Citation for this collection:

MSS 179  Robert H. Richards, Jr., Delaware oral history collection, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware

Contact:

Special Collections, University of Delaware Library
181 South College Avenue
Newark, DE 19717-5267
302.831.2229 / 302.831.1046 (fax)
http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec
askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu

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Mrs. B. Ethelda Mullen

I am B. Ethelda Mullen, retired Executive of the Family Services Association of Northern Delaware originally known as the Associated Charities. I have worked in both public and private welfare agencies in the State of Delaware. I retired in 1951. I've been active since then in a number of agencies on the board of directors.

I'm a lady Delawarean, born in Wilmington. I've never lived out of the State.

Interviewer: Do you -- now, would you like to -- or you -- would you like to give a background for the social service?

Mrs. Mullen: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mrs. Mullen: In 1916 I accepted the position with the Associated Charities of Wilmington. This was the first welfare agency except for two of the private, smaller groupings that began to make the picture of welfare in Delaware.

Out of this of organization has grown nearly all of the private agencies now in existence. Is that enough background for you?

Interviewer: Yeah, that's fine. Now, if you -- if at any time you want me to stop just say so you can correct [inaudible] [0:02:33].

Mrs. Mullen: I went to the Associated Charities as a case worker with no specific training. My training had been in the field of education. This opportunity was offered and appealed to me, I think because of my very real liking for people.

And I worked for about a year and a half as a so called case worker, untrained. At that time, the executive of the agency left Wilmington and the Board of Director asked me to accept the position of executive on a trial basis.
This later became the job which I worked at for about 32 years, so that I have some background of knowledge and feeling for the welfare movement of the state. Now, that’s enough about me.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mrs. Mullen: Yeah, all right.

Interviewer: Continue.

Mrs. Mullen: Just for a minute. Prior to 1884, there were in Wilmington three organizations looking after the dependent part of the population which at that time was a very small proportion. Those organizations were the Providence Society, The Female Benevolence Society, both of those women’s organizations. And the Saint Vincent de Paul Society which was the Roman Catholic relief organization.

In 1884, these three organizations came together and said we will have one charity organization society.

And they named it the Associated Charities of Wilmington. This was a city organization. Is that a [inaudible] [0:05:30].

Interviewer: Did they [inaudible] [0:05:32] to you?

Mrs. Mullen: No, not then. Up to that time, there was very little dependency outside of the city. It came with the industrial complexion of the city, outside was our farming area, there were now these small suburbs and towns. New Castle was there, Newport was there. But there weren’t all these developments that we know about today nor even a few of them.

So that it seems sensible and logical that these three organizations should pool their efforts and their finances which is what they did. And the Associated Charities opened an office at 602 West Street, buying the building from which these other organizations could all work.

But they no longer existed as these organizations, you see. They became the Associated Charities. The Providence Society was this open only to membership for people from the society of friends. Did I say the Providence Society?
Mrs. Mullen: I would like to correct that if I may and say the Female Benevolent Society. The Providence Society was a group of young married women here in town.

We had depressions in 1893, 1908, 1914 and '15. These last two years, the City Council of Wilmington appropriated $1,500 to the Associated Charities from public funds. This is the only time public funds were ever used by the Associated Charities. And I think that's an interesting fact that ...

In 1920 and '21, there was another rather disastrous but not too long lived depression at which time the mayor of Wilmington organized a relief commission "to secure funds from private sources for unemployment relief." This was not public money. Then, let me see, I think I wrote a note here. I don't -- I didn't have it. I think it's on the -- I have a note there to look up myself.

The money raised for the relief commission was to be distributed among or any agencies in the community who would be giving assistance either newly permanent or whatever temporary agencies are here.

[0:10:08]

But later, the Associated Charities was asked to assume responsibility for all unemployment relief. The funds should be supplied by this mayor's committee that was still under Associated Charities' sponsorship. Now, in '29 to '31 up through December 1930, the Associated Charities assumed an increased relief load of its own because of another depression.

At that time, December 1930, the Mayor's Unemployment Relief Commission was organized to secure funds to be handled by the Associated Charities. This was a second mayor's committee asking a private agency to handle the problem with funds which they would raise and hand over.

In the fall of '31, the mayor appointed an unemployment and relief committee which later became the nucleus of the commission administering state and federal funds. This is the first where a commission itself within the state was handling state and federal funds. These are all depression movements. In '34, the state legislature failed to appropriate any funds so losing all federal participation.

Interviewer: Well, could you explain that federal ...?
Mrs. Mullen:  Matching money, dollar per dollar. The reason that the legislature failed to do this was pretty apparent. The lower part of the state being agricultural was not hit by New Castle County works and the people in the lower counties felt that they didn't want to appropriate money for jobs to be done up here.

They didn't have a problem right then. If John Jones [phonetic] [0:13:26] didn't have food, somebody would give him a hand. He could plant potatoes. He could have chickens. He could have a hog. So they felt there was no necessity. There really wasn't poverty in Delaware.

You can understand their point of view up to a point. There really was some suffering in the lower part of the state. They didn't want to see it. And there wasn't too much of it to see.

Interviewer:  Well, if I may ask. The matching fund was going on prior to Roosevelt's administration or ...

Mrs. Mullen:  It started back in before '34. I don't know whether I've got the [inaudible] [0:14:14] right here or -- was it '31? In June, in '32 responsibility for unemployment relief was assumed by the City of Wilmington and later by the state with federal produced first, later in that year in the fall I would assume.

[0:15:00]

Interviewer:  All right.

Mrs. Mullen:  Then it was in the spring of '34 when the special session of the state legislature failed to appropriate further funds for a statewide program for unemployment, so losing federal participation. Governor C. Douglass Buck, newly elect governor of Delaware, approached the board of directors of the Associated Charities, we're still the Associated Charities, see. But at this time, it had begun to operate under a new name, the Family Society.

We were doing other things in the agency than just administering charity. People were coming for help with other problems, for housing, with trouble -- with marital difficulties, trouble with the youngsters, not being able to get a job and not only that but not having an education, not being able to cope with living in the city.
And we felt that for those people, the name charity was a bit of a disgrace they thought. So we changed the name to the Family Society thinking it couldn't hurt anybody.

When the legislature failed to appropriate any funds, Governor Buck came to the board of directors of the Family Society now and asked if they would lend their executive to set up a relief program for New Castle County if the rest of the state didn’t want any. And I personally -- they came to me and said they want us to lend you to set up the program for New Castle County. And I said I don't want to work for a public agency.

Interviewer: Why?

Mrs. Mullen: I didn't want to get into the political tangle. I wanted to keep the job that I was doing, the thing in which I believe, free from political control. And I was afraid I think. But it turned out that it was the only thing we could do. There was no other person in the state that had any experience in setting up an organization and getting it to function. And in spite of the fact that I wasn't too happy about it, I agreed to do it.

There was already an organization you'd see working but no more money. No state money therefore no federal money. I took over the organization. And I laugh if I think about it now. I knew the Governor Buck very well. I had known him all my life. And I said, "If I do it, there has to be two stipulations."

And he said, "I think I know what they are. But I'd like you to tell me." And I said, "There will be no politics and no religion. It's going to be for everybody who needs it." And he said, "All right. You have my word on that."

I took it over. He asked me to stay six months and get it going and I stayed 18. I knew I couldn't do it in six months. And I stayed 18, it was a big organization for Delaware then. Now, to operate only in New Castle County.

Interviewer: [inaudible] [0:19:38].

Mrs. Mullen: Now, this is what everybody wanted to know, where are we going to get this money? The state wasn't give us any therefore the federal wasn't going to match anything. There was nothing to match. Governor Buck turned over all the county roads to the state and took the money which was set up in the budget for county roads, building and improvement of county roads which is $50,000.
And because it was the only program in the state, federal matched it, matched county money instead of state money. You get that? I mean, that was the way it happened.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Pierre [phonetic] -- I beg your pardon. You can completely cut that if you want. Mr. James T. Skelley, a devout Roman Catholic was the first chairman of the commission appointed. He had been a member of the board and president of the board of the Associated Charities.

We know how to work together. Some of my own staff had left me to go with the state federal set up before. They stayed on. We worked at a program. It wasn't easy with a big program. We got -- I tell you these little things because I think they're interesting and indicative of what was happening although federal no longer would give us money. They did give us goods in kind.

Interviewer: Because they wouldn't match?

Mrs. Mullen: They wouldn't match.

Interviewer: The county money?

Mrs. Mullen: They did match the county money. Yeah, they matched the $50,000. So we had $100,000 in money. But they brought steers on from the west, had them slaughtered, we got the meat. This was done in a lot of the states in the east here.

Surplus of cotton mills which couldn't be sold because people were not buying were given to agencies so that we had much material from which people could make clothing, sheeting and woolen goods, various kinds of surplus things which were coming in. Bucker.

We had that and we set up a storage place with refrigeration in an abandoned public school and put some of our unemployed men to work on the project.

We also opened a shelter for men who didn't even belong in Delaware but who were caught in the squeeze. Those men all found work which they couldn't do within the organization. Now, some of them didn't get
cash money. They got shelter, food, clothing, single men they were, not men with families. We didn't do this to men with families.

These were men who were drifting around the country trying to find work. It worked out very well, exceedingly well.

So that in addition to your $100,000 you had some help, goods in kind which you could give to people. You could -- people could come, go to these places where the refrigerators were set up. We build in refrigerators when we go to schools. Iced them [inaudible] [0:24:02] and the people came there with an order from their worker at the agency and got the things that we had to give them whether it was pork or beef or flour or butter, whatever there was.

Interviewer: Was there any breakfast programs at the schools?

Mrs. Mullen: Not at that time there were, no. The lunch programs came into the schools later than that. It was a step forward but it was only a step toward what we were really wanting because people want to do it themselves. They don't want to have me hand it out to them for which they pay no cash.

[0:25:02]

They want cash, a job, cash to pay for the meat. Really, they do. There are a few people in the world who don't want to work but the average person was a bit ashamed without just reason because it wasn't their fault, it was unemployment then at its worst that we know it here up to that time.

That brought us some up to the place where the present public assistance program came into being, you see. All through those years clear up here to '34 and that really brought us up to what became later the Public Assistance Program which has been federally and state funded. Now, that's enough I think of that line.

There are some other things that I would like to tell you which you can cut from this tape if you want later but I think they are interesting and important. To me they are because I lived [inaudible] [0:26:16]. As the Associated Charities, later Family Service began to wonder why people were poor, why people were sick, why people couldn't make the grade. The man next door couldn't and this man couldn't.
We began to look into the causes of this thing and didn't spread the ointment over the sore. We tried to clear up the sore. And this when we came consciously into a program of understanding and knowing people as individuals not as poor people, not as pobres [phonetic] [0:27:09] as they were once known although we never called them that. Not as people out of work but people who had the same desires, the same needs that everybody has.

And for some reason, either fault of their own or no fault of their own because surely the depressions were not their fault, had come to a situation where they no longer could help themselves.

For some of these people this was hard, awfully hard especially for some of the people who had come here through the years from the poor little counties thinking they'd get jobs, got the jobs, unemployment came along, they lost the jobs. They didn't know how to live in the city.

You didn't dig the potatoes. You didn't raise the hogs. You were living in two rooms in a house on the east side of town. And we set ourselves then to use our brains and to try to discover not what was making people tick but what was making Mr. Jones and Mrs. Smith pick the way they were ticking you regularly.

And that's when we really began to help people because Mr. Jones' problem was entirely different than Mrs. Smith's problem. What we can do for him was not what we could do for her.

And then we began to see through the years that we had to learn from the clients what services we were going to offer. We didn't know that in the beginning. We thought if we gave them something to eat and some coal and a place to stay that that was it.

Interviewer: When did this realization start …

Mrs. Mullen: I couldn't ever tell at what point. It happened as we began to think, we began to know people. I can remember one crazy Christmas when we wanted to give them all Christmas presents and we didn't have money to do it in the agency. And we were going to all these secondhand clothing and stuff that people had given and come and say here's a shirt. It'll do for Johnny. Here's a dress, it'll do for Lizzie and there was no brains to it.

[0:30:09]
We didn’t understand our people. You had to get underneath and find out. Why was Mr. so and so who I knew so well with two teenage, young teenage girls, they were less than teenage and she -- and a vowed prostitute. Why was she a prostitute? We don't just go be a prostitute, you know.

And what could we do to help in this situation? What could we do for Mrs. De Angelo whose husband was in the state hospital and was going to be there the rest of his life? With five children. And she's coming in and say, "Here's the five children. I can't keep them."

And we saying, "Oh, yes you can. We're here to help but we're not here to do it." And she abled and just work along with us and come with -- make a good home. That is be a good mother for her children. Sure we had to put the support under it for a long time.

But we were making a home for the kids. And she was the mother and she was proud of it. This is where it's more than thousands of dollars that you could have given her and just given it to her. And I know where every one of those five children are today. They're all grown up.

One of them is a priest, one of them is teaching in a high school. One of them is a head of a department in one of our big printing industries.

Interviewer: What I meant is did this come -- this realization come about the cause of the intensity of suffering during -- would last the person or was it coming about when you were beginning social work?

Mrs. Mullen: I think it was coming about when we were beginning social work. I think we didn't realize that we were beginning to understand. But I think as we knew our people better and looked for the strengths in those people instead of talking about their weaknesses because I firmly believe to this day -- I'm an old woman, but I firmly believe to this day that there is nobody that hasn't somewhere some strength if we can find it.

Maybe they can't find it themselves. But if we can help them to find it, it's there because I've seen some pretty sad situations and out of them have come some good results.

I would like to talk with you for a minute -- this is awfully disjointed. I realize it but it seems to come.

Interviewer: All right.
Mrs. Mullen: I would like you to know some of the things that have come out of the Family Society. I call this Family Society at one moment, the Family Service at another. It changed its name in the period. Some of the things that have happened during all of this period from 1884 on, things that have come about because the need for them was discovered in our dealings with our people.

And I think this is an important development. There was at that -- during those early years of a great deal of tuberculosis in Wilmington that we had brought a number -- great numbers of Negros that come up from the south. They didn't know how to live here. They didn't have adequate food. They didn't have proper shelter.

But tuberculosis was not only among the Negros. It was pretty -- many people have them, have [inaudible] [0:34:32] quite young. I have everything more. I need to do a lot of those. So that a member of our board, a woman, Ms. Emily Bissell, was instrumental in the formation of a Tuberculosis Society.

[0:35:01]

And she got a number of the doctors in town and a number of other people interested. And the first office manned by a local doctor, a young man was in our building. We had seen so much of this, the need for it so that this doctor, Dr. Ralph Stubs [phonetic] [0:35:26] opened a clinic in our building.

It was a primitive clinic I rented but it was a start. Out of this groovy present sanitarium, now known as the Bissell Sanitarium named for Ms. Bissell, Ms. Bissell also instituted the first Christmas seal campaign which has gone all over the country. That was one of the things that came out of our organization.

The Visiting Nurse Association. In our calls among our people, we found so many people sick. They didn't have a doctor. They weren't getting the proper care. There weren't the hospital facilities in those days. So, a committee was formed of the old Associated Charities that was early, out of which grew the Visiting Nurse Association which is now a big lived organization on its own two feet long ago, '32 I think it was it went off on their own. We gave them their share of the contributions which had come in that year and Godspeed and let them go.

We also were instrumental in starting the way that we [inaudible] [0:36:48] here, a summer camp for children of the poorer families in
Wilmington. First, we rented a place. Then we bought a piece of land near New Castle and built buildings, put in swimming pools, a swimming pool and did all the other things that one has for a camp and we sent the children out there for vacations and for the staff for the summer, sent them out there for vacations.

The Travelers Aid Society was inactive. And it has come back into the fold of Family Service incidentally, that's interesting as a department. The Mothers' Pension Commission originally was known as now the Aid to Dependent Children program which is under public hospices, which started as a private organization financed by private funds as a Mothers' Pension Commission given to widows with young children.

The program which appears every Christmas time in the newspapers originally known as the 25 neediest families was our baby. A member of our board and the newspaper started that.

The social service exchange now under the offices of the welfare council under the [inaudible] program which is where an index was kept of all different persons and families known to different agencies in town so that we can cross-reference if need be. We can help each other by knowing if Mrs. Jones comes in today and it says that she needs help with clothing or you refer to the social service exchange.

She may be going somewhere else to get clothing. She may not need the clothing and that's rarely the case. Or it may be that we need to know what this other organization knows about Mrs. Jones. We don't want to spoil their plan and they don't want to spoil ours. That was pretty important.

The story for every top program which was originated way back was ours. We did it with the city fireman at first, the program that the city fireman set up. And together with our sponsorship and some money we could help to get hold of, we did that.

I think some of those things are interesting in that they came about because the agency saw a need.

During the influenza epidemic of 1919 which was the worst we ever had, my workers worked with Visiting Nurse Association, visited with the nurse to find out the needs of the family and what the nurse felt needed to be put in there.
It was a joint program all through that epidemic. We worked day and night. I remember walking the streets of Wilmington until 11 o'clock at night with nurses.

But it works out. It paid off. These are the things that I think are interesting that could come from one organization not because the organization was smart but because the people themselves brought problems which we couldn't do anything about till we found that we needed the Visiting Nurse Association. We needed the Tuberculosis Association.

Then those things went off on their own when they got big enough. One of the most rewarding things that we've done I think was to help in the establishment of the Children's Bureau of Delaware which is one of the finest organizations there is in the United States. I mean not because I said so. Not because I made it so. I had nothing to do with it. But it is known as one of the finest children's organizations in the United States. It's got one of the finest executives I ever knew. You feel kind of good that these came out of your organization while you were part of it, that they came because the need was there and because we were wise enough at last to see the need, the real need. Not the rotten potatoes.

They were essential too. I don't mean that. But why not the bread? Why didn't they have the bread and potatoes, that's what I mean. I mean, when we got to the place where we could say why instead of how much, we had gotten to a place where we're got to go somewhere with.

But it didn't happen because we read it in a book. It didn't happen because we learned it at school of social work. It came out of the expressed needs of the people themselves and why were they in that situation.

This to me has been one of the richest experiences. And the many of them had been very rich but that I think, to know that you cared and that they knew that you cared. I walked into the dime store at the Market Streets [phonetic] [0:43:11] a couple of weeks after I retired and my picture was in the paper and it was all the stuff on the front page didn't belong there.

And a nice looking young woman stepped up to me -- did I tell you this?

Interviewer: You [inaudible] [0:43:31] this.
Mrs. Mullen: Okay, I'll say that one again. But other -- there are many, many stories out there I could tell you.

Interviewer: But there was this person that you're mentioning now.

Mrs. Mullen: I was in the dime store and this very nice looking young woman came up to me and said, "Ms. Mullen I saw your picture in the paper and I cut it out. You don't know who I am?" And I said, "No, I'm sorry I don't."

And she said, "I'm -- well, let's say Mary Jones. I thought you'd like to know that my sister and I are both happily married. We're both buying ourselves little homes over at Manor [phonetic] Park. And we both joined the church over there. And our husbands have good jobs. And this is my little boy. And I'm so and so." She was the daughter of the prostitute.

So that paid off because we were able to put something in there other than just saying you're a bad woman, you can't have these kids. We'll take them away from you. Well, we didn't take them away from her. We helped her pull herself up to being able to take care of them.

And these are some of the rewarding things about it. You never got a big salary in social work but you gotten off out of satisfaction.

[0:45:03]

Did I tell you the funny story about the colored man? I think this is human. Elderly, very elderly old fashioned colored man married to an American-Indian woman, had two boys, came in one morning, wanted to see the boss lady. And I went out and I said, "Well, good morning Edward."

He says, "I have to talk to the boss lady, the top boss lady." And I said, "Well, what can I do?" He said, "I've been to the hospital and I'm sick." And he says, "I got to have medicines. And I got to have the -- tell me the things to eat."

And I said, "Sure. We all do when we're sick." And he said, "I can't work." And I said, "Of course you can't work if you're sick." [inaudible] he said -- I said, "What is the matter with you?" He looked around to see if the doors were closed and he looked all around and he said, "Are you married?"
I said, "No, I'm not married but people tell me everything." He says, "I've got the female trouble." I don't know what to say [inaudible] [0:46:20]. Well, we also had some funny things happen.

A woman came in one morning, Saturday morning. We close at noon on Saturdays, with five children. And our worker had seen her. She went to [inaudible] [0:46:42] with what the worker had told her so she sat in the waiting hall. It was a hall. She had all five children with her, one little baby.

She said, "Mrs. Mullen." I said, "Yeah?" She said, "I'm going to stay here until you give me what I want." And I said, "Well, I'm [inaudible] [0:47:04] to the police woman and I said, "I'm awfully sorry Bethy [phonetic] [0:47:06] but we're closing at 12 o'clock and then anybody can stay here with you."

"I'll just leave this children right here then you can take care of them. I'm not going to take care of them no more." I said, "That's going to be awfully too bad when everybody goes out. I'll lock up the doors, don't you think?"

She was saying, "You wouldn't do it." I said, "But that's what we're going to do." She wasn't getting what she wanted. She was getting what the worker honestly believed and rightfully that she needed it and she was trying to get a little bit of push in Bethy [phonetic] [0:47:47].

But these were some of the things that happened. But hundreds of things happened that were funny. And hundreds of things happened that were terribly sad. So it was a one time up, one time down. But I worked at it for 32 years and there was never a morning that I wasn't up and ready and anxious to get to work. I loved every minute of it.

It was hard work. It took so much in you but I loved it and I have never regretted a day that I put in. It's been very, to me very fascinating. I retired a little early because my mother had been ill for a long time. My sister had been very grossly confined. Even with nurses you have to have somebody to manage the house and see how things go.

My mother died and I felt that there was nothing to hold us that we ought to try before we both got too old to see something of light and although I hated to leave the job, I did. And I did leave a little early. I mean, the retirement not too much but -- so we traveled.
And we spent the next few years doing quite a bit of travelling pretty much all around to different places we could go to. We went to the Orient, we went to Hawaii, we went to Scandinavia. We went to England and France and Italy and Spain and then Holy Land and Russia. That's what I did with the last few years of my life.

Now I'm an old lady and I'm sitting back. But I had a full life. And I'm very grateful that I did go into the kind of work I did with no training, no experience. And then I went, got my training, my education part of it the hard way by taking semesters here when I could get one and taking some night work at the University of Pennsylvania and some courses at Associate [phonetic] [0:50:35] Foundation in New York and this kind of thing till I build it up for myself.

So the University of Delaware was one of the -- I say this with great pride and great humility, offered me an honorary degree. So it hasn't been too bad. I've had a good time and a very full life.

Interviewer: That's good when someone can look back and say that.

Mrs. Mullen: Yes, it was good. It was good. Now, is there anything you want to ask me? I think that I have been -- I tried to pick out what I thought was the high spots. There are three timely agencies, these agency serving families in Wilmington at the present time.

So the Family Service is already in Delaware and the Catholic Welfare and the Jewish Welfare. There is no competition among those agencies. They play back and forth and the case goes where it can get the service that it most needs, very splendid spirit among them.

There are, if you want to know about it, some institutions which stand out in Delaware, institution for children such as the Seton Villa for Catholic children, the Siena Hall which is also for Catholic children. The Children's Home which is non-sectarian, that's in Claymont. Our Lady of Grace [inaudible] [0:52:27] which is a Catholic one. And the Elizabeth Murphey School which is for Kent and Sussex County, a very fine school.

There are homes for adults such as the Layton Homes for aged Negro persons. The [inaudible] [0:52:45] Home which is for white persons, more men there than women. Not -- no -- and the Palmer Home in Delaware which is a private hospices. The [inaudible] [0:53:00] Home which is a big home and one of the newest and finest which is a Jewish
one. The Home for Aged Women in Wilmington which is one of the oldest, probably the oldest institution in the whole of Delaware.

And the Home of Merciful Rest which is for permanently involuted persons. The Children's Bureau is as I told you an outstanding organization, an outpost of ours which does adoptions and foster home care and special programs for children, a working long-time program on the funding for Indian children. And they are outstanding in the country.

Now, I think that's probably my story.

Interviewer: Okay. I have a number of questions.

Mrs. Mullen: I would like to stick this in just an appendage if you want to that during the Second World War, all of the social agencies in Delaware worked on evacuation plans in event of disaster. We set up evacuation centers. We called unheralded outs where you'd get a red signal when the alerts would come to the community. And the social workers would go to a given point. Each one knew where she was to go. And that I directed for the whole state during the Second World War.

And also, Family Service gave its services to the Draft Board in setting up a consultation service for draftees who had problems about their draft, reasons why they might not be drafted. And we worked that to the whole state.

[0:55:17]

Interviewer: This was during ...

Mrs. Mullen: So the different Draft Boards. Yes, through that war, same war. We had those two programs running during that war. I got a congressional medal for that. But not for that -- yes, for that -- not for the -- but those were two services which would have seemed outside of our but we were asked to do it and we did.

Interviewer: Okay, I might ask you some questions.

Mrs. Mullen: All right. And I’ll keep still on that two topics.

Interviewer: Okay. I wanted to go back to when you first began in social work and I was wondering about the case worker's duties, the roles of the case worker.
Mrs. Mullen: The role of the case worker. A family would be assigned to a case worker. We had Wilmington district into east side and west side Wilmington. That meant they're all east of Market Street over at 11th Street bridge, over 3rd Street bridge. All of that area toward New Castle, what was known as the east side district.

And there was an east side secretary with assistance and the [inaudible] [0:56:36] staff who was responsible for whatever happened on the east side and I suppose it was the west side that took all the city limits. And later we spread out into the county a little bit. Of course they -- all in Delaware now but before I left there, we had gotten out into the county.

At the beginning, there was no really trained case worker. They were apprentice trained. They worked under somebody who was a trained person and learned -- that's the way I learned in the beginning. But I did go on and try to get some more later.

A worker would have x number of families to be responsible for. And those families came directly to that person and stayed with that person who was their case worker. For instance, she didn't come in today and she, Mrs. Walters [phonetic] [0:57:53] and Tamara [phonetic] [0:57:54] and see Mrs. Hagenplate [phonetic] [0:57:56]. She really stayed right straight through with the worker that she started out with.

And they developed a relationship and rapport and that's what helped us to learn what people needed because you got to know the people. If you slung them around from one person to another, you didn't ever get to know anybody. And they didn't get to know anybody and feel any confidence in anybody.

These people consider these case workers their friend. Some of the younger women looked to them all as if they were their mothers. They listened and they wanted to do, I wanted to try what this worker said was something to try.

And there was a strong relationship there. Firm on the case worker's part but strong and good. But they were not trained people then. Later, we began to bring professionally trained people into the agency, first as supervisors and later as case worker.

But in the early days and for quite a while, they weren't there. They weren't available. They didn't have any training. So the college started the school social work, well, it's University of Pennsylvania now but it was
a Pennsylvania school social work for a while good many years. That was a good one. And later it was one of them more, but in the beginning there was no school of social work. You couldn't get a masters in social work because you didn't get it. These people were college people but they didn't have any masters in social work.