

AS I SEE IT

By RAYMOND M. HOLT*

(This editorial is reprinted from the CALIFORNIA LIBRARIAN, October 1956, with the addition of references to North Carolina in brackets. It could happen here, couldn't it? Ed.)

As the shadows began to lengthen beneath the pines which encircled the quiet mountain village, a low hum swelled into a roar reverberating against the cliffs. Out of the sky an ungainly form descended assuming the characteristic shape of a helicopter. Landing in a grassy field behind the school, children converged on the plane almost before its rotors stopped flailing the air. A feminine face smiled from the cockpit briefly before disappearing. Almost immediately the door was flung open and a series of steps were dropped to bridge the few feet between the craft's body and the ground. Large yellow letters along the side of the helicopter identified it as "Intermountain Bookcopter No. 2" and smaller letters explained: "A Unit of the Redwood Empire Regional Library."

While the children began filing inside the "whirlybird" to inspect the orderly rows of books placed invitingly on the shelves, the first adults arrived.

"Why, hello Mrs. Lewis," the librarian exclaimed, "How's the new baby?"

"Fine," the person addressed as Mrs. Lewis responded. "Those books on infant care you brought last week have been a wonderful help."

"I'm glad," the librarian said, "I brought a brand new one this time."

"Oh Miss Fiske," a deep male voice boomed toward the librarian, "did you bring that electronic handbook?"

"I certainly did, Mr. Hayes. In fact, I brought not only the handbook but a couple of others which I think you'll find helpful in leading that new current affairs discussion group," Miss Fiske added.

"Look at all these new cookbooks," one woman advised another. "Enough ideas and recipes here to keep a body poor for the next year!"

Miss Fiske smiled and looked at the growing number of villagers—more now than could crowd into the confines of the helicopter. "We'll have to route one of the larger copters in here from now on," she noted to herself.

As an older woman entered the doorway, Miss Fiske called to her, "Hello Mrs. Patterson. I was just looking for someone to tell me how Mrs. Andrews is. I understand she's home from the hospital."

"That's right," Mrs. Patterson said. "But she's goin' to be on the recuperatin' list fer quite a spell."

"Well, since she was such a faithful library user, I brought her a few books. Would you mind taking them to her?" Miss Fiske inquired.

"Be glad to," the older woman smiled warmly.

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Miss Fiske ducked into the pilot's compartment and quickly returned with a handful of books in bright new jackets. "These are brand new," she confided.

"Oh, thank you, I know she'll appreciate them," Mrs. Patterson said, smoothing her nearly-white hair. "You know, everything about libraries have changed . . . except you librarians," she quickly added.

"What do you mean?" Miss Fiske inquired.

"Fer as long as I can remember, there's been a station of the library here in Pineville. Most always it was just a shelf or two of books over at Mr. Howard's General Store. Then a few years back that bookmobile used to come up pretty regular. That's when we first got acquainted with you librarians. But there still wasn't much to pick from. But now, we get to see you twice a week and you've always got lots of books. Yep, things have certainly changed," she mused.

"You'll be around for the movies this evening?" Miss Fiske broke in gently.

"I'll sure be here," Mrs. Patterson brightened. "Be bringin' some of my neighbors, too."

Just then a couple of children made their way from the children's section to beg, "When are we going to have the story hour, Miss Fiske?"

"Right away," the librarian laughed, excusing herself and leading a quickly formed procession of children outside to form a story-ring on the grass.

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Foolish conjecture? Library Service by Helicopter is out of the question?

Not at all! Librarians in this state now face the greatest opportunity ever afforded us to pioneer in the development of library service. Between the impetus which has arisen from the adoption and implementation of our library standards, the "shot in the arm" afforded by federal funds, and the anticipation of new legislation at the state level, we have stepped over the horizon into a new tomorrow. The limits imposed upon us are the limits of our own imaginations, abilities and aggressiveness. If we wish only to perpetuate what we now have, we will do so. On the other hand, if we accept the challenge which is ours, we can create a library system which will provide library services above and beyond anything heretofore known.

But we won't do it "sitting down." We can't succeed if we continually haggle over the preservation of details which hamstring cooperative efforts. We will fail if we persist in submitting to our fiscal officials "minimum budgets," designed to "avoid criticism." Nothing is going to improve if we "let someone else" do the experimenting while we adopt the traditional methods and services of a bygone day. We will never see the library take its place in the vanguard of public institutions so long as we plug away at introverted hobbies and join only selected "cultural" groups.

The creation of library systems and services adequate to meet the needs of our citizens requires a crusading belief in books and their place in the life of mankind, uncompromising adherence to high standards of service, attainment of more adequate financial backing, critical examination of today's library, eagerness to experiment—to try, and if we fail, try again and again until we succeed, unswerving loyalty to the

library profession, broad contacts with leaders in every field of community life including labor, management, business, the professions, education, and culture. Ours is a 24-hour, seven-day week job and every member of the staff from the desk clerk to the top office is on the firing line. Twentieth Century Librarianship is no job for weaklings.

Thank goodness, we have librarians in California [and in North Carolina] who have already seen the possibilities and are pushing forward toward the achievement of better library service.

Some of them hold positions in our larger municipal and county libraries. Backed by the comparative wealth of their library's resources they are experimenting in fields of cooperation, and volunteer to undertake time and energy consuming tasks.

But the most impressive records of achievement are being turned in by librarians from outlying municipal and county libraries. Here, where they are known by name and recognized by a vast majority in their communities, they ask and give no quarter in their struggle for better service. Their labors are sure to be revealed in the headlines and editorials of their local papers—sometimes in praise, often misunderstood and challenged. Every request and every change is scrutinized—if not criticized. Yet, because they have accepted the challenge they are finding public support beyond all expectation.

It is the accumulated accomplishments of all such librarians which will build the foundation and erect the structure that in turn shall house and determine the effectiveness of library service in the State of California [and in the state of North Carolina] in the decades just ahead. What will be *your* contribution?

Sam Boone Exhibit At Wilson Library

On exhibit in The Louis Round Wilson Library at UNC recently were Chapel Hill scenes photographed by Sam Boone who heads the library's photo-reproduction department, and is art editor of *North Carolina Libraries*. We are proud to quote from an editorial in the *Chapel Hill Weekly*:

"The artistry of Mr. Boone is evident in every photograph. He has captured beauty and tradition with the camera and so presented them on photographic paper that one's love and affection for every place and building about the town and University are enhanced."

Index Enclosed

Miss Louise Bethea, cataloger in the State Library, graciously accepted the task of indexing volume 14 of *North Carolina Libraries*. The index is inserted in this issue so that it may be placed with the numbers indexed. The editorial staff is most appreciative of Miss Bethea's contribution.