

## **Ellen Clarke**

### **Side 1:**

[20] During this time she got to know the people working in the field, the director of Adult Ed for ABCCM and jail minister. They worked with volunteers who established a library (using old push carts from old Pack Library) providing clothes to be used for hearings and following up with families on the outside. [Jean Warst Robbins, Tony Sayer]

[44] She had been in jail every day and knew this was the least productive place for non-violent offenders, whose destructive behavior was directed toward themselves and not society. [Judge Lewis P. Witchard]

[55] She became increasingly frustrated with this approach and her insight coincided with the perception across the state that perhaps there were better ways to hold offenders accountable. During the last two years of her work at ABCCM she was part of a state-wide commission to assess the effectiveness of imprisonment and to make recommendations to the Governor. [Judge Lewis P. Witchard]

[65] The Reynolds Foundation paid for the analyses and she was selected as a member of the commission. A new experimental program resulted from this called "Alternative Sentencing" or "Client Specific Planning." This entailed working with the defendant and coming up with recommendations for the judge - a rehabilitative treatment plan in lieu of prison.

[85] Five cities were funded by the foundation, one was Asheville and she wanted to be a part of it. She, with two volunteers who had worked at the jail created an organization which they incorporated in 1982 called "Western North Carolinians for Criminal Justice." They received a grant from Reynolds and began serving clients in 1983. Office space was offered in the Central Methodist Church. Indigent defendants were interviewed and a report was sent to the judge for consideration. [Sally Bridenstine, Jim Kauflin]

[104] There is no formal collaboration with the other funded groups but they all trained together - (Raleigh, Greensboro, and Fayetteville) in the National Center in Institutions and Alternatives in Washington. These four groups became the lab for the Community Penalties Program of N.C., funded in 1984 by the legislature.

[117] This community based correctional approach to criminal behavior is cost effective and productive, it is less expensive and generates better results than jail service. Eighty percent are staying out of custody and saving expenses, which has had the approval of both Democratic and Republican representatives. She has found it very exciting to be part of the effort since 1983 to offer a more progressive and humane approach to the difficult problem of crime and punishment.

[150] This is a way that continues to prove itself and, while it is not a salvation, it is one positive direction and may be as significant as Head Start.

[179] Problems facing rural areas differ from urban areas in that the clients in the country are less distressed but the resources are paltry. In the cities offenders are younger and more violent and problems more severe, but there are many resources. Seven counties west of Buncombe, where the population is smaller, will take the strategy in use here and adapt it to fill the local needs. North Carolina heads the nation in its statewide analysis and approach to this problem.

[202] Both public and private funds are used for this program. Along with the Z. Smith Reynolds (enclosed) Foundation, grants from local foundations have also been obtained: The Janirve Foundation and Community foundation. Other groups also contribute: the Jr. League, Unitarian Universalist Church, United Way, Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church. In 1986 the State General Assembly contributed 85% of their budget and 15% was raised locally: This support has continued.

[231] There is a local board of Directors (see MacPherson tape). The eighteen members representing a variety of backgrounds, offer advice and raise money. [Robert MacPherson]

[238] All the people working in this office are employees of the agency which contracts with the administrative office of the courts to provide alternative sentencing plans.

[244] A video of "Women at Risk" was developed (contact the office to see it). The program was modeled after a program used in the main prison in Raleigh, developed by a colleague. It was adapted to be used with women eligible for alternative sentencing and provides intensive treatment. [Fay Sulton]

[303] The clients are the most disadvantaged women who live marginal lives and have suffered severe hardships. The therapists and social workers meet them where they are. They live outside and come to the office for counseling and Trinity Church for group treatment. They are able to live with their family, take care of their children, work to pay off fines and learn to manage their lives while being offered guidance and emotional support. Childcare is provided when they meet in the Trinity Church lounge.

[362] Trinity Place (see Morrissey tape) is an alternative placement for runaway juveniles. Treatment is also given.

[364] The 29th and 30th judicial district has programs for women and men defendants facing jail and prison sentences. This is somewhat similar to the "Women at Risk" program. By the end of the summer 13 counties will provide one or the other program.

[387] This is part of a larger effort nationwide to try to explore alternatives to incarceration. The timing is good.

[404] There is a crisis in prison overcrowding: Lawsuits on the part of prisoners because of conditions is a constant threat and policy makers are tired of putting so much money into prisons. This is another approach - a cost effective and positive option. The crime rate has begun to drop nationally but because of the increased population (Baby Boomers) there was a

rise in crime. Drugs had a great deal to do with that. This program is not for everyone - it is for the non-violent offender. (Fast forward to other side.)

## **Side 2:**

In 1977 she and her husband, a graduate from the Pacific School of Ministry, decided to come back to the South East. ABCCM, under the direction of Wilcher, with offices on Broadway, worked with a search committee to find people who could work in a cooperative effort to help the incarcerated. [Tony Sayer, Robert Wilcher, Thomas Morrissey]

[2/20] She first went into jail in Alabama. By finding a nun who visited regularly she was able to accompany her, get to know the inmate needs, meet the county commissioners, mental health staff and social service workers.

[2/43] After her 18-month project was concluded she went to the University of California, taking courses in criminal justice and working with citizens groups looking at problems in their jails. Three areas were studied. 1. The local aspect and citizens that wanted to help 2. Rehabilitation - looking for better programs for inmates. 3. Advocacy other options to policies used.

[2/56] She found that Alabama, California, and N.C. shared the same profile - all problems are similar and present themselves in the jail environment, i.e. teen age pregnancy, illiteracy, drug and alcohol abuse, rape, and sub-standard housing.

[2/70] Every time a person of the middle class or upper class finds herself in a tragic and sad event, the system works quickly to ameliorate her discomfort and stay as quickly as possible. "If we were as concerned about the people in Hillcrest as we are about Biltmore Forest we would have a whole different situation."

[2/77] She is a native of Alabama and grew up during the Civil Rights Movement. The attorney of Parks, who refused to sit in the back of the bus, was a close friend of her family's. She knew friends of King, was excited by the marches and wanted to do more than her parents wanted her to do. The problems and issues were table conversation, they were part of her white, middle class background. Her father was sympathetic to the blacks but had to keep his job. Citizens were divided in their attitude toward outsiders coming to demonstrate, some of her friends felt insulted. [Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King]

[2/113] She graduated from St. Andrews College in N.C., worked in Washington for two years and got her master's degree from Union Theological.

[2/124] Through her white friends she has heard about Building Bridges but because of her background, living in Montford and having her children attend a class of mostly blacks, she has no need to attend. She feels that this program offers an opportunity for people to be authentic with one another.

[2/178] The video of the women who have graduated from the program will be enlarged and show to new clients. This will help assuage their apprehension about the process. They are wary, scared and self-conscious when they begin.

[2/203] There is a discussion about inviting former clients to form a committee which would be helpful in future planning. Because the office is in the middle of town, former clients can drop in, however they have busy lives. Life is not easy for them. Many are young mothers in abusive situations.

[2/238] If left to their own choice, most clients would not choose to be here and they would not follow through. Their choice is either this program or jail. If they do not show up, this is reported back to the court. They are held responsible. The drop-out rate isn't high and, while the program can't be worked out for the clients' convenience, it is made "user friendly." Child care is provided on site and on a bus line. When needed, they are helped with transportation.

[2/264] While the group does not work directly with the schools, children in need of care are hooked up with resources. There are a number of children (about 200) with mothers incarcerated in prison. A church group relates to these children. [Melva Banks]

[2/286] When a man goes to prison there is usually a mom around but when she goes there is a different problem. Either a grandmother, sister, aunt or foster home take over. This is another argument for an alternative program - to keep a family intact. Eliada home is used, safe and affordable housing, shelters and half-way houses are used. Housing is a problem (see Margaret Dowdle tape).

[2/302] Between 1975-1982 two volunteers worked with her at ABCCM. They are the ones who worked with her to start this agency. Here the board members and advisory committee members and advisory committee members volunteer. There is not much opportunity for volunteers work because of the need for training, knowledge of the court system, consistency and the significant amount of time needed. The board conducts an annual fund drive and occasionally sponsors forums.

[2/327] She has been asked by a teacher of criminality in the Asheville High School to talk about the program, show the film and after a quiz, contrast what they believe with the facts: there are 100 prisons in N.C. with nearly 30,000 inmates a year costing \$25,000 each for a year stay. She also reviews the kinds of crime people typically commit. [Miss Burris]

[2/346] Some years ago the film "Scared Straight" was popular. She questions about its value as a deterrence. A former district attorney said " a criminal does not think consequentially". He does not think beyond the action and is often too young or too high. [Ron Brown]

[2/383/] She wants people to know that this is a citizen based, non-profit organization, managed by a volunteer board of directors from folks in the community. It is part of a state-wide effort in N.C. and relies on the public and government to offer services that are more creative and therapeutic than jail service.

[2/394] She feels she is on the cutting edge of something that is going to grow. The program started in 1983 and this is long enough to see the results. The staff feel as though they have found their niche. She is grateful for the opportunity.