Leave The Dishes In The Sink

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6 Social Justice: The 1960s

Liberal Tendencies

Over the years my liberal tendencies moved against the conservatism of Cache Valley, Utah, a conservatism far older than I.

Historian Charles S. Peterson, researching Cache Valley between 1890 and 1915, found it to be homogeneous with two-thirds of its population by birth being British, Scandinavian, or Swiss. They were little given to change because of the Mormon tradition and a strong sense of the family farm. Farm families were large and did the work so that itinerant workers and labor organizations were almost totally excluded. Even though hard times hit and mortgage debt grew, Cache Valley’s people sought to conform to the system rather than reform it, as did Great Plains farmers and Oregon’s Progressives.¹

Wynne grew up in a small Utah farm town twenty-five miles south of Logan, in a family of Democrats more liberal than their neighbors. Together, Wynne and I expanded our horizons by reading Harpers, The Saturday Review, and the Sunday New York Times, the latter being a heavy burden on the mail carrier. We were Democrats, but as a university administrator Wynne had to be more circumspect than I, so I worked in the party for both of us. In the early 1960s one of the programs we favored was subsidized medical care for the elderly.

It happened one November that a talk was to be given on our campus by Dr. George Fister of Ogden, who was then president of the American Medical Association. He refused to divulge his subject ahead of time, but we speculated that he would speak either about quackery, or else about socialized medicine, which the AMA opposed. He would address Town and Gown, an informal gathering open to everyone, preceded by dinner. Town and Gown was invented by USU President Daryl Chase in an effort to ease tensions between townspeople and faculty. I suspected Fister’s talk would not ease the tension between me and the medical profession.

Wynne and I went to the dinner, bringing with us several visitors from the United States Department of Agriculture who had come from Washington, D.C. for the dedication of the new Crops and Entomology...
Labs. I said to our guests, ahead of time, that if it turned out that Dr. Fister was speaking against socialized medicine, I would not stay to listen. The large campus dining room was packed. I swear every medical doctor in Cache Valley was there, and I wondered who was minding the store. It was certainly no evening for medical emergencies.

After we ate, Fister rose to speak, and I realized in his first few sentences that he was there to argue against socialized medicine. I rose and departed. But Wynne and guests remained, trapped by people who had shoved their chairs about to get a better view. Afterwards the guests told me the speaker had made them more firmly convinced than ever that elderly people should have socialized medicine tied to Social Security.² Four years later, on July 30, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson went to Independence, Missouri to sign the new Medicare bill in the presence of former President Harry S. Truman, who had proposed such a program twenty year earlier.

At another Town and Gown meeting that same month I did stay to hear the speaker. I wrote about it in my family letter and also told about Kip at Caltech. We heard Judd Harmon, a young political scientist, wade into John Birch societies and their ilk. He didn’t pull any punches and called arch-conservatives Cleon Skouson and Ernest Wilkinson by name.³ I was astonished when the wife of a Board of Trustees’ member said, “Wasn’t Judd Harmon disgusting? I kept hoping he was drunk and not responsible for those horrible things that he said.”

A similar thing happened when Esther Peterson came to campus to speak on employment for women. She was the Utah native newly appointed assistant secretary of labor and head of the Women’s Bureau. The wife of a university official said to me, “Esther Peterson is a terrible woman. She thinks all women should leave their homes and go to work. I hear she’s an atheist, too.”

That was quite a family letter. I also wrote the following:

Kip is tackling the Supreme Court. He is protesting the loyalty oath required for applicants for the National Science Foundation fellowships. Wrote an editorial for the Caltech paper. Organized “CODA,” which coordinates similar efforts by graduate students on other campuses. He will attach a disclaimer to his own applications and ask others to do so also. Then Linus Pauling’s lawyer will take Kip’s case to the Supreme Court. This lawyer has argued a good many cases before the Court. Kip will become a controversial figure if the case is accepted by the Court. Wynne thinks it is ok to try, but Kip’s father-in-law is not so sure and thinks he may
end up a martyr for nothing. Kip’s scientific abilities ought to enable him to get a fellowship whether he is involved in this sort of business or not.

As matters turned out, the case did not go to the Supreme Court, and though denied at first, Kip did receive fellowships.

Conservatism always showed up at the annual November dinner of the State Farm Bureau, held in Salt Lake City. Because Wynne was director of the Utah Agricultural Experiment Station, he and I attended. I remarked in a family letter that the national president of the Farm Bureau, who spoke at the annual dinner, ranted against socialism in his talk. I also said that Wynne had attended national meetings in Washington and was elected chairman of all directors of agricultural experiment stations. Other letters indicate that the Farm Bureau and the Cache County Commission were against mosquito abatement, and against more funding for the public library. I had discovered that more money was appropriated for weed control than for the library, and I said so in public, whereupon the county government ceased indicating on our tax notices how much went to what programs.

Proposals to fluoridate Logan’s water supply always met hostility, even though Preston, Idaho, twenty-five miles north of us, had been fluoridating its water supply for ten years. In February 1964, Sandra and her teeth appeared on educational television as an example of what lack of fluoridation could do, as compared to the teeth of a Preston girl of the same age. Both girls and their dental charts were shown, with Sandra having two-and-one-half times as many fillings as the Preston girl. Four dentists on the program pointed out that Utah ranked fiftieth among the states with regard to correct amount of fluoridation in drinking water.

As for the broader world, it touched our community when Peace Corps recruits began coming to USU for training. While people vaguely hoped the Peace Corps would increase chances of world peace, local authorities were busy stocking basements of various public buildings as bomb shelters. Wynne and I cleaned up our coal room, the furnace having been converted to natural gas, and put in shelves and some supplies, figuring that in an emergency we could drink water from our hot water tank and hot water radiators. We would strengthen our bomb shelter ceiling by stacking books on the living room floor directly above us. We thought we knew what we were doing, and then the Paulings entered our lives.
In the fall of 1961 Wynne learned that Edward Teller, inventor of the hydrogen bomb, was scheduled to speak on campus the next February. He insisted that Linus Pauling be invited to speak so the public could hear both sides. As events turned out, Pauling spoke early in February and Teller later that month.

Pauling and his wife arrived in Utah in a heavy fog. We didn’t know where they had landed. Certainly not at the Salt Lake airport, which had no planes land all week and none that day. As matters turned out the Paulings landed in Ogden, and Wynne drove down to pick them up. We had invited guests to Sunday night supper, and lots of people for an open house afterwards. It was a very lively evening. We found the Paulings delightful, friendly, full of ideas, and both with twinkling, large blue eyes, his more gray than hers which were almost lavender. He remembered my father from the Oregon State campus; he himself went to the campus in 1917. His wife Ava was also born in the Willamette Valley. I learned that she used to work as a judge at elections because she was very good at figures and because she was one of those rare persons, a Democrat, in that district. But when a loyalty oath was demanded she resigned.

The next morning I took Mrs. Pauling and my friends Corda Bauer and Dorothy Lewis up Blacksmith Fork canyon to get above the fog and to see the elk herd at Hardware Ranch. That evening, Old Main auditorium was packed with people waiting to hear Pauling. People said it was the largest audience ever, except for the time when Eleanor Roosevelt spoke. Pauling got off some good cracks against Edward Teller, and his humor, irony, and lilting voice charmed the audience. The next day there was a seminar, Pauling did a television program on tape, and in the afternoon Wynne and I drove the Paulings to Salt Lake.

On our way, with our guests in the back seat, Pauling told his wife that while he did a Public Pulse program in the evening, she was to send a telegram to the *Saturday Evening Post* in which he demanded the right to provide the *Post* with an article in response to one that Edward Teller had written, and he outlined some major points. She sighed and said, “Oh, Linus, you know how much I hate to send long telegrams!” But she did it.

When Teller came to town, Wynne was away. The auditorium was as packed as it had been for Pauling. Teller was as vigorous in attacking Pauling as Pauling had been in attacking him. Teller spoke with a thick accent but was an excellent speaker and held the audience spellbound. He was sure we needed the information from more atmospheric tests,
and he encouraged shelters, saying they would save a good percent of
the population. In contrast, Pauling had said we have plenty of infor-
mation, more than Russia has. And shelters just made more possible the
occurrence of a war, which very few would survive.

Over thirty years later, Harden McConnell, a chemist at Stanford
University, reviewing three new books about Pauling, commented:

It is hard for anyone who has not experienced such events to
appreciate the truly oppressive political environment in the United
States during the 1950s and ’60s. I signed Pauling’s 1957 petition
against nuclear bomb testing with apprehension concerning possi-
ble adverse consequences to me. In my opinion Pauling had a major
impact in the international decision to stop atmospheric nuclear
bomb tests, to the benefit of everyone.\textsuperscript{8}

Community Work

As the children grew older I had more time to give to community work.
Kip left to become an undergraduate at Caltech in 1958, and four years
later he went on to Princeton for graduate work in theoretical physics.
Barrie left for Stanford in 1960, where she majored in anthropology.
When the Pauling and Teller talks occurred, I was forty-seven years old;
Wynne was fifty-three; Sandra, thirteen; Avril, twelve; and Lance, ten.

In Logan, a continuing local issue was the need for a sewage dis-
posal system because raw sewage was flowing down into the west
fields and out into Bear River. When there was a very cold early winter
without snow, the children and I went ice skating on the sloughs west
of town, and they said they could see feces under the shallow ice, but
feces was not the word they used.

Women’s groups had been trying very hard to get a sewer bond
passed. We all knew each other and had worked together for good causes
through the local Women’s Legislative Council. Despite its name, this
council was not composed of women in the legislature, of which there
were, and still are, painfully few. Rather, the council represented many
women’s groups, and when the state legislature was in session a handful
of local council members drove to the Capitol in Salt Lake City on
Thursdays to attend a State Women’s Legislative Council meeting and to
observe the legislature. Sometimes there were pre-legislative meetings.

Mostly, however, our council met once a month in the Cache
County courthouse to discuss current local issues, with its members
reporting back to their own organizations. An amazingly large number
of women’s groups belonged to the council including civic, religious, school, political, professional, literary, and study clubs. We were unaware that this Council would be for us the final phase of the women’s club movement that began in America in the nineteenth century and kept Progressive issues alive before and after the turn of the century.9

On December 3, 1962, while I was at a meeting on strategy to get the sewer bond passed, a dramatic power outage occurred in our neighborhood, leading me to write an article for the Herald Journal which appeared next day under the heading, “Some Things That Happened Last Evening”:

We live across the street south from the First Ward Church, and at 5:40 by our kitchen clock, there was an explosion and the electricity went off.

My son on an errand to Tim’s grocery had paused to watch insulation burning on the wires. Burning material had been falling into trees. And then came the explosion ‘and it was light as day,’ he said.

About this time the AC Women’s Club had concluded their regular Monday meeting and had been discussing what they should do, as citizens, about the sewer bond. They voted unanimously to support it. (Later in the evening Eleanor Van Orden would phone to tell me this.)

Where was I in the meantime? Not at home to see the burning insulation and the explosion. I had been called to a five o’clock meeting in the Chamber of Commerce rooms to help plan the taxpayers’ meeting to be held Wednesday night in the Logan Junior High.

I was asked if the Women’s Legislative Council would co-sponsor the meeting. Of course the Council would, said I, because they had voted on a resolution supporting the sewer bond . . .

Last evening I put in a call to Allie Burgoyne, president of the Logan chapter of AAUW [American Association of University Women]. Would they also co-sponsor the meeting? She phoned her officers and in a short while phoned me back. ‘Yes, we would be glad to.’

At 6:30 I started driving home and found traffic directed at corners by men with flashing red lights because the semaphores were out. It was impossible for me to cross First South to my home. ‘Wires are down.’
Not knowing what to do, I stopped by a house lighted by a candle and used a telephone, but got only busy signals. I didn’t know whether the children were in a panic at home; I didn’t know whether they had enough sense to stay out of the street, for some of the trouble was obviously directly in front of our house.

I drove down Center to Main and then came along First South, where by special dispensation, crewmen let me through the barricade to drive slowly home on the left hand side of the street.

The children, thrilled with living by candlelight, had fed supper to themselves and two neighbor boys. ‘Let’s go to the library,’ I said. ‘It will be light and warm and you can do your homework. Besides, I want to talk to the BPW [Business and Professional Women] officers; this is BPW meeting night at the library.’

We walked out in the darkness, gingerly, hugging our side of the street while trucks and men, and huge beams of light probed the transformers on the pole across from us.

Would the BPW members be willing to co-sponsor Wednesday’s public meeting, I asked. They voted strongly in favor of doing so. One member said, ‘Whenever I travel outside the state and people ask me where I’m from and I say Logan, they say ‘You mean that awful town that still has its raw sewage out in the open?’

The BPW accepted a list of chairmen of ward areas of Logan who will distribute leaflets about the sewer bond next weekend. Would they volunteer to help the ward chairmen distribute these? Many were agreeable.

Home again to a fast cooling house. To bed. Trucks and men worked far into the night. Silence. At three a.m. a solitary truck drove up and a beam of light probed the transformer directly across from my bedroom.

Before dawn, trucks, men and voices in the street. In the darkness I grope my way about. Somehow I must find fuel to make a fire in the fireplace.

The whole experience makes me pause. How dependent we are on other people in an emergency such as this: The men who guarded the streets to prevent my entanglement with wires last night. The men who are now trying to fix the transformers. The men checking the fuses in our homes. And the coming sewer campaign.
Earnest men are trying to find wise solutions which will protect
the people . . .

I should have added, “and earnest women.” In today’s parlance, the sewer bond effort was an example of women’s on-the-ground networking and mobilization.

Besides a sewage disposal system, we badly needed a better way of dealing with garbage. There were nineteen city dumps with at least two burning all the time. We were urging the city commission to set up a sanitary landfill or buy an incinerator. The local Women’s Legislative Council sponsored a public meeting in the old junior high, and there was hidden amusement when one commissioner kept calling the proposed incinerator an “inseminator.” I was chairing the meeting and hadn’t the nerve to correct him. The sewer bond was defeated. We did get a sanitary landfill, and a few years later voters approved sewage lagoons which have proved a delight to water birds and a satisfaction to airplane pilots who immediately know they are in Cache county.

The Logan Board of Education

In 1959, still unable to get a professional position at USU, I decided to get myself onto the school board. One of the five members of the Logan Board of Education had moved out of the city, so I wrote a note saying I’d like to fill that vacancy and gave my qualifications. The board put me on, and I later won public reelection twice.

The four men board members belonged to Rotary club, considered to be the most powerful service club in the valley. Two had ties to the university: Milton R. Merrill, a political scientist who became academic vice president, and Norman Salisbury, a banker who was also on the USU Board of Trustees. The school superintendent was Sherman G. Eyre, a very capable person, and board relations with him were good because the board knew the difference between his duties and the board’s. Board members took turns being president. Because their USU duties kept them so busy, Milt Merrill and Norm Salisbury chose to skip their turns at being president of the Logan Board, which explains how I came to be president four separate years out of the eleven I served on the Logan Board, in great contrast to the Cache Board which would not permit their solitary woman member, Doris Budge, to serve as president. The Cache district included farms and towns across the county and tended to be conservative.
One duty of the board president was to hand out diplomas at graduation. It was my turn to do the diplomas in 1969, when Lance was scheduled to graduate from high school. He knew how I greeted each graduate with my right hand extended to shake hands, and my left hand held slightly back with the diploma, ready at the last moment to thrust it into the recipient’s left hand. The day before graduation, Lance and a friend were sitting on the couch in our front room, and he said with a grin, “Mom, you know what we’re going to do when we go across the stand at graduation? We’re not going to shake your hand.” “That’s fine,” I said with a smile. “I’ll kiss each of you instead.” At graduation I noticed that Lance and friend each had a right hand extended the moment they hit the stand.

The high point of my early years on the board was the bond election that made possible a new junior high building, to be built all at once. Until then, the district’s slim capital budget meant building schools only in stages. The PTA, women’s groups, and business community cooperated beautifully and on May 10, 1961, a large headline on the front page of the Herald Journal proclaimed “City School Bond Issue Approved by 2589 to 69.” This was a 97.5 percent vote. Although I was head of the residential drive for votes, the real work was done by a USU faculty wife, Edith Pedersen, who later died, much too young, of breast cancer.

Three years later we held another bond election, this time for improvements at several schools. It passed with a 96 percent affirmative vote. However, the capital budget was separate from the operating budget, and we continued to find it difficult to get enough operating money for schools. Each school board had power to tax property, a power which we used gingerly to prevent taxpayer revolt. A state uniform school fund helped poorer school districts, for which Logan qualified. Various state monies went into this fund, and I gave a great many talks to PTAs and to service clubs explaining this.

I spoke to the local Women’s Legislative Council on school finance. And once, while George Dewey Clyde was governor, I spoke to the State Women’s Legislative Council on the proposed finance program for Utah public schools. That was in November 1962.

The governor, a conservative Republican, an engineer, and former dean of engineering at USU, gave an hour long talk before my turn came. When he sat down I could see the Logan delegation tense up for fear he would remain for my talk, which they knew contained economics diametrically opposed to his. Fortunately the governor departed for what he considered more important matters.
In his talk Governor Clyde mentioned that he had had breakfast with Governor George Romney of Michigan, but Clyde did not tell what Romney had done to help Michigan schools get more funds. I knew that Romney set up citizens’ committees because my sister Elaine chaired one. I told of the Romney plan and hoped the audience realized that Michigan had a Republican governor who believed in more money for schools, while Utah had a Republican governor who was pitting higher education and the public schools against each other.11

Insufficient operating money continued to plague Utah schools. The teachers called a two-day strike in May 1964, only they didn’t call it a strike, but a “staying out of school.” The Utah Education Association (UEA) voted to stay out of school Monday and Tuesday because Governor Clyde refused the advice of his own committee on schools that a special session of the legislature be called to consider putting six million more dollars into the uniform school fund. At one point the governor became so angry he threatened to call out the National Guard to force teachers to stay in school.

On Saturday evening, before the Monday when the strike would begin, all the local superintendents came together in Salt Lake City to hear Ted Bell, state superintendent of schools. Little did anyone realize that years later Bell would become United States commissioner of education under President Reagan and would literally save the cabinet status of education.

The next morning, Sunday, at ten, the presidents of all school boards came together with the superintendents to hear Bell. The Utah School Boards Association voted thirty to six in favor of a resolution that every school district should make an honest effort to hold school Monday and Tuesday. I spoke briefly at that meeting before television lights and several microphones, and said that the real power to make a decision lay with local boards, and the real work would be done after we left the meeting and went home. A Salt Lake board member in a long speech accused the UEA of subversive leadership and implied they might even be communists. “So much hokum!” I wrote my family.

That Sunday evening we held a Logan Board of Education meeting in the Woodruff school, the one behind our home. After half an hour of deliberation we voted unanimously to offer a compromise to our teachers: that they stay on the job as usual on Monday, but we would declare school closed on Tuesday, and they could all go down to the UEA meeting in Salt Lake if this was their desire. Since 180 days of school, by law,
must be conducted in order to get our state money for operation, we declared Saturday of this week a school day, to replace Tuesday.

The Logan Education Association representatives came in at seven o’clock. We talked for some time, and they accepted the compromise, though with some misgivings for fear the UEA would chastise them for not staying away from school two days. At eight p.m. in the Woodruff school, a Logan Education Association meeting of all teachers took place, with three of us from our board present at their invitation. The vote was 118 to nineteen to accept the compromise. When the announcement was made of school on Monday (rumors had been rife that there would be no school) there was a commotion outside the open door and we heard boys’ voices saying, “Ugh!” and then running feet. (Lance was one of the eavesdroppers.) The teachers burst into laughter.

Box Elder school district and a small number of others did as we did, but Cache district did not, nor did the big school districts. They announced that school was open. Most teachers stayed away, and there was some attempt to use substitute teachers, parents, and others. Some vandalism occurred and the national press capitalized on the situation.

Years later a school official observed, “It was the first time in the nation’s history teachers had actually withheld services. People were shocked that Utah teachers would be such rebel rousers.” The good that came out of the teachers’ action was that the school boards association set up a cooperative agreement with the school superintendents’ association, UEA, and PTA to work together in preparing school finance legislation.

Change was in the air whereby there would soon be official negotiations within school districts. I noticed that a Herald Journal reporter began coming to our board meetings. Our superintendent’s usual written report sent over to the newspaper office was no longer sufficient.

The May of the teachers’ “staying out of school” strike also saw dedication of the new junior high building for which the bond vote had been 97.5 percent in favor. That summer, in cooperation with the city government, Logan school district held another bond election, this time for a municipal swimming pool to be built next to the new junior high. The campaign was spearheaded by the Logan Recreation Board, which included representatives of the city government and the school board. I chaired the recreation board, and City Commissioner Nephi Bott was vice chairman.

Bott opposed the municipal pool. He wrote letters to the newspaper and gave talks using interesting arguments: Swimming is dangerous and spreads disease; and anyhow our young people should be working
in the beet fields not swimming; and anyhow Logan can’t afford a pool; and besides it is taking the bread and butter out of the mouth of the Logana swimming pool owner (a public pool privately owned).

Women’s organizations, the PTA, and businessmen set up the usual block campaign. I wrote my family that I had bet the school board we would win by 65 percent. They doubted it. The vote was 67 percent in favor, and by November the pool was completed and dedicated. Bott reluctantly came to the dedication but stood smiling beside me in the newspaper picture.14

Also that November, Calvin Rampton, a Democrat, defeated Governor Clyde. During the campaign, Rampton stopped by our home to see me, and to congratulate me on the successful school bond votes in Logan. He asked me to vote for him, and I said of course I would. He said he knew I had an advanced degree, and that his own wife was working on an advanced degree at the University of Utah. After his election, Rampton appointed me to the State Building Board, a powerful five-person board, which oversaw building at all state institutions, including the prison, mental hospital, colleges, and universities.15 I held this position for twelve years, the same length of time that Rampton remained in office. After I joined the board, one of its first acts was to recommend to the legislature a large bonding bill for buildings. This bill passed. One reason Rampton appointed me was because I favored bonding, in contrast to Merle Hyer, a Cache Valley farmer and conservative Republican, whose place I took on the board.

So now I belonged to two boards with power, the State Building Board and the Logan School Board. Each had funds and a staff. Each had five members, with me as the only woman. Yet I was never treated as lesser because of my gender, I assumed because the men were gentlemen in the true sense of the word, and because I was a competent person with the added prestige of holding a Ph.D. in economics.

The War on Poverty

I helped create two new organizations in the 1960s. It is difficult to create a new organization that possesses any semblance of power, especially when compared to the two boards to which I already belonged. One of the new creations was the Governor’s Committee on the Status of Women, which I will discuss in the next chapter because it was a forerunner of contemporary feminism in Utah. The other creation was the Northern Utah Community Action Program (NUCAP), federally funded
under the Economic Opportunity Act, an act which undergirded President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty, part of his Great Society Program. But I can’t tell about NUCAP until I tell about its forerunner, a little migrant school on the south edge of Logan.  

In 1962 the United Church Women, composed of women in the local Presbyterian and Episcopal churches, set up a summer class for the children of Spanish-American migrant workers who came from Texas each May to work in the sugar beet fields, stayed to work on beans, and then in August went north to harvest apples and other crops, before returning to Texas in the middle of November. Today we would call them Hispanics, but “Spanish-American” was the term then in use.

Joyce Davis and Adelaide Bohart, representing United Church Women, went out to the camp on the south edge of Logan where ten migrant families lived, crowded into abandoned quonset huts near the old Amalgamated Sugar factory. They took with them Elizabeth Rodriguez, a Presbyterian who was a former migrant worker. She spoke Spanish, understood migrants’ problems, and convinced the families of the importance of a summer class for children while parents were working in the fields. At home in Texas these youngsters received only five months of regular school, and the church women thought a summer class could help with English, arithmetic, and health habits. The local Catholics also became involved in this project for humanitarian reasons and because most of the migrant workers were Catholic. Women from the Baptist and Lutheran churches also volunteered help. The LDS Church was never directly a sponsor, but individual Mormon women, especially Angelyn Wadley and Lucile Burgoyne, became involved.

This little summer class, held in an old garage, lasted almost eight weeks. It was taught by Lucile Burgoyne, an excellent teacher in the regular school system. She taught without pay, assisted by Elizabeth Rodriguez and other volunteers. Although Lucile Burgoyne spoke no Spanish, other volunteers did. The children found the hours pleasant and were safely out of the fields.

The second summer, the National Council of Churches gave some financial help to United Church Women to pay the teacher’s expenses and lay linoleum on the floor of the garage. It did not close on one side, and swirls of dust settled over table and chairs as large trucks passed, hauling limestone. This time the teacher was Donna Rose, a returned LDS missionary who spoke Spanish. Volunteer women still helped.

During neither of these first two summers was there publicity about the little school. The public welfare department knew nothing of its existence. Why should it? Migrants were transients and ineligible for
welfare. The third summer the little school moved into a brick storage room with an electric light hanging from the ceiling, and a door that could close. The school district donated school desks. It was not an ideal environment. For one thing, there were rats. But the housing that the migrants lived in wasn’t ideal either. Sanitary facilities were poor.

Enter the federal government in the form of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Always well informed on social legislation and now involved with the migrant program in Box Elder county as well as in our county, Joyce Davis told me we needed a Community Action Program to be an umbrella over Head Start, Neighborhood Youth Corps, and the migrant programs. If I would work on getting a CAP, Joyce said she would work with the migrant programs. I had already persuaded the Logan Board of Education to apply for a Head Start grant.

Carol Clay, who had always lived in Cache Valley, realized that getting a CAP would take a countywide effort, and at this time she was urging creation of a community chest, which didn’t need federal funding but did require a broad county effort. I still remember when Carol and I were walking across campus toward the extension service's annual women’s leadership conference; we stopped and decided that she would do the community chest and I would do CAP. We would work together under auspices of the Cache Women’s Legislative Council, of which Carol was president. Here again was the Women’s Legislative Council taking action in the spirit of the Progressive era, just as women’s clubs of our country had done in earlier years. This time we would have allies among low-income and ethnic groups.

First we laid groundwork with those we considered vital to our plans, including the school superintendents, County Commission, and Cooperative Extension Service. The Women’s Legislative Council invited a broad spectrum of community leaders to attend an organizing meeting. This meeting, held on January 19, 1965, led to creation of the Cache Community Council, which we hoped could apply for OEO money. There were also committees appointed including one which, under Carol Clay, quite quickly made the community chest a reality.

Early that spring, rather unexpectedly, two consultants from the San Francisco office of the United States Department of Labor showed up to help us fill in the forms of a migrant proposal. They urged us to think big: not just a four-week class for the youngsters, but eight weeks; have some evening adult education in auto mechanics for the men; have a pre-kindergarten program such as Head Start for the young children. Migrant mothers could help with the school lunch and at the day care center, learning nutrition and wise ways of child care, and earning the
minimum wage of $1.25 at the same time. And do it for all three migrant camps in the valley, not just for the one on the edge of town.

We found ourselves getting acquainted with people we had never known before, and laying big plans. That was how it came about that we prepared a twenty-eight-page migrant proposal. Eight copies were required in a hurry by the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington. The local Job Service office said I could use the Xerox machine in the state’s Department of Employment Security in Salt Lake City, eighty miles away. There was not a single Xerox machine in all of Cache Valley.

The day I left for Salt Lake City to photocopy, I was racing against time. First I picked up letters of support written by various officials. By noon I was in Salt Lake City. Employment Security ran off the pages for me—224 sheets of paper, unsorted. I hurried to the Capitol to the small office of the state Office of Economic Opportunity coordinator, tucked in a bit of space off the governor’s waiting room. The coordinator was not in.

“‘I need to sort out all these pages and staple each copy of this proposal,’” I said breathlessly to the governor’s secretary. “Can I spread these papers on the rug in the waiting room?” I gazed longingly at the broad expanse of superb carpeting in the waiting room. After all, nobody was waiting to see the governor, for the governor was out of town. “Of course not!” replied the governor’s secretary briskly.

“Even though I’m a good Democrat and the governor is a friend of mine?” I ventured, saying to myself: that’s the advantage of living in a state with small population. If you enter politics it’s easy to get to the top; and when your party is in power, the governor calls you by your first name. True, it had taken sixteen years for my party to get into power, but now I intended to make hay while the sun shone.

“The governor doesn’t want clutter in his waiting room,” said the secretary firmly.

“Well,” I said, willing to compromise, “could I just sort this stuff in a corner of your office, behind this armchair?”

She said yes, and so I knelt down and began sorting and stacking and stapling twenty-eight sheets to compile eight copies. I was surrounded by CAP sheets of all sorts, letters of consent, estimates of cost, a civil rights sheet, etc. As I finished, I thought my knees would never unfold so I could stand upright. The secretary let me make a long distance call to the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington saying that the proposal was coming, airmail. The call reached there just before five p.m., Washington time, but I need not have hurried so fast, because the office worked late into the night.
Weeks went by. We didn’t get federal funding that summer. Church women raised some money. Joyce Davis and the Migrant Council found a director for the project, a young sociology student just graduated, who could spare a summer. Also a young woman social worker, just graduated. Both would work without pay.

When the migrants arrived in May the weather was bad, there was no work for them, and red tape kept them off food stamps. Monsignor Jerome Stoffel donated six hundred dollars from the Catholic Church to tide them over. Fortunately, the Cache County Board of Education offered use of the little Hyde Park school building without charge, and provided books and materials. Two regular school teachers taught for a pittance. The public health service provided a part-time nurse. Bessie Lemon, extension home agent, coordinated transportation, as local women with their cars brought children from three camps, the one south of Logan, one in Lewiston, and a smaller one in Amalga. Women in Hyde Park, mostly LDS, made noon lunches for the children.

One beautiful summer morning I went out to visit the school. Of a potential forty students, there were thirty brown-eyed youngsters, clean, shining, enthusiastic, in two rooms, one for the first and second grade, and the other for third to sixth. At the end of the four weeks, the teachers and their aides reported that the children had made good progress. The newspapers were lyrical in their accounts of the school, and the pictures of the children would melt your heart.17

It had taken 150 volunteers to make this school possible, an average of five adults for each child. Is there any “proper” ratio in a project like this? The residents of Cache Valley learned more about the migrant families than they had ever known before. The women who took the children to and from school in their cars realized for the first time under what primitive conditions the migrants lived.

Finally, in 1966, our grant applications began producing Office of Economic Opportunity funds. Money came for migrant programs. The first CAP money came in my name until the county commissioners could get used to the idea of accepting federal money. When the Head Start money arrived, I promptly turned it over to Superintendent Sherman Eyre. That summer both Head Start and the migrant school were held in the Woodruff School across from Logan High School. Soon the Cache School District took responsibility for migrant education with funds from Title I of the Elementary, Secondary Education Act, and still does today. It was Joyce Davis who insisted from the very beginning that migrant education belonged in the public schools.
Our Northern Utah CAP encompassed Box Elder, Cache, and Rich counties, and one-third of its board consisted of low income people who learned to deal with county commissioners and other officials, fulfilling, in a way, the mandate of poverty programs of “maximum feasible participation of the poor.”

Office of Economic Opportunity funding could also be secured for projects for senior citizens. At the suggestion of the state’s councils on aging and tourism, the local chamber of commerce, and the county commissioners, I wrote a supplementary project to fund eleven low income senior citizens as information aides in a tourist program.¹⁸

Five years later we were in a battle to keep NUCAP. Across the country protests over civil rights and the Vietnamese war intensified. Suspecting that organizers in community programs fueled the fires of revolt, President Richard Nixon wanted all CAPs ended. Ours was the first one slated for demise in the western region of six states. I think we were chosen because we were small, semi-rural, and presumed to lack political clout.

When we sensed this danger, the county commissioner who was president of our NUCAP Board suggested he step down and that I take his place. The board duly elected me president in January 1971. The picture in the Herald-Journal shows me seated with my second vice-president, Neil Leatham, head of the Head Start Advisory Council.¹⁹ What I like about the picture is that I am wearing a pantsuit, the first local woman in relatively high office to be seen wearing a pantsuit in the pages of the Herald Journal.

On April 18 my picture was again in the newspaper, on the front page, reading a letter from the Denver regional office saying that our CAP was being de-funded. The preceding Saturday our NUCAP Board had met with Bill Bruhn of the State Office of Community Affairs, who said this was a political matter and we should ask our congressional delegation for help. Immediately our Cache and Box Elder Migrant Councils wrote letters. I sent an official NUCAP letter to the congressional delegation and to Governor Rampton, and persuaded County Commissioner William Hyde to phone the delegation, telling them that Cache County wanted the CAP office kept. If our CAP folded, Head Start, Neighborhood Youth Corps, and the Emergency Food Program would need to find other sponsors, and this would be difficult. Then I wrote a letter to the regional Office of Economic Opportunity office in Denver requesting a hearing.

On May 9, which was my birthday, I wrote my folks that every few years my birthday and Mothers Day hit together and this was the day. It was a beautiful time of year in Logan, with crab apple trees in full bloom.
Wynne had been in Washington D.C. the previous week and saw the Vietnam war protesters. Many were arrested, including bystanders. Half the doctors who cared for the wounded were also arrested.

I was happy to report to my folks that our county Democratic convention passed a resolution, which I helped write, reading, “Be it resolved that this convention calls for the setting by the U.S. Congress of a date certain for their withdrawal of all U.S. Military Forces from Indochina and that this resolution be transmitted to the Utah Congressional Delegation so that they may know our concern in this matter.”

The CAP hearings were May 21–22. Two men came from OEO to present the case against us. James L. Young, deputy director of the Seattle region, conducted. We sat at the middle of the long side of the
ping pong table. The other regional OEO man, Morris Lewis of Denver, sat to Young’s right and I sat to his left, with our Board members seated in two long lines at right angle to me. This was in the old knitting mill on south Main Street, which had become the Cache Opportunity Center. Logan High art classes had painted the walls with murals on a white background, so the room appeared large, light, and airy. The Woodruff school loaned us a hundred folding chairs.

Gunn McKay, Democratic congressman, was not there but sent Robert Higginson who read McKay’s very fine two page letter favoring re-funding. Brent Cameron of Frank Moss’s staff (Democratic senator), made strong remarks. Wallace Bennett, (Republican senator), did not come, but, in Washington D.C., he went to the head of the Office of Economic Opportunity to defend us. Sherman Lloyd, (Republican congressman), said if the decision went against us, he would swing into action. The governor, though not present, indicated his firm support.

Spanish Americans from our migrant councils testified. Roland Chico, a tall and broad American Indian who was a member of the Utah Migrant Council, made a strong statement in our favor. The state Office of Economic Opportunity director, who originally told Denver it was all right to de-fund us, lost his job immediately. His successor, a young lawyer who attended our meetings, wrote Denver a strong letter urging re-funding. He took me to dinner after the second meeting closed and was very curious about who was coaching me. I didn’t tell him that Wynne, Brent Cameron, and Ronald Chico coached me. He couldn’t understand how a non-lawyer could work out such a good case. Actually Denver could have nailed us to the wall several times, but the two regional men refrained. I believe they hesitated because the governor and the congressional delegation wanted us re-funded. At the end of the meetings Denver phoned me saying we were re-funded.

Other Matters

In my early work with CAP, I unexpectedly received an invitation from the USU Department of Sociology to teach their longstanding course on rural community organization and leadership. I think the Civil Rights Act of 1964 caused the demise of the anti-nepotism rulings. I accepted this invitation, beginning in 1966 and continued for several years, using examples from local community work, from the Peace Corps, and from scholarly writings on community organization.

The summer of 1966 I taught a workshop for teachers of disadvantaged (meaning low-income) children. A Head Start grant paid my
salary. This proved to be a strenuous period because Wynne had his second heart attack. While he was in intensive care at the Logan hospital, his doctor Merrill Daines, who was also a Logan School Board member, told me that I could not take Wynne home to our house with all its bedrooms upstairs. This time Wynne needed a first floor bedroom.

Wynne’s recovery from his first heart attack, in 1963, was on a single bed in the large, sunny kitchen, next to the old fashioned radiator, only a few steps away from a half-bathroom under the stairs. But such primitive living arrangements would not do in 1966. Fortunately we had been talking with Carol and John Clay about their home that was for sale, one-half block from the hospital and near where we had lived during the war. Carol told me they wouldn’t sell to anyone else while we waited to be sure that Wynne was out of danger.

With Wynne safely out of intensive care, I signed a check for the down payment, and the children and their friends helped me move. Wynne came home to a first floor bedroom and a very long telephone cord, because he insisted on carrying on university business to the extent that the doctor allowed, and then some. He absolutely refused to be an invalid, and we never treated him as one.

I have always believed that Wynne’s first heart attack was brought on by the shock of his father’s death from a heart attack, followed soon after by his brother Leland’s death from a heart attack. Leland was four years younger than Wynne. Their two older sisters developed heart symptoms at this time. Wynne’s third heart attack occurred February 8, 1971. I have no theories about the cause. Earlier, on January 14, an avalanche in Logan canyon swept away the end of our cabin, filling it with debris-laden snow. Wynne was careful not to go up to see the damage. Instead, he sent Sandra and her friend, Sue Lusowski. On their return, we gathered around the kitchen table, and Sue sketched the appearance of the cabin. Just then the local newspaper arrived, and there was a picture of our cabin on the front page, looking much as Sue had sketched it. By May, when enough snow had melted so we could begin clearing up the place, Wynne was giving instructions, but leaving the heavy work to the rest of us. He delegated the rebuilding to Lance, our competent nineteen-year old.

In early June, Wynne did not endure commencement well. He was on the platform with other dignitaries, and I was in the audience. He stood too long as the graduates all filed out. But I didn’t realize this, and I had climbed the stairs to the upper concourse when I suddenly heard President Taggart call through the loudspeaker, “Is Alison Thorne in the audience?” I turned and saw that Wynne had collapsed. I ran down those
steps with my heart in my mouth. Wynne’s face was as white as his shirt. He smiled weakly and said, “I seem to have fainted.” We got him into an ambulance, and after staying overnight in the hospital, he was released. It was not an attack. He had taken a nitroglycerin pill as he stood for the graduates to file out, and the blood had rushed to his feet instead of his head, where he needed it. He took the nitroglycerin because he planned to walk over to the building where Sandra’s college, Natural Resources, was holding its ceremony. He didn’t get there, and neither did she.

That summer, when I was sure that CAP funding would be renewed, I resigned from the board, citing concern over Wynne’s health. Considerable infighting ensued, but ultimately Marvin Fifield, a USU faculty member in special education, became board chairman and piloted CAP safely into sponsorship by the Bear River Association of Governments, a newly created three-county organization empowered to secure federal grants.20