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Recommended Citation

Briggs, Marilyn and Institute of Child Nutrition, "Marilyn Briggs" (2004). *Oral History Project (all interviews)*. 142.

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Marilyn Briggs Oral History
Interviewer: Beth King
Interview Date: July 8, 2004

Marilyn Briggs began her career in child nutrition as School Food Service Director for San Juan Unified school district in Sacramento, California, during the 1970s. Later she served as Coordinator of the Nutrition Education and Training Program and worked on what became the prototype for the National Nutrient Standard Menu Planning System. She recently stepped down as state Director of Nutrition Services for California to work on her doctorate in nutrition science. She has held offices in the Society for Nutrition Education, the American School Food Service Association and American Dietetic Association.

BK: It is July 8, 2004 and I'm here with Marilyn Briggs. Marilyn, could you tell us a little about yourself, where you are from and where you grew up?

MB: Okay, I'd be happy to. I actually was born in Washington D.C and moved around quite a bit during those school years. I started off in Maryland, then moved to St. Paul, and so I started school in St. Paul, then moved back to Bethesda, Maryland. My father worked at the National Institutes of Health. Moved again in high school to California, which was a totally different world to me than Maryland. So I went to high school in Maryland and continued high school, and then college in California.

BK: So you've been in California since then?

MB: Just about. I did have a few work experiences outside of the state, but more or less pretty much here in California, yes.

BK: What's your earliest recollection of Child Nutrition Programs and the School Lunch Program?

MB: Oh, that is always a fun question; I like to use that at meetings because people have such diverse memories. My first memory about school lunch is stewed tomatoes. I remember never having stewed tomatoes because my mother did not like stewed tomatoes. And when we had them in our school lunch I absolutely loved them, so my first memory is looking forward to the stewed

tomatoes day; and that sounds kind of unusual, doesn't it? In Maryland they made delicious stewed tomatoes in the school lunch. This was at Bethesda Elementary School, and our cafeteria was down in the basement. It was a very happy place with children receiving wonderful food and it was all a very positive experience. I also helped the School Lunch Program with the tickets and with doing some serving and loved everything about the School Lunch Program.

BK: So were you helping while you were in school?

MB: Yes.

BK: In high school?

MB: In elementary school.

BK: In elementary school?

MB: Yes.

BK: They let you give out tickets?

MB: Yes, they let us give out tickets. We counted the tickets in our classrooms and we went to other classrooms. It was a chance to go around to different classrooms and take the numbers from the other classrooms, and take them down to the cafeteria.

BK: Did you, did they sell the tickets or, how did you? I don't understand the ticket system.

MB: Okay, yes, they sold the tickets, and they were little tickets like raffle tickets that they kept track of in those days, and this was in the fifties, early fifties.

BK: So you were the ticket collector?

MB: I was the ticket collector, that's right. And some days I also got to work on serving the vegetables or the desserts, always good desserts, too. The other thing I remember is milk, that we could have as much milk as we wanted and I loved

milk. I think it was before the days of the 16oz. milk carton, but we would be able to have as much milk as we liked.

BK: Did you have milk at recess?

MB: We did not have any food at recess; no, it was just during the lunch program. That was it. No Breakfast Program yet either.

BK: So, I guess that was your beginning with the Child Nutrition Programs.

MB: Yes, it was, and the staff was very friendly and wonderful. They were, as a child I remember the impact that School Food Service can have on a child, because they were my friends and always there to support you, people you could talk to, and always there with a smile.

BK: And how, then, did you move into Child Nutrition Programs as a career?

MB: Well, as a career, I started out as a dietitian and went to a dietetic internship that told me nothing about School Lunch Programs. I mean, zero about working as a dietitian in School Lunch Programs through my dietetic internship. Looking back, I thought that needed to be rectified, actually. Later, when I was a director in an internship program, I worked with Dr. Virginia McMasters in San Francisco in setting up an internship program. She strongly believed in dietetics students learning about opportunities in schools, and we included that as part of our dietetic internship. So, that was my first real experience in getting to know some of the professionals working in Child Nutrition Programs in California. Then, when I moved, because of my husband's job, from San Francisco to Sacramento, I was looking for a different kind of job. I had young children and was looking for something that I could integrate with my children and their schedules, which was off on weekends. I went to a dietetics meeting and Carol Hiort-Lorenzen was a dietitian talking about opportunities in School Lunch and legislative issues in School Lunch. I remember being absolutely struck with what a perfect place that would be to work and became very interested. So I next talked to Violet Roefs, who I hear you'll be visiting, and she had a whole list of possible openings in California. There was one in Sacramento that was closed, but I went and talked to them and they were able to open it up and interview me, and I had my first job at San Juan Unified in Sacramento, working on a Nutrition Education project funded

by a grant they had just received. So through that job I learned about what it was like to be in a School Food Service Program in a school district and loved it, and went on to be an Assistant Director and Director through this avenue. So it was really through going to professional meetings and getting to know the School Lunch professionals that were dietitians that opened up the whole world to me.

BK: So your educational background kind of prepared you for that, and then you were able just to move into it as you were, when you discovered the opportunity?

MB: When I first discovered the opportunity, it was the Nutrition Education piece that got me interested, and then I received the Food Service and Food Service Management experience from working in a variety of institutional Food Service Programs, including hospitals. School Lunch was unique because of the opportunity to work with children.

BK: How long did you work in Food Service in general before you started working in School Food Service?

MB: It was about twelve or so years working in mainly hospital dietetics, including the U. S. Public Health Service Hospital. I worked the longest at the Veteran's Administration Hospital and was actually an administrator there, setting up a metabolic kitchen, and was Section Chief of therapeutic and clinical dietetics, and enjoyed that very much also. I also worked in Hawaii for a year, again because of my husband's move, and was instructor at the University of Hawaii in dietetics, and I thoroughly enjoyed working with these students also.

BK: Was there someone, maybe a mentor, who was influential in directing you in Child Nutrition Programs?

MB: I would probably choose Carol because she was a professional and really a mentor person who seemed so excited, so enthused, and so knowledgeable about her field. I would say that she's the one who first sparked my interest. And then Violet Roefs was so helpful. When I went to San Juan Unified, she was directing the grant program that I was working on. She was extremely helpful; she invited me to the state office and we worked on several projects there, and that's how I became interested in working at the state level. And then, Gene White used to come to our district. She was State Director at that time, and when she needed a

photo opportunity she would come to San Juan, and I was so impressed with her. I was especially impressed that she would pay the, I think it was fifty cents for the lunch at that time. We were very happy to give it to her and pay for it as our guest, but she absolutely insisted every time she came that she pay that fifty cents, and that truly impressed me. So she also is the one who introduced me to the national meeting. She took me under her wing at my first ASFSA meeting, and it was when she was outgoing President. At that first meeting I was, number one, struck by the number of people, and, number two, the ceremonies. This was the one at the Superdome in New Orleans. She was outgoing President and came in at the head of Mardi Gras in a convertible. And I couldn't believe that this was my friendly neighbor; I had no idea this whole other world existed, so I had great fun and she introduced me to ASFSA.

BK: Those ASFSA people are special aren't they?

MB: That's what impressed me at that meeting, absolutely, is the friendly, caring, wonderful people that I met there, absolutely. And I knew I had found a new career.

BK: So tell us about your career in Child Nutrition and about the various positions that you've held in Child Nutrition.

MB: Okay, in Child Nutrition, my first job was at San Juan, and I stayed there in several different capacities, at San Juan Unified. It was a seventy-two school district, and at that time I think it was about eighty thousand children. It's been declining currently because it's one of those suburban areas that now has older people, less children. So they're closing schools and having lots of problems right now. We, at that time, had decentralized service, so each school had a kitchen, the old fashioned way, and we baked bread every morning in our kitchens. And at that time we were experimenting with adding some whole grains. We found that if we added one-third whole wheat, children would accept it. We made all of our bread in each kitchen, which is not done today anymore in very many places, at least not in California.

BK: I don't think it's done many places.

MB: I was working with Nutrition Education in the classroom, and my strongest interest was integrating it with the nutrition program. We were able to do that when we had decentralized service because there was a kitchen in each school, and the managers worked with the teachers. At a few schools, I started family style service. I was new to School Lunch; I didn't know you couldn't do things, you know. I didn't know that there were rules and regulations that said you couldn't do it, so I called up the state and the USDA, and they agreed that we could have this pilot family style meal service, and it worked great. In fact, I was just asking my daughter the other day if she remembered; it was at her school. And she did remember how nice that was. We bought round tables, we had senior citizens volunteer to sit at each table, and we had bowls of the different food items. We had a way for people to check that each child was offered exactly what they needed to be offered. So, it was lots of fun, lots of fun. Through the years, while I was there, the Combo Program was introduced in the junior highs and the high schools. Rather than having the traditional meal, they started serving more fast food type entrees. Still healthy, but really catering to the interests of junior high and high school, increasing participation that way. And then we finally made that move, gradually, towards a centralized kitchen. Actually, one memory while I was there also was the food processing agreement. We at that time had flour; we were baking naturally, so we had lots and lots of flour in our warehouse, up to the ceiling I remember. And a person from Sabatasso Pizza, which was a fledgling company at the time, drove up in their station wagon and said, "We have this wonderful pizza we'd like you to buy." And I said, "Well, we have too much flour; we have to make our own dough. If you could take our flour and make it, then we'd love to have you make it for us." And, so we actually looked into it, called the state office and they said that we could pilot doing something like that, and that was the first food processing agreement. Now it has grown into a very large program.

BK: Was that the first food processing program in the country or in the state?

MB: Yes, in the country; it had never been done before.

BK: And when was that?

MB: This would have been about 1977, I believe.

BK: Wow.

MB: '77 or '78. So that's a historical moment. It worked out well and Sabatasso did some great pizzas for us.

BK: That's a really good story. So, after you left, how did you move into the state, into being a State Director?

MB: How did I get to the state?

BK: Yeah.

MB: I was at the state quite a while before I became State Director. I was first interested when I came to San Juan and a national Nutrition Education and Training program did not exist. We had a similar type of program at the state level, and Violet will probably tell you about that because Violet directed that program. At that time, Jo Martin and some others and the Society for Nutrition Education were working on a national Nutrition Education Program, and I became involved in working with them in lobbying for a program that would support Nutrition Education in schools nationwide. And so, being a part of that from the beginning and then seeing the legislation pass, I was very interested in how it would be implemented at the California level. And through that interest, I applied for a position in that program, and also because of Gene's encouragement. I think Gene's encouragement was probably the number one motivator. I did apply for a position in the Nutrition Education and Training Program and became one of the staff. Amanda Manning was coordinator; she came from out of state. She had a tremendous, wonderful background at USDA in many different programs. And we had a terrific team of about seven employees in California, because the legislation authorized fifty cents per child, although it actually appropriated less. When we started out we had about four million dollars to work with - two years of funding. I have lots of fond memories of getting that program off the ground in California. So, getting back to your question, which was how I got to the state department. And then I progressed from there to Nutrition Education and Training Coordinator, and that's another story. Shall I mention it quickly?

BK: Go ahead.

MB: Within the Nutrition Education and Training Program, we were having problems having nutrition services recognized as part of what a school district is all about. Working with some school districts, we developed a conceptual model of comprehensive health with six different components. We made sure that nutrition services was one of those components. That model worked so well in our pilots that the Superintendent of California at that time wanted to implement it statewide as our health education model, and he created a health unit that implemented that model. Amanda was selected to coordinate the health piece, so at that time I stayed in the NET Program and took her place as coordinator to implement the nutrition services part of the Comprehensive Health Model. Amanda went from there to CDC and implemented that model nationwide, so it was really exciting to see it go from a pilot to a nationwide program, which is still being implemented at CDC.

BK: When was that, that they did the Comprehensive Health Model?

MB: We started that, again, it was probably about 1979 and then in the mid-80s is when it was recognized and picked up by CDC and developed into a nationwide grant program for comprehensive health.

BK: So you were on the cutting edge of several...

MB: It was exciting to see it grow, yes. It gives you a strong belief that if it works at the local level, there's really a possibility that it can work nationwide. Absolutely. It was really exciting to see it develop.

BK: After you did Nutrition Education and Training, what did you do next?

MB: After Nutrition Education and Training, another project we worked on was Nutrition Standards and School Guidelines. Ever since I was at San Juan, coming from the dietetics and the food worlds, working with a lot of different quantity food preparation programs, I felt like there could really be some improvements in what Food Service Directors were allowed to do in planning their meals. Especially if you have somebody who's competent in planning meals and nutrient planning, why would they have to adjust things according to the school meal pattern when they could use a nutrient analysis and have a fine meal. So, that had been an issue that I wanted to move forward for a long time. I started talking

to the staff at USDA about it; Cynthia Ford allowed us to do a pilot, and again we worked with the Directors. We chose ten school districts to try to solve this problem. It took about a year to get them to believe that, indeed, Cynthia told us we could look for alternatives. And through that we developed the Nutrient Standard Menu Planning system that was really the prototype for the national NSMP. Through working with all of those programs, I really wanted to expand my experience within the state to work with all areas of Child Nutrition Programs, and moved to the Assistant Director job, and then to the Director job, and that was through a number of years. Does that answer your question?

BK: During this time, when you were doing the Nutrient Standard Menu Planning, were you in Washington for part of that time?

MB: Yes, I was. With our prototype and our experience, when Ellen Haas came on board, she was excited about what she was seeing. She came to visit and was excited about the districts and the improvements that they were making in their programs and the increased flexibility for the Directors. She invited me to come on as a special assistant to help her to implement some of the changes that she wanted, which was a very interesting experience. I think you probably remember that time.

BK: Well, why don't you tell us about that time. It was an interesting time, especially for those in School Food Service.

MB: Yes it was. In California, we had worked from the ground up, and we had really involved Directors and made the changes according to what they told us worked for them. When we moved to the national level there was a very interesting difference. Do you want to cut that for a minute?

[At the request of the interviewee, the tape was stopped. The recording resumes with the following comments.]

MB: So when I first came to USDA, they had been dealing with the issue of what to do about the meal pattern. Ellen Haas wanted to make a change in the meal pattern. There had been a request for comments on a proposed regulation. They received more comments on that regulation than any other, I think they had said any other federal regulation; they had thousands and thousands of comments.

One of the first meetings that I went to when I arrived there was a meeting with Ellen and her nutrition staff, and she asked her nutrition staff what they would recommend for the change and if there were any comments that would help. I knew that California had commented and had given them all the information about the SHAPE Program that was working. And I heard a gentleman say, "No, there were no ideas, but we've come up with this great idea." And they presented this great idea they had which was long and complex and complicated, and I don't think it would have worked. I was very quiet because I had just gotten there, but when she said, "This will not work; surely there must have been something else that people suggested since we've had this many comments," and he said, "No, there weren't," I couldn't help it but say, I guess I should say I heard myself saying, "Oh, yes, there were." And I said, "I know that we commented from California." Ellen turned and said, "Well, what was your suggestion?" and I had brought it to the meeting. She took a look at it and she said, "Well, this looks great. Why didn't you tell me about this?" And she dismissed her staff, and that's the meeting I remember. So, when we were meeting with her privately we worked on this. She had her own opinion, and she changed it somewhat. She added a lot more breads at the high school level; that's what I remember. We knew that it hadn't worked for us but she had a hand in changing somewhat what our pilot program had done. We then were given the task of working on the regulations and I learned about how you really can't discuss it once you're actually writing the regulations. We went through the regulation approval process and that was very interesting because changes occurred at every step; everybody had a question along the way. What came out was quite different than what we had originally hoped for, and it became quite confusing because of several issues that became quite contentious. We ended up with five different menu planning systems which was unfortunate, because that was very confusing. Now that there haven't been any changes for awhile I think people are used to them. More and more people are becoming aware of the flexibility and advantages of the Nutrient Standard Menu Planning System. A real important part of that, of course, is having a professional who can also plan menus and make them both appealing and nutritious, and make sense in terms of meal planning.

BK: How many meal patterns were there before?

MB: There was only one.

BK: There was one; it went from one to five.

MB: From one to five, and in California, it was...

BK: "Any reasonable?"

MB: "Any reasonable approach" was added by a California director, yes, who was very vocal and very legislatively savvy. The issue was the weighted averages. USDA insisted, the USDA staff felt it was very important to have a weighted average when you are determining your nutrient content. We had done studies to show that really you came out with an equally valid nutrient analysis. The line was drawn in terms of what kids are selecting versus what you are offering children. We really felt it was unfair for directors to be responsible for what children are selecting versus what they're making available. We included the nutrition education, the motivation, all the other things around helping children to make nutritious choices. So, it was a matter of philosophy. It became a very contentious issue and that's why the California directors went back and obtained a waiver to the weighted averages. We also obtained approval for SHAPE to become one of the accepted meal patterns. That was another compromise that was made because the directors who were having such success on SHAPE really didn't want to make those changes that had come along as the legislation progressed. So it was all very contentious at times. What I always hope for is people being able to sit around a table and work things out and come to a consensus, so that it didn't get quite so confusing for everyone. That unfortunately didn't occur because of how the process works, I guess.

BK: What time was this? Mid-90s or?

MB: Yes, mid-90s, I think you're right, mid-90s. I could look it up; I think it was right around '94 or '95.

BK: And how was Nutrient Standard Menu Planning related to Dietary Guidelines and was there a connection?

MB: Yes. Absolutely, absolute connection to Dietary Guidelines. The Dietary Guidelines came out before the Pyramid. In California, we came up with the

California Daily Food Guide, which was really like the Pyramid. It was before the Pyramid was official, but we used many of the USDA materials and wanted to have something that all the state nutritionists could use for their nutrition advice. And the California Daily Food Guide became our standard until the Pyramid came out, which was the same. After we had the California Daily Food Guide, there was a California state law, which actually was a California Department of Education sponsored legislation, to establish nutrition standards for school meals and all foods sold on the school campus, using the California Daily Food Guide, and that's how we started our work. That was actually back in 1989. With the Pyramid, reflecting the Dietary Guidelines, that same idea was at the national level, and the School Meals Initiative, as Ellen Haas coined it, was really all about incorporating the Dietary Guidelines into Child Nutrition Programs. That was the overarching goal of the School Meals Initiative. And actually, my other job while I was there was to develop and implement the training and technical assistance plan for incorporating Dietary Guidelines into professional development programs by USDA. And that was when the Team Nutrition materials were developed and the conceptual model for the different materials that have been developed. It was another interesting experience when I first came to USDA, when I was starting a new training and technical assistance plan, as you well know, as the Institute does it so well, the first step was to have a needs assessment of what currently existed. When I did that at the USDA, the staff there told me that that's not how they did it; that they wouldn't answer that question because that's not "how we do things here," and "we determine what people need." And when I really got to the bottom of it, the Food Buying Guide and the Menu Planning Guide were the only materials they had at that time. And other stuff, helpful stuff, would creep up secretly to help us develop a plan, and we would go to the Food Service Directors and representatives from different professional associations to talk about what was needed out there. We did it anyway, with quite a bit of contention.

BK: How many training materials were you responsible for working on by USDA?

MB: It was really the whole, let's see if I can remember the framework. We developed a plan that included the resources, the training and technical assistance resources; if you look at the Leader's Guide for Team Nutrition materials that was really what we developed the plan for; all of those materials. I haven't thought about that for a while. Do you remember the Nutrition Adventures? That was a promotion that Ellen Haas felt was a great opportunity

to get out there and do some of the culinary things. We also developed Nutrition Education Modules with the Scholastic company. Meal Talk was a part of the plan. I started Meal Talk while I was there.

BK: You did?

MB: That was really exciting. Was able to pull out funds to get it started and to build the Healthy Kids Resource Center.

BK: That's a good resource.

MB: That was part of the plan. The nutrition, Team Nutrition Training Grants was part of the plan. We did not mean for that to replace NET by any means. Unfortunately, that is what occurred. It was only meant to be a support for states to be able to use the USDA materials that were developed. It was never meant to replace NET, and unfortunately that's what someone in the legislature apparently wanted to do anyway. With the Team Nutrition Training Grant, the USDA wanted to only give out very little funding. We were able to, because of Ellen Haas's office, increase it to four million that first year, which was very important. The National Food Service Management Institute was a very integral part of that plan and a part of the meetings when we were developing the plan, and they had several different components of the plan in it and were given extra money to do projects such as planning kitchen equipment for use in preparing meals that met the Dietary Guidelines. I'm trying to remember some of the other things. There was a series using chefs cooking different foods; what is that called?

BK: Healthy Cuisine for Kids?

MB: Yes, you know them all better than I do, yes. That was one of the exciting pieces I think that people have really enjoyed.

BK: We picked that back up and had one last ...

MB: Oh that's wonderful. So the fun part of that was getting everybody together and brainstorming on what was needed and who were the logical people to work on those different programs. I'm trying to think of the other Institute programs, there were some others that the Institute did also.

BK: Well, you mentioned the Institute. Tell us about your involvement with the National Food Service Management Institute.

MB: Okay, the Institute is near and dear to my heart. I first learned about the Institute from Allene Vaden when she was developing the concept. She was active in the Society for Nutrition Education, and I knew her from that society. She was also active in the Dietetics Association. She was developing a prototype model and asked me to review it and to give comments. And I got so excited when I learned about the vision, and it was so sad when she was no longer there to watch her vision being implemented. I helped to lobby for the legislation to support the Institute, so was very excited and honored when I was asked to be on one of the committees to help to initiate the activities of the Institute. And the first group that I was with was the RETAB, Research, Education and Technology Advisory Board, was I close? And I think the Institute just did a fantastic job at including different representative groups. I was representing NET on that group; I remember there was a Child Care representative, and it was just a real model of beginning a very exciting project, something inclusive of all the stakeholders that would be a part of that project. The hospitality, also, was absolutely incredibly wonderful, and helped the members of the committees be that much more creative. And I think it helped attendance; everyone looked forward to the meetings. And we actually bonded and almost became a part of the Institute family; there were some very, very great times. In those early meetings, some of the projects that I remember discussing, probably the first one because it has lasted and has been such a success, is the BLTs. I remember the small working group where we knew one of the inputs from the directors was that they wanted something short and sweet. And we came up with the idea for the short sessions, which we had known some managers to do previously, and then in the course of brainstorming came up with the BLT name, which has really stuck, which is great fun. And also the satellite programs. At that time, satellite education was still relatively new, and coming up with that idea and seeing that into fruition and watching the first satellite programs was very exciting. So, the other exciting part, of course, was having the dream of having the building and then to go back and be a part of the dedication for that building was absolutely fantastic. I was later, I think the Advisory Councils were combined or something, on the National Advisory Council. And again, I remember the bonding, the interaction with the other members there, and the exciting programs done by the hardworking staff.

It was incredible, the progress that was made between each session. We worked on a plan and then saw that plan come to fruition; to see how hard the staff were working and how passionately committed they were about their work was very exciting.

BK: And there's another way that you were involved with the Institute too. Tell us a little bit about your involvement with the archives.

MB: Oh, okay. The archives was a project that I was always interested in. I knew early on in the planning that that could be an important part of what the Institute did. And I came to that meeting to develop the plan and, again, a great group came together and generated lots of exciting ideas through brainstorming about all the different and important functions of an archival project, such as this activity, though I did not think that I would be one of the interviewees.

BK: You were on the list.

MB: It's a very important project for the ages. My father was a nutritionist and also archivist at heart. He had a nutrition library and a nutrition history library, and so now we're still sorting through some of the things he had, such as a book by E. V. McCollum, signed by E.V. McCollum, who discovered Vitamin A. It's so meaningful to the next generation to, to be able to know the stories. It's all about the stories I think.

BK: You mentioned that you've been involved with NET, or that you represented NET when you were on the Advisory Board.

MB: Yes, I was the President of the NASNET, or National Association of State NET Coordinators.

BK: Would you tell us about your involvement with professional organizations that would touch Child Nutrition Programs? I think you an officer in one of those.

MB: Yes, I've been active in mainly the Society for Nutrition Education, the American School Food Service Association, and American Dietetic Association, and I've held different positions in each one of those. I think of Allene Vaden again. I think she was actually going to be President of both SNE and ADA shortly before

her death, which was really, really sad. In the American Dietetic Association, I've held many different offices, plus I've been on some of their task force groups. Most lately their Alliance Task Force Group to restructure their partnership programs, and as part of that I've really stressed the importance of Child Nutrition Programs. The association of ADA with Child Nutrition has been rocky along the way, and some School Nutrition people feel that they've been more or less, I would say, quote unquote, looked down upon by the dietitians, and we've worked very hard to change that through the years. And I think it has definitely changed, and is going through an exciting metamorphosis right now. At our last session that our School Nutrition practice group had at the American Dietetic Association, where we used to have very poor attendance of the dietitians, we've had overflowing crowds that are now interested in coming into the profession. Dietitians that have been involved in School Nutrition Programs have always known that it's a wonderful, wonderful place for dietitians to bring their skills, but I think that's really growing now, and that's an area that I've really enjoyed working on. For the state Association I've been the Education Policy Advisor for over twenty years. Also for the state Association, I helped to organize a School Nutrition practice group at the state level. So, really, always trying to promote the whole idea of dietitians getting involved in schools, because I think it's mutually beneficial to schools plus the dietitians.

BK: Gene was telling us this morning about the shortage of directors, or that they're hearing that a lot of directors will be leaving.

MB: That's right.

BK: Are you thinking about these ADA members being able to fill in the gap?

MB: Yes, absolutely. I think educational programs for dietitians to help them learn about School Nutrition Programs and to help them learn the skills that they don't necessarily learn in their training that are transferred to the school world is a very worthy endeavor, absolutely. Let's see, what else were you saying that Gene said?

BK: You mentioned the Society for Nutrition Education.

MB: Yes, the Society for Nutrition Education. I was active in the Society, and am active; we have our meeting in a couple weeks. Unfortunately, it's often back-to-back or at the same time as ASFSA. I worked hard, though, to make sure it wasn't at the same time; it's now just close by. I started out by organizing a division in the Society, for Nutrition Educators of Children, and that's a division that's still quite active, and held many different offices including Treasurer and then President in SNE. I was going to say immediate past but it's two years now, how time flies, President of the Society for Nutrition Education. And in ASFSA, I've been chair of the Nutrition Committee. I was on their Nutrition Committee for many years, and I'm now on the Foundation Board and held many other offices at the state and national level. So, it seems like I was active in one committee or the other.

BK: You haven't yet told us about your time as State Director in California.

MB: Okay. That was also a very interesting time. California is a very large state, and as you know, ten percent of the children participating in Child Nutrition Programs are from California. So we have very similar and yet very different issues than other states. The State Directors have a group within American School Food Service Association, and state staff, and that's a real important way to connect. When I started at California we did a strategic plan. I had done that in the NET Program at the state and the national level, and it had helped us to focus and be able to pursue and focus on the goals that we wished to see come to fruition. When I started in California, the goals included really seeing California become a leader in the nutrition areas and organizing a "Nutrition Summit," and we formed important partnerships in those areas. I think the most important change we made was to improve our customer services and respond to the needs of our constituents and the children we served. The Child Care Food Program issues were really coming to a head as I started, and that gave me an opportunity to actually work with the legislature quite a bit. We were dealing with the integrity issues within the Child Care Food Program, and that was quite an experience, a very interesting part of the Directorship. We reorganized as a result of a strategic and business plan, which was also a challenge but this really helped us to focus all efforts on our mission. Technology in California is a very interesting issue also. As I was starting as State Director, I remember we had a ten billion dollar surplus in the California budget. So, through our strategic planning process, a highest priority was to establish legislation that would increase the

reimbursement for meals in California. We succeeded in authorizing it, but unfortunately we went, in one year, from a ten billion dollar surplus to a ten billion dollar deficit. So, that was quite an experience and the reimbursement didn't come through, but the issues still remain. But, the budget issues in California for Directors are really number one right now with increased energy costs, increased labor costs, and very little increases in revenue, so lots of challenges remain.

BK: How long were you State Director?

MB: I was State Director for four and a half years. It went fast.

BK: And now you're in a different world.

MB: Yes, now I'm in a different world as a graduate student. I'm finishing up a doctorate that I started long ago. I have my Master's in nutrition science and had actually been working on a doctorate at Berkley, and now I am back at school to learn the current nutrition science. I've been away from it for quite awhile, about twenty years, so I'm seeing how the world has changed and it's incredible, all of the new advancements. There is almost a whole new way of thinking about nutrition with the current Human Genome Project, where the human genome was identified about two years ago and that has just absolutely, dramatically changed how people are thinking about nutrition. We're going to be hearing a lot about nutrition advances in the next few years, I think. So it's very exciting. I'm trying to combine that knowledge with my work in School Nutrition policies, and I'm still not sure exactly where I'm going to direct my research; I'm still not sure where that is going to exactly fall, working on that one.

BK: You mentioned changes in nutrition science, but what changes have you seen in the Child Nutrition Programs over the years, over the span of your career in Child Nutrition.

MB: That's a good question. Many changes, I would say dramatic changes. As I said, when I came to San Juan I was still in a district that had a kitchen in every school, and I've seen a dramatic change in how meals are prepared and delivered. It seems as though in California we are moving to more and more schools having no on-site preparation at all, moving to just a heat and serve kind of operation.

Or a central kitchen that uses a cook-chill method and many side dishes that might be just, again, heat and serve. So, that change in food service system has had a dramatic change in how the district itself thinks about School Nutrition policies, including the School Nutrition Program, in their classroom activities. If the school, if the food program is just a truck that comes at lunchtime and delivers them pre-prepared meals, that's a different way of thinking about school nutrition. I think what I've seen is actually two different directions. It's very interesting and I don't know what the future holds; perhaps it's two different systems that the future holds. One way that it's going is more technology, more heat and serve, more Lunchables kind of meals. And then the other direction that it is going in some California schools is really back to the more traditional service, including gardens. We actually do have some school districts that are going back to home prepared meals in the school setting and back to even gardens. While I was Director, we had a Superintendent who was very interested in starting school gardens; we had a "Garden in Every School" initiative. As a result, in California we have many schools with school gardens, and some of those schools are combining that school garden or the local direct marketing programs with school food, so they're making an effort to put local seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables on the menu and have some more self-preparation in the schools. So that's really two opposite directions and it will be interesting to see where we go.

BK: With the school gardens, do they serve the food that they grow in the garden?

MB: Yes, we have many gardens. Some of them actually do that, some of them are using the food that they are growing in the garden as part of their salad bar or part of their School Lunch Program. Santa Monica is one that has been very, very much promoted in the press and they're using some from their garden but they are mainly buying fresh and local seasonal products through their farmer's market program and through other local cooperatives with commodity groups. But Davis, right here in this community of Davis, has what they call a Crunch Lunch program where they, again, have a salad bar and they do include foods that they've grown in their garden with lots of community and parent volunteers helping out with it. Very, very interesting program. They've had lots of support from many different parents that are very interested in doing this; it's an unusual program. Also, in Berkley they've had a lot of support, and they have Alice Waters, who is a local chef who is, I don't know if you know the name Alice Waters but she's been very

celebrated and established in California cuisine. She's worked tirelessly with the Berkley Unified School District in establishing some really wonderful garden programs that coordinate with the classroom. They actually have laboratories where they take foods from the garden, have cooking classes on how to prepare it, and later serve that in the school meals. They are now actually building and constructing a kitchen at one of their schools that is constructed and designed around that idea where they will be using the garden produce and other local seasonal foods; and Alice is helping them to set it up and have family style, round tables and family-style meals where foods are served right there in that kitchen, all coordinated with gardens. So it will be interesting to see how those prototypes develop and if they actually do move some other schools to that style of service.

BK: That will be very interesting to see.

MB: Yes, that's right.

BK: To see those children learning so many skills by, you know, learning how to grow their vegetables.

MB: Yes. I think the other change is in the School Nutrition policy. We have worked with this concept of a school having a School Nutrition policy for some years. When I was at San Juan, part of our project was to develop an Advisory Board and to establish standards for classroom education and standards for the School Lunch. We now are seeing that in our federal legislation and the reauthorization that every school will have a School Nutrition Policy. And we have that also in state legislation, so there's been an increased interest in School Nutrition policy. That's an interest of mine, and it will be interesting to see how that plays out. When it really comes down to it, working with the district and School Nutrition policy, there are not a lot of, a lot of good models for that. It will be interesting to watch it as these are further implemented. That's another change.

BK: Did you see any changes in the labor force in the level of skill or commitment in the time that you were?

MB: I think an automatic change came when we changed the type of food service, absolutely. Violet, again, will be able to tell you a lot about that. She's worked tirelessly in professional development programs since the '40s, so she will have a lot to say about that. We used to teach lots and lots of classes about basic skills of food preparation: how to bake bread, how to work with raw meat products, even butchering skills, and desserts, all kind of "from scratch" products, and fruit and vegetable preparation. That has changed now. With central kitchens it's a whole different way of operating, a whole different set of skills. With reheating, even fewer skills are required. So, I definitely see a difference from when we were learning the skills for actually preparing the food in a school kitchen. It seems to me that that was just more interesting and more exciting in terms of skills that were learned and ability to use them in lots of places. Very rewarding, you actually have a product at the end of your hard work and can see that the children enjoy the food that you prepared. You can feel creative, because you can add your own touches and help the district to create new recipes, the recipe testing was very exciting, as opposed now to product testing, which is also important but a bit different when you're not actually formulating the product. So, absolutely, lots of changes in that area. The personnel skills are still about the same. In California, training staff who do not speak English has been a growing issue. We have some resources for that now, but still many, many more needed.

BK: What do you see as some of the issues facing Child Nutrition Programs or some of the challenges that have been faced in the past, and what is in the future?

MB: Well, I think, when you say challenges faced in the past the first one that really comes to mind is management and funding issues. That has been such an issue here in California, and I hear that it really is spreading across the country, where schools used to be an integral part of the district and funding was just there for everyone, and the paradigm was that the school helped to support the School Lunch Programs. Now the paradigm is that the Child Nutrition Program is a separate business, and the resources that the directors are given in terms of reimbursement compared to what they are expected to charge for their meals is sometimes disconnected. So, financial budget issues is number one. Related to that, all of the issues, now that the world has moved to have a strong interest in serving nutritious meals, the changes that are needed to make that happen do

cost money. We need to make changes, but rather than orders coming down from on high on how a director needs to do that, they need to be involved in the decision. We find that there's many new laws or demands coming from some people who have never worked in a school kitchen and who do not understand the issues. We have incredible issues in terms of children's health. I would say it is not the School Lunch Program's fault that we have these issues. It's a complex problem that involves our entire environment; we all need to get together on this issue and not blame the School Lunch Director and impose more requirements or have no programs at all. I think in California some of the directors are really at the breaking point in terms of holding it together to keep their program and have a viable program running. They certainly are serving nutritious meals; they want to continue serving nutritious meals, but we need to work together rather than have policemen come in and say, "You can only have this many grams of sugar or this many grams of fat in this product," which is an issue here in California. Actually, I was just talking to the Dallas Director this morning, and she was calling about some of those legislative issues and School Nutrition policies, and she was saying, again, that some of those policies are written by people who have no experience in the kitchen and they really don't have meaning in terms of improving the child's diet. So, issues in Child Nutrition Programs, I think number one is some of the funding issues. Nutrition, Nutrition Education, and School Nutrition Policies is closely related, and I am so excited to see them addressed in reauthorization. We have possible funds and interest returning for Nutrition Education programs in schools. Child Nutrition Programs really are and have the potential for being a center for the community in terms of Child Nutrition Programs, and some districts are now achieving that. It really takes lots of support from the whole district and, with funding, sometimes that can make the difference. So, I'll be very excited for the future to see what comes of this current reauthorization process, and support that comes through the federal government to the states, to the locals for some of those nutrition and Nutrition Education issues. Obesity, of course, is what has the attention of the nation right now and, in order to work together on that issue, I think it's fantastic what Arkansas has done. They've received some publicity lately and it's very exciting that, again, their whole community, the health department, the education department, and the governor are all working together to really, again, work from the ground up. They started pilots in some local districts and it's great to see what can happen when people work together. In many other states, it can become a competitive process, education versus health versus agriculture. Hopefully people can come

together and solve some of these issues together. The obesity issue in California is big. We have our own California issues including the diversity of our population and the diverse strategies needed to conquer this problem. So, I think that people are interested now and we're going to see more attention in this area, and hopefully that will be a challenge that we can really face in the future. Does that answer your question?

BK: Yes.

MB: Okay.

BK: What do you think has been your most significant contribution to the Child Nutrition profession?

MB: To the Child Nutrition Profession. That's an interesting question; I would probably say three. One is, I worked in the early days of the Five A Day Program. I have an interesting story about the Five A Day Program.

BK: Okay.

MB: I mentioned the California Daily Food Guide, and when the state nutritionists were working on this California Daily Food Guide. We wanted to zero in on one area of our California Daily Food Guide, and at first fat or low fat was chosen. A marketing person who with us said, "Can't you think of a positive message?" With our new food guide, the one change we had was that we went from four to five servings of fruits and vegetables, and so we offered that as our change. And he said, "Well, let's try that," and came up with the Five A Day message and the logo, which is still used today. Every time I see it in a grocery store, it reminds me that "we can do it!"

BK: You helped do that.

MB: Yes. We started with no money and just an idea, with about five state nutritionists. And this program has grown to really a billion dollar program with contributions from government, the food industry, and others; much more than we would have ever dreamed of. So that's one contribution I think, related to the Child Nutrition Programs because we were an important partner in promoting

and using the message. Then, probably second would be, we talked about the School Meals Initiative and the SHAPE Program, and that was a dream of mine from way back when I was at San Juan Unified. So to see that develop and improve has been a very interesting learning experience because of seeing how things change; it's not always quite how you would have had it, and to observe the politics of taking the program from a pilot to a national program. That was a real learning experience, and Directors can now use Nutrient Standards. I think there's still room for lots more improvement and I would enjoy being involved. I think probably, as a third one I would probably say the Comprehensive Health Program. I think my philosophy has always been from when I first worked at San Juan Unified, rather than the Food Service Program operating in isolation, it should be a part of the whole school community. The Comprehensive Health model does help to identify Nutrition Services as an integral part of all the health issues that are being addressed by the school district, and pulls nutrition out as a very, very important part of it. I was making a case for that early on when I was working on a National Advisory Board for the Cancer Institute, and I'll never forget this because it brought home the point. We had all the experts from psychology and health education, all the different areas of health, physical fitness, and all these very important people. And we were trying to work out this challenging problem in developing this program for the Cancer Institute, and we were just not doing well at all. One of the issues was including nutrition as a separate component. People were becoming contentious, they were arguing, they weren't making sense, and at about two-thirty, I finally said, "Why don't we have lunch?" We hadn't eaten all day, and after lunch everything was clearer. So, I had a perfect model of the importance of nutrition to learning and being able to think clearly; this was brought home to them by their own experience and they agreed that they would include nutrition, then, as one of the components. So, the comprehensive health program model, along with the corresponding nutrition and health policy development and action would be the third contribution.

BK: What keeps you involved in the profession?

MB: What keeps me involved? I wish I knew. My first reaction is that it is exciting and fun for me. It's what I am passionate about, partly because I've been involved for so long, partly because I love everything that there is about Child Nutrition Programs. I love cooking, I love food, I love nutrition with all my heart, and I love making a difference for children. It's a rewarding, exciting field to be

involved in. I think my favorite is the hands-on. When I went to the Department of Education, I never dreamed I would stay there as long as I did. I love being in the kitchen, planning menus, making meals for kids, and that's one of the pieces that I get very, very passionate and excited about, and maybe that's why I stay involved, because I feel like we can do better in making a difference for kids in schools. We're not there yet and I feel like there's still a lot to be done, so I'm happy to be a part of it.

BK: Are there any other things that you'd like to tell us about?

MB: Oh, probably not now. Are there any other things that you would like to talk about at all?

BK: No.

MB: Okay, we can probably end, and thank you so much for asking such interesting questions.