

THE NATION'S RURAL ELDERLY

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
UNITED STATES SENATE
NINETY-FOURTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION

PART 3—GRETNA, NEBR.

AUGUST 17, 1976



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- Part 1. Winterset, Iowa, August 16, 1976.
- Part 2. Ottumwa, Iowa, August 16, 1976.
- Part 3. Gretna, Nebr., August 17, 1976.
- Part 4. Ida Grove, Iowa, August 17, 1976.
- Part 5. Sioux Falls, S. Dak., August 18, 1976.
- Part 6. Rockford, Iowa, August 18, 1976.
- Part 7. Denver, Colo., March 23, 1977.

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THE NATION'S RURAL ELDERLY

TUESDAY, AUGUST 17, 1976

U.S. SENATE,
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING,
Gretna, Nebr.

The committee met at 10 a.m., pursuant to notice, in the Municipal Building, 202 North McKenna, Gretna, Nebr., Hon. Dick Clark presiding.

Present: Senator Clark and Representative John McCollister.

Also present: William E. Oriol, staff director; Kathleen M. Deignan, professional staff member; David Harf, legislative assistant to Senator Clark; John Guy Miller, minority staff director; and Alison Case, assistant clerk.

OPENING STATEMENT BY SENATOR DICK CLARK, PRESIDING

Senator CLARK. Good morning. It is good to be with you in Gretna for this official hearing of the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging. We have several scheduled witnesses and then we will try to hear from people in the audience. A stenographer will record all that is said, and we will issue a printed transcript of the proceedings.

Our subject at this and five other hearings this week is "The Nation's Rural Elderly." In other words, we are emphasizing in these hearings the specific problems that people have in rural areas. We know that many of the programs are designed, in fact, for metropolitan areas. The metropolitan areas certainly need programs for the elderly as well; but the particular emphasis of these hearings will be on the problems faced by people who live in small towns, by people who live in the countryside, and what we can do to help them.

I first suggested these hearings a little more than a year ago to Senator Frank Church, who is the chairman of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, and he agreed. We held some meetings, in fact, last April in Washington, and now we are holding them here in the Midwest so we could come out to talk to people who are affected by the Federal programs that have been instituted. I want to make my statement very brief, and call on Congressman McCollister for a statement as well, and then we will have the witnesses. I want to make three or four major points before we start with these hearings.

First of all, the prime objective of these hearings is to determine the responsiveness and the practical help provided to the rural elderly by such programs as the Older Americans Act, medicare, public housing, transportation assistance—how and in what way people in small towns can ride minibuses and other kinds of buses.

Second, there is a real need for this evaluation because, in our view, we failed to do what we said we were going to do in the 1971 White House Conference on Aging. We have not yet arrived at a national policy on aging, particularly on rural areas and/or rural issues. A part of the lag has been caused, I think, by the lack of leadership that we have had in Government in these programs. Another part has been caused by economic uncertainties related to inflation and unemployment. Nationally about 8 million people, or about 28 percent of all the people over 60 years old, live in rural areas—communities like this one and smaller communities—but in some States the percentage of older people who live in rural areas rises to 50 percent or more.

For example, here in the State of Nebraska about 45 percent of all people over 60 years old live in small towns or live in rural areas. In Iowa, we have almost exactly the same percentage—almost half the people over 60 years old live in rural areas, and yet much more than half the total population lives in metropolitan areas. There are major differences among the States and even though each of our hearings has a rural theme, we find that there are special circumstances in each locale that call for close inspection.

Here in Nebraska we will be especially concerned about the delivery of services to the widely scattered rural elderly and the effects of the increasing isolation of the elderly in small towns and communities as they leave the farms and as many younger workers leave to take jobs in other areas. We will be hearing from a number of individuals from all across the State of Nebraska who have confronted some of these problems firsthand.

Another issue on which I hope we can have some discussion today is the financial ability of rural county governments to help pay for services funded by the Older Americans Act, as well as other programs of the Federal Government meant to serve the elderly. I think we often find that in many rural areas local governments are very much in support of services, but find the financial burden imposed on them in meeting the matching requirements for participation in Federal programs particularly difficult.

Finally, I would like to say that in the Older Americans Act program and in all the others, the rural elderly must feel that no one is dictating to them. The progress that we are making in aging is due in no small part to the initiatives and determination of older persons who are making things happen. The Federal share of their effort, if one is needed, ought to be part of the solution, and not part of the problem.

Now I would like to ask Congressman McCollister if he has a statement.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN Y. MCCOLLISTER, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEBRASKA**

Representative McCOLLISTER. Senator Clark, thank you. Thank you for two reasons: Thank you for coming to Nebraska where a large proportion of our population is in the senior citizen category and thus have a very special meaning to us, and because so many of our senior citizens do live in rural communities; and to thank you for in-

ving me, a member of the other body, to participate in these deliberations today. I am grateful, too, for your generous invitation.

I think the policy of the Federal Government toward the rural elderly can only be characterized as one of benign neglect. The Federal Government has a great number of programs for elderly people in our metropolitan centers, but as I go around this State I discover that there are very few programs that are able to be delivered to the people in our smaller rural communities. Thus, these Senate hearings today can serve as a real basis for beginning to formulate policy that will change that neglect of so many of our rural senior citizens.

I think we need many programs designed to address those in rural communities—stronger nutrition programs and transportation programs. I understand in Council Bluffs this afternoon you have some hearings addressed to that subject, as well as other places around Iowa. There are a great many problems that are affecting rural senior citizens.

I say, again, I am grateful to you for your being here and for your invitation to allow me to participate. I am going to be very brief because I think the real meat of what happens here today comes from our panels and from those who will be participating.

Thank you.

Senator CLARK. Thank you very much, Congressman.

Now we are going to hear from a group of persons who are very well qualified to speak on this subject. I think we are going to go in the order in which they are printed here. First, Norman Magnusson, who is chairman of the board of governors, eastern Nebraska Human Services Agency; then we are going to hear from Evelyn Runyon, ombudsman, eastern Nebraska Office on Aging in Omaha; then Pete Lakers of Columbus, Nebr.; Glen Soukup, executive director, Nebraska Commission on Aging in Lincoln; and Marge Stine, director of Senior Citizens Industries, Inc., in Grand Island, Nebr.

I think we have asked the panelists, if they have an opening statement, to limit their remarks to about 5 minutes, and then we are just going to have discussion back and forth for a while. This panel then will probably end about 5 minutes till 11.

So you proceed in any way you think appropriate, Mr. Magnusson.

**STATEMENT OF NORMAN A. MAGNUSSON, BELLEVUE, NEBR.,
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF GOVERNORS, EASTERN NEBRASKA
HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY**

Mr. MAGNUSSON. Senator, first I want to sincerely thank you and your staff. It is very heartening to us in the Midwest to know that we have people in Congress and the Senate who are interested enough in our local problems to come and meet with us on our own grounds. So welcome to Sarpy County, and this is from all the citizens of Sarpy County. We are very happy to have you here.

I think I am known to most of you. In case somebody doesn't know who I am, I am Norman Magnusson. I am on the Sarpy Board of County Commissioners and I serve on several other boards throughout the community. I am also chairman of the Eastern Nebraska Human Services Agency Governing Board.

I am testifying today in regard to the needs and wants, or at least as I regard them, of our senior citizens in the rural area. I will start by saying that some people in the East cannot understand we people in the Midwest. We are a different type of people. We are proud of our heritage, we are proud of what we have accomplished, and we like our home—this is where we like to be.

In Sarpy County I think the board is doing a pretty good job, as far as funds go, of what we are doing for senior citizens. At the present time we have homemaker services, specialized transportation services—that is the one that, as far as I am concerned, has been a dismal failure. It is one of the higher cost ones, but it is one of the most needed. There will be some people speaking a little bit more on that. I just wanted to get in what my concerns are.

ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS ERODE FUNDS

I am chairman of the MAPA. In case you don't know what MAPA is, it stands for Metropolitan Area Planning Agency, of the Urban Affairs Committee. Lately we have been getting all kinds of requests for grants in transportation for the elderly from various organizations. At our last meeting I requested that we hold a meeting so we can try to coordinate these services under one head. I don't like to see money going for administration when it should be going for services.

The way the transportation system is fragmented at the present time, this is what we are doing. We are spending money for administration that should be going for furnishing buses or transportation for you people to get to your doctors, to get to your church, to get to any place you want to go in the community. If it is necessary. I will try to get legislation introduced at the next session of the unicameral to take care of that, at least in the State of Nebraska, and hopefully we can get some legislation passed in Congress that will make it national instead of just one State.

We have the ombudsman service where, if you feel you have a complaint, you can go to one of the youngest ladies that I know of in spirit, not in years. She is one of my favorite people. We will hear from her later.

Information and referral services, recreation services, foster grandparents and, beginning in September, the senior companion program, retired senior volunteer program, family services, counseling services, health maintenance clinics: These are other areas that, due to the cooperation of our visiting nursing association, I cannot speak highly enough of. They have done wonders in Sarpy County since we have had them.

All of our nutrition sites—we do have a health maintenance clinic at the present time and this is not just for senior citizens. We, at one time, thought just of senior citizens but, realizing the need for this service for everybody, opened it to everybody. I hope you use it, because the service is there.

Then there are some special needs such as medical services. The older residents have difficulty in maintaining their health due to the difficulty to get periodic medical services. We hope that these health maintenance clinics that are on nutrition sites can overcome part of

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Transportation—I spoke about that. This is the most serious thing that we have. A lot of you have your own cars, I know, but there are also many that do not. I think you are entitled to some of the things in life that you can't get unless you can get there. I am very prone to go to church myself. The fact is, when my minister is gone, there are several other churches around and I fill them up. So church is important to me, and I hope it is to you. I hope that we can one day give you transportation so that you can go to the church of your choice on Sunday.

Legal services is another program that we so far have not been able to get off the ground.

We talk about isolation and people in rural areas, or about our children moving away. Mine have been gone for a good many years. Friends are dying off. I am afraid to look at the obituary column any more, I might find my own name there some morning. I don't have the philosophy that some people do. I don't believe in a rural area with high-rise apartments or housing for senior citizens. I still have the old kind of philosophy, "Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home." As far as I am concerned, I think that the broad effort should be made to keep you people in your own homes as much as possible and also to see that the home is taken care of, that it is kept up so it is a decent place to live, and that you have transportation to go from that home to the various activities that are already outlined.

VISITING NURSE PROGRAM ECONOMICAL

Now I know this is a departure from what some people believe in. One reason we got visiting nurses is so that we could keep people out of rest homes, nursing homes, and hospitals. Last year alone the home nursing program saved Sarpy County taxpayers about \$170,000—at a total cost to the county of a little over \$60,000—by having the nurses go to your home, visit with you, take care of you there, and keeping you out of these costly hospital rooms and nursing homes. The most important part of all this program is that it keeps you home with your loved ones where you belong.

You are an independent people, and you should be. You should be proud of your heritage and proud of what you have accomplished in this great country of ours. It is people like you who have made this country what it is today, and the younger generation growing up can learn a great deal from you—if they just will. I think it is wrong to put your talents on the shelf and say there is no place in society for you.

Limited county revenues—yes, our revenues are limited by statute. We have a statutory limit of 14.28 mills. This is as high as the county board can go. Fortunately, we have a board in Sarpy County that feels human services are important, and I will tell you how important they think they are. The total request we had this year would have called for a budget of a little over 17 mills. We have whittled it down to 14.28. Did we whittle down human services? No, we did not, We added \$5,000 to the visiting nurses budget. Senior citizens was a little over \$7,000 last year; this year it is a little over \$36,000.

theory of the Boy Scouts—do a good turn daily, and help your neighbor.

Thank you.

[An additional statement of Mr. Lakers was subsequently received, and follows:]

ADDITIONAL STATEMENT OF PETE W. LAKERS

In addition to what I said at the hearing in Gretna, Nebr., I would like to mention what is available through the American Association of Retired People, which was started 3 years ago here and, as of now, has a membership of 341. We have a handyman program and a halfway house program. We also have other programs in cooperation with our technical college. We had 226 participants in lifetime learning courses as follows: metric system, laymans law, cards-for-fun, printing, defensive driving, mechanics for women, and physical fitness. The courses were for 6 to 20 hours and cost from \$6 to \$20, enough to defray expenses.

We have bus trips to shows almost weekly; to Omaha and Lincoln at a discount. Also longer tours.

We have groups of four people calling each other four times a day to see if things are all right.

We have a monthly meeting, with an average attendance of 55. We motivate each other and help each other.

Priorities for services are: (1) transportation—we have some, we need more; (2) meals-on-wheels—we should have it in other towns; and (3) handymen or chore people.

We also have complete social security payments at 65.

We are trying to do what we can for senior citizens, but with increased costs, our problems are the same as other counties. Together we must all get more involved and work together.

Senator CLARK. Thank you.

We are going to hear next from Glen Soukup, who is the executive director of the Nebraska Commission on Aging in Lincoln.

STATEMENT OF GLEN SOUKUP, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON AGING, LINCOLN, NEBR.

Mr. SOUKUP. Thank you, Dick.

I have heard it called the curse of all old farmers—they always move to town. Curse or not, the trend is obvious. Only the urban areas of Lincoln, Omaha, and south Sioux City have a smaller percentage of elderly residents than the countryside.

But when a farm family retires from the farm, they try to remain as close to the farm life as they can. Generally speaking, the smaller the community, the higher the concentration of elderly citizens. Based on 1970 census figures, only 9 percent of the population of our urban areas are elderly. That percentage almost doubles for communities of 2,500 to 10,000. By the time you reach towns of 1,000 to 2,500, you can anticipate about one-quarter of the population to be 65 or older.

The small rural hamlets don't even show up on the census figures, yet this is where the greatest percentage of elderly reside. These crossroad communities have become retirement centers for yesterday's farmers. They dot the map in out-of-the-way places—communities of 200 or less—with most of the residents on social security.

These could be Nebraska's retirement utopias—the basis of Nebraska's well-known legacy of longevity. In the past 15 months I have signed certificates honoring 138 centenarians. Enough of these men and women have been farm people to convince me that it is the rural way of life that is the basis of their longevity.

But I said these communities could be Nebraska's retirement utopias. Often these small towns are many miles from the nearest doctor and emergency aid. The residents live in constant jeopardy. Even the simplest consumer needs—a grocery store or library—may be in the next town 20 miles to the north. Without adequate public transportation, many are forced to rely on neighbors or their own driving skills—or simply stay home.

Not all the rural communities are slowly fading away. Much has been written about the "rediscovery of rural America." This rediscovery might be viewed more realistically as a flight from the cities. Eager for country living, many city workers commute to nearby rural hamlets "for the kids" or for their own peace of mind.

These migrating workers often maintain their finances in the city while increasing the demand for services in the rural communities. Seniors in these "bedroom communities" often find themselves faced with crushing special assessments for public works improvements.

FEDERAL PROGRAMS DISCRIMINATORY

Rural areas lack the resources to provide necessary transportation, health, community development, and social services. Far from redressing this lack of resources, Federal programs discriminate against rural areas. Rural counties have a disproportionate share of the Nation's poor, aged, and unskilled. Yet a 1970 Government survey of 242 Federal programs revealed that only 27 percent of Federal outlays reach rural areas.

Rural America has three-fifths of the Nation's bad housing, but gets only one-fifth of all Federal housing subsidies. Rural America is served by just 12 percent of the Nation's doctors and 8 percent of its nurses. Rural counties are home for about one-half of the Nation's poor, yet the efforts of these communities to seek solutions to these problems have been frustrated by spiraling costs, economic recession, and requirements mandated by Federal and State programs.

Federal funding formulas have been heavily weighted in favor of the highly visible urban areas. The rural aged are poor and isolated—out of sight and out of mind.

A good case in point might be title IX of the Older Americans Act which provides employment opportunities for seniors. When a rider was attached to the President's swine flu vaccine bill that provided increased funding for title IX, hopes were raised that such senior employment programs as the handyman service could be extended to more rural areas. Of course, the lion's share of the funding ultimately went to the urban areas.

There are certain diseconomies in providing services to rural areas that have held back the development of needed programs. Without the social services, rural citizens have relied upon themselves and each other. But the world is changing. New problems, such as the crisis in the cost of fuel, have made it increasingly unrealistic to expect that the self-sufficiency of rural people can continue to meet these growing needs.

Much remains to be done. Through the use of paramedical personnel and visiting nurses, medical services can be provided to areas that have gone without. We need to expand volunteer opportunities. We must

stay up to date on technological breakthroughs—such as improved methods of insulating homes, and we must rediscover old methods with promise, such as windpower, if we are to meet the growing needs with our limited resources.

There are a great many skilled and capable seniors living in rural Nebraska. It is frustrating indeed that so many of these competent workers are unemployed while so many crying needs exist in the country. Elderly residents could be doing much to help improve facilities and services in their communities. For example, there are 120 older workers employed under the federally funded green thumb program in Nebraska working on community improvement programs that would otherwise go undone. Despite the fact that green thumb can serve only a small portion of the State, the program always has substantially more applicants than it can hire. This demonstrates that rural elderly people will seek out the programs that help them to help themselves if they are given half a chance.

Rural America has been last in line for too long. We must begin to extend opportunities to the elderly in both the cities and the country. Probably the most important single step we can take is to promote an enlightened awareness of the rural elderly and their needs.

Sitting next to me is a woman who has done much to promote this enlightened awareness in the Grand Island area of the State, and I am going to now let her tell it like it is on the local level.

I would like to present Marge Stine.

STATEMENT OF MARJORIE G. STINE, DIRECTOR, SENIOR CITIZEN INDUSTRIES, INC., GRAND ISLAND, NEBR.

Mrs. STINE. When I was asked to explain how we got our program started in the rural area, it is a very serious thing. How did we get the older people involved? We were under the OEO—Office of Economic Opportunity. We then went to the grassroots level and talked to the people themselves through intensive outreach. We started with five participants—that, you can imagine—and these five participants went into the areas and helped the people find out what their greatest need was. Their greatest need was additional income. They felt additional income was their greatest need.

At this meeting of these five participants, we asked them how they felt they could supplement their income. The only way they could see it at that time was to start selling their handmade crafts, so we drew on all the resources in the community. We held periodic craft and white elephant sales by some of the stores, some of the county officials, State officials, several of the service clubs, and then we had what we called a flea market that helped raise money for a small store. The store was established and we incorporated as a nonprofit organization under the name of Senior Citizens Industries, Inc. We then applied for delegate agency status from the Office of Economic Opportunity and applied for title III funds.

After the retail outlet was established, the Senior Citizens Industries, Inc., board of directors applied for a foster grandparents program. Through this funded program, 50 or 60 seniors were able to supplement their income by working 4 or 5 days a week, several hours a day, working with disadvantaged children.

With participation increasing, need was evident for the means of transporting seniors to and from activities, doctors, getting their groceries, and so forth. Through the advisory councils and the incorporated board of directors, Hall County applied to the Nebraska Commission on Aging for the handi-buses. At the present time both buses are running at peak capacity in all counties.

We then applied for a nutrition grant which we received through title VII. We are serving many meals per day at several sites, two of which are in the very rural area. This was funded for all counties by the Nebraska Commission on Aging. Through the combined efforts of the church, a meals-on-wheels program was developed serving 25 to 35 meals per day to homebound individuals.

SENIOR CENTERS ESSENTIAL

At one time most of our activities centered in the Grand Island area. We have had a very difficult time getting the very rural elderly involved. We tried the news media through human interest stories, et cetera, to no avail. Outreach was sent out from the Grand Island area. It seemed everything failed. We then decided to take the programs to the rural community towns. We hired a part-time community aide from each town with the idea of developing an informational center for each area. The community became involved by providing space in churches, fire halls, town halls, et cetera. The centers became a focal point for all activities. The seniors were able to get information regarding services available to them in the community.

The seniors feel most comfortable with their own peer group and seem to develop a good rapport with the community aides. Even the most timid and withdrawn individuals become involved in one or more of the activities.

We at the rural level have found the senior center concept as a vehicle to get the local residents involved, for the simple reason the elderly have an opportunity to pitch in and help other individuals in need. By the same token, they have a feeling of dignity and pride in their own activities they themselves have helped to develop.

I came from a town by the name of Surprise, and it is a surprise, believe you me. It has a population of about 79, I think, at the present time. My mother still resides there. It is a tragic situation. Three-fourths, I would say—maybe 90 percent—of those older people have no means of transportation. The doctors' facilities are not within 23 miles of this area and they have to depend on their children or, if the children are gone, the neighbors to get to the services in the health-related field or even to buy some of the groceries that they need. This is a very unpleasant situation. I do think when we develop centers in the rural areas the community gets involved, we have information and the old people know where to go to get help.

Thank you.

Senator CLARK. Thank you.

I want to thank the entire panel. I think they did a good job of reflecting the fact that the elderly people in rural communities have very wide ranging, different, and unique kinds of problems. That obviously is one of the concerns about trying to apply the Federal

system so that it does have some ability to adjust, be flexible, and to fit the specific needs of small communities.

I just have a couple of questions, and perhaps the Congressman does.

Since you still have the microphone over there by you, Marge—one of the most impressive achievements of your efforts in Grand Island is the enlistment, I think, of about 140 persons in the retired senior volunteer program, and I am just wondering, very briefly, what kinds of things they did for the community and how did you get that many people involved?

Mrs. STINE. I wrote the original RSVP program, but before it was written, we went to the volunteer sites and explained to the community what these volunteers provide. Then we went to the advisory council and explained how much the people could gain by volunteering. In the rural areas at this time we did not have transportation. Transportation was provided. This gives the older people a chance to get out and get involved in the community. I think this is one of our greatest things, that we have transportation whether we do get out or not. We have, I think, over 163 members at the present time.

Senator CLARK. Over 163 now?

Mrs. STINE. Yes.

Senator CLARK. You don't think there is any secret in how you do it, you just go out and recruit them?

Mrs. STINE. Yes; but I think actually it is getting the older people involved. I don't know. It seems like we like to help our fellowmen, and I think it is one of the secrets that if they are helping someone, you don't have much problem in getting volunteers.

Senator CLARK. Let me ask Glen Soukup a question.

As I understand it, at one time you were involved as a director of the community action program—a CAP program. Now in Winterset when we opened these hearings yesterday afternoon just south of Des Moines, we heard about a well-run cooperative effort between the community action agency on the one hand and the area agency on aging on the other, but sometimes we hear of conflicts between the two. What has been your own experience and what would you recommend in terms of the Federal Government trying to create an atmosphere of cooperation as contrasted to some of the problems that we seem to have between the community action agency on the one hand and area agencies on aging on the other? What has been your experience and what would you recommend for us to consider to try to improve that?

COOPERATION SOMETIMES LACKING

Mr. SOUKUP. Well, in my experience, there is cooperation and lack of cooperation. In my own experience years ago, of course, we had a demonstration grant from AoA which was one of the original three pilots that resulted in the title VII feeding program, so I can say our cooperation was very good.

There have been problems recently between the community action programs and the area agencies on the local level because of disputes that go back a long way. The area agencies on aging came in after the CAP agencies were there and there seemed to be some problems.

What can you do at the Federal level? Anything in the way of enforced coordination that you can do and that we can do, of course, is going to help alleviate this problem in Nebraska. We are working on that very thing right now.

We just completed a companion study with an agency on the State level which deals with community action programs going into what the problems are and looking at possible solutions to them. We are in the finalization stage of this report at the present time. I guess we all know we have very limited resources and we have to do everything we can to get these resources used in the most effective way at the local and State levels. I believe that is what the people at the local level are interested in doing; however, there are problems involved.

Senator CLARK. Thank you.

Congressman McCollister.

Representative McCOLLISTER. Thank you, Senator.

I have two questions, but first an announcement that is, I think, very apropos to what the panel has been talking about.

Late yesterday afternoon we received word that a grant we had been working on for Douglas and Sarpy Counties of \$100,000 has been made to provide a senior companion program for the elderly. Basically what it involves is the employment of 60 seniors at the minimum-wage rate, but it is nontaxable, and it also has, in addition, transportation and other services as part of it to provide some companionship for senior citizens—rural citizens in Douglas and Sarpy Counties—that I think is going to be very, very helpful. As I heard your comments, I was struck by how very different the need is of rural communities compared with the urban communities who have, to date, received the bulk of the funds.

LOCAL CONTROL OF FUNDS

Now the first question. Recognizing that difference in need, and speaking of the Federal role in these programs, it is my belief and rural communities, in the sense that we know it in urban communities, of Federal guidelines, and Federal strings attached to it, in order that each community or each rural agency may tailor their priorities to fit their need.

I will give you an example. It occurs to me that housing in most rural communities in particular are better served with a minimum is not the same thing at all. The programs of which you have spoken—maintenance and handyman services, visiting nurses—those are the things that you need in order to help the elderly maintain the highest degree of independence possible in their own community. Yet if the Federal Government sets the guideline, it seems to me, that you are likely to have mandated a priority of funds that is going to be somewhat different. Do you agree with me that there should be a maximum of local determination of how Federal funds are to be used in tailoring a program for the rural level? Any disagreement?

Mr. MAGNUSON. No disagreement whatever, John. Speaking as a local government representative, this is one big problem with Federal funding. They don't realize the local problems like we people do. I think if we got it with less strings attached we could do a much better job.

Representative McCOLLISTER. You mentioned in your discussion on transportation that you regretted that so much of the Federal funds were used for administrative purposes at the expense of the money being directed to the actual services to be provided to the beneficiary recipients. It seems to me that it gives you a maximum of independence in the use of those funds that is helpful in reducing the administrative costs not only at the Federal level, but at the local level as well.

The question on transportation to which you referred—you said you hoped it could be consolidated and that evidently a number of different efforts, each requiring its own administrative costs, now go forward, and you are hoping that there could be some kind of combination of those transportation services. Could you elaborate a little bit to give me a little better idea of what you mean? How is it done now?

TRANSPORTATION POOL PRACTICAL

Mr. MAGNUSSON. Now there are a number of organizations who are performing services for the elderly. Each organization is requesting buses through the Nebraska Highway Department on funding that has been in effect for 2 years. Too often these buses are only used for an hour or two a day. If we had a common transportation department or a central transportation department, all of these buses could be pooled on a central dispatch and when they were not being used for the one agency, then they would go into the pool to be used by another agency who has the need.

Representative McCOLLISTER. Are you talking about multicounty, or within a county? MAPA as the coordinating agency?

Mr. MAGNUSSON. No; multicounty, because our senior citizens are multicounty. Two counties, Douglas and Sarpy, are the only two so far that have used it. Washington County is showing a great deal of interest and we are working with them. We hope we get the other two counties in region 6 to realize what they are doing or not doing for senior citizens.

So I think it should be central transportation agencies, such as MAPA, or somebody who has the knowhow of transportation. I am not a transportation man. There is no one on the Government Board that is a transportation expert. So it should come under the heading of somebody who is knowledgeable about transportation and knows what can and can't be done.

Representative McCOLLISTER. These counties, of course, have a history—even back 6, 8, or 10 years ago—of coordinated effort. I refer, I guess, to the meeting of the tricounty watershed board, Encore, MAPA—I don't know how many others. All have demonstrated that the capacity and the attitude of these counties is to work together. I would hope that you could come together in some fashion to provide this coordinated effort.

Mr. MAGNUSSON. It just proves what county government can do; we can pool our resources at much less administrative cost and the public can get the job done.

Representative McCOLLISTER. Thank you.

Thank you, Senator.

Senator CLARK. Thank you very much.

We want to thank the panel for some excellent testimony. It has been very helpful to us.

The next panel is Dorothy Switzer, host of the Grand Generation, editor of "The Dorothy Switzer Report," and a member of the Nebraska Commission on Aging; Helen Storms, Lizzie Springer, and Henry Knappe.

Following this panel we will be hearing from Richard D. Heft, who is chairman of the Harlan County Board in Alma, Nebr., and Hans Jensen, legislative committee chairman of the Nebraska Senior Citizens Council in Aurora, Nebr.

We are going to start now with Dorothy Switzer, member of the Nebraska Commission on Aging.

I might ask each of you, because of the time problem, to try to limit your opening statement to 5 minutes; then we will have more time for discussion.

STATEMENT OF DOROTHY SWITZER, HOST, THE GRAND GENERATION; EDITOR, "THE DOROTHY SWITZER REPORT"; AND MEMBER OF THE NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON AGING. LINCOLN, NEBR.

Mrs. SWITZER. Thank you.

The Grand Generation is a program which appears on the Nebraska Educational Television Network supported, in part, financially by the Nebraska Commission on Aging. It has just completed its third year and in October will begin its fourth year. It is a program designed for older Nebraskans, and we are very happy to always be of service. We have a toll-free telephone line known as the hot line on which people may call us with their problems. I am basing my testimony today largely on the letters and the telephone calls we have received— they number in the thousands now.

On each of the weekly Grand Generation programs on the Nebraska Educational Network in the months of October through June, I present an information report, "The Dorothy Switzer Report," on subjects thought to be of interest and importance to older Nebraskans. The information reports are compiled and distributed by mail twice a month to a mailing list of more than 1 thousand individuals, groups, and agencies. As many elderly Nebraskans do not have access to television, the printed report is intended primarily for them. The report is also used in numerous ways by senior citizen centers and by appropriate public and private agencies concerned with needs and problems of the aging.

My testimony, based on the kinds of inquiries that come to the Grand Generation, emphasizes very strongly the fact that the elderly in Nebraska and the rural elderly, in particular, wish to remain independent in their own homes as long as possible to avoid having to be institutionalized. They need exactly the same kinds of supportive services which, happily, are now being received by many of the urban elderly. The rural elderly urgently need access to health delivery systems and to home health care and physical therapy. They need homemaker and handyman services, congregate hot meals and, in some cases, meals-on-wheels. They also need opportunities for recreation and socialization.

Hospitals and clinics, physicians, dentists, audiologists, speech pathologists, and oculists are few and far apart in many areas in the far-flung State of Nebraska. Thus, the rural elderly need transportation in order to procure such services. They also need transportation to transact essential business, to do shopping, to attend church, to maintain social contacts, to keep active in the community, and to remain in touch with the world. Incidentally, many of them look enviously at those rows of schoolbuses parked in school parking lots for very many hours of the day when it seems to the elderly that those buses could be used to take them to places they need to go.

It was hoped at first that the Federal transportation demonstration project might help solve our problems. We all rejoiced when one of these proposed projects was notified that its application had been accepted. However, 14 months have elapsed and the application is still involved in the review process. It is now awaiting equipment specifications. No money has been received and there is no promise of action before January 1977. Similarly, application for three buses for three Nebraska cities under the Federal national transportation section 16(b) (2) have long been bogged down in equipment specifications hassles.

POST OFFICE A NECESSITY

I have been asked to testify about the deep concern of the rural elderly who live in communities that are threatened by loss of small-town post offices. Such towns usually have no banks or credit unions, and they have few or no sources of general merchandise. Being largely without transportation, the rural elderly must, per force, shop by mail and must pay for their purchases by postal mail orders. If, for example, their eyeglasses, dentures, or hearing aids need repair, these must be sent and returned by mail. Because they are without legal or even paralegal services in their communities, they must often send important documents and business papers by registered or certified mail. How are they even to purchase stamps when their post offices are closed? As small communities decline, the elderly tend to become increasingly isolated, and this becomes even more acute when they have no post office. Small town post offices serve major information and referral functions, and they serve social functions, as well.

Granted that small town post offices may operate at a loss and that in many cases the postmastership is a political sinecure, there are economies which could be effected—such as decreasing the hours and days of service—without depriving the rural elderly of their greatest source of service and satisfaction.

If I may take a moment to be personal, I may tell you that my mother lived in her farm home until her death at age 82. She kept up correspondence with a host of friends of all ages, and arrival of the mail was the high point of each day. Also, one of my aunts who lived alone on her farm until her death at the same age, 82, maintained a worldwide correspondence. Both women belonged to regional and national flower clubs which, through the mail service, gave them an avid interest in life to the very last.

The rural elderly are in urgent need of legal or even paralegal assistance, such as is available in metropolitan areas of the State through

legal aid societies. Many of the appeals addressed to the Grand Generation program relate to this need.

A higher proportion of the rural than the urban elderly own their own homes, although most of these homes are exceedingly modest and often in need of repair. In small towns the tax base has been seriously eroded as local businesses have closed when population declined, thus taxes are onerous. Others will speak to a reverse trend in some "bed-room" communities, but this inevitably requires expensive extension of services. Thus, a problem of deep concern to the rural elderly, which might seem to be of local or statewide nature, is one of which the Senate Special Committee on Aging should be cognizant—it is the matter of special assessments for such things as street paving districts and water and sewer improvements. In order to pay such special assessments, the elderly are often faced with having to sell the home, acquired through a lifetime of sacrifice and thrift, in which they had hoped to live out their days.

Others will speak to the subject of the disastrous effect of ever-rising costs for fuel, electricity, telephone service, and other utilities—to say nothing of astronomical medical costs.

Another thing I would like to say is that inflation has created the most overriding problems for the rural elderly—the very people who have the least opportunity to find employment by which to supplement their limited incomes. Restrictions on earnings by social security recipients are unfair, but the lack of jobs in rural Nebraska is even more devastating. It is not lack of work. There is work which should be done throughout the State, as well as throughout the Nation, which has myriads of unmet needs.

Thousands of our rural elderly have talents and skills which should be put to use—often, indeed, to serve the needs of other less physically able older people. Elderly rural Nebraskans survived the years of drought and depression, bank failure, and crop failure. They are notoriously long-lived and self-reliant, and they do not wish to be relegated to the rocking chair or the whittler's bench. Under present circumstances, however, too many of the rural elderly—totally against their will or desire—constitute an enormous wasted human resource.

[An additional statement of Mrs. Switzer was subsequently received, and follows:]

ADDITIONAL STATEMENT OF DOROTHY SWITZER

In many of the small towns of Nebraska there are relatively few young or middle-aged families, and therefore few young people who can be employed to mow lawns, shovel walks, and do other chores and errands for older residents. In the surrounding farm areas there are often, however, sizable groups of farm boys and girls enrolled in 4-H Clubs and in Future Farmers and Future Homemakers of America. Leaders of such groups are interested in community service projects in which the members can engage, and frequently their cooperation can be enlisted to serve the needs of the rural elderly. This is a source of help for older Nebraskans which is largely overlooked. Services of the young people need not be entirely unpaid, as frequently the older people can afford to pay a reasonable amount for services rendered.

Possibilities of involvement of rural youth with the rural elderly are virtually unlimited. Youth with garden projects often have a surplus of produce which can be shared with older people who are unable to garden; those enrolled in cooking and baking clubs who are trying to perfect their skills may share some of their products with the elderly; young men in farm construction projects

often have building skills which can be contributed to help older people keep their homes in repair.

In Council Bluffs, in Senator Dick Clark's home State of Iowa, a youth handyperson program in Cass and Pottawatomie Counties provides homeowners over age 60 with free small home repair jobs. The young people are willing to work without pay because they find it spiritually rewarding; others, whose grandparents have died, just like being close to older people, it is said. Many of the elderly people have so much pride that they do not want to have something done for them for nothing, hence they reward the young workers with cookies, milk, and ice cream—and with their friendship.

There is evidence that when communities are made aware of the needs of the rural elderly, awakened concern leads to innovative and creative ways to meet such needs. For example, in Bellevue a concerned woman became aware that older people had difficulty in getting to the grocery store. She enlisted the cooperation of church groups which supply a bus and driver and a volunteer escort to take elderly residents on a weekly shopping trip. This has served not only a practical purpose, but has provided socialization opportunities for many who had previously been isolated at home for weeks at a time.

Senator CLARK. Very well said.

Now we are going to hear from Helen Storms from Western, Nebr.

STATEMENT OF HELEN STORMS, WESTERN, NEBR.

Miss STORMS. Thank you, Senator.

Senator CLARK. Western is a town, isn't it?

Miss STORMS. That is right.

Senator CLARK. Not just western, but Western with a capital W.

Miss STORMS. That is right. Western is a town of 340 people at the present time.

I wish to speak as a senior citizen and as a member of the rural community. I am truly a member of a rural community in that, on both sides, my grandmothers homesteaded within 7 miles of where the town of Western is at the present time. I have lived all my life, you might say, in Western, except for 42 years of teaching. I moved in and out, but Western has always been my home.

I would like to bring up something a little personal in some of my remarks, and I hope you will forgive me for that. In years past we had three doctors. We had a dentist, we had a registered nurse—we had two or three. They were not called practical nurses then, but they took the place of practical nurses. We had two trains a day and we were pretty well served. Today we have no doctor, no dentist, no R.N. We are 18 or 19 miles away from any of those services, and that has very decidedly changed the life of the people that live in our rural community.

I would say that probably 50 percent in our town are retired. Just going up and down the street in my own mind the other day, I counted 50 people who live alone. I counted another 50 who, husband and wife, are still together but have practically no relatives within the town, which makes quite a difference.

TRANSPORTATION TOP PRIORITY

Then in 1971 there was a survey made in our country as to needs of the older citizen, and the first preference was transportation. So with the help of the community action and our county agent, who was very active in that program at the time, we established a minibus.

Well, there were lots of trials and tribulations in getting the minibus off to a good start, but we still have the minibus that we think is working very well. We serve six towns—two towns in other counties. They have doctors and hospitals in their towns. We run our bus 3 days a week—2 days we go to Lincoln and on alternate Tuesdays we go to either Fairbury or Beatrice.

Then we have a program of special tours, because it is my feeling that for some of these senior citizens a trip, purely recreational, is good therapy and perhaps does as much as a trip to the doctor. We ask them where they would like to go or if there are programs they would like to attend. For instance, we go to Abilene, Kans., almost every summer, they love to go down there. In the fall we go to Nebraska City to the apple orchards. They love that because they are always treated to a good drink of apple cider.

It has been up and down financially, but we think we are off to a pretty good start. The other day I got on the telephone and decided to make another survey of our town, which is not hard to do when you have a town of only 340 people. I asked them what their major concern was. Well, I found that they were really very satisfied with our transportation setup. They thought that was very nice. Their second preference was some kind of health service to come in.

The next preference was the handyman service, and I certainly could go along with that. It is very difficult in our small towns to get people to come to do odd jobs. Maybe you live alone and can't get out and do them all yourself. It is just a little simple thing of mowing the lawn. It is very difficult to find people. They say, "Well, how about the Boy Scouts?" Well, we don't have a Boy Scout organization. We have Cub Scouts, but they aren't old enough to do that.

It is impossible for me to trim my rose bushes because the boy mowing the lawn takes them down every time. So a handyman service is something that is very important.

Senator CLARK. Thank you very much for an excellent statement. We are going to hear next from Lizzie Springer from Macy.

STATEMENT OF LIZZIE SPRINGER, MACY, NEBR.

Mrs. SPRINGER. Thank you.

Senator CLARK. How big is Macy?

Mrs. SPRINGER. Macy is an incorporated little town of about 300.

Senator CLARK. About 300. I feel right at home here. I am from a big city. I was raised in a town of 490. Now I find that both our communities are smaller.

Will you tell us about Macy?

Mrs. SWITZER. She lives on a farm.

Mrs. SPRINGER. Macy is practically all Indian people. There are very few non-Indians left. We have a senior citizen center which we all go to 5 days a week to eat dinner. They have come out to us and take us back, which is good, but the transportation is very poor for us to go shopping for groceries because just 14 people can go in this panel van. Then when we want to go shopping, our coordinator says we have to have more than one go—"Just one? We cannot take you." The nearest good place for shopping is Sioux City. We like to go

there because there are always bargains in the grocery stores, but we have to wait until we have more than one to go. So transportation is poor that way.

If we want to go see the doctor, the transportation is good for that. There is a van that comes out to us when we set a date for them to come.

About our housing. I live out in the country; I am a widow and I live all alone. My children and grandchildren have grown up and left me, so I live alone. Not only me, there are other senior citizens living alone—men and women.

I have pity for one man. He is a blind Indian and he lives out in the country. I get in this panel truck when they go out to him and a lot of times I have helped to lead him to the truck. I don't think anybody goes out there to see this man. We have meal service there, but I don't think they go out to see him.

There are a lot of gardens that the senior citizens fall back to. There is a lady that lives alone and her sons have a bad habit of drinking. They bother her, and we just can't do anything about that.

About our telephones—we have our telephones installed, but we have had a difficult time getting them. We even signed a petition with the non-Indians to get the phones and when the non-Indians got their phones in we didn't get ours until about 2 years after.

Senator CLARK. Why is that?

Mrs. SPRINGER. I don't know. That is what I would like to know.

Mrs. SWITZER. It took action by the Nebraska Commission on Aging and some other concerned citizens to bring it about.

Senator CLARK. You have phones now?

Mrs. SPRINGER. We have phones now. Before then we had real problems. I was sick one time and I had to walk down to the road to a farmer to take me to the hospital at that time before we had the phones. Many people have been doing it.

I don't live in fear now. I have my own phone. The rest of them with seven families have their phones now—some of them are senior citizens.

Then I don't know if I should say this. Our panel is——

Senator CLARK. Your panel is your minibus?

Mrs. SPRINGER. Yes, the minibus. It is pretty well worn out and I told our supervisor, Mr. Mayer, about it. He said that we had to go and talk to our tribal council, that they had charge of that. We have not gone to the council yet. I think maybe next week some of us senior citizens will go and talk to them to see if they can get anything else. It is very unhandy to get in and get out. There are a lot of things that different ones talk about here that we have not got.

Senator CLARK. I want to come back after we hear from Henry Knappe and ask you some questions about some of those specific areas, if I may.

Mr. Knappe is from Alma, Nebr. You may proceed in any way you wish.

STATEMENT OF HENRY J. KNAPE, ALMA, NEBR.

Mr. KNAPE. I will give you just a little history of our town and surrounding area. We have a population of 1,450 and we have a senior citizen center. It is progressing, in my belief, very successfully. We

are like everybody else. We have our problems and we serve five other towns around us. We have four meals a week—Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. We serve one meal a week over at Orleans, Nebr., because they haven't any restaurants there and we are going to let them serve on Sunday so that senior citizens can be served with a hot meal on Sunday. They come over the other four times and a lot of them have participated in the meals and activities of our community. I will just give you a little rundown on the towns, the population, and the districts.

Ragan is 19 miles away from Alma and it has a population of 60, with no stores. Republican City has a population of 173 and it is 8 miles. Stamford has a population of 200 and it is 17 miles. Oxford has a population of 150 and it is 14 miles.

We have one minibus. I am just like all the rest of them—that minibus is one of the most important things in the senior citizens community to me, because it helps bring the elderly into town and it helps take them to the doctors. Besides these towns we serve, we have a phone. They go up there once a week. The bus holds eight, and they take these eight people out—different ones, of course, on different weeks—for a ride in the country.

When people get old they like to see where they live and see how things progress. Our big trouble is transportation. While we have the minibus to these other towns, we have emergencies lots of times and they have to get a person to a doctor. Then we have volunteers—we have no volunteer service. My wife is 76 and she volunteers to take these people to the doctors lots of times. I was thinking, if we could get another minibus to fill in while this one minibus is out, we could get volunteer drivers, I am sure, to run it in cases of emergencies. Then when that minibus was not busy, we could take that on a trip. Like the lady said here a while ago, take it down to the Eisenhower Museum.

My main concern is that we have to take people to a specialist lots of times. We had one this week. Well, the bus could not go because it was out of town and they wanted to go to Kearney to a specialist. If we had another minibus, that would have filled the gap.

Representative McCOLLISTER. How far is it to Kearney?

Mr. KNAPE. Forty-five miles. You know, when you take a bus out of town and serve these other towns it is quite a chore. I am like most of them, I think the No. 1 priority is transportation.

CHORE SERVICE PROGRAM

No. 2, as the lady said a little while ago—I am just rehearsing some of the things they have gone over—that is chore service programs. I think the chore service program is one of the most important things. We have elderly around in the small towns. They have that handyman for putting in storm windows, painting, odd jobs done, like mowing their yards. It is awfully hard to get somebody to do chore services, because most of us down there are elderly. There are just a lot of elderly there.

Of course we have the reservoir. We have people from Hastings come there to retire because it is a nice place to fish, and you know how that is. If people have someplace that they enjoy more than others, they move there. That is why I moved down, too, as far as that goes.

I think my time is just about up, so I better just leave it that way. I am very glad that I had the privilege of talking to you.

Senator CLARK. Well, I wish we had more time to visit, but let me try to keep my questions brief. As you know, if we are going to successfully fight inflation in this country, we have to limit our spending.

Mr. KNAPE. That is right.

Senator CLARK. So the question is, which of these programs is the highest priority? Which ones do we need to be putting more funds in? Which ones can we eliminate, and so forth? You have said, for example, that in your judgment you support much of what has been said here before—that transportation is a very high priority. Now, would you put a high priority on the nutrition program, on the hot meals program, and why? How high and why?

Mr. KNAPE. We have that and I think it is one of the most wonderful programs there is because there are a lot of elderly women and an awfully lot of elderly men that need a good hot meal. I didn't stress that as much as I should have, but I think that is No. 1, really. Then I think transportation is No. 2, and I think chore service would be No. 3. That is the way I would grade them.

Representative McCOLLISTER. Did you say nutrition is No. 1?

Mr. KNAPE. Yes. I think nutrition would be No. 1—see that the elderly get a good meal as many times as you can. Yes, I would put that No. 1, I would put transportation No. 2, then I would put chore service No. 3. I would like to see chore service so you would have somebody that would do these jobs that are needed to be done for the elderly, because they like to stay in their own homes. This has been brought up before.

NUTRITION PROGRAM 5 DAYS A WEEK

Senator CLARK. Now let me ask Lizzie a question. What about nutrition programs at Macy? I don't know how many programs you have or if that is the same. Do you have a hot meals program there?

Mrs. SPRINGER. Yes.

Senator CLARK. Is that each day, once a week, or how does that work?

Mrs. SPRINGER. One a day at noon, 5 days a week.

Senator CLARK. Is there good participation in that? Do people go?

Mrs. SPRINGER. Yes. They have trays they take out to some who are unable to come in—27 trays every day, to take care of those people.

Senator CLARK. I see. Twenty-seven trays a day are taken out to elderly people to their homes.

Mrs. SPRINGER. Yes, to their homes.

Senator CLARK. The other thing I wanted to ask you about was health care. Suppose you get sick? Where do you go? How far away is it? How do you get there? In other words, what kind of health care do you have available?

Mrs. SPRINGER. We have a hospital there about 9 miles north of Macy and they have a panel car. They have a clinic right in Macy, and that car takes us over there.

Senator CLARK. Is the food good, in your judgment?

Mrs. SPRINGER. Yes, it is good.

Another thing, too, Senator, I want to tell. Some of the senior citizens that are old are in homes now—about four or five of them—and

they don't like it there, but their families can't take care of them at home. The hospital keeps them just a certain length of time and they are discharged—they have to go home. They don't want to go to these nursing homes, they just don't want to.

Senator CLARK. Let me ask you just one other question. You mentioned, when you were speaking earlier, about housing. What is the condition of housing in Macy? How would you describe that?

Mrs. SPRINGER. There are five homes for the elderly in Macy, and they are out in the country. We didn't ask for them to move there; I don't want to move out there. I have my own home, and I would rather stay there. My sister is about 75 and her home is very poor. They told us last week that they were going to try to have more housing for the elderly out in the country, but that may be just something they are talking about. This month they are going to have a meeting.

Senator CLARK. About housing?

Mrs. SPRINGER. Yes. There is a way to help us elderly out. If we could get housing, we sure would appreciate it.

Senator CLARK. Well, it is a very basic need. It is as important as food.

Thank you very much.

Dorothy, I wanted to ask you a question. We have been talking here about the most basic needs and you have mentioned several of them here very clearly, but do you think that the highest priority in rural areas is nutrition? Is it health care? Is it employment? Is it transportation? Can you evaluate those?

PRIORITIES VARY LOCALLY

Mrs. SWITZER. Well, it varies, of course, in various parts of the State. These people who are fortunate enough, as Mr. Knappe is, to have transportation in their community, even if it is not quite adequate, and nutrition and various other things, are lucky. There are vast areas in the State in which there are no nutrition projects, no kind of transportation, public or otherwise, and there are vast areas in which there is no opportunity for employment.

Small towns have declined, the businesses have gone out of business. There is little opportunity for the retired farmer, who moves into town and finds a special assessment for a paving district doing devastating things to his taxes, to, in any way, earn any money to supplement his income.

So I think it is very difficult to spot any one thing as the most needed, because it varies greatly by the area of the State and circumstances. I suppose that at every meeting I have attended, and I have attended many of them in area agencies on aging, senior citizens council meetings, and things of that kind, transportation does loom the largest.

The nutrition programs are appreciated more after they have had them, but until they have, they don't realize what they are missing. I think I would have to say transportation is most important.

Another very great need, however, is for legal assistance or para-legal assistance, comparable to what the elderly in the metropolitan areas are able to receive through the Legal Aid Society.

Senator CLARK. That is a good point. It has not been mentioned before in these hearings.

Mrs. SWITZER. It is urgent. Many of the questions which have come to us at the Grand Generation relate to this subject.

Senator CLARK. Let me ask you this, and then maybe Congressman McCollister will have questions.

You said that in your town—that is, in Western—you have what you consider to be, at least, adequate transportation now, but what about health care? Now, you said you needed that. My question really is—I think you said Western is a town of 300.

Miss STORMS. Three hundred forty.

Senator CLARK. What kind of health center could you support, that would be useful and helpful to you, and yet practical enough to do the job? I am particularly interested in writing legislation, and I would be interested in any suggestions that you have.

Miss STORMS. I think if we have somebody—I don't know just what term we should use, perhaps a visiting nurse or something like that—who could take blood pressure, and things of that sort. I have a neighbor who, once every 3 months, goes to Lincoln and has her blood pressure checked. It takes about 5 minutes. The nurse takes her blood pressure and tells her whether to take those pills, something that easily could be done at home. If she cannot get her appointment on the day that the bus goes, then she has to scrounge around and see who she can find to take her.

Senator CLARK. A registered nurse?

Miss STORMS. A registered nurse perhaps could handle a good many of those problems.

Senator CLARK. Suppose you had a place there for distribution of prescription drugs, would that be helpful?

Miss STORMS. Well, yes. I would say that a third of our people that ride the bus go for medicines.

Senator CLARK. Very well.

Congressman.

Representative MCCOLLISTER. Thank you, Senator.

I have been sitting here listening to the testimony and remembering almost half a century ago when the needs of the elderly were the same, yet our ability to administer to those needs was quite different. I suppose that many of us in this room can remember our great-grandmothers and our grandmothers living with us and we were able then to provide for their care. In the meantime, in half a century, our small towns have dried up, our society has become so mobile that numbers of senior citizens have been increased because of the fortunate increase in our longevity, yet our ability to minister to the needs of the elderly has steadily, over half a century, gone down.

THE CHURCHES' ROLE

Now my question to you is, since the family is no longer as well able, because of the wide dispersion over all the country—what other institutions in these communities are still able to address themselves to the community? For example, I was wondering if Western has active churches who address themselves to the needs of the elderly in providing some of these services and some of these needs—particularly I was thinking of the socialization need, the need to remain a part of the community.

I was thinking of the hot meals program. Is that a characteristic of smaller communities—that the churches minister to their congregation of senior citizens?

Miss STORMS. Well, in many of these small towns, like ours, for instance, we do not have a resident minister. The idea of the parish among the churches—our minister in Western—the one that ministers to our church—lives in Wilber 18 miles away. We have three active churches in our town and not a single resident minister.

Representative McCOLLISTER. But there are three congregations?

Miss STORMS. Yes, there are several congregations, and they are all small, needless to say.

Representative McCOLLISTER. I assume that their membership is on the upper side of 50 as well.

Miss STORMS. Yes. I think the largest church in our town has a membership of 167.

Representative McCOLLISTER. Well, as we try to devise or invent systems to provide for needed services for the elderly, we think of all the institutions who used to do it and who now cannot, and what we must do to fill that gap. There is the community, there is the State government, there is the Federal Government, and I suspect that the farther away we get from the community, the less personal interest, the less efficiency, and the greater cost. So whatever we can do to devise systems to support local effort, the better off we are. Thus, what I have obtained from you and the previous panel's testimony is to whatever extent this becomes a Federal program, to do whatever we can to use it as a stimulus to make the local communities more self-sufficient. Do you all agree with that?

Miss STORMS. Yes.

Mr. SOUKUP. Yes.

Mrs. SWITZER. It has happened in many communities in Nebraska. I wish that Art Nebelsick from Crete were here, because the churches in Crete were responsible for organizing a program for the elderly and from that has developed the senior center, and all kinds of activities. There has not been a cent of Federal or State money put in it and they have one of the best programs in the State. There are other towns which have acted to solve their problems. Neligh organized a senior citizen program through the churches because it was felt there was great need for it. The Commission on Aging has recently granted a small amount to a center which was organized in much the same way at West Point. Many of the senior centers in the State have developed through the concern of church people who have initiated the kinds of activities that later developed into a larger program.

Representative McCOLLISTER. We are grateful for your contribution.

Mrs. SWITZER. Thank you.

Miss STORMS. In our town, by far the majority of the members of the church are senior citizens.

Representative McCOLLISTER. What town is 18 miles away—Wilber?

Miss STORMS. Yes. Wilber is 18 miles away.

Representative McCOLLISTER. Any possibility of that church in Wilber adopting the congregation in Western to aid that congregation?

Miss STORMS. I kind of doubt it.

Mrs. SWITZER. It can happen though.

Miss STORMS. Yes, it can.

Mrs. SWITZER. In Crete, the rural churches cooperate just as much as the churches in the town.

Miss STORMS. They have some very active church members in Crete who really have pushed it. We have no nutrition program in Western or in the smaller towns. We have one town of 120, one of 160.

Representative McCOLLISTER. Thank you.

Senator CLARK. Thank you very much.

We thank you as a panel. It has been very, very helpful to us.

Mrs. SWITZER. We appreciate the opportunity.

Senator CLARK. We have two more witnesses, and they may both come up at this time. Richard D. Heft, chairman of the Harlan County Board in Alma, and Hans Jensen, legislative committee chairman of the Nebraska Senior Citizens Council in Aurora, Nebr.

I might say as the witnesses come up that the flowers on each of the tables come from the Gretna 60-Plus Club whose representative, I think, is here. Would she stand, please.

I understand that one representative may want to make a brief statement. Am I correct about that?

Mrs. DIETZE. Yes.

Senator CLARK. Please come up to the table.

We are going to hear now from Richard Heft, chairman of the Harlan County Board. We have about 20 minutes and we have three witnesses, so we will try to divide the time evenly.

Mr. Heft, please proceed in any way you think appropriate.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD D. HEFT, CHAIRMAN, HARLAN COUNTY BOARD, ALMA, NEBR.

Mr. HEFT. Senator Clark, Representative McCollister, my name is Richard Heft, and I am from Alma, Nebr.

When Glen Soukup called me up and wanted me to speak, he went out so far that you cannot even find it from here, you have to go out someplace else. You can't get here from there.

Anyway, when he asked me to speak, I really didn't know what he wanted me to speak about, but he said I would have about 5 minutes to talk. I said, "Well, that should not be any problem because my wife says I talk so slow, it will take me 5 minutes to say what I have to say and then by the time I tell a little story my 5 minutes will be up." So I will tell you a short little story.

There was an elderly gentleman that liked his spirits, and he went into this bar and ordered a drink of whiskey. He told the bartender to put in three drops of water. So the next time the same little gentleman came in and ordered his drink, and he said, "Bartender, just put in two drops of water." And the third night he came in again, and by this time the bartender's curiosity was quite aroused, and he said, "The first time you said you wanted three drops of water in your drink, the second night you wanted two, and tonight you want one. Why?"

He said, "Well, us elderly gentlemen can still hold our whiskey, but we can't hold our water." [Laughter.]

TAX LIMITATION EFFECTS

Anyway, being the chairman of the Harlan County Board, our biggest concern with the elderly is taxation. For just a small county—we have less than 5,000 population in all the county, which covers about 25 square miles. When I first went on the board about 4 years ago they appointed me to the service for the aging, and I thought it was a very worthwhile project. We had no service for the aging at that particular time.

When I went on the board, the first thing I did was to get a survey of what the people in Harlan County wanted first, and it was transportation; second was job chore, and third was a civic center. Well, I am glad to say we have all those, plus several more now. We have a nutrition program along with it. We have the medical lady that comes in and takes blood pressure at least once a month, and we hope to expand a lot further on that.

Anyway, back to taxation. Our county tax valuation is only \$30 million, so 1 million brings in only \$30,000. By the time you get it all divided between the 14.28 which the State requires you to have, and by the time you take care of all your services, you don't have anything left. Last year the person who represents the counties said there were 31 counties that had reached their mill levy and that there will be over 30 more that will reach it this year. So I am telling the counties that don't have the service for the aging—if they don't get the tax relief, there is no way that they will be able to handle it.

Revenue sharing, I understand, has been up before and I think that should probably continue. Before, you could not use any Federal moneys, but I think that is going to be changed to where you can use some of that revenue sharing, too, for some Federal programs. Right now we have only about 0.21 of 1 mill toward service of the aging, because it only brings in about \$8,000, and Federal aid from it started off as 90-10.

Well, the predicament in Harlan County on the service for the aging came to us. Our No. 1 problem was transportation, so they said, "Well, you go on a 90-10 for the first year." When we got down to it, it came down 75-25. So we have been in it for 1 year and 9 months, and the Federal Government has come out now and said, "We are not funding any more money for transportation in Nebraska; we have it cut off."

So the State has come out and said, "Well, we will continue it at a 50-50 grant. If we had known this to start off with, there is no way in the world that our county could have gone into transportation. We have it now and we have it on the tax rolls, so there is no way that they can take it away from us. The people in our county definitely want transportation, but it makes it all for the bad when they cut it off. They guarantee you at least 3 years, and we have 1 year and 9 months.

The panel that was here before me fairly well covered every aspect of all the programs and I don't think that I need to repeat any more on that, so I will turn it over, then, to this gentleman here.

Senator CLARK. Thank you very much.

We are going to hear now from Hans Jensen who is legislative committee chairman, Nebraska Senior Citizens Council, in Aurora, Nebr.

STATEMENT OF HANS O. JENSEN, LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, NEBRASKA SENIOR CITIZENS COUNCIL, AURORA, NEBR.

Mr. JENSEN. Senator Clark, Congressman McCollister, I am the lobbyist for the senior citizens in Nebraska without any pay. I am glad to do that for them and they probably get as much services as they pay for. However, I served 6 years in the legislature and I am glad that I have the time, and I enjoy being involved. This is one way of being involved, it gives me an opportunity to keep abreast of these things and it also gives me an opportunity to be of service to my fellow man. The world has been good to me and I would like to be of help to the people that made it possible.

One of the peculiarities about the elderly is that they have the tendency to make do. They will sit back and suffer injustices and shortages without really saying much about it.

I attended a meeting in Omaha one time and I will tell you of a little incident. We sat there and listened to the elderly testify and discuss their problems with the mayor. Along about 3:30 in the afternoon some old lady got up and led the group in singing "God Bless America." It almost brought tears to my eyes because the elderly are just as grateful, even though they have as much need as any group, or perhaps more so.

Let me just briefly cite some of the things that I put together.

MEDICARE FORMS COMPLICATED

Most elderly are confused and baffled by the forms connected with the medicare program which they are requested to fill out upon receipt of medical services and care. Oftentimes, words used are medical terms not understood by lay people. Medicare usually pays approximately 80 percent of the bill and other insurance companies are called on to pay the balance. This gives the elderly no end of trouble and concern to understand and to use. It is my opinion that oftentimes medicare is not used because of the problems it brings about.

Language used by medicare to describe action taken should be simplified and amounts covered by medicare either should be increased or charges for medical services reduced so it could all be covered by medicare. It is my opinion that the present policy used is so troublesome that it is limiting the use of medical services which the elderly need.

I am also a representative of the Damascus Farmers Union and I am doing all sorts of lobbying work for them in Nebraska for the same reason. I would like to mention something they prepared for me that I think is of interest to you. Just a brief remark about the Green Thumb program. The National Farmers Union sponsors this program in 28 States, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. There are only

120 older people working under the program in Nebraska to date in 14 communities. There are 49,000 elderly eligible for the Green Thumb program in Nebraska, according to the latest census figures. Therefore, special interest should be placed on enhancing a program of this nature, a program that uses the skills of elderly and part-time work for improving the homes in which they live. It is the kind of program that gives older people the opportunity to earn a better living in our affluent State, rather than being destitute or on public assistance. I might add here, too, that as long as these elderly people feel that they have a purpose in life, they can look forward to tomorrow. I tell you, this makes life a lot easier for them to live.

Senator CLARK. Thank you very, very much.

Let me just ask you one question.

You identified yourself, Hans, at the beginning by saying that you were a lobbyist for the elderly and that you tried to speak for their interests. One of the impressions that I have in watching elderly clubs, associations, groups, and councils form is that much of the reason that the Congress, the administration, the State legislatures, the county boards of supervisors, and so forth, have responded, to some degree at any rate, to the problems of the elderly is that the elderly have themselves become organized. They have become a strong force and have, in fact, called these people in and talked with them. They have been effectively organized and are an effective voice for their own use and their own needs. Do you tend to share that view?

Mr. JENSEN. Indeed I do, and I am going to quote you on it, too.

Senator CLARK. Good. There are a lot of people who think that lobbyists are bad people or that they are bad names—and certainly they can be—but in a democracy I don't see how you can work effectively otherwise. I don't see how you can really have your own point of view represented, whether you are elderly or young, farmers or businessmen, or anybody else, without being effectively organized. I think until the last 10 years, the fact is that elderly people had not been well organized for that kind of effort. I think in the last 10 years they have, and I think it is reflected in the kind of legislation and the kinds of administrative actions that have occurred as a result of that.

Mr. JENSEN. They have the political moxie, if they just use it.

Senator CLARK. That is right.

Mr. McCollister.

Representative McCOLLISTER. We are short on time. I yield.

Senator CLARK. Please identify yourself.

STATEMENT OF EVA DIETZE, SENIOR NUTRITION PROGRAM, 60-CLUB, GRETNA, NEBR.

Mrs. DIETZE. I am Eva Dietze.

Senator CLARK. You are here as a representative of the 60-plus club here in town.

Mrs. DIETZE. Yes.

Senator Clark and Congressman McCollister, my name is Eva Dietze and I am speaking for the senior nutrition program in Gretna, known as the Gretna 60-Plus Club, who have signed this statement. We feel that the special problem the senior citizen faces living in a rural

area is transportation. A person living in a rural or farm area who cannot continue to drive because of poor eyesight or other health problems is forced to move into town. The rural town also being without transportation forces the senior to be dependent on others to drive him to the eye doctor or to have glasses fitted—to the dentist, podiatrist, et cetera, all of which are located in the metropolitan area.

Now in the area of health care we feel that the nursing home should be required to have a registered nurse on duty 24 hours a day and a reliable resident doctor, or one that would be on call at least 24 hours a day. The nursing home should be required to have large outside areas, fenced in, where the patients can be wheeled outside for fresh air. The area should be large enough for the ambulant patients to walk around. Windbreaks of trees and shrubbery should surround this outside area. We recommend a State inspection, under Federal regulations, of nursing homes, including an inspection of the rooms, perhaps four times a year. We recommend higher and stricter standards to run a nursing home.

We feel there should be more information and education in the area of preventive health care, not only for seniors, but for every American citizen. That is, enlightening people on how to prevent illnesses and take care of their bodies before they are sick. We feel there should be more exposure and tighter controls on the chemicals and additives and the colorings and dyes that are in the foods we are eating, and steps should be taken to eliminate these additives in our foods.

Thank you.

[The written statement of Mrs. Dietze included 41 signatures. Retained in committee files.]

Senator CLARK. Thank you for a very excellent statement.

I was handed a note that there are two additional statements. Although we don't have time to actually read them, I would like for them to be included. I will distribute forms and you may send them back. They will be made a part of the official record.¹ They simply invite you to comment on any phase of discussion that we have had today, and read as follows:

Dear Senator Clark: If there had been time for everyone to speak at the hearing in Gretna, Nebr., on August 17, 1976, concerning "The Nation's Rural Elderly," I would have said:

Please feel free to fill these out and bring them to us.

I would like to call on these two people very briefly, and Congressman McCollister and I will speak about 30 seconds, then we will close the program.

If you will please keep your seats, we can have some order. I would like to call on Margaret McMullen, who is president of the State Association of Community Action Agencies.

**STATEMENT OF MARGARET A. McMULLEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
MID-NEBRASKA COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM, INC., KEARNEY,
NEBR.**

Mrs. McMULLEN. Senator and Congressman, I know you are under a tight time frame here, so I will try to make this very brief.

¹ See appendix 3, p. 196.

As the Senator noted, I am president of the association that includes all of the community action agencies in the State. Our association includes nine agencies total; seven of these are multicounty rural agencies, the other two are metropolitan agencies that also serve some limited rural area around the metropolitan centers. I believe Mr. George Woods, our State director, will be submitting some more written testimony to you before September 15, so I am just briefly going to touch upon a few things here.

As you perhaps know, the community action agencies were leaders in most areas in the development of senior citizen programs and services throughout the State. CAP agencies were established back in 1965 and the early part of 1966; CAP programs have developed over the years since then including transportation, nutrition, telephone reinsurance, social and recreational activities through senior service centers, health services and clinics and, most recently, our winterization program.

Incidentally, you may be interested in knowing that in the past 2 years—or a little less—the CAP's have winterized approximately 2,550 homes, and 75 percent of these—or 1,800—were homes of elderly persons living on fixed or limited incomes.

All of these services that I have mentioned are still, in many cases, being operated by community action agencies. Other service agencies in more recent months have entered the field of providing services. This, in particular, includes the area agencies on aging. I believe Mr. Soukup spoke just briefly about some duplication and, perhaps, problems regarding this type of thing earlier. I would have to support this statement, but I hope that the CAP's and the AAA's are on their way to working out these problems and will coordinate efforts in the future. In fact, the State CAP association will be making some recommendations to the Commission on Aging at their meeting in September and, hopefully, this will help resolve some of those problems.

I think the CAP's are unique in many respects. They have capabilities that are not available or are not used by any other human service providers. One of these that I think is particularly important is the efficiency of the CAP's. By law our administrative costs cannot exceed 15 percent, and the most recent reports from throughout the State indicate that our administrative costs are approximately 11 percent at this time. I also think we have a unique capability of mobilizing volunteers. An example is in southeast Nebraska—the Humboldt area. The CAP down there has a nutrition program that only costs them about \$1.35 a meal because they are using all volunteer labor. I think one can see the obvious saving here.

Another plus which I think the CAP's have is that they have combined other State and Federal moneys, such as Department of Labor funds, title XX moneys from the department of social services, and others, thus stretching the dollar so we can serve more people.

I could probably go on and on about our unique capabilities, but I know of the tightness of your time frame and that everyone is anxious to close the session here. I would like to thank you for your time. Mr. Woods will be submitting some more written testimony.

Senator CLARK. Good. We will be very happy to have that testimony and it will be made a part of the record as if given here. Any other comments that you would like to make, submit them as well.

I know Mr. John Buck of Creighton University has a statement, and again I would ask him and others here who have statements—because two or three other people approached me as we came in this morning, and others called ahead—if they would be kind enough to give us their statements in writing, they will be included in the record.

This is John Buck.

If you could just summarize your statement in about 20 or 30 seconds and then give us your written statement, it will be included in the record in full.

**STATEMENT OF JOHN BUCK, CREIGHTON INSTITUTE FOR BUSINESS,
LAW, AND SOCIAL RESEARCH, OMAHA, NEBR.**

Mr. BUCK. I am John Buck and I am an advocate of legal services for the elderly. I do have a longer speech that I could give. The need for legal services has not really been brought out, with the exception of Mr. Magnusson's and Dorothy Switzer's comments. The first reason the agency in area 10 in Iowa found that persons were not utilizing assistance as offered by their legal services program was that the elderly persons were found to not realize they had a problem requiring legal assistance.

A second point is the National Senior Citizens Law Center has determined that approximately 90 percent of the legal questions that the elderly have can be answered without the assistance of an attorney; for example, by a paralegal person. There are retired attorneys who do belong to RSVP and who do volunteer their services.

In Nebraska, the only place that the elderly persons can presently get the assistance of an attorney, without having to pay \$40, \$50, or \$60 per hour, are the three legal aide offices in Omaha, Lincoln, and Scottsbluff. Therein lies the problem that was mentioned about transportation needs. For example, the rural elderly don't have access to transportation to Omaha. But Omaha Legal Aid requires that legal assistance be given directly in the office—the elderly cannot call up and ask questions. They have to go into the office physically, which presents a great problem for them.

I work with Creighton University and we suggest, as a possible solution to this problem, the establishment of a legal information center for rural elderly which would operate with a WATS line, which is a toll-free telephone that anyone in the State of Nebraska could call. The center could provide answers to legal questions when a lawyer's services are not needed and where the presence of the elderly person would not be necessary. Second, it could provide case research for the attorney servicing the elderly which would then, hopefully, lower the cost of the legal services.

I am being cut off now, but Lizzie Springer brought up an excellent example where such a center could be very useful which she could have called the legal information center that we suggest. Perhaps we could have gotten the ball rolling to get her the assistance that she needed and she would not have needed to wait 2 years for a telephone.

I thank you.

Senator CLARK. Thank you.

We will make your full statement a part of the record.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Buck follows]:

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN BUCK

First of all, thank you for the invitation to attend this meeting about the special needs of the rural elderly. It is most encouraging that the Senate is continuing its interest in the problems of the elderly and specifically in relation to those living in rural areas. Older Americans live "needing" adequate income, housing, health care, nutrition, and employment much more acutely than do younger people. There exists a vast array of laws which have been designed to, and in most instances do, assist the elderly to be better able to live independently within this society, but these laws are too numerous and usually too technical for a layman (especially an older person) to be able to understand. The particular area, in relation to the Older Americans Act of 1975, which I would briefly like to address is the problem which the elderly have in obtaining legal assistance, especially in rural America.

Elderly persons most often live on fixed incomes; the source of which could be social security, supplemental security income, pensions, or possibly their life savings. No matter what the source, however, these incomes are usually fixed, and less than that to which the elderly were accustomed to in their working years. They are particularly susceptible to the effects of inflation, but generally do not qualify for legal aid.

As Senator Tunney stated last year, "Unfortunately, few elderly can afford the \$40, \$50, or even \$60 per hour fee charged by the average lawyer. Thus, they fall through the cracks of the legal system: Too rich for legal aid; too poor for a lawyer." Senator Cranston added that "The situation of the nondestitute elderly with respect to legal representation may be even more acute than that of the elderly poor. The former have too much income or resources to qualify for free legal service and yet often cannot afford to hire a private attorney." In many instances, even where attorneys are available, they may not be able to provide adequate services—often they do not have the time or resources available to keep up-to-date on the rapidly changing laws which affect older Americans' lives. This is especially a problem in rural areas, since these lawyers rarely have access to complete law libraries, and do not specialize in law affecting the elderly.

In a survey performed by the Area X Agency on Aging, the reasons for the area's elderly not seeking the assistances offered by legal services were: "(1) Not realizing that they have a problem requiring the assistance of an attorney; (2) confused or frustrated about legal affairs; (3) lack of aggressiveness; and (4) can't afford legal services." In addition, the National Senior Citizen's Law Center has estimated that approximately 90 percent of the legal questions which elderly persons have could be taken care of by the provision of legal information without direct legal representation from a lawyer. With these facts in mind, and a stated purpose of the Older Americans Act being to provide "legal and other counseling services," it seems that solutions to some of these problems should be forthcoming. Before these solutions are determined, careful consideration should be given to the long neglected problems of the rural elderly. A review of the 11 model projects funded last year (designed to promote the betterment of legal services for the elderly) reveals none with the select purpose of serving rural elderly.

The rural environment multiplies the difficulties the elderly have in procuring legal assistance. First, accessibility of private lawyers is lowered and these rural attorneys lack the necessary resources for case research. Since the legal questions of the elderly deal with such a vast number of laws, and rural attorneys would usually not have a caseload sufficient to warrant becoming an expert in the field of elderly law, the assistance which these attorneys can provide may often be limited. In Nebraska, elderly persons (over age 60) comprise the third highest percentage of population of all the States. The only legal assistance presently available to elderly citizens stems from the urban legal aid offices in Omaha, Lincoln, and Scottsbluff. These offices are usually inundated with requests from low-income persons, elderly, and nonelderly alike. In Omaha, legal aid requires that the requester of service must physically come into the office, which may often be impossible for confined elderly. In addition, what of the elderly who live too far from the legal aid offices, and what of those who are too rich for legal aid, but too poor for a lawyer? How can these older Americans receive the assistance they need to live independently in this society?

We would propose, as a possible solution to these law-related problems of the rural elderly, the establishment of a legal information center for rural

elderly, which would essentially provide service to three groups, with the end purpose to serve the needs of older rural Americans. The center would provide research to lawyers serving the elderly, would train social service personnel about the law affecting the elderly, and would directly answer some of the elderly's legal questions in instances where the direct assistance of an attorney was not required. The center could provide information about the family farm, inheritance, consumer fraud, or tax laws and could refer elderly to such existing social services such as the small claims court. Since such a center could operate in each State, drawing on the law schools and other resources located therein, it should be designed so that, if a model is successful, it could be easily replicated by other "rural" States. We hope to propose establishing such a center in Nebraska to the Administration on Aging, and while it is not presently known whether or not it will ever be funded, it is evident that the rural elderly need legal assistance of the type that model urban programs do not and cannot provide. Any effort to promote the provision of legal services to rural elderly (such as the Older American Act of 1975) should be strongly supported by all concerned parties, and we encourage such efforts.

Senator CLARK. This room is going to be used at 12 noon for a congregate meals program, so we have to break up at this point.

I do want to call on Congressman McCollister.

Representative MCCOLLISTER. Senator, the only comment I want to make is to commend you for the organization of these 2 hours and 5 minutes that has produced, I think, a record that ought to be very useful to the Congress in determining the priorities of legislation. It has been an excellent job and I commend the Senator from Iowa for coming to Nebraska to hear from our citizens.

Thank you.

Senator CLARK. Thank you very much.

I think we have received a lot of valuable information. If I could try to summarize it in about 8 or 10 sentences, it seems to me that what we have learned here is that we have unique needs in rural areas, yet, in fact, particularly in the area of transportation, we have even greater needs than we have in metropolitan areas.

We have heard about the value here of the nutrition program—hot meals. We have heard a great deal about the need for extended health care into some of the smaller communities. We mentioned Western, but really there obviously are other communities as well across this State and across the country that are badly in need of additional health services. We have heard about the problem of housing in rural areas. We have heard just now about the need for additional legal services.

So the demands are many and I would be hopeful that coming out of this hearing and other hearings that are being held in other parts of the country we can design some programs now that are uniquely beneficial in helping to solve the problems of people who live in rural America.

We thank you very much for coming.

Mr. SOUKUP. We would like to say thank you to Senator Clark and Congressman McCollister for being here with us.

Senator CLARK. Thank you. This hearing is now recessed.

[Whereupon, at 12:13 p.m., the hearing was recessed.]

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1

LETTERS FROM INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS

ITEM 1. LETTER FROM EDWIN L. CORDING, OFFICE OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, HEBRON, NEBR.; TO SENATOR DICK CLARK, DATED AUGUST 10, 1976

DEAR SENATOR CLARK: I am the chairman of the Blue Rivers Agency on Aging which comprises Gage, Jefferson, and Thayer Counties in Nebraska, and a commitment to Richardson County for a nutrition program which is to start soon.

In the first three named counties we started with a transportation program: two buses, now a third has been added, and all are running at full capacity and as per schedule. We had some difficulty with funding. After being in operation 2 years we were informed by the Commission on Aging that the third year's funding would not be available. This problem has been worked out, however. The main problem now is in local funding as all three counties are at the mill-levy limit as allowed by the Nebraska statutes.

In Thayer County, of which I am a member of the county board, we cut 0.60 mill from our road and bridge levy last year to come under the 14.28 levy limit. This, of course, is the last one that should be cut since we need our roads and bridges updated so desperately.

Our elderly problem for the up-coming winter will be the terrific cost of fuel to keep warm which takes a large part of their welfare income and leaves very little to subsist on.

Our agency on aging sends us a monthly report of expenses and work done in the various departments. I only wish the community action programs would do the same.

I may not be able to get to the meeting at Gretna, but I am sure our director, Fred Holtz, will be there and could answer any questions you may have. Willard Gumar may also be there from our board.

I am enclosing a levy sheet¹ from Thayer County for your review if you like.

Sincerely yours,

EDWIN L. CORDING.

ITEM 2. LETTER FROM DELBERT L. NIEMEIER, STATE DIRECTOR, GREEN THUMB, INC., LINCOLN, NEBR.; TO KATHLEEN DEIGNAN, STAFF MEMBER, SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING, DATED AUGUST 10, 1976

DEAR Ms. DEIGNAN: Enclosed are some statistical facts and figures about the people who are enrolled in the Green Thumb project here in Nebraska.

In 1975 the estimated number of people eligible for Green Thumb in Nebraska was 49,783 persons. At that time only 107 Green Thumb positions were available. This is only 0.215 percent of the total available.

In 1975 the estimated number of people eligible for Green Thumb in the 14 counties in Nebraska where Green Thumb operates was 15,976 persons. Again only 107 positions for part-time work were available, or only 0.6 percent of the total available older work force.

In June 1976 in Nebraska, the total enrollment in the Green Thumb project was 118 people. Their average age was 70 years and 1 month. Their average

¹ Retained in committee files.

education was 8.7 years and their average income was \$1,577—most of which was their social security benefits.

Nine people were enrolled between 55 and 59 years old ; 51 people enrolled were between 60 and 69 years old ; and 58 people enrolled were between 70 and 80 years old.

The oldest Green Thumber is 89 years old. Actually four people enrolled are over 80 years old and working hard every day earning a better living.

Eighteen people are handicapped (loss of an eye, progressive arthritis, recuperating from a stroke or heart attack, etc.) and 13 people who are enrolled are veterans of World Wars I and II.

On July 21, 1976, we held a training meeting in Syracuse, Nebr. Part of the time was spent in a question-and-answer period devoted to the needs and problems of the elderly living in rural Nebraska. Listed are some of those discussed :

(1) Need of public low-cost transportation from rural areas to county seats, and occasionally to Lincoln, the State capitol.

(2) Need more opportunities to work at least part-time to earn a better living and not be on public welfare.

(3) Lower taxes on private property (their homes).

(4) Better health care, including dental care, and more free medical examinations.

(5) Lower utility costs for the elderly.

(6) More low-rent housing available for the older people.

(7) Social security should not be counted as income. The social security benefits are something that each older person has earned through their productive years and they are just now able to draw on these earnings after age 62 or 65.

(8) Need more winterization work done on their homes to help save on energy and on heating costs.

The Green Thumbers also believed that the maximum income guidelines should be much higher than they now are. These are the guidelines that these older people need to meet in order to qualify for programs that the Congress has enacted for their well-being.

All the Green Thumbers present believed that an older person should be assisted by whatever means possible so that they could live in their own homes as long as physically possible.

They were very grateful that they were given an opportunity to express their needs to you and the Special Committee on Aging. We enjoyed your visit to our office and we also thank you for this opportunity for "in-put."

Please contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

DELBERT L. NIEMEIER.

ITEM 3. LETTER FROM FRED HOLTZ, DIRECTOR, BLUE RIVERS AREA AGENCY ON AGING, GAGE, JEFFERSON, AND THAYER COUNTIES, NEBR., TO SENATOR DICK CLARK, DATED AUGUST 13, 1976

DEAR SENATOR CLARK : I would like to address the problem of rising costs of energy and utilities faced by retired persons, especially low-income senior citizens.

Numerous complaints and comments in the fall of 1975 prompted this agency to do limited investigation into propane pricing practices. Information was hard to document and almost impossible to receive concerning wholesale prices of this fuel ; however, we were able to establish that wholesale propane prices did not change through the fall and winter of 1975-76. Retail prices did fluctuate greatly with each individual dealer. Some raised prices by as much as 5 cents per gallon in the heating season and, as usual, the small user suffers the greatest increase. Volume users are and were offered up to 2 cents discount per gallon. We also found that elderly are paying 1 percent interest per month on bills not paid in 30 days. Some pay interest all summer for the past year's heating bills.

Our investigation also found that numerous persons on small incomes cannot heat their homes comfortably. Most were paying from \$80 to over \$125 per month for heating fuel and receiving from \$147 to \$178 per month social security, and unable to build any kind of reserve to fall back on. I am speaking of only

heating cost. This person still has lights, water, phone, and other utilities. We found senior citizens trying to survive on less than \$30 per month after fixed utility bills were met.

Surely something (maybe a fuel stamp program) must be done to assist the senior citizens living in rural areas. They have no choice but to lock in or use this type of heating fuel, and are completely at the mercy of our energy crunch and pricing practices of local propane dealers.

I definitely feel that this problem should be investigated and addressed by Federal agencies with the thought to some type of assistance for needy low-income senior citizens.

Thank you for the chance to comment on this problem.

Sincerely,

FRED HOLTZ.

ITEM 4. LETTER FROM EVERETT W. GREEN, SECRETARY, NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION, LINCOLN, NEBR.; TO SENATOR DICK CLARK, DATED AUGUST 31, 1976

DEAR SENATOR CLARK: This is in reference to your August 4, 1976, letter asking various State agencies for comments on what has been done by the State agency to serve the elderly with transportation subsidies and other services.

This is to advise that this commission recently assisted the Nebraska Legislature in drawing up a bill, which was subsequently passed, to exempt the transportation of the elderly from the jurisdiction of this commission.

This would be the action of any consequence for us to report.

Sincerely yours,

EVERETT W. GREEN.

ITEM 5. LETTER FROM NEBRASKA STATE SENATOR ROBERT L. CLARK, SIDNEY, NEBR.; TO SENATOR DICK CLARK, DATED SEPTEMBER 8, 1976

DEAR SENATOR CLARK: This is in reply to your letter of August 4, 1976, in which you have asked for suggestions concerning improvement of rural telephone service.

The Telecommunications Subcommittee of the Nebraska Legislature has conducted public hearings in Nebraska communities relative to rural telephone systems. The committee was instructed by the members of the 84th legislature to:

- (a) Identify the unique problems and characteristics of rural telephone systems which inhibit the provision of quality service;
- (b) Propose alternative solutions to the problems identified;
- (c) Develop and analyze information about the size of the telephone exchanges in rural areas, and the effect of such geographic and population size upon service;
- (d) To gather whatever additional information is necessary to make an assessment of the situation.

In your letter you stated that your Committee on Aging was conducting a series of hearings on "The Nation's Rural Elderly." It should be pointed out that our Nebraska Study Committee did not direct its attention specifically to the problem of the elderly, but to the problems of rural telephone systems in Nebraska.

The findings of the committee:

- (1) Nearly all of Nebraska's rural homes presently have phone service.
- (a) Approximately 60 percent are being served with buried cable facilities.
- (b) Nearly 56 percent are being served on either 1-, 2-, or 4-party facilities, at the customer's option.
- (c) Multiparty lines (eight-party service) are presently scheduled for elimination by 1982, with a few scattered projects remaining until 1984.
- (2) Rural customers have submitted testimony asking for wider toll-free calling areas. The telephone companies in Nebraska, operating under rules of the Nebraska Public Service Commission, provide EAS when 65 percent of the telephone customers request such service and agree to pay the higher basic rate that is applicable to the enlarged calling area. At the request of the Nebraska Public Service Commission, the telephone industry has submitted to the com-

mission several proposals that will hopefully meet with a more favorable customer acceptance. In these proposals, charges would be applied only to those customers that would benefit from the expanded service.

(3) The costs of providing and maintaining telephone service in rural and sparsely populated areas are extremely high and will continue to be subsidized by the total rate structure of the State.

(4) The present policies of the Federal Communications Commission, which encourage competition in the most lucrative area of the telecommunications industry, will almost certainly reduce revenues for Nebraska telephone companies. Under FCC sponsorship, specialized common carriers are skimming the cream by serving the more profitable intercity market, while ignoring less populated areas. The results can only be higher telephone costs for all customers, but particularly for those in rural areas.

Our committee will not have final recommendations for our legislature by the September 15 date which you suggested. It is my belief at this time, however, the final recommendations will be similar to the following:

(1) Consider enacting legislation that would encourage telephone companies to advance their plant modernization schedules.

(2) Review the action of the Public Service Commission on extended area service (EAS) requests and orders.

(3) Explore the possibility of legislation or a resolution supporting the Consumer Communications Act of 1976.

(4) Continue monitoring the activities of Nebraska telephone companies regarding rural service improvement programs.

If I can be of further service to you, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Senator ROBERT L. CLARK.

Appendix 2

INTERAGENCY MEMORANDUM FROM EVELYN RUNYON¹ TO LAWRIE ROBERTSON, EASTERN NEBRASKA HU- MAN SERVICES AGENCY, DATED JULY 23, 1976

SERVICES TO RURAL COMMUNITIES

You have asked for my thoughts on services for the rural elderly. Most of my 78 years have been spent in small communities, though I have been an urbanite for some time. However, I have maintained close association with persons living in small towns, villages, and on farms. As ombudsman for ENOA, I am, and have, worked with the elderly who have always lived in the city and many who have come to the city from rural areas to seek the services and conveniences of the city.

It is my strong conviction that the same services offered through the area agency to our urban elderly are as needed and are as altogether appropriate and adequate for older persons in small towns, villages, and on farms. The need for transportation, health care, nutrition, companionship, and social life may be even more urgent in some locations and in numerous cases than for the urban elderly. All of the services we at ENOA offer could be taken to those in our rural areas. We can meet the needs effectively with competent, understanding staff.

In fact, there is no organization better prepared and equipped than the area agency on aging to fill and coordinate services to respond to the needs of the elderly located in rural areas. But, I feel, as I indicated, that this rural service provision will take a special approach. For the mores in rural living are vastly different from those in urban living. There is a defensiveness to be overcome, for the rural resident is most apt to be suspicious of the person from the city. This is partly because our myths have included the one that the city dweller looks on the small town citizen and the farmer as unsophisticated and uninformed. And, too, because living with space and free association possible in small communities, and living close to the soil on farms, gives a different perspective on life that the more or less impersonal and close association in city living does not afford.

The offering of services from the area agency must be accompanied by an understanding of the psychology of rural living and with a compassion born of understanding and sensitivity to the mental and emotional characteristics of the rural citizen. Any hint or semblance of welfare or patronizing should be totally lacking. It is imperative that there be empathy, if the necessary degree of rapport is established. In my opinion, in most all rural areas there would be very little, if any, difficulty in recruiting volunteers as aides in all of the programs. There does remain a residue of neighborliness that makes volunteering for many almost second nature and carries with it a badge of honor.

It can be noted that with the almost total dependence on the automobile for transportation, the handicaps that may come to the rural elderly tend to isolate many of them. This is even more so than if they lived in the city where some public transportation is available. Many women did not learn to drive, and after the death of their husbands, lose a taken-for-granted mobility; many, both men and women, have had to sell their cars because of financial need, as well, and many have physical disabilities that make driving a car impossible. Gone are the days when the family's horse and buggy provided safe transportation for those suffering handicaps, financial or physical, that most often come in later life. We tend to accept the myth of "unquestioned neighborly help" to the elderly and a rugged self-sufficiency in both the small communities and on the farm. In print, media, and television scripts this myth is perpetuated, but does not bear out what the truth is now, only as historical qualities.

¹ See statement, p. 160.

Health care, at best, is limited in rural areas. Often it is meager, if not non-existent. For many physicians today have migrated to the city since competence beyond first aid demands the laboratories, technicians, and modern technology supplied by metropolitan hospitals. House calls by a physician are practically eliminated. Thus, with distances greater and mobility limited, rural citizens most often neglect to see a physician and do not receive preventive care.

Time was when a physician knew practically everyone in his community and his concerns for them was that of a benevolent neighbor. That too, has become a myth. Even the midwife has been replaced by a licensed practical nurse, but most small communities do not have the services of LPN's on a regular basis. A mobile unit for health service staffed with trained personnel and equipped to take blood pressures, make diabetic and other uncomplicated tests, eye and hearing examinations so as to recommend medical care when necessary could fill the vacuum in health services in the rural areas.

If food sites could be assured with added portal-to-portal transportation, then this type of facility could be utilized if necessary in lieu of a mobile van to fill the existing and growing need for health care. This also implies, of course, a health maintenance staff is available for a nutrition site.

We are apt to assume that persons in small towns, villages, and on farms raise their own food and are therefore adequately fed. This too, falls in the category of myth. The mother used to be able to can sufficient vegetables and fruit for the winter and the family together took care of the garden. Yet in reality, often the elderly are alone and these chores not possible. Cooking becomes a difficult task for the majority of elderly persons and nutritious, balanced meals are rarely on the table. Often, because the older person alone is apt to have no appetite, and/or no knowledge of the body's need, or of the harmful effects of certain food he or she may be getting in a daily diet, malnutrition often occurs. Statistics bear out the fact that nutrition sites with the carefully planned meals for the elderly, served in attractive settings and with the inherent sociability encourages and provides proper nutrition.

Nutrition sites can and do fill many needs of the elderly beyond a balanced hot meal at noon. The social activities and companionship are vital to keep the elderly active and with the feeling of belonging. The sites make it possible to reach many of the community's elderly with informational and inspirational programs on health maintenance, safety, and financial affairs. Many need knowledge of regulations in social security, taxes, homestead exemptions, and filing the necessary forms, to mention only a few matters of special interest and value to the older citizen in the rural areas. Games, recreational programs, dancing, trips, and warm congeniality that comes from eating, listening, and playing together all imply portal-to-portal transportation for many site participants.

My experience as ombudsman has brought me face to face with the lack of coordination in many valuable and needed services offered to the elderly. This is not limited just to AoA programs, but the entire spectrum of community services that eventually will be needed for a great segment of our elderly citizens, rural as well as urban. I have the distinct conviction that many programs have been designed without thinking to the long-range implications—the peripheral outcomes are often ignored. Health maintenance, nutrition (through balanced meals), social life, and the feeling of belonging are all interrelated and all dependent upon adequate transportation, and flexibly responsive programing adapted to meet the special needs of any particular group of elderly served by the AAA—whether they be rural or urban.

THE ROLE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The role of the ombudsman is a complex one for it must deal with all conditions of human needs and characteristics. It demands careful, accurate investigation, compassionate human understanding, and must call upon certain administrative skills in resolving problems and in handling unjustified complaints.

The ombudsman is called upon to investigate any concerns of senior citizens for essentially any unresolved concern is basically a complaint that needs to be solved.

This office has investigated concerns relating to customer-vendor differences, legal situations, housing, social security misunderstanding, insurance difficulty, fear for personal safety, housing, or human associations, critical situations inci-

dental to illness as well as many referrals to other human service agencies to name some of the areas that become cases to be handled in this office.

In short, any human concern, whether personal, confidential, or impersonal, could ask for the services of the ombudsman. Often the caller only needs someone with patience and understanding to talk to for loneliness is so often the primary or triggering factor in concerns or complaints.

It is also the duty of the ombudsman to discuss with the administration possible improvement of services in the agency from insights gleaned through the investigation necessary to resolve the concerns or complaints.

EVELYN RUNYON.

Appendix 3

STATEMENTS SUBMITTED BY THE HEARING AUDIENCE

During the course of the hearing, a form was made available by the committee to those attending who wished to make suggestions and recommendations but were unable to testify because of time limitations. The form read as follows:

DEAR SENATOR CLARK: If there had been time for everyone to speak at the hearing on "The Nation's Rural Elderly," in Gretna, Nebr., on August 17, 1976, I would have said:

The following replies were received:

RUTH C. BLANKENSHIP, OMAHA, NEBR.

The hearing in Gretna, Nebr. was very worthwhile. It brought out the real needs of our rural elderly.

The testimony has given us some real guidelines.

You are to be congratulated in bringing this hearing to rural Nebraska.

HELEN M. BROWN, GRETNA, NEBR.

In Gretna, we now have delivery of mail in town. However, the Federal law says that mail is not to be delivered to anyone closer than one-quarter mile from the post office. Most of our elderly people—at least a number of them (I counted 40)—live in this area. That means they have to walk to the post office. This is also true in other towns near here. Can't something be done about this?

JOCIELL BULL, WAYNE, NEBR.

The needs of the rural elderly are the following in the line of necessity: (1) Transportation; (2) Nutrition; (3) Home nursing; and (4) Homemaker—chore service.

These should be available for all the elderly—no matter what their income is. We find in our area that those in the poverty level are better provided for than those who have a dollar or two above the poverty line!

We also feel that more services should be provided under medicare, such as: eye surgery, hearing-aids, dental work, etc.

We want to keep them in their homes as long as possible, because they enjoy being in the neighborhoods where all aged persons live. They do not want to be put on a shelf, and many do not use a rocking chair. They have knowledge and wisdom, and they want to share it with others. Let us meet their needs so they can remain in their homes as long as possible.

HELEN C. HENGEVELD, BLAIR, NEBR.

I felt this was a very worthwhile program and I was glad to attend.

ELMER F. LANGE, LINCOLN, NEBR.

ACTION has a deep concern for the rural elderly and is conducting, in rural areas, programs that are for those 60 and over. These programs are in communities with a population range of 800 and up. These programs are also operated on minimum funds, but with specific emphasis on keeping the elderly active.

ACTION elderly programs consist of retired senior volunteer programs (RSVP), foster grandparent programs (FG), and senior companion programs (SCP).

BILLIE F. LOGAN, OMAHA, NEBR.

First of all, Senator, I would like to thank you very much for your advocacy for the elderly. They are certainly a forgotten group but, thanks to individuals like you, things are beginning to look up for them. I manage 11 elderly high-rises in Omaha, exclusively for the elderly, and am aware of and a strong advocate of their needs. This has been a problem for the elderly in that when a little illness overcomes them and they need some time for recuperation, there is no intermediate-type living for them; it is either self-sufficiency or a nursing home. The homemaker service that they are able to receive has been one of the most important services for the urban elderly, and helps them maintain their independent living.

There are many services now available, and the little individual in the urban areas, as well as the rural elderly, have a difficult time learning of the services. It would seem that those agencies rendering the services would have a greater responsibility to an outreach program that would encompass all. The little elderly persons still remaining in their homes, living out among the residents of the urban city, can be more easily forgotten than those who have the capacity to learn of the programs. Then there are the SRO's, single-room occupants, living in the urban core of the great cities who are strictly loners and give no encouragement whatsoever to agencies and their services. It is a tremendous task—and much needed—to take and give a helping hand to our elderly of the Nation. These are individuals who have sacrificed time and again for their country. They suffered during the days of the depression, pulled themselves up by the bootstrap, and sacrificed again for their country—many to the extent of giving a loving son, daughter, or husband to World War II. During all these years they attempted to put some little something away in savings so they could care for their old age and not be a burden to their families or country, but inflation took care of that and left many without a penny. Their pride continued on and many still refuse assistance, thinking it is charity.

Talk about the "Grand Ole Generation," we should all certainly be proud. Still in the limited incomes, they continue to ask what they can do for their country. We all owe our elderly much more than we could ever hope to repay. There are so many things our legislature could do in helping them with their ability to live in dignity. Such things as limiting them to earnings and affecting their social security. They are forced into retirement, put on a limited or fixed income, and forced to remain there. Also, those who receive veterans' pensions are penalized by their social security increases, for social security is counted as income in computing the amount of VA received, so consequently when they receive a raise in social security, they receive a deduction in VA—fair?

The recent Federal programs of Senior Companion and Green Thumb are the greatest thus far. They permit the elderly to help one another, receive payment, and are not penalized on their other incomes. In the urban areas this takes the pressure off somewhat, for at least now they can afford a little transportation—public that is—and get around. As so many spokesman at the meeting said, "I could go on and on." It is rewarding to see so many persons interested in the elderly and I certainly feel with national politicians as yourself so interested, the elderly have a great fighter in their corner. Thank you very much, Senator.

LAVERN PLAMBECK, OMAHA, NEBR.

I believe that transportation is one of the big problems for the senior people; they also need a better health care program. The hearing was very interesting. Thanks, Senator Clark, for taking time out for this type of program.

LUCILLE PRATER, RULO, NEBR.

How would one go about handling local transportation for the rural elderly? And how would the financial end be taken care of, such as who would be in charge of maintenance and other expenses? Many need the service and are on limited income.

RUTH ANN RAILSBACK, HUMBOLDT, NEBR.

As public information officer for Southeast Nebraska Community Action Agency, I would like to inform you of the services we are making possible for the senior citizens in our area. We operate in the four-county area in the extreme southeast corner of Nebraska with winterization and nutrition services offered in the two counties to the north.

Nutrition: Seven congregate meal sites, also offering home delivered meals, plus some of the small towns with cafes prepare home delivered meals. Two more meal sites are in the process of being started.

Transportation: Regular monthly bus trips within each county from the small towns into the county seat or larger towns. This provides access to medical services, grocery, etc. Portal-to-portal services within the area for special medical needs, congregate meals sites, etc.

Winterization: Service is available in the 6-county area with over 150 homes being served and the large majority of these belong to senior citizens.

Health services: Blood pressure clinics are held at five multipurpose centers on a regular monthly basis and other clinics are held as needed, with volunteer nurses and aides conducting the clinics. Diabetes Clinics are held. Home health aides call on the elderly in their homes for nonprofessional health care. At present time, we are helping sponsor a demonstration county health project in Nemaha County with the cooperation of many agencies. This will serve all ages, with many being senior citizens.

Recreation: Recreation and educational field trips, crafts, card playing, socialization, etc., at the five multipurpose centers; senior citizen clubs in most all of the small communities which meet regularly; telephone reassurance; we helped the senior citizens form AARP chapters in each of the four counties.

Used clothing: The multipurpose centers provide used clothing for all ages, including senior citizens, some of which are used for quilting materials.

Sell food stamps: In one of the counties our outreach workers sell food stamps in every town, large and small, some of the clients being seniors.

Outreach and referral: This is a large job done by our outreach workers, keeping the senior citizens aware of the programs they are eligible to participate in.

We are proud of the services that we do offer, but fully realize that the elderly in our area still have many needs that are not being met. We need handibus service in the five counties not having one; we need chore service, handyman service, and some kind of legal service. We also need multicounty bus service. We must also admit that we need to continue and enlarge the services that we are now providing.

HENRY D. SMITH, LINCOLN, NEBR.

It seemed there were three primary concerns echoing throughout the hearing. These were: (1) transportation, (2) home health services, and (3) nutrition (meals prepared for the elderly). Most all of the speakers described these as basic needs, at least in one respect or another. I think you will also agree that throughout the hearing it was apparent there is a desire to remain independent and in the home as long as possible. It was also brought out that, coupled with the nutrition and home health services, should be health education services to teach methods of disease and disabling prevention.

The three concerns are closely related. As an example, certain needs for transportation services might be alleviated, such as to a physician, if home health services were available. Also, nutrition should consist of more than just availability of meals; nutritional quality of meals is indeed vital.

As "health" is our primary concern, we would encourage your support of home health services. Health services are a basic need for all of us, especially the elderly. Nutrition and transportation could be coupled into this or at least serve a complementary relationship.

The State department of health has placed a high priority the past several years on assisting (consultative and financially) communities in developing their own community health services. This includes home health care and prevention through health education. Such services are furnished to everyone in need of such services, though the elderly have certainly a high rate of utilization. Since 1972, six rural counties have established such a program for a population of 80,000 persons. (Urban areas of Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island, and Scottsbluff have had established programs for quite some time. Our emphasis has been on the rural counties.)

Fifty-one counties do not have home health services available for an approximately 600,000 population. These are rural counties with a high elderly population. The State department of health does not presently have the resources to furnish such services in this magnitude.

We heard at the hearing that counties are having a problem in providing services due to the 14.28 mill tax limit. So, even with our assistance, many counties seem unable to alleviate this problem and furnish this much-needed service for their people in need, especially the elderly.

The committee hearing was excellent. Views and needs as expressed by the witnesses certainly stress that action is needed.

Again, we encourage your support and offer our services in any way we can be of assistance to you in this endeavor.

DOROTHY TREMEL, OMAHA, NEBR.

I am a firm believer in helping people to help themselves. The agencies, and especially churches and synagogues, could do more to dispense needed services to older people. Is there any way for Federal dollars to be given in the form of small grants to initiate programs as an incentive for especially churches to get involved?

We spoke at the hearing about coordination of transportation services. There must be some way of using the expertise of MAT in Omaha, and yet let local churches, agencies, and hospitals be the spokesmen for the elderly who need transportation. Without this in-between, the system is so impersonal and hard to get that all older people experience is frustration.

MARIE WADDELL, PAWNEE CITY, NEBR.

I am a resident of Pawnee City, Nebr., in Pawnee County. We have 166 widows 65 to 90 years of age; 275 couples, widowers or bachelors 65 and over. There are 5 small towns with from 12 to 50 senior citizens in the county.

We have two doctors and one dentist in the county.

We have no transportation in the county but the Seneca bus. What has to be done in our county to get a minibus? We have low-rent housing, but it is five to eight blocks from groceries, bank, and doctors.

We are 45 to 80 miles from eye doctors or other specialists, and from 20 to 80 miles from bus, train, or plane service.

