

**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF THE  
MARIN COUNTY FREE LIBRARY**  
**Anne T. Kent California Room**

Original recording available at the Anne T. Kent California Room

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**INTERVIEW WITH VIRGINIA KEATING**

by Carla Ehat & Anne Kent

April 14, 1976

INTERVIEWEE: Virginia Keating (VK)

INTERVIEWERS: Carla Ehat (C.E.) and Anne Kent (A.K.)

DATE OF INTERVIEW: April 14, 1976

TRANSCRIBER: Marjorie Hoffman

CE: Today is Wednesday April 14, 1976. Continuing the Oral history program of the California Room at the Marin County Library at Civic Center, this is Carla Ehat of the Moya Library Guild. Joining me today is Mrs. Thomas Kent, past president of the Moya Library Guild and a former librarian herself.

It is our privilege today to be at the residence of Virginia Vail Keating, 472 Miller Creek Road in San Rafael. Virginia Keating has made an outstanding contribution to the community, having served for 38 years as head of the Marin County Library system. Virginia has resided in Marin County since she was two years old and has been most active in civic affairs. She has served on the Board of Directors on the Marin County Historical Society, the Senior Coordinating Council and the Humane Society. She has served as Financial Secretary of the San Rafael Improvement Club and has served as president of Zonta Club of Marin, also as Chairman of Marin County Retired Employees, to name but a few societies. But, it is as head of the Marin County Library for 38 productive years that most citizens recognize and remember this extraordinary lady today. The Marin Library at Civic Center under the dome of the Frank Lloyd Wright designed Administration Building is a far cry from the library that existed in 1931 when Virginia joined the staff of the Marin County Library, created only five years earlier in 1926. To tell us this story of how Marin County created its own County Library, here is Virginia Keating and Anne Thompson Kent. Good Morning, Virginia.

VK: Good Morning, Carla.

CE: Good Morning, Mrs. Kent.

AK: Good Morning, Carla.

CE: Well, ladies, I understand that for many, many years after California was admitted as a state to the Union in 1850, it took some years before Marin County got a Library. Now this is rather unusual, isn't it? The first county library occurred in 1908 in Sacramento and then according to the reading I've done, there were eight counties created in 1910, 22 more between 1911 and 1915, and then finally in 1926 Marin County got its own library. How did people, prior to the incorporation of a County Library, avail themselves of reading? Virginia, were there private libraries?

VK: There were what we knew as Municipal Libraries that served the communities in which they were situated. There was a very old established library in San Rafael, an old established library in Sausalito, an old library in Mill Valley, most of these under the Carnegie Foundations. A library in Larkspur, a library in San Anselmo. But, unfortunately, the great body of the county had no library. There were several reasons for this. Marin County had two definite types of population. There was the bedroom-type community whose interests were largely in San Francisco, the southern end, and then there was the northern end of the county who had a foreign born population whose interest were largely agricultural and rural and so it was very difficult to get those people interested in the things that many people, including Mrs. Kent who's here with us today, felt were very important to have for the body of the people. So there was a long time and great deal of work that went into - before this actually became an actuality. There were many trips to Sacramento, many meetings that were held. I wasn't in the library but I certainly heard this story told many times.

CE: You remember the beginnings, Mrs. Kent, of these years before the library became a reality? As a librarian yourself in New York, you were anxious for this.

AK: Yes, I was interested, but really not interested it in California. I had come as a war bride, you might say, and I forgot about being a librarian until, just by chance, I met an old librarian. After the armistice I met an old librarian from New York right in the Ferry Building in San Francisco and then we renewed old acquaintances and old remembrances until she said, "Where do you live?" and I told her how wonderful the place was, I lived in Marin, and she immediately turn from a friend to someone who said, "Not at all." I said, "It's beautiful, it's like Long Island, really." She said, "No such thing, it's a black spot on the State of California." And I said, "Why, what's the matter?" "Well," she said, "what have you done about your library, have you looked into your library?" I said, "No, I haven't thought about libraries now since I've been out here." And she said, "Well you'd better because in Marin County there is no County Library. There are plenty of town libraries, but there are many people in Marin with no library service." So that's what started it.

CE: Well, I understand they used to have subscription libraries. Do you know what these were? They had them in the cities, certainly.

VK: Well, yes - well Mechanic's, I believe -

CE: Institute and the Mercantile Library -

VK: Yes - places where there is a fee charged or they have special collections for - but we are only interested in a library that's free and operated for the good of the public. This is particularly appropriate that we have this interview because the date of August 3, 1926 is exactly fifty years this year.

CE: Isn't that wonderful?

VK: This is our fiftieth anniversary.

CE: Well, Virginia, would you be good enough to read from the minutes of the Board of Supervisors meeting of that day.

VK: This was really the great day for the County Library. "A resolution providing for the establishment and maintenance of a County Free Library in Marin County. Whereas the Board of Supervisors of Marin County has taken the necessary steps prescribed by Chapter 68, Section 2, Statutes of 1911 preliminary to the establishment of a County Free Library. Therefore, be it resolved that the Board of Supervisors of Marin County, State of California does hereby establish a County Free Library for the County Of Marin, State Of California. A motion of Supervisor Deysher, seconded by Supervisor Martinelli, the forgoing resolution was adopted by the following vote." And there were all "ayes" except one "no". The interesting things about this is -

CE: Would you read in the names please? These are all "ayes," now?

VK: All "ayes." Supervisors Martinelli, Barr, Deysher, Gardner, "Nos", Sweetser. The interesting thing about this is that they not only voted the resolution, they also voted the money to start the library.

CE: Do you have any awareness of what that figure was?

VK: No, I don't know this. But, in Sonoma County they effectively stopped the establishment of county library, Carla, for many years by voting a resolution but no money.

CE: I see, I see.

AK: I'd like to say one thing in here, it's a little bit out of order, I know some of the schools had libraries but I have to tell you that the Ross Landing School has always had a library. We have some letters we have shown on other interviews of the Murray children who wrote notes, who wrote theses or whatever you might call them, on their school and on every one they mentioned how proud they are of their library. So I would think the original Grandma Kent and Mrs. Dibblee and all those people who were in that valley must have seen to it that they had a good library. They even named the number of volumes they had in their library, and these were small children. And they put, we're always been proud of that.

CE: Well, tell me, Virginia and Mrs. Kent, the resolution was made. When did it actually become a library?

VK: February 14th - we always say Valentine's Day is our celebration day, we always try to celebrate with a Valentine or a piece of Valentine's cake or something because that was - February 14th was the date of our - was the date we actually started and opened the doors.

CE: And where was it located then?

VK: It was located in the basement of the old courthouse, which is no more.

CE: In San Rafael -

VK: In San Rafael on Fourth Street, yes.

CE: Where did you get the inventory of your initial library? Where did the books come from? Did you get any bequests?

VK: Well, this part, you see, Carla, I have to guess because I didn't join the staff, as you know, for a number of years.

CE: About five years later.

VK: So there was a -----

CE: Did you inherit any books from anyone or ----

VK: There may have been donations. Perhaps Mrs. Kent would know better than I about that.

AK: I don't know that, but I do think they all came down from the State Library; it's a regular pool. You see, all these other 31 counties were already established, you see, so we were just the 32nd apparently, and it still runs that way. We are a piece of the State Library.

CE: Well, I understand, ladies, that there's a very close relationship between the State Library and the County Library.

VK: Well, the State Library service supplements those - the service of the County Library to furnish to the library expensive books, difficult books to obtain, and books that are beyond the scope of the local library, on loan. Those, of course, are to be borrowed and returned. In my time, I don't recall ever having received any gifts from the State Library.

CE: Well, tell me Virginia, does the State Library have anything to do with the appointment of the County Librarians?

VK: No, not that I know of - I mean ----

CE: Not directly -

VK: No, not directly, no. The County Librarian is appointed by the Board of Supervisors and her salary and her term of office is set by the County board of Supervisors.

CE: You serve at the pleasure of the Supervisors?

VK: Of the Supervisors, yes.

CE: So, in your case, you've done such an outstanding job, you can stay forever if you perform. Now, on account of the Board of Supervisors, naturally changes - - Are there any examinations required for a Librarian at that time?

VK: Yes, there was the County Library examination. I know that there are examinations for County Librarians given in Sacramento. I'd like to tell you a little bit about the various places where the library has been housed.

CE: Yes let's do that.

VK: I think that would be kind of fun. When we started in we were in the basement of the old courthouse and that's where the beginnings of the California Room came which I'll go into a little later. We had one bookcase that had a lock on it, so this became the nucleus of the California Collection, as we did have a lock and a key. And it became a ritual if anyone got a book from there that the bookcase had to be unlocked and relocked, and that was the beginning of the California Collection.

I've always been indebted to a member of the Grand Jury, a very large, heavysset woman who came one time on a Grand Jury tour, you know, as the Grand Jury does to inspect various offices and so forth. We had pipes overhead; we also had pipes going up and down, and this large, lovely lady got wedged one time between some of the pipes and some of the furniture which made it almost impossible for her to get extricated, at which point she decided this was no place for a County Library and rendered such a report. And so, when there was a possibility that there would be a building, a school building, which was to be abandoned by the district because a high-speed highway was going close by, the old Coleman school, it was possible for me to lend some strength to my argument that it was a place for the County Library to go by telling that this Grand Juror had said that the County Library was in a most unfortunate, unhealthy and unsafe place. And so, for the sum of \$10,000, the County acquired this building and the County Library was moved out to the old Coleman School building which the County later sold for a goodly sum, I may say, when they got rid of it. That was our second location.

CE: Second location.

VK: And we were very happy there, Carla. Then the war came along and the County was requested by the Army Engineers to turn the building over to the Army Engineers; they needed headquarters. Now again, I'd like to give a very great word of gratitude to the Board of Supervisors. The Board said that the Army Engineers could have the entire building with the exception of those quarters assigned to the County Library. They did not toss us out of the building; they let us remain. And those are really some of the happiest years the County Library had because the Army Engineers had trucks, they had--  
- you know, strong backs ---

CE: They could help you move books -

VK: They could help us, they could help us move books, and they were very, very kind and we existed together in complete harmony. Well then, when the war was over, of course, the Army Engineers moved out and then the County started moving other office into the building, all of which was perfectly pleasant and desirable to us. We really were very, very glad to be there. At the end of that period of the County Library's home, we moved into the Frank Lloyd Wright Administration building, which was, of course, into the most beautiful building that anyone can imagine, and we had a very beautiful location. So that is the saga of the library headquarters.

CE: Well now, speaking of that parallel, I like to interject, if I can, reading from this paper written in 1936 and updating it. At that time when you were originally in the basement of the County Courthouse in San Rafael, you had 17,500 volumes. Today, in the library that you left a short few years ago, in 1976, their inventory is over 200,000. Quite a growth isn't it?

VK: That's wonderful.

CE: Also back in 1935, 90,000 books were circulated in that year and today, in your main library and all of your branches, you circulated in 1975 844,663. Tremendous. Well tell me, I think it's time we moved a little bit to the various other branches. I want to come back and concentrate specifically on your creation of the California History Room and your creation of the Bookmobile, but could we touch briefly on the other branches that evolved during your administration? Virginia, let's see, you had, in your portfolio, I noticed, that was presented to you upon your retirement, you have a collection of some extraordinary photographs, unusual looking domiciles that house libraries.

VK: I think the specter that haunted me all during my library career was the fact that the landlord might raise my rent. It was a constant specter because all of - anyone who knows that you are presented - you present a budget at the beginning of the budget year that you are expected to live within your budget and you can't change that budget during the year. And then the landlord whom you have agree to pay - Now, I'm speaking now of 1940, 1950, 1930 figures, \$25 a month or \$15 a month or \$30 a month, all of a sudden wants \$25 where he'd only been getting \$20. Well, that's quite a raise in rent. The rents were just --- when I look back on them, it was fantastic but I mean in those days it was a great fear to me that they would raise and I would go about begging and pleading, you know, "No, I'm sorry I can't do a thing until next year and then it will be just until the new budget and then if the Board doesn't agree, I don't know what we're going to do." But, then again, there was also the specter that the building might be sold and this happened in various places where we were - just - well situated, for instance in Fairfax.

CE: Now that was what I wanted to get to. Was Fairfax one of your first branches, Virginia?

VK: Fairfax was established before I became Librarian. But it was upstairs, and now, you know, everyone is concerned about people who cannot get up and down stairs and in those days, there wasn't that much concern about it, but it was always a great concern of

mine. I know that we had people saying "Oh, my mother can't come to the library; I wish she could, but the stairs are too much for her." So that was always a concern of mine, and so when I found out about a downstairs location I was simply delighted. So we found a place on the main street of Fairfax. Do you remember, Anne, when we opened the Fairfax Library in the old barroom?

AK: I couldn't remember just ----

CE: An old bar room!

VK: Well, it was a bar. And there was quite an article in the paper about it. It was written up in humorous fashion, you know, where the bar had been there are now library books, you know, and it was really great. Oh, we were just so happy. There was quite a smell of beer for quite a while, but we managed to air it out, you know, in between times. But it was just a perfect location and everybody was real thrilled about it. Well, unfortunately this didn't last because the building, our landlord sold the building, or his wife did I believe, and so we had to look elsewhere. And I'd like to give a word of praise to a man who I met the other day for the first time and is one of the most civic-minded men in Fairfax, Mr. Frank Healion. Mr. Healion had always been a good friend of the libraries. While we were renting his upstairs location, Carla, he was always generous in being - charging us a very little rent. Well, I went to Frank and I cried on his shoulder. I said, "Frank," I said, "I left your building and you know why, but now I'm really desperate." Well, he owned another large building, also downstairs, and he said, "Well, I'll see what I can do, Virginia, I'll see if I can find a place for you in a downstairs location again on the Main Street," which he did. And so we moved in there and we were there up until the time that I left the library and then later than that they moved again into another place. Now, I think, it's public knowledge that the library is going to move onto the Buon Gusto site, which I couldn't be happier.

CE: That makes you happy, I imagine.

VK: That makes me very happy, yes.

CE: Well, I understand when that Fairfax Library was created the Community Church donated its entire collection of books as a nucleus. Is that true?

VK: Yes, that is true.

CE: And then when Kentfield, also established in 1927, the citizens donated the use of a room in their spacious fire station for the library and each year renewed this courtesy.

VK: Well, we moved to Kentfield - we moved in Kentfield a couple of times, too.

CE: Moving out towards West Marin, can you tell me the story of some of the other branches out that way?

VK: The first location in Bolinas was again before my time, but I was told that it was in a houseboat that was - -

CE: Boat house - -

VK: Boat house, yes -

CE: That was supposed to have been the Coast Guard Station on Bolinas Bay.

VK: But there again, that had moved from that location before I was Librarian, but I moved the library two or three times in Bolinas, every time trying to get a larger space. Now the last move, again, has taken place since I left the library and it's now in the Community House which was a place that I had always eyed with envy and it wasn't available at the time that I was a Librarian.

CD: Tell me, Virginia, how did the Coast Guard personnel get serviced at all by your library? Did they ever avail themselves out there at the old Light House? Out at Point Reyes?

VK: Oh, the Coast Guard, we used to serve them with the Bookmobile. That was kind of fun because they'd drive up to the Bookmobile in their Coast Guard truck, you know, and they would take books for all the family.

CE: Well, we will cover that in your Bookmobile narrative. Now, they tell me there was an interesting library in Point Reyes Station. Would you describe that for us?

VK: Well, every time I see that beat up old car out there in that lot, I just wish something would happen to it. But, the car ---

CE: What do you mean, "the car?"

VK: Well, it was a railroad car -

CE: Northwest Pacific Railroad?

VK: Northwest Pacific Railroad car and it was acquired from the railroad and it was moved up --- You see, at that time the railroad was still running and it was moved up on a flat car and put in the lot adjoining, what was then the Black School and the children came to the library by classes and it was very available and had a very good circulation. There were pictures in the railroad magazines and it had a great deal of publicity.

CE: That's a great idea.

VK: The school was abandoned when they started unionizing schools in the area and by that time, the railroad car had developed all the ills of old age, you know, leaky roof and everything was wrong with it and so we moved.

CE: Well tell me, Virginia, judging from the photograph you have in your album here of the Bookmobile, you saved the seats and had little tables in between.

VK: Yes - every other seat was taken out, yes.

CE: Isn't that a clever idea. And then at the end of the library car, you had the library shelves.

VK: There was the desk and then the shelves were at each end. Yes – we have the pictures there, you know. I had lunch, actually, with the librarian yesterday.

CE: What is her name?

VK: Her name is Lavinia Adams.

CE: I notice, reading the history here, that Lavinia Adams retired in September 1964 and had been the Point Reyes County Librarian for 32 years. Many of them in this railroad car, huh?

VK: Well, yes - that was - the library was established in the car, I mean, that was the first library and then when we moved into the small shopping center there, why, she continued as librarian until she retired.

CD: I see. Well, Mrs. Kent, when we were out interviewing Lois Dawson McDonald the other day in Point Reyes Station, didn't her husband, Harry McDonald, says something about restoring that car?

AK: He did.

CE: And Mr. Giacomini.

AK: He did, and we passed the inner road, I don't know what it's called, and there we saw what was left of the car. Really it looks in very bad shape but he thinks that they're going to restore it.

VK: And use it for what?

CE: Just restore it - maybe for the bicentennial.

VK: Oh, I see. Well, when we didn't use it anymore, why, I left it with the firemen because they were using it, the Fire Chief up there, they were using it for storage, and then I believe he turned it over to someone else who moved it to its present location.

CE: Did you have a branch at Inverness also?

VK: Yes, we had a branch at Inverness and that was a cause because during the war people's gasoline supply was so limited that people who had formerly come into San Rafael to shop or had used the Point Reyes Library found they had no way to travel any distance, so they had requested, and so they gave us free space in one of the little places in Inverness. Then we eventually moved into a small real estate office, which was separated from the building that it had been attached to and is still being used as a small library there.

CE: I think Mrs. Kent has a story about the Inverness Library.

AK: Oh dear -

CE: I think it is perfectly proper to tell that story.

AK: Well, I don't like to tell it very much but when Inverness people, some of the Inverness people, showed an interest in a County Library they asked me to come to speak at a little meeting they had organized. Now it's so long ago I forget some of the names, but the other day, as Carla said when we went out for another purpose or went out to the Primrose Tea, we met Miss Elizabeth Phillips who was one of the very people who asked me to come, who fixed this meeting. They fixed up the meeting without asking everyone to come. They were trying very desperately to get the okay for the library. But, Mrs. Hamilton was one person they had skipped and the Judge whose daughter was one of the people fixing this up said, "Have you invited Mrs. Hamilton?" and they looked very sheepish and he said, "You must do it." So Mrs. Hamilton came.

CE: Who was Mrs. Hamilton again?

AK: Mrs. Hamilton was one of the largest taxpayers in the entire place.

CE: She was Judge Shafter's daughter.

AK: She belonged to the Howard Shafter family, you know, and she was the biggest taxpayer and she came and she was very agreeable and she sat quite close to me and she complimented me when the speech was all over and she said, "It's a wonderful idea, it's very nice, little lady, it's very nice, but not for Inverness. We don't need a library. We are hard working ranch people. I take magazines every week when I go out to the ranches and the next week they still sitting where I left them. They are too tired, they work too hard and we do not need a County Library." And it didn't happen right then either, it didn't happen for quite some time. Quite a long time.

CE: Had you heard that story Virginia?

VK: No I never had - I mean, this is what's fun to have ---

CE: Well, now, let's see, were still out in West Marin. What other Branches were created in that area?

VK: Well, there was Stinson Beach and ---

CE: What was the Stinson Beach story? Did that happen during your tenure?

VK: Yes. At Stinson Beach we started as - in back of a store there and then we were able to move into a small place, actually on the beach, a little building. We have pictures of what which were when the County took over the beach and we were very happy to move in. Remember, Anne? We had this very attractive little building with flowers growing up on either side going down --- We had little problem in the winter when it was kind of wet around but otherwise it was just fine. Then the State took over the park, you know as they often do from the County, and they either were going to take the building down or - anyhow they gave us notice that we had to move the library so we move into town and we moved into a large building right in town. That was fine until that building was sold. You see, that's the story of my life; we either had rents raised or building sold. So then finally, the last time, and I don't know whether it's been moved since, I haven't heard, but we had some young men who owned a restaurant there offered us space in a building

close to them and we moved the library there. That was the last location we had at Stinson Beach.

CE: Is it still there?

VK: I believe it's still there, I haven't checked up.

CE: Now coming back from there, there's Woodacre. Does Woodacre have a library?

VK: Well, I was very much amused in this article that Anne was looking at, you know when I was checking it over before you came and there was an item in there about the Woodacre Library. The rent being \$500 a month. The most it could possibly have ever been was \$50, and when I saw that I was telling Bruce about it, I said, "That's really a typo." But we had the Woodacre Library first in the old Maillard home, you know –

CD: The Maillard home? The San Geronimo Rancho there?

VK: Yes --- that was originally where it was, and then we moved into the Woodacre Community House.

CE: Do you have any photographs of that, by any chance?

VK: No, we don't unfortunately.

CE: We did interview Mr. Ernest Maillard and got the story of the Rancho.

VK: We were there just a relatively short time, then we moved into the new Community Building there.

CE: Of course, the prices must shock you terribly today compared to the ---

VK: Well, I don't really - It probably would just horrify me if I knew what was happening today.

CE: Well, I don't know what the initial budget of the library was in 1926, I do know - Do you?

VK: No, can't remember now, but I do know that when I took over the library, the library was in a very bad financial situation and I was told to maintain very strict economy, which I certainly did try to do.

CE: Do you recall what those initial years' budgets might be?

VK: No, I can't recall. They should be a matter of record, but I can't ---

CE: Well, it's interesting to see, of course, with inflation and growth and the devaluation of the dollar, in 1963 your budget was \$235,000 and 1975-1976 budget is \$1,377,639.

VK: Yes, I know there's a tremendous difference, yes.

CE: What does the dollar mean? Of course, in those early days you were serving what, in the way of population? Maybe 19,000 people? What have we now, over 200,000.

VK: Well that, and also one of the things that is being accomplished now, I certainly want to give full credit, is that the library now is accomplishing the goals of establishing large regional libraries which has always been one of my dreams, you know.

CE: Has that been one of your dreams?

VK: Yes, in fact I think I drew an original regional plan and presented it to the then-Administrator as a dream that we would like to have and -

CE: It's all taken place?

VK: Well, it's taking place. I mean I can see --

CE: Like this new Fairfax Library, you've created the Corte Madera Library ----

VK: There were just obvious places where there should --- where the centers of population would be, you know, and it turns out that that's the way it should be, not that I take credit for it but I mean it's just strange that it did work out that way. Now, I was in the library when we purchased the land and built the Novato Library, although I was not there when the library was completed.

CE: But you were there - during your tenure the property was purchased and plans were made.

VK: That's right, plans were made. And I also was there when we did arrange for the purchase of the Corte Madera property, but I had left before we - before the architects were hired or anything like that, but I did have a part in it which I'm happy to ----

CE: What about Belvedere-Tiburon?

VK: Well, Belvedere-Tiburon is an interesting story.

CE: Could we hear about it?

VK: When I first went into the library --- When the library was first established Belvedere and Tiburon, I believe - Belvedere was in the County Library and then for some reason, which I never was quite sure of, they withdrew from the library and they should not have been allowed to withdraw because the only way that a community may withdraw from a County Library system is to set up an equal facility of its own and they did not, of course, do that. However, nobody questioned it and they were allowed to withdraw but they never did set up a library. I mean, they had a back room in a building but there was nothing there. They didn't even have a reasonable resemblance to a library. So, fortunately, there were a number of people in the community, including the woman who was serving as the librarian, who felt that this was a ridiculous situation. So, they started calling the County Library and asking me to come down to various meetings, and I did. I appeared before the Parks and Recreation and I appeared before various groups down there, the City Council and so forth, because Belvedere, you know, is an incorporated city, and eventually, to make a long story short, they decided to come into the library. I had to - I tried to make certain promises to them, that we would have a site that would serve them equally well, both communities, that we would increase the hours

and that we would have a librarian from both communities. The first two were easy to get, I mean we increased the hours at once, we double the time, and the two women were both friends and both delightful women and that was easy. Getting the site that was equal between both communities, equally acceptable, was a little more difficult but we accomplished that within a few months and we did find a place in the Cove shopping Center which was just as close to either place and where it is now. So that worked out and they came back in and I think they've always been --- I've heard of no difficulties since then.

CE: All right now let's see, we've covered - You have a library, another branch, we didn't cover coming back. Is there one at Forest Knolls?

VK: Yes there is a small branch at Forest Knolls. I don't - I talked to the librarian there not too long ago and I understand that they are going to increase the hours out there and I know that's something that she has been wanting for a long time. That's housed in a little building which has the other --we had a location there which was over a creek and it was always quit perilous in the winter time because when the water was rushing underneath you always were in imminent danger of being swept away by the flood. But, after we found a place across the highway in a drier and safer location I think everybody felt more secure.

CE: Well, you've really seen some pioneer days of the library system. Now, there's one more we haven't touched upon, Marin City.

VK: Well, Marin City came as the result of course of the community being established as a war time industry of the establishment of Marinship. There was a site offered us in the Community building there where we were in a small place for a very long time. Then, later on when they enlarged the building, there was a much better place and my ambition, of course, was to find a suitably trained black woman to staff the library because, you know, between the time the library was established, which I believe was (if my memory is correct) about '52, and the time when the building was remodeled and things had changed, the whole community picture had changed down there, too, you know, and I felt that we would have much better rapport with the community. As it turned out we did, to have a black woman, and fortunately I found a most delightful woman, one that I was very fond of myself.

CE: What was her name?

VK: I just can't - for the moment it's gone from my mind.

CE: It might come back to you.

VK: Yes. But she's since married - her first name is Alice [Littleton?], but just for the minute I can't think what her last name was. She took her training at headquarters and she loves the library and she's had parties for the children and everything was fine the last time when we had a visit from Sacramento, when we opened the library in the new building and they were so thrilled because we had carpeting on the floor. You know, a lot of real luxury.

CE: You know you mention the children, Virginia, and I must interject here at this point, it always delights me anytime I go to any of the branches to see children in your libraries. Children love it. How old does a child have to be to get a card, something like four or three? When you could write your name?

VK: It used to be when he could write his name was the rule we did have at one time. Now whether the children's librarians have made any change in that I don't know, but that was the rule that we did have.

CE: Well, I understand that 25% of the total circulation is in books for preschoolers and this is most unusual to me. But of course, Marin does have - Marin people are concerned and literate and they want their children to love books. But it is a delight to see the children in the library.

AK: I really believe that the County of Marin is covered by library service more than almost any county anywhere, east or west. I don't think there's a thing from the Point Reyes Lighthouse, which you also serve, I think, I think every inch, whether it's for children's books in the schools - Oh, you might tell a bit about school libraries.

CE: Yes, I want to get into that. What is this service to schools that the County Library serves?

VK: Well, we don't do that now, you see.

CE: What did it mean?

VK: Well, at one time, that was one of the things that was most concerned people, the fact that the school libraries were so inadequate and the idea was that if there could be a central pooling system that the same group of readers, the same group of social studies books, the same group of other types of curriculum material could be circulated around and they would - instead of sitting in a school they could be moved around. That was the basic of the school library system.

CE: Logistically, how was that handled?

VK: Well, this is the way we had this. Now the school library system came into Marin County with the very beginnings of County Library.

CE: All right, how did that work? Continue.

VK: We had a school librarian and usually a clerk who helped. The school librarian was named Perry McDonald and ---

CE: That's the man we met the other afternoon, isn't it, Mrs. Kent?

AK: Right.

VK: And he had complete charge of routing and recording all of the school library books. At that time, all the schools belonged. Originally, I think, the concept had been that it would only be small rural schools but the idea was so good that everybody wanted to get

in and participate. So, in Marin County at one time, every school in the county belonged except San Rafael. Well, then of course, the situation gradually began to change with the joining together, the unionization of the schools, where many schools became one. Then the whole idea that they could within their own districts participate - I think it was the Novato District and some of the others decided that perhaps they could take care of their own school service, but it was only just two years, 1966, when the superintendent of schools decided that he wanted to take over the service. To the best of my knowledge, after he took over the service, the districts decided they wanted to continue to service themselves and I don't believe, with perhaps the exception perhaps of some very small districts, that he does service any of the school at this time. Now, that may be not true but that's ---

AK: That's too bad, it's a great loss. But a great help to the library, that must have grown to ----

CE: That must have gotten to become quite a real ----

VK: Yes, it became too large a thing. I mean, it was just much greater than it had been originally, Anne, as you know, I mean, from the small beginning it got to be a mammoth undertaking.

AK: But the idea was wonderful and if the schools did or would adopt that very thing and do it their own way ----

VK: And it brought a great deal of friends, friendly feelings, toward the library and, of course, it brought the teachers into the library not only for school books but for the other services the library provided, you know.

AK: Well, they still use them.

CE: Tell me, Virginia, there was a service at one time for children also in the shipment of books to summer camps where they were, Boy Scouts, the Camp Fire Girls.

VK: Yes. Again, I don't know whether that service is still continued, but at one time -

CE: Did it ever continue under your ---

VK: Oh, we always did it. We had large wooden boxes that were specially made and each year we would use some of the books that were not in use on the Bookmobiles, you see. We had one Bookmobile that went to the community stops and one Bookmobile went to the school stops and this was not a school service, this was library service to children at school because it was a convenient place to go. Those books that were not in use for the summer we would box, we would carefully select them for different reading levels for school camps and also include all types of books that would be craft work and for children that would be interested in various things to make and games to play and poetry to read and all that kind of thing. Those were sent out at the beginning of the school camps and that was done for many, many years.

CE: Now, before we move on to the Bookmobile, which is a fascinating story, I just want to recap something here. From its original beginnings then in 1927, when it was inaugurated really, the legislation was passed by the Board of Supervisors in '26, but you said in February 14, 1926, fifty years ago. It started with one place in the basement, then, of the Courthouse in San Rafael, relocated in the Coleman School, and then since then in these fifty years, there are twelve separate branches of the Marin County Library. Is that correct?

VK: I believe that is now ----

CE: Yes --- And the Civic Center Branch, where the California Room is presently located, happens to be in the Administration Building of the County of Marin, where the headquarters of the County Library are, but it's just another branch, isn't it? Civic Center Branch is another branch physically located in the Civic Center --

VK: In the Civic Center, yes, yes.

CE: Now, we want to know about the Bookmobile. How did you ever think of that idea and why did you create the Bookmobile? There are photographs in your albums of it. It's a beloved thing to see putt-sing down the highway. How did it come about, Virginia?

VK: There were several reasons, as I told you, I was always faced with the specter of raises in rent, I was also faced with places being sold and taken away. It seemed to me that we should start thinking about some other way of serving people other than small branches, so I had read in library literature about a certain type of service known as the mobile library service that was used in the East. So I thought to myself, "I would like to have a Bookmobile." So I went to a friend in San Rafael who had the Dodge Agency and I talked to him about it and so I said, "I'd like to have a Bookmobile," and he said, "A what?" and I said, "A Bookmobile," and he said, "What's that?" and I said, "Well, it's a library on wheels." He said, "You mean with a lot of books on the outside of a truck?" and I said, "No, I don't want them on the outside, I want them on the inside," I said, "because people on a rainy day they'd have to stand outside, so I want them to go inside." So we, together, designed what we thought might be a Bookmobile. So he sold us - I went to the Board and asked for permission to buy a one-ton truck --- a chassis ----

CE: May I interrupt you for one moment, Virginia? Then, whenever you needed unusual things you would have to go to the Board for permission on all of these expenditures?

VK: Oh yes, always, yes. Explain to the Board ---

CE: What was their reaction when you talked to them about Bookmobile?

VK: Well, you know, they were quite intrigued with the idea. If you would present an idea to the Board - and I'd like to say that in all my years (and there were 36 of them) there were lots of changes on the Board and I was still the librarian going along. I had very happy relations with the Board of Supervisors; they had always been marvelous. Then again, I may say I was always - I was not unreasonable in my demands. Because my folks had been taxpayers in Marin County since 1902 or 3 and I realized the Board's difficulty and responsibility and so I was not a person that was unreasonable in the things

that we asked for and we didn't all of a sudden go in and ask for huge raises in salary or huge demands. So when we asked for something like this, and as I say it was something different but they thought it would be kind of a good idea. So we went over to Oakland, with our sketch in hand, to a place where this man knew a body building works in Oakland and we showed this picture to them and so, as a result, we started --- they designed a Bookmobile. Now this was back in 1948 and if you people remember 1948, you couldn't hardly buy a passenger car, you know.

CE: We had had six years of war with no production of cars.

VK: And after that, of course, you could buy from the Gerstenslager Bookmobile Company, you could just go in and order a Bookmobile the size you wanted, but in those days you just had to get, you know, what you can. And when I look back on it, you can see the pictures, it looks remarkably like a Bookmobile!

CE: It's just great ---

VK: And we had such fun about it - I started, I was the first driver because I felt that we couldn't afford to hire a man to drive it and so I just wanted to be sure that it was possible for a woman to manage a big rig like that, and so I was driving around the county.

CE: How did it handle, Virginia?

VK: Well - I mean in those days I thought it was easy to drive. We started our first stop down in Tamalpais Valley and the truck drivers would go by and tootle the horn and they'd see me and I'd poke my head out. Of course, now women drivers of trucks is fairly common, but 1948 it wasn't, you know, it was rather unusual. So then we developed our second Bookmobile which was for the, as I say, library service to children at school.

CE: Well now, getting back to this first Bookmobile, you established a regular routine, a schedule, for this van, right?

VK: Oh, yes.

CE: You would go certain places certain days of the week?

VK: Oh yes, definitely.

CE: Describe one of those days, for instance, when you went to West Marin.

VK: Well, this was our longest trip and we would go all the way out to --- the longest trip that we've made was out to a small school that was way out on the Point Reyes Peninsula. We would go out to this little school and at that point the children, of course, would all come out to the truck - to the school -

CE: A big event.

VK: A big event, yes indeed. At that point, the people from the Point Reyes Lighthouse would come. There was, at that time, the people named Zetlerquist

CE: That's how you serviced the Coast Guard, then?

VK: Yes. They would come out, usually Mrs. Zetlerquist would come with some of the boys from the lighthouse, you know, and then she would select books for her family or ---  
-

CE: Was she the lighthouse keeper's wife?

VK: Wife, yes. I read about her not long ago in some article. Oh, I guess it was in that new book about Point Reyes. Then we would come back and we would stop all the way at different places and we would combine not only the actual Bookmobile stops but we would also stop at the ranches.

CE: Would you?

VK: We were economical; we would deliver books, you see, to the ranches.

CE: They had either sent a request in the previous trip or had written to the library and you -- respected their delivery?

VK: Yes, we would include their requests with our regular deliveries. We would stop at Point Reyes and leave the books off for the Point Reyes delivery and pick up the returns for headquarters and then we would stop at the Marshall School, which - does any of you know where the Marshall School was? Well, that was quite an experience because it was way up on the top of a high hill. I may say that I did not drive this trip. Perry McDonald, who visited schools, would drive this because when you got up to the top of this high hill there was a very narrow place to turn around and you'd have to back around and could just barely make it to go down the hill.

AK: Is that sort of in the view from Perry's new house right now, do you think, looking towards Marshall?

VK: Well, it's quite a ways beyond where they live, Anne, quite a ways beyond. You know where the Marshall store is down there on the flat, you know where the boats are, well it's just up on the hill beyond that. Then we would stop, our next stop would be, we would go up to Tomales and we would leave books at the Tomales Library and collect the books from the Tomales Library ----

CE: Is that library closed now?

VK: Well, I read somewhere or heard somewhere that it was. Now, this again is something that has happened since I've been out of the library and I don't know.

CE: Well, there have been changes and reorganizations and --- unification ---

VK: I think possibly - probably it's probably been arranged that that would be served by the Bookmobile now. I mean, I'm sure there not left without service, you know.

AK: Now, that Bookmobile had a definite time and place didn't it?

VK: Oh yes, Anne, they knew exactly what time we were to be there at the school, they knew what time we would be in Point Reyes, they knew what time we'd be at Tomales.

CE: Well, may I ask you, Virginia, in addition to filling the orders that were requested, did you have an inventory, a library of general reading also there that people could browse and make a selection?

VK: Oh, yes. We had several thousand books on the shelves, yes. And those books were changed so that people didn't get bored with seeing the same titles, you know, all the time. We had a about an equal selection of adult and juvenile books. One of the things you might like to know - has nothing to do with the Bookmobile - When I said Tomales, we use to have Judge Bowen's court in the Tomales Library. Because he was supposed to hold court so many days a week upstairs which was the Town Hall, but it was very cold and drafty and boring up there and I don't think he had too many cases, you know, so he asked me if there were any reason he couldn't sit downstairs in the library and hold his court down in the library. I didn't see any reason why he couldn't and so he used to --- You knew him, Anne ---

AK: Oh, I knew him ----

VK: So he used to have - to hold his court down in the library.

AK: His wife just died ----

VK: Yes, I knew her, too. She was a delightful woman. So, anyhow, we always tried to use the library for every possible community affair that we could. Like we'd have chess games in the Kentfield Library, you know, in the back room ----

CE: Yes, I heard about that.

VK: Just to bring it into every part of the community that we could share in, the library had a part.

CE: Getting back to the Bookmobile just a moment longer, is that job, for instance, you hire X number of librarians to fulfill your need (within your budget). Say you have the twelve branches today and the two Bookmobiles, is the person who gets the Bookmobile job a regular librarian or --- I guess what I'm trying to say is, suppose someone likes to travel, they'd say, "I'd love to be a librarian if I could run the Bookmobile." Is that often honored, that kind of a request? Or do you rotate your personnel?

VK: No. The two girls that I had all during my - during the time that I was in charge of the library, handled the Bookmobile. I had the same two girls.

CE: And they just enjoyed that?

VK: Yes. The only change that I had was the one day a month when Perry and I took the Bookmobile to the branches and to the Point Reyes stop because I wanted to go on that trip because that gave me a chance to visit the branches that I didn't see on the regular schedule otherwise. But, otherwise, I had Edna Winfield on the school Bookmobile on a regular schedule and Sarah Smart, her name was, she has since remarried, her name is Sarah Zentius now, on the Community Bookmobile. Those two girls handled the two Bookmobiles all during the time I was librarian.

CE: Tell me, Virginia, your years in this wonderful work, did you notice a change in the taste of library patrons? For example, I understand recently there have been some economic hard times and people have used the library more. Hard times are supposed to be boom times for libraries. Have you noticed any particular, or did you notice changes in people's taste? For instance, today people are interested in taking out books on how to repair things, very practical. In the slumping economy seems to have created an interest in geology, biology, medicine and practical things, how to fix things. Did you notice any change or trend?

VK: Well, during the depression we certainly had that, because I very well remember the depression. I wasn't librarian at that time, but I can remember in Kentfield, those were the things we had so many calls for. When I used to be the Kentfield librarian, you know, before I was County - before I was in charge of the library.

CE: Oh, I didn't know that.

VK: Yes, I started my library work in the Kentfield Library and I was there, you see, before I became the head librarian.

AK: Vegetable gardens -

VK: Yes, vegetable gardens and all that kind of thing were very, very much in demand. Since then, you know, they have general taste of interesting things.

CE: All right, now, I think we must talk about the wonderful California Room, which is your creation. You don't know what an enthusiastic response we get --- Isn't true, Mrs. Kent?

AK: Yes, wonderful.

CE: Whenever we go out interviewing people, and we've been all over the county and interviewed descendents of early pioneer Marin families, they ask, "Where are these tapes going?" We tell them that they are going to be deposited in that wonderful California Room for the use of future scholars and historians and when we say the California Room, they say, "Well that's all right." Isn't that true, Mrs. Kent?

AK: Very true.

CE: I think it is a wonderful thing and your present Civic Center Branch Librarian Virginia Borland is so enthusiastic about that room and she wants to make it the Bancroft Library of Marin County.

VK: I know she does!

CE: Well, why not?

AK: The Bancroft Library people are interested in it, too.

VK: Well, Virginia has a tremendous knowledge herself, you know, and a great interest, that's the main thing.

CE: How did it come about?

VK: Well, it just started, as I say, in one locked case and I have always felt that the responsibility of the librarian was the local history because there hadn't been anything.

CE: Very good. There's been so little written about Marin.

VK: Well, now fortunately that's not the case now. But, we had at that time one copy of the Munro-Fraser History of Marin County and that was in the locked case. So, I decided the only thing we can do if we don't have any books, were going to have to try and collect newspaper articles, magazine articles, just anything that we can. So we started doing that and that was the beginning of some of the scrapbook material that I had been collecting. You know, there'd be an article in the Chronicle or an article in the IJ and of course Florence Donnelly, bless her heart, was the greatest source of material ---

CE: You have a whole collection of those Marin Magazine sections of the IJ -

VK: Yes, and then we indexed them, you know and ----

CE: Yes. You have the biographical folders?

VK: Yes, all those things. Well, we were going to try to sort of fill the gap, as it were, because there wasn't any material and I thought eventually there would be material written but we're going to have to give them something to write about, you know, because it has to go. Then, of course, came the Writers Project and the WPA and the SERA and the man that was in charge of that was a man name Cliff Flack - You remember Cliff, of course, and he was a friend of mine, and he was in charge of the Writers Project in Marin County. I was able to help him in getting material and in return he gave me a lot of his source material. So that, more or less, gave us a good sort of start and since then, many people have used our files in the California Room. When we were able to move into the Coleman School Building, we blocked off one section of the hallway, blocked the hallway off, and so the only way into the California Room was through my office. And then this carpenter, who was a friend of ours from Novato who had done carpenter work, built shelving for me, made me a rough sign, redwood sign, "California Room." Of course we got a lot of teasing about that, they said, "Is that where the barroom is?" when we put up the sign. Of course by that time we had gathered quite a few books, they weren't all on Marin County, they were books on California.

CE: Well it's depository for all of California.

VK: Yes - western material.

AK: How about Cliff's book - Cliff, then, wrote that ---

VK: Two volumes -

AK: Could you tell us something about that?

VK: Well Cliff's book - he turned over to me two thick - a thick manuscript, which I had bound. I sent it up to this bindery up in - Angwin Book Bindery up in Napa County. We

divided it into two volumes because it was so cumbersome, you know, so it is known as a chronological history because it was just a series of dates. But, he had gone through the history of Marin County and then he started in on the very early newspapers and so it was a priceless document. It had all what happened, you know, the important events of each date through these two volumes. Then there was another man, Anne, you remember Mr. Meret? Did you ever know Mr. Meret from Kentfield?

AK: No, no.

VK: Well, he did the same thing. It was very, very similar to Cliff's book. In some cases it was even a little fuller. So I did the same thing with that. When that was available, I took that and had that bound and so that was a chronological history, too.

AK: Is that one still in the library? And the other one was lost - the other one has a - one volume of Cliff's, anyway, has a funny history because it disappeared and then when it was found it was returned, I think, to the San Rafael Library. It's the most precious thing in San Rafael Library owns, they allow you to take it to a table and bring it back, and it is no longer in the County Library and nobody seems to know how that happened.

CE: When you say Cliff, do you mean ----

AK: Cliff Flack.

CE: Clifford Flack, than you. Yes, Mrs. Kent and I saw that in the San Rafael Library.

VK: But that couldn't be our copy, surely, because ours would have been stamped with the County Library stamp.

AK: Well, I can't understand it ---

VK: I don't think the San Rafael Library would keep our copy, I can't believe that.

AK: Well, I don't think they knew. I suppose somebody brought it in and have it to them.

CE: Well that's a mystery you girls will have to pursue. But tell me, Virginia, you have acquired the papers of individuals, for example, Dr. Stanley's papers.

VK: Yes, well now that again happened after I had left.

CE: You're gradually acquiring some valuable material in this wonderful California Room.

VK: Yes. Well many people have given us nice collections of books, too. I know we received from an automobile man from San Francisco some very interesting photographs, early photographs, of the San Francisco fire, for instance -

CE: Oh, Fred Patt's collection -

VK: Yes. They were given to the library. Then we received many interesting books at various times and, of course, one of my special interests was when we got gift books in.

CE: Gift books?

VK: Well, books that were donated, donated books, because I was always looking for - well, particularly I was interested in all books but naturally particularly books that would supplement our California collection and once in a while you'd find something really interesting. Now, a box of books came in from Sonoma County, or I assume they came from Sonoma County because they came in through the Novato Branch, and there was a Jack London with - inscribed, you know ---

CE: Wonderful!

VK: And that, of course, went into the California collection and it had --- I've forgotten what the phrase was, but anyhow, something or other "signed, Jack London," you know. Then I found another book one time that was a collection of Joaquin Miller's poems, which at that time was listed at quite a high price because it was an unusual copy, not one of the well known ones. So, I was always searching for, you know, books that would prove of value through the years - Another thing that I was just crazy about doing was buying from these remainder dealers, you know, because lots of times you could get real good bargains. For instance, you won't believe this, but I got four volumes of Engelhardt's Missions of California for ten dollars. Four volumes, because they were slightly water stained, you know, and they offered them to me - he offered them to me, this remainder man, he said, "They're slightly water stained," so of course, I went through them quickly to see if the insides were all right.

AK: I don't know what a remainder is, I don't know what that is.

VK: Remainders are books that are left over from a store.

AK: Oh, not a family or not an estate?

VK: No, no from the stores. Well, of course, the remainders can be from anything. A store, Anne, would buy up an estate and then offer them. They're like second-hand, you know?

CE: You know, Mrs. Kent, a former librarian, head of the Moya Library, she has been - during her tenure, she has received many beautiful books given in memory of people. I wonder, do people give books to the California Room in memory somebody or that could be instituted ---

AK: Good Idea.

VK: I don't remember them giving to the California Room but we have received art books in the County Library.

CE: Well, I was thinking, there are a lot of individual families right here in Marin who have beautiful libraries and in those libraries are a great deal of California literature and histories, I just thought we must get some of that into that California Room.

VK: Well, perhaps the Friends of the Library have already done that, you know there's a very active group ---

CE: That's true ---

VK: That Mr. Bajema, Bruce, has - you know, that were started, the Friends group started after I left ---

CE: Yes - Mildred Bissenger is the present president and they've been most co-operative. In fact, they have assisted Mrs. Kent and I in this Oral History Program and it's a wonderful thing and we'll be hearing about it for years in the future, it will grow and grow and how fortunate you've started it Virginia. Now, Mrs. Kent there's another part of the library that is so fascinating, that's the Children's library. Tell us how that came about. Did that happen during your tenure, the Children Library?

VK: The first children's librarian that the county had ever was, the first professional children's librarian that we had was Miss Barbara Rauhala, who I think is still with the library, is she not?

CE: I believe so.

VK: And we were just delighted to get Barbara because she came highly recommended. We were very happy that she was willing to come to Marin County because she left a post which was closer to her home, and everyone has always been very pleased with her work. She has a tremendous rapport with youngsters. Everything she has done in the library while I was there and since I've been gone, I believe, has been just very, very wonderful. Since then, I believe there have been other children's librarians hired. I've watched the various programs that have been instituted for children. I notice in the paper there have been quite a few programs in Corte Madera which are very interesting and innovative, you know. Mask making and some of the other things, which are new. I don't know if you all have seen the wonderful children's area in Corte Madera which is so unique, you know - the amphitheater idea, which certainly is conducive to make a wonderful storytelling time.

CE: Beautiful, yes.

VK: And many of the branches have story telling.

CE: Well, don't you think it's unusual, though - has a study been made about the percentage of children who really avail themselves of your Marin County Library? Isn't the percentage quite high?

VK: ?

AK: I think it is perfectly wonderful the way children learn to use the files, they learn to use the Reference Departments very, very early. I think it's fifty percent due to the children's rooms in the public libraries that have done it.

VK: Anne do you remember way back when we had Frances Clark-Sayers as our storyteller?

AK: ? storyteller, she's one of the four that I know in the whole world.

VK: Well, this was a very long time ago, before she was well known, before she had really become famous as she later turned out to be. She was living in Sausalito and so we decided we would ask her to give a series of stories around the county and so we did. We had a story hour - remember Anne? - in Novato and Point Reyes and all over. One of the things I can remember most about that was that she evidently hadn't seen a great deal of Marin County before we started taking her to these various places. We came down along Papermill Creek and it was just the time of year when all the beautiful trees were bright yellow and she was, of course, a tremendously, tremendously sensitive person who appreciated beauty and I've never seen anyone who was so impressed with how beautiful the country was. Then later after that, she gave many courses, of course, and was - you know, professor at the University of California. But we really started out, didn't we, Anne? You know, we were the one of the very first --- And of course we always had story hours all summer, in the branches.

CE: Oh you did?

VK: They were not professional storytellers but they were people who had experience with children, some nursery school teachers and people who had rapport with children and so almost all the branches offered some type of summer programs for the children. But now since we've had Miss Rauhala, or the library has had Miss Rauhala, why, I know they have planned in much more professional type of programs.

CE: You know, sitting here thinking of all the services that a library does, specifically the Marin County Library, in addition to circulating over 200,000 books; I understand 500 people a day used the Civic Center Branch last year, and also over 844,000 books were circulated. In addition to having 65,000 card holders that you have presently, and according to Betty Times she thinks its going to increase to 100,000 shortly, you're serving 206,000 population of Marin, according to the last census. All right, you've got those books circulating. In addition the service that your library does, and from what I've observed every time I went into the Civic Center Branch, your information center of your Reference Department is overwhelming. I've never been there when the phone hasn't been ringing and the girls who are staffing that tell me that it's thrilling. They never know when they pick up the phone what they're going to be asked.

AK: May I say, too, that I never heard one time, I never have heard them say, "Well that's something I don't know, maybe you can ask such and such." And that's more than I can say of the great number of libraries I've been in. Where men or women have been on duty and we have asked questions and they have not made an effort, but in Marin County Library never once, they always follow through no matter how long it takes.

CE: Yes, I think your personnel there is - they're outstanding. I'm impressed with the information center, that's another service you do. Then - people wonder, "Why do you need so many librarians?" - They're answering the phone, they're running here or there, they're finding books, you have your circulation staff, and then you have your periodicals at Civic Center - They've got over 600 periodicals, you're checking in, circulating around.

AK: The exhibits -

CE: All right, I was getting to that. In addition, you've got this tremendous space and utilization of it by having these educational and exciting exhibits of art, of culture. That, to me, is a sort of - and programs. Through this bicentennial year, you've got thirty programs going all the way from Greek dances to ---

VK: I missed that, I was so sorry.

AK: It is so wonderful.

CE: This is a tremendous thing a library does.

AK: We learned that that Greek night not only did we see and hear the music and the dancing but every town in that particular area has a different costume and there were people - not only the one nice woman who ran it but other people spoke up and the priest was there and they told about their religion, they told about their costumes, they told about their everyday living. It was wonderful.

CE: Well, I think it's thrilling and stimulating and a wonderful reservoir that your library provides. Look, Anne, I mean, here they've advanced from their catalog system now, they've got into computerized circulation control system. I think was instituted after your retirement ---

VK: Oh yes, yes - I don't know a thing about that --- don't know and don't care!

CE: But I think it was the man who succeeded you, your assistant Bruce Bajema, who you named as your successor and was appointed as librarian and he's sticking with it. He's installed it and he's going to make it work, and I suppose it will. I know anybody who's worked with computers, the few initial years are headaches but then it does enable one to accomplish so much more. Tell me Virginia, what were your long-range goals for the library and have some of them been achieved?

VK: Well, the thing that I just mentioned was that I had always thought in terms of this regional type of program, you know. Even as long ago as when Mr. Jensen was there, he was one of the first Administrators, because he asked me the same question and I told him that I thought we should look forward to a day when we would have regional libraries with ---

CE: What do you mean when you say "regional?"

VK: Well libraries such have they have now. Instead of having a lot of small libraries that we should look forward to certain centers that would be much - not everybody having to come to the Civic Center as being the only place where there was an adequate facility. That there should be, with the growth of the county, adequate facilities in various spots. As I say, when I look back and I remember talking with him, I said, "Now the centers are outlined by the various areas where the population center is. Novato is going to be probably the second, if not the first, largest city in the county and there certainly is room for a very large library in the Corte Madera area." At that time, I'll be quite frank, I envisioned Larkspur and Corte Madera getting together which they haven't done but I certainly ----

CE: Well Virginia, you have a book there in your hand ---

VK: Well, this is a book about the Clement Woodnott Miller who was one of our most famous representatives in Congress. After his tragic death, his friends and his mother contributed money to establish a special collection in his honor in the County Library. These books are on civil liberties and it is one of the best collections of books on that subject. So if you are interested in that subject, inquire for books in this special collection.

CE: In the special collection - thank you. Is it housed in the California Room?

VK: No, it is in the regular library.

CE: Well, Virginia, you've seen many changes. You've seen and been responsible for many worthwhile things that have continued long after your retirement. I think, Virginia, we have to salute you for your many years of dedicated service, for your excellent and imaginative performance as County Librarian. The entire county is truly in your debt for your many innovative ideas, the remarkable Bookmobile and its success, the California Room, a living room of heritage of this remarkable county and our State. We truly thank you for these two fine accomplishment also. We know today that your library is a mini university where one can get information on almost anything. For the high standards that prevail, we all thank you for your leadership and inspiration. Thank you today for letting us come and talk with you and share your reminiscences of the Marin County Library. Mrs. Kent would you like to conclude?

AK: Oh, I'd just say we're very proud of you, Virginia, very proud of the library, indeed.

CE: And we're proud to be a part of it in the California Room.

VK: Well, I thank you both and I certainly enjoyed the entire interview.

CE: Thank you so much.