrial Groups (2), Kindergarten Groups for Orientation and Story Hours (12), Separate School Groups for Orientation (26), Youth Chess Tournament (4), Senior Citizens Spend-the-Day Programs (3), High School International Art Exhibit, Planning Meetings with the Recreation Department and the Department of Continuing Education (6), and the Genealogical Workshops (2).

Our programs and projects always followed a varied pattern. In-depth study of the drug abuse problem progressed to venereal disease and ecology. Members assisted us in selecting a record collection pleasing to youth. We even arranged for the young people to have three jam sessions at the Neva Lomason Library on nights when the library was closed to the general public. We indoctrinated them into the art of story-telling, then used them to hold special Story Hours for children of elementary school age, setting up groups in small circles all over the library, with two teenagers assigned to each circle.

To do a more effective service on all levels, we utilized other agencies to help: the Chamber of Commerce, West Georgia College, The Carrollton Recreation Department of Carrollton, The Agricultural Extension Agency, The Estelle Condra School of Speech, and the Cancer Society — to name a few.

Back in the late Fifties we cooperated with the **State Department of Education's Public Library Division** in experimenting with a special collection of books — most of them modern — for college-bound students. We weren't told **what** to do — just originate a project and write it up. For participation we were given a thousand dollars worth of books which would become the property of the Regional Library.

We put considerable thought into the proposition. Our idea was to replace the ineffective system of book reporting customarily set up for high school youngsters, with a program of reading and open discussions about books and their authors, looking into their purpose, setting, characterization, strong points, appeal, over-all effectiveness, etc.

I discussed the idea with Carrollton Superintendent F. M. Chalker, Principal Hugh Maddox, Senior English Teacher Eunice Johnson, and Librarian Adalee Burrow. They were intrigued with possibilities of the proposal and agreed, provided I would take an active part in the effort myself. A Senior Leadership Committee of Five was named immediately to help us plan and carry out the project.

We set up a section in the Carrollton High School Library labeling both books and shelves "YA". The youngsters amazed me with their all-out participation and their give-and-take criticism. Before the year was out WXIA-TV (Channel 11) of Atlanta had heard of our project and invited us to be on a morning talk-fest. Five young people and I made the trip to tell our story.

The project (by agreement with the Public Library Division) was for one year only but we expanded it on our own the next year from Carrollton High School to two other senior high schools — (Bowdon

and Dallas) — chosen because of the excellent librarians and English teachers. We made a three-year program of the YA College-bound Reading Project, and thereafter retained the “YA” as we found the young people liked having their own earmarked volumes.

Patrons frequenting the library world come in all shapes and sizes and proclivities — good, bad, or indifferent. It was all quite an experience to us. One person selected books by color and size. We found she was carrying out a color-scheme. Another just like to have “Best-sellers” lying around the house when guests came.

A very clever young woman serving time for embezzlement talked the jailer into taking her to the library every two weeks during her incarceration to select for herself rather than compromise her reading desires by “some little deposit the librarians would make up.” A one-legged black man, whom I had known since my youth, who was spending his last years in a nursing home, confined to a wheelchair, wanted to visit the library every week, to “smell” the books, to wheel up and down between the stacks. When we discovered this, we arranged for a volunteer to take care of him.

One woman called to say she had just moved “to the country” from Atlanta and she was in the process of making apple wine. “I have the apples all cut up. Now what do I do?” she asked.

Another day a young man ran all the way in and across to the Circulation Desk to return books. As he dashed out he said over his shoulder: “My wife is in labor in my car and I’m on the way to Tanner Hospital. See you later!”

A young man in Douglas County acquired an education in radio and television repair service by using our library materials, spending many months in study, then passing a rigid examination. He is now employed in a work he loves, and talks freely about the importance of the library in his professional life.

There was never a dull moment. People were fun. One elderly, white-haired woman with a fine sense of humor, rather deaf, quiet and self-contained, stepped up into the Bookmobile to choose herself a book. She pulled one down and the Extension Librarian, Helen Bailey, said: “I don’t know whether you’ll want that or not. It has some bad language in it.”

“Oh, that’s all right, dear,” she said. “I’ll be by myself.”

Helen said she had a twinkle of mischief in her eyes and voice.

Among the students I taught at the college was Charlotte Echols (Hinesley). I talked to all my college students about the need to read,

read, read. Charlotte took me very seriously. Just after I retired I received a long, appreciative letter from her. Charlotte said she wanted to put down in writing some of her own thoughts on how the library has enriched her life — and the lives of her family.

She wrote of the little beginning library as (and I quote) “a haven for me. As I browsed in the basement library, a feeling of excitement came over me, for I was discovering book titles that I had never known existed. Those books filled a void in my life.

“Later, as I was completing my college courses, your staff was always helpful to me, no matter what assignment I was working on.

“In my career as an educator, the library has been useful in helping me to become more knowledgeable about the subjects I teach, as well as human psychology. I had such fun last year at Christmastime, building a school program based on material checked out to us at Neva Lomason Memorial Library. Seeing the joy on the faces of the children was reward enough for all the extra work — yours and mine.

“Now that we have moved to the country, the library has been a source of material in helping us to establish a small vegetable garden.

“Your library was certainly a mecca for the hobbyist. My own daughter was able to make macrame projects from instructions in library books. In my living room I have a beautiful little decoupaged plaque featuring a print of one of the first West Georgia Regional Bookmobiles — the craft mastered from “how-to” books checked out at the library.

“I could go on and on . . . but suffice it to say that I am looking forward to many more years of growth in learning — enriching and rewarding experiences with the world of books and through the many services provided by the West Georgia Regional Library.”

In the course of working with people, Librarians find it very exciting to see children growing, knowing that the public library is a most important part of their lives. Clair Dixon is a case in point:

“Nannie got me started. She loved books. I had many happy hours listening to her reading to me even when I was small enough to sit in her lap” . . .

This was young Clair Dixon, the bookworm, talking. The “Nannie” she referred to is her Great Grandmother, who is still living. Clair has always been an “independent” library user. By this trait I mean she knows her own mind, preferring to do selection of materials on her own, calling upon the librarians for help only for serious or

complex reference problems that confront her. One would never, never call her a casual browser, though I believe she has visited the public library nearly every day.

We often hear about people standing in line for hours and hours in order to get the first tickets sold for some sports event or to secure the first car tag. Well, as a small child, Clair would stand outside the door, quietly waiting for the library to open early in the morning so she could sign up for our children's summer reading program. She did not boast about being "first"; rather, she went right on about her business of getting her special "ticket" for the program then selecting her books. She came to the library so often that she almost became a part of our library family.

We have occasionally experienced the wrath of a parent who wished to inform us that **her** child (in the fourth grade, say) was capable of reading on the high school level. This pronouncement would be accompanied by the demand to let the child read **anything** in the library, if she or he so chose. The child's attitude most of the time would already be caught up in an "I am superior" attitude. Not so with Clair. Her parents never once indicated to us that she was a special reading case. She was though. We encouraged her to read as her interests demanded and she was always happy about her choice of books. I wonder how many "Clairs" there are who never received encouragement to explore the wonderful world of books, or who perhaps never had access to a good public library.

Part of my joy and satisfaction in serving so long as Director of the West Georgia Regional Library has been in watching the growth and development of so many children through the medium of the library, many of whom now have children of their own who continue the reading tradition!

Once in a while an entire family has emerged as a true reading family with no ifs, ands, or buts. What joy to the librarian is such a find — like the McGuires.

Whenever I think about this wonderful family as they are today and recall some experiences I shared with them in the early years of our program, as the kids were growing up about the place, in the quiet village of Little Tallapoosa, I am deeply moved. I have to say to myself:

The family that **reads** together **succeeds** together.

I couldn't help laughing one day at Little Tallapoosa School when three on Ol' Dan (family workhorse) rode up, the kids were

reading a book aloud as they came up the school road. It was Laura Ingalls Wilder's **LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS**. They hopped off the horse, put the bridle up on Ol' Dan's neck, placed a loving pat on his rump and said: "Go on home." He obediently turned homeward, Flicker (the pet pony) frisking along, soon ahead of him. Jo Sybil was riding the pony. I stood there in astonishment.

"Do you usually read as you ride along like that?" I asked them as grinning fit to kill, they darted past me to the schoolhouse to keep from being late.

"Yes'm, they said, "'cept when it rains. Then Mama usually brings us on the tractor."

About a year after we had started Carroll-Heard Regional Library, I showed up at the Little Tallapoosa School for a community get together. There I talked at length with Jewell and Robert McGuire and they introduced me to the Mack Beavers, who operated a little country store in the heart of the community. I was beginning to open up store book centers and hoped to get a public service contact set up in the Beavers Store. Mack Beavers invited me to drop by the store and tell them what to do. The result was a fine library center which touched many lives in the community. Occasionally it just so happened that some incident or other would give the program a bit of extra publicity.

One day when I was down there at Beavers' Store on a regular service schedule, carrying in a fresh collection for the Library Center, Jo Sybil McGuire came flying up to the store on Flicker. She jumped off and trailed me into the store, not noticing she had left the screen-door open. Before you could say "Now see here, Flicker," that pony had entered the store and eaten up all the bananas. Mack just laughed about it. Jo Sybil giggled, I said,

"Well, that might be easier on Flicker than chewing up a book, Mack. At least maybe it won't give him a stomach-ache. Just suppose he'd swallowed this one (holding up a book on electricity for boys). This might have given him a charge all right."

That incident became a community "tall tale". I might add that this is another case of the stir we caused as we became a part of the rural scene. Books **do** motivate people — and in this case, it seemed to have an indirect influence on the macinations of a wee little horse.

Sometimes I felt I got more enjoyment out of knowing the McGuires than they did using the library. The family is still going strong in the wonderful world of books. How the rafters of the old homeplace at Treasure Oak Farm must ring when the whole gang



gathers from time to time. What a precious heritage Jewell and Robert have given their children and their children's children, through books!

I have often asked myself: Can you really measure the effect of library use by the individual over the long haul? on the family? on the agency or institution? It is hard to give a **qualitative** analysis, which, in truth, is far more important than the **quantitative** evaluation.

Once I was given this opportunity. It was in 1946. I was working far off the beaten track in the extreme southwestern part of Heard County at the time. A man came by the library center to plead with me to help his handicapped child, who had been born without a rectal terminus. Surgery had made an acceptable adjustment for her, but she could not comfortably attend public schools. She was six years old and a cute little blonde, bright as a shiny new coin.

The family actually lived over the line in Alabama. The father worked in a mill there. The children rode the bus to attend a consolidated school — all but little Fran. I explained that there was no agreement between the states of Georgia and Alabama, but I would provide materials for Fran if he would help. We agreed that I would mail a card to him before each Bookmobile visit to Glenn, Georgia, and he could then meet me at the school to return the box of books she had read and to get another one. We would talk about the child's interest and progress.

For eleven years we furnished Fran with books and watched that little girl grow into an attractive, alert, refined young lady. She learned to drive an old Ford car and came to meet the Bookmobile herself. Once in a while I would ask the Bookmobile Staff to tell me what she was reading and I discovered that she read the same books any other youngster of her age would enjoy.

One day the father came with Fran. With tears in his eyes, he explained that the family was moving to Anniston, and he wanted to thank us in person for the wonderful kindness we had extended to Fran over the years. Thanks to us, he said, his youngest had enjoyed a happy childhood and youth.

Perhaps the whole idea of effectiveness can best be summed up in two sentences spoken one day following a special program for Senior Citizens we had at one of the Branch Libraries. One turned aside to a friend and said:

“Ain't that library the nicest thing?”

The other looked at me and softly spoke: “Thank you for caring enough.”