

Helen Tarasov Reed

1989 Recording – Summary

[Introduction - Norma Snap - AAUW project (1989-05-03)] This tape was one of several for the AAUW as a project following a panel presentation of taping oral histories.

The following is a review of the information.

Helen was born in 1915 in Toronto Canada of Russian intellectual and liberal parents. Her goal in life was to work in International Relations in Washington but women were discriminated against. She, through a scholarship, got a masters in International Law from Fletchers [International Centre for Commercial Law]. Despite the Depression she was always employed - usually in top professions. She married a dye chemist and moved to Asheville in 1946 where her husband (died 1978) was employed at Enka. They had three children. She traveled extensively and taught in China for 2 years. She mentions outstanding local AAUW women. [Florence Bynum (Mrs. Curtis) , Edie Foster, Ida van Dobbenburgh (Mrs. W. J.), Lucille Clasz (Mrs. Edward L.), Mary Westall]

1992 Recording

Side 1:

[1/1] Introduction. We refer to the tape she made for the AAUW.

[1/9] She put her son in the Country Day School because the public school wanted to skip him. At first she was a volunteer and then for 13 years taught language as a staff member. This was experimental teaching which introduced children to a new way of thinking. She taught German, French, Spanish and Russian. She introduced a course in civics and the students visited courts and banks. [Ronald Reed, Jane Bingham, Marshall Abell, Wilder Penfield]

[1/87] She has always been a freelance interpreter and translator.

[1/102] She always wanted to go to China and taught advanced English to engineers for 2 years, starting in 1984. In 1989 she joined a North Carolina Friendship group and sailed on the schooner Vega as an interpreter. The purpose was to check the environment and promote relationships. There were 23 Americans and 22 Russians. [Pearl Buck]

[1/270] Her parents were born Russian Orthodox but were agnostics. Her husband was a Baptist and, when they heard about a group that wanted to start a Unitarian church, they joined the meetings. [Dianne Ronald]

[1/308] The group met at the Congregational Church and in people's homes. As the group grew in numbers they rented space in the YMCA for 5 years. [Ruth Melcher, George and Muriel Cornell]

[1/327] With 40-50 people the group looked for a permanent home. The former mansion on 120 Vermont Ave. with a large yard and trees was acquired. She describes the house. [Andrew Reed, Norman E. (Norm) Poultney]

[1/362] Because of the change in the Social Security law Welch, a former retired minister, could afford to come out of retirement and the fellowship became a church. [Rev. Daniel M. Welch]

[1/387] There was an ongoing relationship with the community through participation in activities such as schools, League of Women Voters, AAUW, etc. The minister met with outside groups. Many members had been Unitarians in the north. Some came from Jewish or Catholic backgrounds. [Mrs. Cornell, Wood and Ruth Melcher]

[1/439] While many Unitarian churches close for the summer, this one did not. Visitors were attracted and the membership grew.

[1/461] When, on a cold morning, the boiler blew up there was an immediate pledge of \$1,200. Pigeons in the attic were a problem. [Norman Holbert, Grace Welch (Mrs. Daniel M.)]

[1/518] A capitol fund of \$3,000 was raised (see history by organist) toward the building of a new church. [Russell Woodson]

[1/535] Church has always been a big part in her family life. Her son purchased the old church organ. He had been inspired by the organist. [Andrew Reed, Russell Woodson]

[1/581] Officers from the Unitarian Headquarters furnished advice and Beacon Press material was used.

Side 2:

[2/1] he church grew steadily. In 1962 [1963] Welch retired, Mr. Gross was called and church status was officially given. However, Mr. Gross, while being a good organizer and an excellent counselor, did not give popular sermons. He went with the N.C. Heart Association and later into the field of social work in PA. [Rev. Daniel M. Welch, Rev. Richard R. Gross]

[2/34] In 1967 Carl Sandburg's widow asked to have a service conducted for him.

[2/43] Universalists and Unitarians merged as their philosophies were similar. A new minister came in 1968. [Rev. Tracy M. Pullman]

[2/74] Reuben Robertson had been interested in starting a Unitarian Church many years before but was unable to gather enough people. In 1969 Dr. and Mrs. Logan Robertson offered property

on Edwin Place and Charlotte St. with three year matching fund of \$7,000 annually. [Reuben Robertson, Logan Robertson]

[2/93] When the church became visible the size of membership doubled and younger people joined. The architect was a church member. [William O. Moore]

[2/114] Ground breaking took place in 1971 and the first service was held in 1972.

[2/136] "Noonlighters" (a monthly luncheon meeting) and other activities were added. The property is rented out to local activities at a nominal charge and is very popular, especially since parking is easy.

[2/163] On the resignation of a minister, interim ministers come for a specified period of time. This position gives the congregation time to search for a new compatible minister.

[2/179] During the period of integration throughout the 50's, Unitarians met with other like-minded people to plan sit-ins. Two days after this occurred a small squib in the newspaper simply stated this as a past fact - stating that the integration had taken place. [Ann Boyce, Eunice Adams, Walter Adams]

[2/253] A local merchant hired qualified Blacks in his store and found that other merchants were hiring them away from him - so he hired more. [Harry Winner]

[2/270] Over the years there have been a number of Blacks in the congregation.

[2/281] Over the years there have been discussions about whether or not the church should take stands with the decision that the church would take a position on social issues. [Rev. William D. Hammond]

[2/298] In 1974 the treasurer embezzled \$10,000. Now the treasurer is bonded [three years later there was an anonymous donation of \$10,000]. he church accepted social responsibility for a Vietnam family. The memorial garden was dedicated and "Care Rings" (sectional meetings) were established.

[2/345] Professional fund raisers were employed in 1977 [1987?] and church school classes expanded into the Jefferson House [a residence next door, bought in 1987]. Three times the annual budget was raised.

[2/367] People in Hendersonville talked of starting a church but decided that, considering the amount of work involved, it was easier to commute.

[2/398] Members had performed most of the office work but now the secretary and office manager are paid.

[2/421] She taught 7th and 8th grades in the church school and liked working on the Bylaws Committee.

[2/430] Her husband was chairman of the board and 10 years later she was chairman. She also finished an un-expired term for a chairman whose company transferred him out of town. [Haldee Reed, Adrian Drost]

[2/441] The Reed children were active in Liberal Religious Youth and the Blue Ridge Assembly (a YMCA meeting place).

[2/482] She mentions how pleased Reuben Robertson was to see the church flourishing - this had been his dream in the 20's.