

Voices of ALSC

The ALSC Oral History Project

Linda Geistlinger

&

Virginia Walter

interview

Effie Lee Morris

This interview for the ALSC Oral History Project was conducted on August 14, 1997 at the Fisher Children's Center at San Francisco Public Library.

LINDA GEISTLINGER We are here today, August 14, 1997, at The Fisher Children's Center at San Francisco Public Library's new main branch to have an interview for the ALSC Oral History Project with Miss Effie Lee Morris, who was a board member for what was then known as The Children's Services Division (CSD) between the years of 1963 and 1965. And we have with us Virginia Walter, who is Associate Professor in the Department of Library and Information Science at the University of California at Los Angeles. And I'm Linda Geistlinger, Managing Children's Librarian in charge of The Fisher Children's Center.

I began with Miss Morris in 1969 as a new children's librarian. How to describe this wonderful woman? She was always an advocate for the highest quality of library service for everyone, but in particular for children, and she has always been an advocate for children in all areas of their lives. Throughout her career, she has remained very active in the library world.

Virginia, can you tell us how you know Miss Morris, and why you're with us this morning?

VIRGINIA WALTER Effie Lee Morris was my mentor when I started as a children's librarian at San Francisco Public Library in 1966. I was here

Effie Lee Morris was a pioneer of library service to children and a highly influential advocate for public libraries. Her distinguished career began in 1946 at Cleveland Public Library, and she was also a children's librarian for the New York Public Library and the Children's Specialist at NYPL's Library for the Blind before she moved to the San Francisco Public Library. A highly active ALA member throughout her career, Morris

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helped to establish the Coretta Scott King Awards, among numerous other groundbreaking contributions. Morris received the Black Caucus of the American Library Association's Trailblazer Award, and in 2008, one year before her death, she was named an ALA Honorary Member, the organization's highest honor.

Linda Geistlinger was hired as a new librarian by Effie Lee Morris to the San Francisco Public Library in 1969, where she worked in several branches, and followed Grace Ruth in managing the Early Childhood Project. For 12 years, she managed the Children's Center at SFPL's Main Library until her retirement in 1999.

Virginia Walter worked as a children's librarian at San Francisco Public Library under the supervision of Effie Lee Morris from 1966 to 1969. She went on to hold various positions at The Los Angeles Public Library until, in 1990, she took a faculty position at UCLA, where she is currently Professor and Chair of the Information Studies Department in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. During her decades-long membership in ALSC, she has chaired the Newbery committee and has served on the ALSC Board of Directors and as president of the division. Her numerous publications include several books for children.