

Helen R. Euren
Narrator

Janet D. Gallagher
Interviewer

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JG: This interview is with Helen Euren, 311 North Tenth Street, Moorhead, Minnesota. Helen was an assistant librarian for thirty-seven years in the Moorhead Public Library from 1934 until 1977. This interview is taking place at the Moorhead State University recording studio on November 12, 1987. The interviewer is Janet D. Gallagher, Audubon, Minnesota, representing the communications committee of the oral history project sponsored by the Heritage Education Commission.

Helen, how did you get started in the library world?

HE: In 1934 when I was a student at Moorhead State College, I was hired by the board of the Moorhead Public Library as a student library assistant. I was familiar with the library because I had visited it all through my childhood. I remember Ethel McCubrey, who was librarian from 1914 to 1931. I had worked as a volunteer at the Moorhead High School library for three years. So I did have some background. This was a good year to start working. We were so short staffed and so short of money that it was necessary to learn every phase of library work. Miss Marian Phillips was librarian. She was an excellent librarian and a good instructor. As soon as we mastered one job, we would go to the next.

JG: Helen, what were your duties at the library?

HE: My duties consisted of being in charge during the librarians' dinner hour and to shelve books. Hours were from five to seven p.m. and eight hours on Saturday. On Saturday I was to work in the children's room and help in the rural school room, the circulation desk, and shelving. Salary: twelve and a half cents per hour. Working at the circulation desk and shelving were our first lessons. Next, the library's method of counting circulation, recording it, opening mail, checking in periodicals and pamphlets. Then we were taught how to accession, type, and file library cards.

JG: What were your duties in the children's room?

HE: The children's library was officially open from three to five p.m. daily and Saturday. We had a story hour on Saturdays from two to three. Story hour meant introducing books to children, hoping to give them a real desire to read. We also, whenever possible, told the children about the author. They liked that. Our space was very limited, and we had so many children [chuckles] our preschoolers and first and second graders met in the children's room. I remember once when Josephine Torson had that group. It was so crowded, we had to remove a table to make room for the children. Our usual attendance was thirty to fifty children. I had the older children in what was called the boardroom, or the rural school room. We averaged fifteen to twenty children each Saturday for special story hours. In the older department, we often had thirty children. These children included grades through six.

JG: Helen, when you became a full time employee, do you remember incidents that were outstanding?

HE: There are many good memories of our story hour days. But I remember especially three events, which I feel the children would never forget. The first concerned Rose and Leonard Sackett. They lived in Moorhead down by the footbridge on Fourth Avenue South. Both of them were library users. Leonard was on the faculty of North Dakota State University [NDSU]. Rose [McLaughlin Sackett] was an author of children's books. Three Tunes for a Flute [Macmillan Co., 1938] was her best loved book. Rose came to several story hours to tell us about why she wrote the book and to tell the theme of it. Once she came and told us how a book is presented to a publisher. Another time she read favorite excerpts from Three Tunes for a Flute. The children got to know her as a friend. This was important and beautiful relationships were formed.

Another fun time, plus a valuable learning experience, was when Erling Rolfsrud, a Concordia graduate from Keene, North Dakota, and later an instructor at Concordia, asked me to read to the children in manuscript form his new children's book, Gopher Tails for Papa [Augsburg, 1951]. He wanted a report on the children's reactions to it. When I read the quote about Mama, which said, "Likely, she would do more than just talk, too. She could talk pretty well with one hand, Mama could," the children laughed and laughed. The publisher wanted to strike that sentence because he thought the children wouldn't understand it. Erling read my comment to the publisher and left the sentence in. Every week, the children would ask, "Is the book published yet?" Months later, Erling Rolfrud, "The real live author," as one child said, came to the library with the published book. He told the children how long it took to get it published and he told about Mr. Heman Faye [Jr.], who illustrated the book and many other details. He thanked the children for listening to the manuscript reading and making comments on it.

The third incident I think children will remember came when I read in the *Library Journal* that John R. Tunis, a sportswriter, answered personally every letter he received from his readers. He was to be at the Minnesota State Library Convention, which I was going to attend. So many weeks before the convention, I reviewed one of his books each week, and encouraged the children to read it and others by Tunis. Three weeks before the convention, I told the children I would be seeing Mr. Tunis, and I suggested they write him a letter telling how they liked his books and which was their favorite. I promised to take the letters to him. Many of them wrote

letters. You have never seen happier children when they came to story hour to share the letters they had received from Mr. Tunis. They were *not* form letters. Every one was a personal letter.

JG: Helen, what was your summer program, and what were some of your other activities?

HE: We had such a tiny budget, but we always had a good summer reading program and story hour. Children's Book Week was a big event. We saved new books for several months so we could have some for display and for special events during the week. We had to limit the circulation to one new book per child for several months, so each child could have an opportunity to read something new.

JG: You later became employed full time. What were your responsibilities?

HE: When I became a full time employee, it was only a short time before I was put in charge of over dues. We believed it was important to circulate books and just as important to have them returned. I was taught the different types and qualities of paper so I could become a good mender. Mrs. Wilson and I did a lot of mending, as Mrs. Hegwer did not allow books with loose pages or worn out spines to be on the shelf. Again, our tiny budget required us to care for our property.

JG: The Moorhead Public Library has a very unusual local history file. How did it start?

HE: In June of 1935, Mr. Carl Johnson, owner of a wholesale candy company located at 315 First Avenue South, gave the library the *Daily Tribune*, published in Moorhead, Volume 1, Number 1, dated June 30, 1882. He also gave us other historical papers and clippings which were valuable. A clipping file had been started in the late 1920s, but was not done systematically until the above items were given by Mr. Johnson, and the need for this type of material was realized. I can still hear Miss Phillips when she called me in the office and said, "Helen, at the board meeting yesterday there was a unanimous vote that you should be put in charge of the Moorhead history file. They all have great confidence you will do a good job." I was overwhelmed and pleased. I did my best and was in charge of it until I retired. We had over six hundred titles at that time.

JG: Has this file become important to the library?

HE: Oh, yes. [Sighs] This file is valuable. In 1964, when Moorhead hosted the Minnesota Library Convention for the first time, Miss [Myrtle T.] Rundquist asked me to do a history highlights of the library and of Moorhead in the 1800s. At least ninety percent of this information came from articles from this file. Moorhead History Highlights proved to be more valuable than we anticipated. The Moorhead schools, public and parochial, plus colleges, requested copies. Dr. Hiram Drache used the information in his book The Challenge of the Prairie; Life and Times of Red River Pioneers [North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1970], and Beatrice and William Shockey[sp?] used it for Clay County's Centennial Celebration in 1972.

The book *A Century Together: A History of Fargo, North Dakota and Moorhead, Minnesota* [Fargo-Moorhead Centennial Corporation, 1975] written for the centennial anniversary of Moorhead-Fargo, would not have been as complete without the information contained in this file. This file also contains historical articles written by Roy P. Johnson for the *Fargo Forum* from 1941 to 1962. These articles have since been put in book form, edited by Clarence A. Glasrud, and printed by the Red River Valley Historical Society in 1982. The centennial brought to light the author of a theme we had in the file. Morris P. Fredericks had written it for his thesis at Concordia College in 1926. Mr. Fredericks and I worked together in getting chapters in order and other details taken care of and put in book form with the title *Early History of Moorhead in 1870s and 1880s* [1976]. The contents of this book (which were taken from early Moorhead newspapers) is not available anywhere else. Howard Binford, publisher and editor of *The Guide*, a monthly publication distributed free in hotels, restaurants, retail stores, who advertised in it, told of events going on in the area during the month. He also had feature items. He was happily surprised when he learned I had clipped the biographical material he had written for the *Moorhead Daily News* in 1947. He hadn't saved any of them! These articles were the source for his series, "Voices from the Past," which he wrote for *The Guide*.

JG: How did rural area schoolchildren benefit from Moorhead's library?

HE: Gradual awareness of the need for more adequate library facilities for the rural schoolchildren led to contracts with rural schools in 1934. This would mean we were able to buy in larger quantities with a much better discount and get many more books. We accessioned the books in their own school accession book as the contract stated, that if the school wished to withdraw, the books purchased with their funds would be returned to them. We also kept their books in repair. There were ninety-three rural schools in 1934. These books were used by rural schools only; *never* by Moorhead. Cartons of books were regularly packed and mailed to the schools or picked up by a farmer when he came to Moorhead on business. Saturdays, the rural schoolteachers who were fortunate enough to get a ride to Moorhead would come and pick out books for their schools. This service continued until 1949, when it was taken over by the bookmobile. At that time, only four rural schools were open.

JG: Boy, that was a break from ninety-three rural schools in 1934...

HE: That's right.

JG: ...to four rural schools. My goodness.

HE: [Chuckles] [Coughs]

JG: Did you ever consider getting another job, Helen?

HE: Yes, I did. In the late 1938, I resigned from the library because I was offered a job in the registrar's office at Moorhead State College. Miss [Jane] Jennie Owens was my supervisor. I was paid sixty dollars a month, which was much better than my library salary. I worked there until 1940 when Miss Florence Powell, who replaced Miss Phillips, resigned unexpectedly. Miss

Catherine Leonard, president of the library board, asked if I would return to the library. Mrs. Elsie Wilson, assistant librarian, was on vacation and could not be reached. Miss Leonard cleared it with Miss Owens and I left MSC at about nine thirty one morning to start my new duties. The board offered me sixty-five dollars a month if I would return. Agnes Nemzek[sp?], a student assistant, and I kept the library open until Mrs. Wilson returned. Agnes came after school. We didn't think of taking a dinner hour, as we were open until nine p.m. There was no overtime pay. When Mrs. Wilson returned, Agnes Nemzek, Mrs. Wilson, and I kept the library open until late in 1940 when Mrs. Edith Hegwer was hired. Mrs. Wilson was a good reader and a beautiful penman. She did the accessioning and most of the processing. Mrs. Wilson helped with the clipping file as well as the mending. In the brief time I was at Moorhead State College, I decided office work wasn't for me. I was happy to be back at the library.

Mrs. Hegwer, who was hired in 1940, had a wonderful personality. She was a charming person and everyone, young and old, liked her. She believed in public relations. It was under her that I had experience in book reviewing; where we were in demand all the time to speak on books and libraries. PTAs, preschool mothers, Ladies Aides, the Kiwanians, Rotarians, Lions, Music Club, and Eastern Star were some of the groups that I spoke to. She believed in bringing the library to every organization and we did. Of course, there was no library time to spend on preparation, so we did that at home on our own time. Mrs. Wilson didn't like speaking engagements, so she was happy to stay at the library. My duties under Mrs. Hegwer were to type all catalog cards, catalog juvenile and adult fiction and biographies. I was children's librarian and supervised part time help. We read, and read, and read book reviews, as Mrs. Hegwer wanted her staff to be experts in choosing reading for our borrowers. We would come early one day a week so we could discuss and share the contents of books we read. This was highly satisfactory. We must remember this was on our own time.

JG: You seemed to really like working with Mrs. Hegwer. Why did she resign?

HE: Mrs. Hegwer resigned because the Library Division of the State Department of Education in Minnesota was pressuring that we should invite Clay County to join us and become a county library. She had not been hired for this, and she felt with all the work involved and her small salary, she just couldn't continue here. That was in 1945. Mrs. Wilson and I, again with student help, kept the library open until a librarian was hired. Miss Rundquist was hired knowing a county library would have to be established. Her salary was raised. She accepted this challenge, and under her reign, the library grew. The hospital circulation was begun in 1946. In 1949 the Clay County Library and Bookmobile were in operation. Framed paintings, records, and films were added to the library collection. We joined the film library from State Library Division, thereby getting a new selection of sixteen millimeter films regularly. In 1961, Norman County joined us and we became the Lake Agassiz Regional. In 1967 the city of Breckenridge came in. The way had been paved for Becker and Polk, but they did not sign their contracts until after Miss Rundquist had retired.

JG: Helen, what influenced you to the need for hospital library services?

HE: I had been a patient for several weeks, and during that time I began to see a definite need for library service for patients and staff. Miss Rundquist and I met with Sister Pauline, the administrator of St. Ansgar Hospital in Moorhead to discuss this type of service. On December 12th, 1946, we began. Every Thursday until I retired in 1977 was Library Day. We must remember, in 1946 [chuckles] there were no radios or TVs. Not even telephones in the rooms. So time hung heavy for many patients, and the books and magazines were a great help.

The service grew, and the medical staff began requesting materials for their patients and patients' families, especially for diabetics, heart, and stroke patients. The psychiatric patients were good readers. I also brought a sixteen millimeter film to them every Thursday. The [unclear – sounds like Coda] Club of Fargo-Moorhead gave us a ceiling projector and films, which included children's books, adult fiction and nonfiction, westerns, and mysteries, and the Old and New Testament. The projector was used for patients who were flat on their backs. It could also be used in the homes of patients. There was constant demand for it as there seemed to be almost an epidemic of rheumatic fever and osteomyelitis among children for several years. Harold's Optical of Fargo and the Catholic Daughters of Moorhead gave us each a pair of prism glasses. They were a fine addition to our hospital service and were used almost daily. Prism glasses allowed people to read books while they were lying flat on their backs.

[Recording interruption]

JG: And that's kind of fun. I don't know...I bet you those are antiques in somebody's house right now. Can you tell me now about some small world item you might...tell about Mrs. Olga Woldahl[sp?] of Hawley?

HE: Well, Mrs. Olga Woldahl of Hawley was a patient many, many times because of a condition which couldn't be corrected at home. And she was a great reader. But just for fun one day, I brought her a child's book, Betsy-Tacy and Tib [1941], by Maude Hart Lovelace. Much to my surprise, I discovered Mrs. Woldahl and Mrs. Lovelace had been childhood friends in Mankato, Minnesota. Mrs. Woldahl had played with the characters in the book. She really lived her childhood days over reading the book. This led to a reference question: where is Maude living now? We found the address and it wasn't long before Olga and Maude started corresponding. Maude sent Olga the date when she would be autographing books at Dayton's in Minneapolis and Olga went. What a renewing of friendship they had! Yes, hospital library service is important. It serves a great purpose even when it isn't as special as Maude and Olga's reunion.

JG: [Chuckles] Many people, many months, and much hard work went into Clay County securing a contract system. Can you tell when that started?

HE: The most important extension of library service came in 1949 when all of Clay County secured library service by a contract system with Moorhead. Miss Rundquist and Miss Catherine Leonard, president of the library board, spearheaded the drive for service. It didn't happen overnight. *A lot* of hard work preceded it. Committees from the entire county were formed, instructed as to what a county library would mean to every citizen, and the importance of a bookmobile.

The State Department of Minnesota loaned us a film on bookmobiles. It told a story in pictures and was very good. Josephine Torson and I went to the County Fair with it. No one had a car, nor did the library have a projector. The telephone company was very kind and loaned us a projector. J.H. Deems, manager of Fairmont Creamery and a library board member, gave us permission to ride to Barnesville, where the fair was held, in a Fairmont delivery truck. We left Moorhead early in the morning equipped with a projector, film, and a heavy box of publicity material. We worked from the time the fair opened until some kind resident offered us a ride home. My aunt [unclear] music supervisor at Fargo Public School System, loaned us her car for evenings and Saturday meetings, which we attended. It was a busy few months and we were exhausted. But it was worth it because a library was voted in.

JG: When did the bookmobile service actually start in Clay County, Helen?

HE: November 1949, Miss Mary Cary, our first county librarian, began a series of trips covering the county every three weeks. The trips brought books to every rural school, sixteen towns, and community stops. Books were furnished for stations at Barnesville and Hawley. I worked with Mary the first month of service and substituted whenever necessary until I retired. Several times I had to drive the bookmobile. The cost of this service has been maintained by a county tax levy. Hawley Public Library was established as a branch of the county library in 1950 with Mrs. Verna Wefald as librarian.

JG: Helen, I think it's amazing you're remembering all these names and places!

HE: Well...[Chuckles]

JG: Did you have to research a little bit to remember all this or...?

HE: Oh, yes. I did.

JG: ...you just have this all on the top of your head?

HE: I had everything on the top of my head except the dates.

JG: Well, that was a little bit of research.

HE: That's right.

JG: But all this you remember and the faces and names and...

HE: That's right.

JG: The name Torson rings a bell because there's a chiropractor right close to the library by the name of Torson. Jane Torson.

HE: I...I don't know if they're related or not.

JG: I was curious to know if that was the same family.

HE: Joe Torson was from an old Moorhead family.

JG: Yes.

HE: And yeah...

JG: A lot of the names that you are giving us are familiar with the history.

HE: That's...that's right. Joe had two brothers, David and Ralph. Ralph was a librarian in one of the Fargo schools.

JG: Hmmm.

HE: Dave is in insurance.

JG: Isn't the Moorhead Public Library headquarters for the Lake Agassiz Regional Library? What does this mean?

HE: Yes, we were the county library. But when Norman County joined our region in July of 1961, we became a regional library. A public library then became part of us. It was our duty to update their collection. Updating a collection means taking inventory, discarding outdated material and books that could not be mended or rebound, bringing from headquarters books they did not have and ordering new material. The bookmobile came regularly, so requests could be answered and new books brought to them.

JG: Do you remember what year the city of Breckenridge, Minnesota joined Lake Agassiz?

HE: Yes. In 1967 the Breckenridge joined...the city of Breckenridge joined Lake Agassiz region. Because of this, Breckenridge was allowed grants whereby they could build a new very efficient library building. Mrs. Betty McLaughlin[sp?] was their librarian. This collection was then updated.

JG: Then were there other counties that joined Lake Agassiz?

HE: Yes. The library board, Miss Rundquist, and the State Department had been working on getting Becker and Polk County to join our region. This was not finalized until Mr. [Lon R.] Dickerson became our director. Becker County joined July 1, 1974. Detroit Lakes Library with Mrs. May Paskey as librarian came under our jurisdiction.

Mr. Dickerson wanted to immediately inventory the library and update the collection. I agreed wholeheartedly, as they had used different classifications on children's and young people's

books. Mr. Dickerson asked if I would accept the challenge and I did. I worked two or three days a week for three years in Detroit Lakes. I would many times have other staff members to help. All books were re-cataloged. Many books were sent to the bindery and many discarded. It was necessary to change some of the shelving in the adult department at Detroit Lakes as well as in the children's area. Mr. Edmund Olson, our custodian and carpenter, came many times with Mr. Dickerson and myself to make these changes. The children's room was in the lower level. It was so small. So he divided the kitchen in half by using metal bookshelves, which were in the building. This made a nice area for the easy books and some of the fiction. Polk County joined the region July 1, 1975. The Crookston Library then became under our jurisdiction.

JG: You mentioned Detroit Lakes, and that was in 1974 that they joined. Have you been watching the news lately where the library is now going to be a...? Are they going to add on in Detroit Lakes?

HE: Ah, yes. And it's...I'm really glad that bond issue went through because it's very, very crowded and it certainly is a necessary move to have it.

JG: So it's...it's interesting to note that in 1987 they will be getting a new enlarged library.

HE: Yes, that's right.

JG: And it will be in the same location, do you recall?

HE: Yes.

JG: In that corner on Main Street?

HE: I think that's correct.

JG: Mmmm-hmmm. How often then did you update collections?

HE: Mr. Dickerson was a firm believer in updating collections in the branches every three years if possible. [Sighs] We didn't have sufficient staff to do this, but we did accomplish going to Ada, Hawley, and Detroit Lakes. Barnesville and Breckenridge had been completed the year before he came. Betty Page[sp?], our cataloger, and I went to Ada. Mrs. Marion Tufte[sp?], the Ada librarian, worked with us. Mr. Dickerson came regularly. We felt physical changes had to be made to utilize the space we had. Mr. Ervin Opskar, who was then our custodian carpenter, with the help of Mr. Tufte was able to accomplish this. Extension work is challenging and it means so much to the community.

JG: Then were you involved in the planning of the new building in Moorhead?

HE: Yes, I was. The new building was what Miss Rundquist felt was her greatest accomplishment. Mr. Warren Dodds, president of the board, and [Miss] Rundquist are to be given much credit for their efforts. Miss Rundquist asked me to attend planning meetings with

her. Robert Rolfe[sp?] of Minneapolis was our consultant, and Dick Elkin of Moorhead the architect. They worked well with Miss Rundquist and the board. Miss Rundquist said I was her sounding board. When the plans were drawn, it was time for the bond issue.

JG: There was a group called Friends of the Library. Could you tell us when that was organized?

HE: Yes. Lots of hard work, you know, was put into passing a bond issue. So we, with our staff—we couldn't do it alone—so the Friends of the Library was organized. They were fantastic helping us with speaking engagements to different organizations about the new building. They had been in a training session and knew the necessities of a larger library. The staff also spoke to groups.

JG: Now we know there was opposition in Detroit Lakes now when they wanted to build their library. Was there opposition to this bond issue?

HE: Oh, yes. The day before election a citizen's committee for saving your tax dollar distributed a flyer opposing the new building.

JG: And how did you fight that opposition?

HE: Well, the staff and friends got together and made up a flyer explaining the need for the bond issue to pass. Mr. Arlo Baldwin, owner of Baldwin's Printing in Moorhead printed the flyer. Friends and staff spent all night delivering the flyer from door to door. May 24, 1960 was the date of the election. Members of the board and staff met at my home waiting for the city office to call in the results. We won!

JG: [Chuckles]

HE: 1477 yes, and 613 no votes.

JG: I'm trying to get into my mind how you would ever plan for a move to the new building. Can you remember how your plans went?

HE: Yes. Much groundwork was laid for the move from the old building to the new. James Cochrane and Eric [unclear – sounds like Feets] of Moorhead (James was a teacher in Fargo and Eric taught at Concordia) were volunteers. And they organized the move. They worked on a plan whereby schoolchildren and adults would move the books carrying five at a time and giving the books to the staff who put them on the shelves in order. We had a trial run on December 30, 1961. This trial run showed us how to improve for the big move on February 24, 1962.

I supervised the work in the old building, moving everything from the upstairs library first and then from the basement. It worked very well. It really was kind of a windy, snowy day, too. The children were asked to just work like an hour or two but most of them wanted to stay until it was finished. And it really worked well. Then a fraternity from MSU came to move our magazines and other materials too heavy for the children.

I must admit, I had a real sunk feeling when our old building was empty. Ruth Jenisek[sp?] and I walked to work that morning arriving about seven fifteen. [Sighs] When we finished, I don't know what time it was, maybe five, five thirty. I was so dirty and so tired, I don't know to this day who took us home! Oh, it was a great day. It was a wonderful experience. And because of it, I was in charge of the move from the old Hawley Library to the new in October 1975.

JG: I can't imagine that move was on February 24th...

HE: Mmmm-hmmm.

JG: And of course it would be a cold, windy day. We might note that on November 12th this year, 1987, we're outside without a coat on and it's over forty degrees. And yesterday it was almost a record breaking...

HE: That's right.

JG: Sixty-one was the record breaker and it was sixty yesterday. So it's too bad that the building and the timing hit in February because I moved then and that's an awful time.

HE: [Chuckles] Mmmm-hmmm.

JG: Can you tell me then when you moved into your building how it compared to the old one?

HE: Well, the new library was really a dream come true. We had a full time custodian, no stoker to fill with coal before we left at night when the temperature was bitter cold. No heavy windows to open and close during the hot weather. No snow to shovel when the part time custodian was off duty. We had oil heat and air conditioning. We had space! A desk of our own. A workroom to help us accomplish all the behind the scene duties. One, our brick walls had a tubing running through between the bricks designed to hang the framed paintings we circulated. We had comfortable chairs for patrons who read the papers and magazines as well as tables and chairs. We also had what was called a quiet room for those who liked to be in a room by themselves when they read or studied. The magazine stack was large enough for all current magazines and below the current issue there was room for the three preceding months. We had a new card catalog, a good reference area, a Reader's Guide table, shelves for our newest fiction and nonfiction. We had the correct amount of shelving for all our books and a desk for the reference librarian. Also, a fine circulation desk. Believe it or not, we had more than one telephone! It may sound strange that I'm stressing we had a desk of our own because...in the old building we had one desk where we did everything. *Everything*. We mended, we did reference work...ah...there just wasn't a thing. We only had one desk. So this is why I *stress* how wonderful it was to have desks.

JG: You know, when I was a child, Helen, I can still remember that small children's room that I sat in and...and the wood floors and the hard chairs and...

HE: Oh...

JG: And so I guess I'd like you to describe your new children's room, what it was like.

HE: Oh, our children's room was located in the north area of the library. It was very adequate space for books and shelving areas for easy reading books, were just perfect for little tots. We had a new card catalog there and again, we had a desk for the librarian.

JG: Were there some other special features you liked about that new library?

HE: Yes, the workroom. It was spacious. Magazine stacks for older magazines. Places to house and work on our sixteen millimeter films and film strips. A place to process the books as well as for mending. An area for the county librarian and a garage for the bookmobile. The bookmobile can be loaded from...and unloaded in a garage instead of in the driveway. It was pretty hard to load that bookmobile in the rain and snow. So this was really great. We also had a book return where the books would come inside the building. The librarian had her own office. We had space for our vertical files. The first floor had a men's and ladies' washroom. We had a lower level that had the Catherine Leonard Boardroom, a meeting room which was named for Catherine Leonard, the former president of the library board for many, many years. This room could be used for community functions. And we had an enclosed coatrack down there which blended with the décor; it was very nice.

JG: Then did you also have a staff room?

HE: Yes. We had a comfortable staff room, and a kitchen with a stove and small refrigerator, and dishes which were purchased by the Friends of the Library. We also had a men's and ladies' washroom on the lower level.

JG: Did the planners also have ample storage space for your projectors?

HE: Yes. We had a closet off the Catherine Leonard Room, which had shelves and was very adequate. The entire basement was excavated, but to begin with we used only about three-fourths of it. We had stacks to house the county book and second copies of less used titles, and of course we housed all the old magazines and newspapers in the basement also.

JG: That reminds me of musty smells. Did you ever get tired of the smell of a library?

HE: [Chuckles softly]

JG: I can still recall that when I was a child. [Chuckles]

HE: No, I guess you get so used to it, you know, you don't think about it.

JG: Okay. Can you tell me any special events you remember?

HE: The library was completed. Now it was up to the staff to meet the new challenge. The Friends of the Library helped us. They sponsored National Book Week. At this time, the art department of Moorhead High School, under the supervision of Mr. Curtis Hahn and Mr. Richard Bennett, put on an art show. It had paintings, ceramics, and whatever their special projects for the year was. We had them on display for, I think, three weeks. Richard C. Davids, author of How to Talk to Birds [Alfred A. Knopf, 1972] was one of our guests that spoke at one of our Book Weeks. And Helen Hoover and her husband Adrian were guests one year. The Hoovers live in northeastern Minnesota and wrote about this area.

On October 1, 1964 the Minnesota State Library Meeting was held in Moorhead. The librarians were anxious to see our new building and they really were greatly thrilled about it. And at this time we also started servicing Riverview Heights, which was Moorhead's first government-subsidized apartment building. We also visited nursing homes and left collections at both places; I believe we rotated these every six weeks.

JG: I would imagine that over those special years that you worked there you had some unusual library visitors.

HE: Yes. One fun time at the library was in October 1963 when Jackie Mason, a well-known comedian was in Moorhead giving performances. He had lots of spare time, which he spent at the library catching up on reading and also working on his programs. A few of us had coffee with him and he shared with us one of his routines he had worked on while at the library. He was very complimentary of the library and of the staff.

JG: You sure do have some fond memories.

HE: Yes, I really do!

JG: What other special services were added to that library along with all your special memories that you can think of?

HE: Well, Minitex (Minitex: Minnesota Interlibrary Teletype Exchange) which connects Moorhead to the State Library in St. Paul and the University of Minneapolis. Mrs. Ruth Jenisek, who has worked in the reference department, is a constant user of Minitex. And then a shuttle was started between the schools, colleges, hospitals, and libraries of Fargo-Moorhead. And this was established and we could get our reference material moved much quicker. This was at the time of the tri-state college. In the tri-state...

JG: Ah, yes, the tri-college.

HE: The tri-college.

JG: And you know, I work at Concordia College and we're using that tri-college Shuttle in...even in our offices. It's a wonderful service to get mail to the colleges, and the library, and some of the schools.

HE: That's right. In 1965 a summer bookmobile was started for the city of Moorhead. This proved very popular. And we could now bring the library service to the senior citizens in nursing homes as well as to the entire population of Moorhead. This was really used by younger schoolchildren, Kindergarten; first grades through sixth were constant users of this. I supervised the summer bookmobile. In 1983 the City of Moorhead Bookmobile was discontinued.

JG: Well, that's interesting. I guess that was an important feature of the library, too. Did you ever get out of the city of Moorhead helping other library systems?

HE: Oh, yes. I went to all of them. But hmmm...[Sighs] A new building was constructed in Hawley in 1975. This was made possible by federal revenue sharing bonds to Clay County and to the city of Hawley. It was necessary to have some local funding. I had had experience with the move at the Moorhead Public Library and the Breckenridge Library, so Mr. Dickerson asked if I would be in charge of this move.

Ruth Jenisek from our staff and I had gone very early the day of the move. We had marked the shelves in the old building and the new just so we knew just how to move everything and how to shelve in the new. We had six librarians from Lake Agassiz along with members of the local Women's Club help inside the building. It was a successful day. Students from the elementary schools moved the entire circulation in twenty-three minutes. They carried five books at a time. Now this was a good block that they carried these. And you know, twenty-three minutes is a short time. Mr. Dickerson and I returned the next day to make sure everything was open. Larry Quam, clerk of Hawley, loaned us men and a truck to move the magazines and articles too heavy for our fifth graders, and this was really a great help. Mrs. Betty Haring[sp?], the librarian, and Mrs. Verna Wefald, retired Hawley librarian, were with us. The day after the...well, the day we moved and also the day after, too, get everything in order.

JG: Can I ask you this? Now when you were... had those students move those five books, did they take it out of one section, and they knew exactly where they were going to the same section in the next...?

HE: No. How we worked it, we did not have the student go in the library. An adult came to the door with five books and handed that to the student, and then when we got over to the Hawley Library, the new Hawley Library, a librarian took them and put them in the proper place on the shelf.

JG: Okay.

HE: And it worked. We had enough staff members to...and not just staff members, but adults from Hawley who were willing to help. And we had enough so that it just worked perfectly. They were putting them on all the time and moving out. It worked fine.

JG: Okay, so when you got those books on the shelves, were the shelves marked?

HE: Yes.

JG: So then everything...

HE: We had the shelves all marked. The shelves in the old building were marked and the shelves in the new building were marked. We had two lines. In Hawley, we had the children's department in one line and the adult department in the other. So it...the whole thing got done kind of simultaneously. When we moved in Moorhead, we had to move all adult books first. And because they were housed upstairs, and our children's books and rural schoolbooks were housed in the basement, so we had to do it differently there. But it...well, they never did enter into the building, either one, because we had someone standing there giving it to them to save time, and then everything would be kept in order.

JG: So you didn't lose any books?

HE: No, we did not lose any books.

JG: Didn't misplace a book anywhere.

HE: We...I don't think *a* book was dropped either time.

JG: And this system, well, did you start the system or was this a suggested system by a...?

HE: Well, this is a... this is what Mr. [unclear – sounds like Feets] and Cochrane worked out. They just worked this out in their own head. They hadn't read about it or anything, but...And the reason for five books is because, you know...[Sighs] Here's a small book, and there's a larger one, and all this...

JG: Mmmm-hmmm.

HE: And so you couldn't carry more than five books, because you had to carry so that one wouldn't slide out. You know, and it'd be different if they were all the same size.

JG: And by having five books, you always knew that student was going to give you five books.

HE: That's right. You knew that you were going to get five books and we didn't have a problem at all. It worked beautifully.

JG: Okay. Did your work then after all those years in the library, did they affect positions or appointments on civic boards and commissions?

HE: Yes, several. In 1946 or 1947 I was appointed to the Campfire Council. I believe strongly in any organization which will help youth. I think I served three or four years. During that time we gave Campfire girls the opportunity of working as volunteers at the library. They earned public service awards for this. The service they did was highly satisfactory. One of the girls, Jerri

Nelson[sp?], was hired by the library and worked for us her senior year in high school and her four years at MS [Moorhead State] College.

I was a charter member of the Moorhead Business and Professional Women, which was organized in May of 1952. Among other things, this group furnished a room at the new St. Ansgar Hospital, and we presented the library with a twenty-four inch globe and navigator stand. The library had needed this for years, but we just couldn't fit it in our budget. And so it was a great addition. We also made thirty-five stocking dolls for Vietnamese children. The dolls were included with twenty-five little girls' dresses and eighteen shirts and pants for little boys as Christmas gifts.

I was a charter member of the St. Ansgar Hospital Auxiliary which originated March 30, 1955. I am still active as an auxilian and a volunteer. In 1982 I compiled the History Highlights of St. Ansgar Hospital Auxiliary: the charter members, auxilian presidents, and the gifts which had been donated by the Auxiliary from 1955 to 1982. On April 23, 1983 I was presented with a golden award, which is an engraved gold plate for 6,200 volunteer hours.

JG: Well, I imagine you're pretty proud of that. And what year were you appointed to the Human Rights Commission?

HE: Well, in 1960, I was appointed by Governor Elmer Anderson to the Human Rights Commission. This was really a new experience for me! At that time, this Commission was asked to inspect all public buildings, retail businesses, churches, schools, and libraries as to their accessibility to the handicapped. This also included washroom facilities. Moorhead had a *very*, very poor rating. One of my duties was to work at the Human Rights Exhibit at the Minnesota State Fair. This was really an experience because I was the only white person working at this exhibit at the time. And it was really very interesting and I learned a lot. I worked one day at the Fair, that's all we were asked to work.

JG: Hmmm.

HE: I was on the board that renamed our old high school building on Eighth Street to Townsite Center. I was asked by Dr. Robert Loeffler, site manager of the Historic Comstock House, to serve on the board. I enjoyed this very much, and am happy this house is preserved, as it does make Moorhead history come alive for many youngsters and adults. I served on that board from 1975 to 1981. In February of 1978 I was appointed as an original commissioner to the Heritage Education Commission—that's at Moorhead State University—and served until October 31, 1983.

JG: Can you give us a description of the Heritage Commission?

HE: Yes. The Commission is an independent community-based commission appointed by Dr. Roland Dille, president of Moorhead State University. Its purpose is to create and conduct programs and projects which aide in the preservation of the cultural heritage of this region. The commission regularly holds workshops to train community members to gather and preserve

historical records. The commission has had workshops on family history, church history, and home preservation. We have also had workshops featuring experts on the prairie and on archeology of the Red River Valley.

In 1979, I became a member of the Clay County Historical Society Board and served until 1984. I was on the personnel and acquisitions committees. This has been an exciting time to serve on that board. As we were getting the Flayten/Wange glass negative collection developed and identified, we could see the possibilities of a new Clay County Museum with the building of the Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center. The Clay County Historical Society (or I should say the building) was housed in the old Great Northern Railroad Station. That was really bad because the trains were coming through, it was dirty, it was cold, and it was very hard on many of our artifacts because we couldn't control the temperature properly. So this meant a lot. We would be able to move someday. I retired from the library in 1977, and 1981 Wayne Ingersoll, then mayor of Moorhead, appointed me to the Lake Agassiz Library Board. I served one term.

JG: Now Helen, while you and I have been sitting here talking, you haven't said anything about children being naughty. Everything is so positive. Were the children different, do you think, when you first started as a librarian as compared to maybe today's day would be?

HE: I don't know if it's children or if it's just the world. Because...when children came to the library, I think they had a different respect for the library than they do now. They knew... their parents, you know, had instructed them that they were there for a purpose. And I don't think...there were always some little live wires around, but I don't think there was much as far as discipline. And the library was quiet. We were instructed to have a quiet library. And we did. And our building (our old building) why, we didn't have room for our teenagers to sit, because we had desks and tables, but there just wasn't room. But they always respected us, and if we requested they be quiet, they...they were. And I think it was pretty good.

JG: I know that as a child we respected the librarians. I don't know if it was a fear...

HE: [Chuckles]

JG: ...a fear of them or a respect for them. [Chuckles] But I know that we appreciated the library. And of course now as an adult of age fifty-one, I sure do appreciate this service that we can be in Moorhead and get a book delivered from Detroit Lakes. And I think the library has just gone all kinds of ways to help us.

HE: Oh, one thing I think, too. When I started at the library there weren't a lot of places for children to go. Like Saturdays, the big deal was story hour. It was really a big deal and we had a lot of people. And the library, I think, was more vital to our children and also to our young people. I really do. And the school libraries were pretty poor, so they *had* to come to the library for reference material...much more than they do now. And they...they were really very good. They were...discipline-wise I would say they were very fine.

JG: Of course, now there are computer...isn't everybody online so that you can look at a printout in one library and get a book over from Concordia to Moorhead State or NDSU?

HE: I...I guess that's right. But that happened since I quit! [Laughs]

JG: [Chuckles] I know with myself that when I go into our library or into Moorhead State's library I...I must say that I am confused because things are more complicated. And of course if I was a full time student I might understand it.

HE: Sure.

JG: So Helen, you've had a variety of experiences in your employment of the library. You've lived thirty-seven years of its history. Do you regret the hours you spent on your own time reading book reviews, preparing talks on library services, preparation for story hours, and the many other things it was necessary to complete at your own home?

HE: Well, I must admit, at the time it really hurt not being paid for overtime because I needed money. But anyhow, I did have a job even if it meant working overtime at home. And there wasn't money available in the library budget to do things differently. There just wasn't. But today I don't regret it because I meet people several times a month who say, "Hello! I haven't seen you since you were at the library." They reminisce about incidents I have long forgotten. A couple of weeks ago, in October 1987, I was in the Ben Franklin Store in north Fargo. The clerk asked me if I had been children's librarian in Moorhead and had conducted story hours on Saturdays. She informed me...she introduced herself as Bonnie Jean Moore-Kristofferson[sp?]. She is married and has three children and three grandchildren. She told me she was in my story hours and because of this became interested in reading. Bonnie and her entire family became avid readers. That was forty-five years ago and she still remembers. For me this is just the latest example that makes me glad I didn't consider money or time when there was something to do.

[End of Interview]