



Carolina Population Center

In 1966, the Carolina Population Center was founded at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. To celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2006, a project was conducted to document the history of the Center. This transcript is an excerpt from an oral history interview.

Interviewee: Estelle Mabry

Interview conducted by: Grace Camblos

Interview date: December 6, 2005

Estelle Mabry was secretary for Thomas L. Hall, former CPC Director, from 1974 – 1977, and worked with Dick Udry, CPC Director, in 1977 and 1978.

GC: When I've been talking to people about the big changes in the history of CPC, the one thing that they always point to, and with reason, is the changes that Udry made once he got in. What's your perspective on the things that he did to change the direction of the Center?

EM: Well he saved it. He really did. Or, he and NIH saved it. I mean, I would love to ask him the question: if he had any involvement, or how he influenced NIH to do this, and how, what the other directors did, too. But I bet he was a biggie on 'em. But he took the ball that NIH handed him and ran with it. And really opened the Center up. It was no longer this sort of [pause] awed place. That is the wrong word. But the Center had had a lot of power on campus, because it had so much money. And now it was sort of humbled, right? Because it didn't have any money anymore. This money was changing. The AID money was gone. How was it going to survive? Who had this vision? He did. I mean, even if it was that NIH said, "We're only going to do this," he took what NIH gave him and developed it into an institution that will survive, and an institution that has influence, and an institution that the state is still willing to give money to.