

## The Andrus Center

### A TALE OF GERONTOLOGICAL FIRSTS

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The Andrus Center was not the first major U.S. program in aging. The distinction belongs to other centers of excellence, such as the Philadelphia Geriatric Center, reported on in the fall 2001 issue of this journal. However, Andrus was the first major comprehensive, free-standing research, education, and service program in gerontology west of the Mississippi. Was this an unfolding of manifest destiny or a series of calculated risk-taking events and luck? The reader of this story must be the judge.

#### EARLIEST BEGINNINGS: THE SIXTIES

Once upon a time, well, actually in 1964, this pioneering program on aging in the West was initiated by a pledge of \$2 million to the University of Southern California from Ross Cortese, a builder of retirement housing. This sum, based on a donation of \$50 for every unit his company would build, led to the creation of the Rossmore Cortese Institute for the Study of Retirement and Aging. Dr. James Peterson, a USC sociologist with research interests in those topics, served as interim director. A nationwide search was begun, and Dr. James Birren, a psychologist and the director of the aging program at the National Institute of Mental Health, was recruited in April 1965 by USC's president Norman Topping to become the permanent director. Within a month's time, Jim Birren planned and submitted a training grant to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the precursor of the National Institute on Aging. He then moved from Maryland to Los Angeles with his wife Betty and three children, clearly a midlife career change for him at 47.

The training grant, funded in fall 1965, was the first of many grants to foster the exponential growth of USC's

program in aging; it has remained a primary Center resource. Faculty members were added, including Bernard Strehler (biology), Jacek Szafran (psychology), Alexander Cloner (public administration), Maurice Hamovitch (social work), and in 1967, Vern Bengtson (sociology). The departments of internal medicine and psychiatry, however, declined to participate. Grant stipends helped recruit students to the new program, which, by design, was not embedded in any one academic unit. A first, this unusual arrangement was achieved by "buying off" faculty time from several departments with training grant funds and the cross-listing of aging courses in constituent units. All faculty members had a joint appointment in their home department and in the aging program; this tradition persists today. The idea was to "infect" various university units with the "aging bug."

For 6 months, the Institute was housed on-campus in a small frame building shaded by palm trees, right across from where the Center building is located today. The entire staff consisted of Jim Birren and his



assistant, Linda Ross. The Institute then moved into its new off-campus quarters in a former Hoffman Electronics building called the Research Annex, into space shared with USC's printing office and the department of sociology's demography program. On the first floor were administrative offices and a lounge, the venue for many beer-fueled discussions on Friday afternoons. Faculty, students, and research staff were housed in open cubicles or "cages" on the second floor. There were few secrets under those circumstances! Perhaps that was one reason why some faculty retained their offices back on the main campus, which was a bit of a hike from the Annex and required crossing under the Harbor Freeway.

As luck would have it, the training grant was crucial. Owing to a downturn in the retirement housing industry in 1967, the Cortese pledge was withdrawn. The USC

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administration, led by Vice President Carl Franklin, stepped in to rescue the fledgling program, renamed the Gerontology Center. Without the solid backing of the university's administration, the program might have ended, and Jim Birren might have returned to the Washington area.

Additional grants led to the development of a small library, the recruitment of additional faculty in architecture and urban planning, and the establishment of a Community Programs division, the Center's applied research and community outreach arm. The Center's senior staff were William Larson, Associate Director for Research; Maurice Hamovitch, Associate Director for Training; and Albert Feldman, Associate Director of Community Projects. After the 1965 riots, the Watts-Willowbrook area inhabited by African Americans became one of many sections of Los Angeles that benefited from the Center's community-based research over the years. Doctoral students were expected to have this kind of "hands on" experience, including the preparation of position papers for advocacy, such as the 1971 (and later, the 1981) White House Conference on Aging. Several conferences were sponsored by the Center that focussed attention and stimulated action in emerging areas, for example, Religion and Aging

(1965), and the Institute in Social Gerontology for State Executives in Aging, and Problems of Age and Learning, both in 1966.

Another major first was the development of the renowned Summer Institutes. They expanded under the guidance of Ruth Weg, who became the Director of Training after Dr. Hamovitch left to become the Dean of USC's School of Social Work, and Gloria Haerther (now Gloria Cavanaugh) became the head of the American Society on Aging. The summer program was funded by several sources, including the Administration on Aging (AoA). It brought gerontological leaders, such as George Maddox, K. Warner Schaie (subsequently recruited as the Center's director of research), Powell Lawton, Paul Baltes, and James Schulz to teach thousands of students and professionals from across the country. Many people in aging today identify the Center's summer program as their initiation into the field. The mid-morning and mid-afternoon breaks, beach parties, and dancing on the roof are remembered nostalgically by many. In addition, the Institutes became the prototype for similar programs nationwide.

A continuing education program during the academic year also became part of the Center's educational offerings. It was designed to "gerontologize" people in various professions who were working with older adults but lacked a scientific base for their practice. Noted speakers, such as Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, as well as Center staff including Irene Burnside and Arthur Schwartz, made their presentations to a diverse group from the helping professions: clergy, psychologists, social workers, and nurses. These Center offerings soon became formalized as a certificate program, in response to participant demands for some recognition of having completed many hours in the psycho-socio-biological aspects of aging. The humanities and aging also were featured, with the participation of USC faculty in religion and English.

The ever-increasing demand for the Center's educational programs revealed the lack of books on aging at the time—a situation surely hard to fathom for people entering the field now. Exhibits at major gerontological meetings today seem to be dominated by commercial publishers, but that was not the case in the 1960s and 1970s. To fill that gap, the Center created its own publications division under Richard Davis. Featuring research by the Center's researchers, annotated bibliographies, and the proceedings of Center conferences and workshops, this development was yet another first. The Center's librarian, Julie Moore, and Jim Birren made an annual compilation of all dissertations in aging

nationwide. The results were published by G. K. Hall for several years and revealed that USC was the largest source of PhDs in aging.

An exciting leap forward for the Center occurred on February 29, 1968, when Verna Carley, a representative of the National Retired Teachers Association/American Association of Retired Persons (NRTA/AARP), came to USC to discuss some way of honoring Ethel Percy Andrus, NRTA/AARP's creator and a USC graduate. What if Eleanor James, Jim Birren's perspicacious executive assistant and trusty gatekeeper, had not cleared his schedule for that visit? One shudders to think . . . Another meeting occurred in less than a month, followed by an end-of-the-year discussion between Cy Brickfield and Leonard Davis, respectively AARP's Executive Director and President, and USC's President Topping and head of development, Tom Nickells. A decision was made that AARP members would be asked to contribute to a Center building, making it the first research facility constructed with gifts from more than 400,000 individuals. The AARP would pledge \$2 million, and USC's gerontology program would seek \$2 million under a National Institutes of Health research facilities grant.

Lou Gelwicks, an architect, chaired a committee to plan this new building for the Gerontology Center, and all faculty joined in the initial design of its laboratories and offices. Students and staff also participated, particularly at the Friday afternoon gatherings in the lounge. Input also was sought from the newly recruited Caleb (Tuck) Finch. The NIH grant, however, did not materialize, because the Health Research Facilities Branch of NIH ceased funding of all new applications. Building plans were scaled down and instead, foundation funding was obtained, thanks to the efforts of Linda Ross in her capacity as the Center's development director. The services of Edward Durrell Stone, the architect of the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, were secured.

Groundbreaking occurred on schedule in January 1971, attended by such luminaries as Dr. Jonas Salk, Justin Dart, the chairman of USC's Board of Trustees, and Leonard Davis. The building of 88,000 square feet was constructed under budget and included wet and dry laboratories, a vivarium, library, computer facility, offices, and seminar rooms. It was dedicated on February 12, 1973, not quite 5 years after Ms. Carley visited USC. Attendees included AARP members from all 50 states, and the dedication audience was addressed by the Honorable Sam Ervin of the U.S. Congress, a major advocate for the elderly, and Mayor Tom Bradley of Los Angeles. A time capsule, to be opened in 2000, was buried in the Center's courtyard, right near the fountain dubbed by wags as the "fountain of youth." The building has under-

gone various remodelings to keep up with the demands for more sophisticated facilities and more space for new programs. Only earthquake standards prevented the building of a fourth floor on the roof.

### THE EXPANSIVE YEARS: THE SEVENTIES AND EIGHTIES

Since nature (and buildings) abhorred a vacuum, the new structure was quickly filled by existing faculty and some dental school researchers who were interested in connective tissue changes with age. New faculty in political science, economics, and public administration were recruited, including Neal Cutler and William Lammers. A major National Science Foundation (NSF) grant, steered by Lamar Empey, brought an anthropological flavor to Center research and generated an

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Oscar-winning documentary film about the Jews of Venice, California, *Number Our Days*. A joint master's degree in aging, between the Center and the schools of social work and public administration, was initiated, as were two master's degrees in aging in architecture and urban planning.

Under Paul Kerschner (who later became the Executive Director of the Gerontological Society), students used the greater Los Angeles basin as a laboratory for testing programs and providing technical assistance to a variety of agencies serving elders. The Summer Institutes and continuing education programs flourished in the new space under the direction of Ira Hirschfield (now director of one of the Haas Foundations). To help administrative staff and faculty grapple with this rapid expansion, planning retreats and educational sessions on such topics as leadership were provided. Monthly sherry hours, seminars, and lunchtime forays to Chinatown also provided opportunities for Center personnel to relax together and exchange ideas, often leading to yet another flurry of grant-writing efforts!

Other major programs were created at the Center during the 1970s. These included the development, under an AoA grant, of the first series of three handbooks on aging in biology, psychology, and the social

sciences, the fifth edition of which was recently published. The first handbook project on mental health and aging also was housed at Andrus, under the leadership of Jim Birren and Dr. Bruce Sloane of USC's Department of Psychiatry. The Research Institute was strengthened immeasurably by the recruitment of Warner Schaie, Larry Thompson, and Margy Gatz.

Other groundbreaking work took place at USC's aging program. The Center's library and computer staff worked on creating an automated search of the journal literature, which helped lay the groundwork for today's AgeLine. The concept and operationalization of case management was undertaken by Raymond Steinberg and Monika White, with Genevieve Carter of USC's School of Social Work. An AARP grant led to the development of a cadre of trained older volunteers capable of providing services and conducting research, a model now used nationwide and by the Center's own Andrus Older Volunteers. The Kesten Memorial Lectureship was established to honor the leaders in the field, including Nathan Shock, Ethel Shanas, Gene Cohen, Powell Lawton, Bernice Neugarten, Jack Rowe, George Mad-dox, and George Martin.

Probably the singular achievement of the Andrus Center in the 1970s was the creation of a school of gerontology. In part due to AoA support, the Center's non-doctoral training programs had grown exponentially.

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Although Jim Birren recognized the continued importance of developing new researchers in aging, he also saw a growing need for highly trained personnel to create and deliver a variety of services for older persons. He convened a planning group that included Ruth Weg, Paul Kerschner, and Diana Woodruff to explore the feasibility of a school that would draw on the Center's existing strengths and USC's tradition of excellence in its professional schools. Interviews with leaders in the field helped the planning group decide on the viability of such an entity. A core curriculum of three basic scientific courses (physiology, sociology, and psychology) and a policy course, some electives, and a practicum was designed for a Master's of Science in Gerontology. This trend-setting curriculum became the template for other degree programs in gerontology. Margaret (Betty)

Hartford, with a social work background, was hired as the first director of the new school. At the same time, recruitment of new faculty and new students was undertaken. Again, AoA grant support was a crucial factor.

The School opened in fall 1975, with six new faculty members and 55 students, far more than was anticipated. Many were non-traditional students who had been practitioners and were seeking a graduate degree in gerontology. Steven Zarit was among that first faculty cohort, all of whom had joint appointments in other USC schools and departments. Additional teaching was provided by faculty of the Research Institute of the Andrus Center, such as Pauline Robinson, Judy Treas, and Dolores Gallagher-Thompson. The library's holdings were expanded to accommodate the large numbers of students pursuing their degrees and certificates. It now houses the largest aging-specific, university-based book and journal collection.

It was clear, however, that the School could not survive on grants and tuition alone. Fortunately, Leonard Davis, who had become a staunch friend of USC's gerontology program since the late 1960s, saw the merit of having a school prepare leadership in the field of aging. In 1976, he provided a generous endowment. Those and other grant funds have allowed the Leonard Davis School to develop a whole host of innovative programs including joint degrees with business, dentistry, pharmacy, Jewish family services, and health services administration; a Bachelors of Science degree; faculty development programs for instructors at other institutions; an off-campus degree program; a policy internship; and the first undergraduate health science track in gerontology, initially supported by the NSF. In time, other faculty were hired, including Fernando Torres-Gil (who later became the first U.S. Assistant Secretary for Aging), Sally Coberly, Kathleen Wilber, Jon Pynoos, and Victor Regnier. A new director of the School, David Peterson, was hired in 1978, who conducted research on the evolution of educational gerontology and its outcomes. The traditional research training program, however, continued to be operated under the auspices of the Research Institute.

The 1980s saw the continued innovation and expansion of the Andrus Center's activities. Several new programs were developed. The Business Institute in Gerontology was created to capture the attention and participation of corporate America in aging issues and research. Corporate internships and books, such as Helen Dennis's *Fourteen Steps to Managing an Aging Workforce*, resulted from that enterprise, as did the William Kieschnick Chair in Aging held by Tuck Finch and the UPS Foundation Chair in Aging, held by Jon Pynoos. These thrusts complemented the efforts of an

AoA-funded center on work and retirement and a Department of Education-funded pre-retirement training program led by Ginny Boyack.

Other major programs were instituted. With the aid of Daniel Olincy, the Andrew Norman Advanced Study Institute in Aging was established, the first of its kind. Visiting scholars from the United States and other countries, such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and India, came to the Andrus Center to pursue studies in collaboration with the Center's Research Institute faculty and to develop a commercially published book annually on such topics as Alzheimer's disease and age discrimination and employment. Yet another structure, the California Council on Gerontology and Geriatrics (CCGG), comprising representatives from the state's four higher education segments (University of California, California State Universities, community colleges, and private institutions), was created under Andrus Center auspices. The CCGG was designed to improve the quality of research and higher education to benefit the state's diverse elders. It has had a major impact on state policies affecting educational preparation for serving the aged.

The Andrus Center also was involved in two major new federally funded programs in the mid-1980s. USC was one of the first four Alzheimer's Disease Research Centers (ADRCs) and the first four Geriatric Education Centers (GECs). Both of these required collaboration with the USC School of Medicine and other USC programs (Rancho Los Amigos Hospital, social work, pharmacy, and dentistry) and non-USC entities (e.g., University of California, Irvine). The ADRC and Pacific GEC were headed by Tuck Finch and Phoebe Liebig, respectively.

During the 1980s, the Center continued to recruit new faculty members to strengthen its research, education, and service programs. These included Bob Knight, Eileen Crimmins, Elizabeth Zelinski, John Walsh, Mark Hayward, and Tom McNeil. Part-time faculty, including Robert Myrtle, Gerald Larue, Bradley Williams, Roseanne Mulligan, and Andrew Scharlach, were recruited from other USC units.

The best-known innovation introduced by the Center in the 1980s was the PhD in Gerontology (Public Policy), the first program of its kind in the nation. Jim Birren believed that the field was ripe for its own doctoral program, rather than relying solely on the traditional PhD in the constituent disciplines of biology, psychology, and sociology and, to a lesser extent, political science or economics. He called together a planning committee that surveyed people in the field and sponsored sessions at GSA to discuss the topic. Those sessions often turned into raging debates—not everyone

held the same conviction that the time had come for a PhD in gerontology! Some skeptics even existed within the Andrus Center itself. However, planning continued, based on a common perception that if any organization could make a PhD in gerontology work, it was USC.

The Center's position was strengthened greatly by a similar proposal being generated by the aging program at the University of Massachusetts under the leadership of Scott Bass. After much deliberation, and thanks to the commitment of Neal Cutler and David Peterson to negotiate the degree through the USC system, the School inaugurated its PhD program, sometimes known as "GeroDoc," in fall 1989, 1 year before the Boston program. The bicoastal developments have helped initiate other doctoral programs in Florida, Kansas, Kentucky and Maryland, but thus far, USC has been the only private university-based PhD in gerontology program.

The alumni of that doctoral program are building an outstanding record in the field of aging. Among students entering the program in 1998 or earlier, 70 percent are employed in gerontology-related jobs, many in

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academia. Graduates of the program have joined the faculty at Brown, the Universities of Iowa, Michigan, and South Florida, Quinnipiac College, and campuses of the University of California at Irvine, Los Angeles, and San Diego.

At the time the PhD program was developed, Jim Birren stepped down as Dean and Executive Director of the Center, in keeping with mandatory retirement provisions for persons in executive positions. A nationwide search was successfully conducted that resulted in Edward Schneider, the NIA's Deputy Director, being tapped as the new leader of the Andrus Center. After Jim Birren's being at the helm for more than 20 years, this was a major change.

**THE CURRENT YEARS:  
THE NINETIES AND BEYOND**

The 1990s ushered in a new period for the Andrus Center. Ed Schneider made major and highly successful efforts to strengthen the Center's endowment, with the

goal of a chair or named professorship for every tenured or tenure-track faculty. Today, 11 of 13 faculty members hold such positions. The endowment is now more than \$65 million, a resource larger than that held by many liberal arts colleges. Raising scholarship funds also has been a high priority that has been successful.

Other new prominent scientists were recruited, including Franz Hefti, Christian Pike, Kelvin Davies, Julie Andersen and Valter Longo in the biological sciences, and Merrill Silverstein and Teresa Seeman in the social sciences. The Center continues to attract top researchers to its Institute. Major research programs include the ADRC, the USC-UCLA Center for Demography and Epidemiology, the Multigenerational Families study, the National Resource Center for Supportive Housing and Home Modification, the Los Angeles Caregiver Resource Center, and the Center for Long-Term Care Integration. The total research funding of the Center is more than \$10 million annually.

The Center has continued to exercise leadership in the field. Leonard Davis School faculty members have won numerous prizes and major awards in aging from Sandoz, Brookdale, Gerontological Society, the American Society on Aging, and the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education, as well as from other professional associations, such as the American Sociological Association and the American Psychological Association. In addition, faculty have held nearly all the top positions in the major aging associations.

However, another new Center first entered the scene in the past decade. Under Ed Schneider's leadership, the interactive division of the School, known as AgeWorks, provided the first multimedia Internet-based online undergraduate and graduate courses in gerontology. During this same period, Elizabeth Zelinski became the third director of the School which now offers both a Master's of Arts in Gerontology and a Certificate in Gerontology entirely online, using many of the same core courses required in the residential program. These were the first Internet-based programs of any kind approved by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The first master's students were graduated in May 2002. AgeWorks also provides post-graduate continuing education and Internet textbooks through its Web site (<http://www.ageworks.com>).

As the Andrus Center settles into middle age, after nearly 40 years in the field of aging, it continues to strive to be number one—perhaps a reflection of USC's enthusiasm for its football team. Not only has it provided newly minted researchers and professionals in gerontology, it also has been an "exporter" of talent. As noted above, many leaders in the field started or built

their careers at USC and went on to play important roles at other universities, in government at all levels, in advocacy and international organizations (such as the Alzheimer's Association, AARP, and the World Health Organization), and in the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. Faculty, staff, students, and alumni of this pioneer in the West look forward to meeting the challenges of global aging, by maintaining USC's unprecedented vision and activities in gerontology to serve the elderly better. Indeed, the increasing numbers of older persons and growing interest in understanding the complex issues of aging point to an expanding need for quality education and research—activities that have characterized the USC programs in gerontology since 1964.

