Consortium for the National Equal Justice Library

Oral history collection interview with

Jim Sandman

Conducted by Alan Houseman

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Alan Houseman:
This is an oral history of Jim Sandman, who among other occupations has been president of the Legal Services Corporation. This oral history is on February 3rd, 2025, and it's through Zoom. My name is Alan Houseman. I am president of the Consortium for the National Equal Justice Library and I'll be conducting the interview. Jim, please provide an overview of your life, where you grew up, where you went to college and law school, and the various roles you played in your profession.

Jim Sandman:
I was born and grew up in Albany, New York. I'm the middle child in a family of five kids. From kindergarten through high school I went to Catholic parochial schools, to the elementary and high schools that my parents had gone to. I then went to Boston College, which is a Catholic, Jesuit university, and majored in history there. I went directly from college to law school at the University of Pennsylvania. Immediately following my graduation from law school, I clerked for Judge Max Rosenn of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. Judge Rosenn was my first and most important mentor and role model as a lawyer. He had a more profound impact on my career than any other person.

Immediately after my clerkship, I went to work at Arnold & Porter in Washington. I went there in significant part because of the firm's pro bono program. The firm had a policy that lawyers could spend up to 15% of their time on pro bono matters. I'd never heard of another firm that had a pro bono policy as generous as that. I was also attracted by the fact that the firm, unique, I believe among large law firms at the time, was not departmentalized. The firm had a view that being something of a generalist was not only acceptable, but maybe even desirable, that it was good for a lawyer have to have breadth in practice experience. After three and a half years in the Washington office of Arnold & Porter, I was asked if I'd be willing to go out to the firm's new office in Denver. That was the first office that the firm opened outside of Washington. The office was overworked and understaffed and they asked if I'd be willing to spend three months there to help out. I went out to Denver and three months became 10 years. I lived and worked in Denver for 10 years.

After that, I was asked if I'd be willing to go to Los Angeles to open a new office for the firm there, and I did. I spent 14 months in Los Angeles. Then, after 11 years in the

hinterlands, I came back to Washington. Three years later, I became managing partner of the firm. I continued to practice during my time as managing partner. I was a litigator, although later in my tenure as managing partner, I did more counseling work -- risk management and risk avoidance. After 10 years as managing partner, I decided to step down from that position. I loved my firm. I loved the job of managing partner. But I became disillusioned with the direction that the big firm segment of the legal profession had moved in.

It came to feel to me as if it were all and only about money. I began to feel as if I were devoting my life to making rich people richer. I'm not talking about the clients, I'm talking about my colleagues. If you're going to run a big law firm, you have to be able to pay your associates what they call “the going rate.” That is what associates could make at a similar big firm doing the same work. Today, for starting associates in a big law firm in a big city, that means a starting salary of $235,000 a year before bonuses. And you've got to be able to pay your partners seven figures. I learned how to play in that game when I was managing partner of Arnold and Porter. But that not why I went to law school. So I decided to make a change. I didn't know immediately what I wanted to do, so I had an exit strategy.

I had been asked for some years if I'd be willing to run for president of the District of Columbia Bar. I declined, because I knew I couldn't do that at the same time that I was managing partner. But I decided to see if I could get elected after I stepped down as managing partner. I thought that would give me something professionally acceptable to do that would take advantage of the management experience I'd had. If you're elected president of the bar, you serve as president-elect for one year and then president for one year, and I thought that that two-year hiatus, while I continued to practice, would allow me time to figure out what my next step would be.

My next step turned out to be becoming general counsel of the District of Columbia Public Schools. I decided to make a shift to public interest and public service work. I found during my time as president of the District of Columbia Bar that I got exposed to many Washington lawyers whose practice settings were very different from mine. By that point, I'd spent 30 years at Arnold & Porter. I came to know legal aid lawyers and public defenders and government lawyers, lawyers in small law firms and solo practitioners. What I realized was that the lawyers I admired and respected the most, the ones I wished I was like, were those who were devoting themselves full-time, for the duration of their careers, to the service of others, and not dabbling in that as a kind of

extracurricular activity in the way I had been doing through my pro bono work and community involvement on the side of my day job at Arnold & Porter. So I went to work at the DC Public Schools. It was the best career move I ever made. It shoved me out of my comfort zone, into a world wildly different from the one I had been in for the past 30 years.

I did that for three years. When the then-Mayor of Washington was defeated in his bid for reelection and I realized that the chancellor who had hired me was going to be moving on, I began to look for a new opportunity. I found out that the Legal Services Corporation was looking for a president. I got a call from Ron Flagg, who was then at Sidley Austin and head of their pro bono program, and from Linda Perle at the Center for Law and Social Policy, asking if I'd be interested in the position. I decided to apply. I got the position and then spent nine years at the Legal Services Corporation. I did that until February of 2020, when I decided it was time for another change in my career. Since then, I've been teaching at the University of Pennsylvania Law School and working on a number of projects through the law school and otherwise to try to improve the civil justice system in the United States.

Alan Houseman:
Thank you. That was a terrific overview. You may have answered this already, but what attracted you to LSC besides Ron and Linda's call?

Jim Sandman:
Two things attracted me to LSC. One, the mission. I had already decided when I made that decision to go to the DC public schools that I wanted to devote the duration of my professional life to public interest work and public service. I thought that the mission of access to justice, of working to make the civil justice system accessible to people who can't afford a lawyer, was one that I could be passionate about. That was very attractive to me. Second, it was a leadership job. It was a management job, and I thought it would allow me to use the skills that I developed in my 10 years as managing partner of Arnold & Porter and put them to good use.

Alan Houseman:
When you got to LSC, what challenges did you face when you began?

Jim Sandman:
I faced many challenges. The first and most obvious was funding. I came to LSC at the end of January, 2011, and LSC was coming off its then highest year of funding in

absolute dollars, not inflation-adjusted dollars. But it was clear that the midterm elections in 2010 had changed the political environment and that our funding was likely to be reduced.

I came in at a time when LSC was subject to a large number of recommendations from the Government Accountability Office and from its own Inspector General that required significant changes in the way LSC did business. Those recommendations were the results of audits and investigations that GAO and the Inspector General had done, and they were a big problem. They made it difficult for us to lobby for increases in funding on Capitol Hill. Even our supporters on Capitol Hill told us that that was a problem -- that it gave ammunition to our opponents to be able to point to mismanagement as the reason why our funding should not be increased. So I needed to act as quickly as possible to implement those recommendations.

We also faced a variety of internal management challenges. I was the 19th president in 36 years at LSC , and the effect of all that turnover at the top showed there was not a cohesive, well understood, deeply embedded sense of mission within the organization. Different presidents had different priorities. I think the staff at LSC felt whipsawed by the different priorities and initiatives that various presidents had tried to implement. In addition, the relationship between the staff of the organization and management was not good. Shortly before I arrived, the staff had voted to unionize as an expression of dissatisfaction with management. The relationship between staff and management was in some respects hostile. I felt as if the term “management” was a curse word. That was a challenge.

Finally, I quickly realized something I hadn't appreciated. There was hostility from the grantee community toward LSC . There was a distrust that had a history to it, and I didn't realize how deep that history was. I attributed it to two things. One was the funding reductions and the actions of the board of directors taken during the Reagan Administration, when the grantees were made to feel that the board was not supportive of the mission of the organization and was actively looking to undercut that mission. More recently, grantees had been affected by what was called “state planning.” That was a program that forced consolidation of LSC grantee programs across the United States and reduced the number of grantees from roughly 350 to about 140 over a multi-year period. That had been a painful experience for the grantees, and they were still reeling from that. So those were a few of the challenges I faced.

Alan Houseman:
Right, while you were president LSC undertook number of major initiatives. In addition to funding increases, there was a justice gap studies, pro bono, innovation funding outcome measures, updating LSC performance measures and major studies that LSC undertook on real delivery evictions. Just to give a couple of them. So describe some of these initiatives and why you thought they were important and what have they achieved?

Jim Sandman:
I'll mention seven. I want to start with funding, although funding is a perennial issue at LSC, and that's nothing unique to my challenges as president there. We worked very deliberately to improve our relationship with Congress and to expand bipartisan support for LSC to get support not only from progressive Democrats, but from conservative Republicans as well. Unless you think that progressive Democrats are going to control the House, the Senate, and the White House forever, you'd better have a strategy to protect and increase funding with supporters from across the political spectrum. So we worked very hard to reach out across the political spectrum and to talk to people that I'm not sure LSC had talked to before. We talked to people who had consistently voted against funding for LSC. My philosophy, which was encouraged by our Vice President for Government Relations, Carol Bergman, was take no one for granted and to give up on one. We concentrated on the members of the House and Senate appropriations subcommittees that had jurisdiction over us and on the full appropriations committees, and we met with some success. For example, in every year of the first Trump Administration, the administration proposed to zero out our funding to put us out of business. In every one of those four years, our funding actually increased, including in the years when Republicans controlled both the House and the Senate. So that was one thing, a new approach to funding.

Second, we began to work a lot more with other funders of legal aid. I looked back at LSC records and I saw that in the early years of LSC, LSC was overwhelmingly the principal funder of its grantees. In 1980, the earliest year for which I could find data, LSC was providing on average 88% of its grantees' funding. By the time I came to LSC , that figure was down to 40%. We were a minority funder. But the organization was run as if we were an 800 pound gorilla and the only funder that our grantees had. That was just not the reality. I thought that it was important to forge relationships with other funders, principally IOLTA programs, interest on lawyers trust account programs, which at that point were a significant alternative source of revenue for legal aid programs, and those

who were distributing funding from state legislatures, which was becoming an increasingly important source of funding for our grantees. I thought we should have a coordinated approach. I thought this would be beneficial to our grantees, so that they were not subject to conflicting and duplicative and burdensome reporting requirements from all their different funders. We needed to rethink our business model, to take account of the reality that we had gone from being a huge majority funder to being minority funder.

Third, I emphasized LSC's commitment to technology as a tool to improve access to justice. Since about 2000, LSC had had a very modest grant program called the Technology Initiative Grant program to make technology grants to its grantees so they could provide self-help tools directly to users they were not able to provide direct service to, and to help make their own internal operations more effective and efficient. I saw the access to justice problem as, in significant part, an access to information problem, people not having access to information about their legal rights and protections.

One thing technology does very well is to scale access to information, and I thought that was a very important tool to have in our toolkit. So although the funding for the technology grant program from Congress, a special line item in our budget, went up only modestly from about $4 million a year to $5 million a year, I think we significantly expanded LSC's power and influence in the technology field. For example, LSC had had for a few years a Technology Initiative Grant (TIG) program conference, typically in January of each year. When I started at LSC, at the first TIG conference I went to, the opening plenary session was held in the lobby of an Embassy Suites hotel in Albuquerque. Fewer than 100 people were there. At the most recent conference last month (January of 2025), there were more than 700 people at a conference center in Phoenix. LSC's technology conference is now by far the largest legal tech conference devoted to access to justice and draws people from across the technology and legal practice spectrum.

Fourth, we focused on pro bono and established a pro bono initiative grant fund. We did that for a variety of reasons. At a time of reductions in our funding and reduced resources available to our legal aid grantees to provide help with their own lawyers, we needed to expand the pool of helpers and to try to get more pro bono assistance from the private bar. We were also under some pressure from the then-chair of our House appropriation subcommittee, Frank Wolf (R) of Virginia, to increase pro bono

involvement. He thought we were not making adequate use of the private bar to supplement the services of legal aid lawyers. His pitch was, “I'll talk to you about increasing your funding when you get your pro bono hours up.” So we worked very hard to do that. We had a pro bono task force that issued a report on ways we might increase pro bono involvement. The pro bono initiative grant program, which was a competitive grant program, was a way to encourage our grantees to think creatively and to give them money for programs that might get more pro bono lawyers involved in their legal aid activities.

Fifth, we had a number of other specialized task forces. These were usually the genius of John Levi, the chair of our board, to try to focus attention on specialized areas of legal aid to see how we could do better, and to bring attention to the fact that a lot of legal aid goes to serving purposes that the general public and our funders in Congress are often not aware of --for example, disaster legal assistance. After any hurricane, flood, or tornado there is a huge need for legal assistance to get people FEMA benefits, to deal with unscrupulous contractors offering to do repair work, to help people get the documentation that they need to get their lives back in order. So we had a disaster task force. We had a veterans task force. Many veterans are in poverty. Homelessness among veterans was a real problem in my early years as president of LSC. So we had a task force on what legal aid programs could do to better serve veterans. We had an opioid task force. Opioids were taking a terrible toll on America, particularly on low income Americans and in rural communities. So we looked at the relationship between legal aid and opioids. More recently, there's been a task force on rural service delivery to deal with the problem of what they call “lawyer deserts,” huge swaths of rural America where there aren't any lawyers - no legal aid lawyers, no pro bono lawyers, no lawyers at all. How do you get legal services to people who are geographically removed from lawyers? This was all an effort to increase service delivery in areas of great need, and also to call attention to the wide variety of work that legal aid lawyers do that may not be visible to the public.

Sixth, we did a "justice gap" study during my tenure as president, in 2017. There had been two earlier justice gap studies done under my predecessor, Helaine Barnett. The study that we did in 2017 was much broader than the earlier studies. The earlier studies had focused on the work of LSC grantees. The study we did in 2017 looked more broadly at the need for legal services among the low income population, and featured a comprehensive survey done by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago to try to measure exactly how big the “justice gap” is. The justice gap is the

difference between the civil legal needs of low income people and the resources available to meet those needs.

And seventh, we set up a new office at LSC, the Office of Data Governance and Analysis. We wanted to do a better job of collecting data on civil justice in the United States and on the operations of our grantees, and to make that information more readily available to our grantees and to the public. That office now, for example, has a civil court data project that is the repository of more information about civil cases in the United States than any other repository has.

Alan Houseman:
I was going to ask you about that, the data collection analysis. Why did you set that up? There was a research institute, which actually I directed from 1976 to 1981 at LSC. Ever since then, I've been trying to get some kind of research capacity at LSC with no success until you guys came and set up this new data analysis effort, which I found quite effective and very, very useful. I'm glad you did it. But what led you to do that, I guess is the question?

Jim Sandman:
My understanding was that the Congress had eliminated the funding for the prior research center.

Alan Houseman:
That's correct.

Jim Sandman:
I wouldn't call our Office of Data Governance and Analysis a research center. We were trying to bring more rigor to the collection of data from our grantees to try to focus on the data that would be most useful, and not to collect data that was a burden for our grantees to report but that no one was using. We wanted to see what story the data told, to analyze it. Data tells a story, but you have to have the analytical capability to be able to review the data and suss out the story that it's telling.

I wanted to get more information on the outcomes of the cases our legal aid grantees were handling. We had a lot of data on outputs -- how many people grantees had helped, how many cases they had closed -- but little data on the outcomes of the matters they had handled. I thought outcomes data were important for two reasons: first, to allow grantees to manage themselves better, to focus on what works, what's

most effective in getting meaningful assistance to clients; and second, to make a more effective case to our funders in Congress. Congress wants to know what the dollars that they're giving us are accomplishing. I wanted to be able to make the case that our appropriation was a good investment of hard-earned taxpayer money and that there was a measurable return on that investment. It's not a persuasive case to say only that we closed X hundred thousand cases. That doesn't mean anything to anybody. But to say we avoided this number of evictions, we got this number of protection orders for victims of domestic violence, we got this dollar value of benefits for veterans who previously hadn't been getting them, that's a much better sell.

Alan Houseman:
Yeah, I totally agree. If you had, and maybe you just did it, but how would you summarize your accomplishments at LSC?

Jim Sandman: The seven initiatives that I described would be on my list. But I want to emphasize two things: first, the importance of our board -- the backing, the unanimous support, of a bipartisan board of directors; and second, the impact of John Levi. As you know, the board of LSC is 11 members appointed by the president of the United States and confirmed by the Senate. The board is required by law to be bipartisan. No more than six of the 11 members can be of the same political party. John, because of the force of his leadership and personality, turned that bipartisan board into a unified board, a board whose members respected each other, who acted by consensus, and who very frequently acted by unanimity. That was enormously important and helpful to me. Managing the board was not something I needed to worry about. John had that firmly in hand, and I always felt I had the complete support of the board. They had views on what they wanted me to do, and they expressed those views, but I felt like we were operating as a unified team. Second, all those things that I mentioned, they were all a team effort that involved many, many other people at LSC. I had a great team that worked very well together, that was committed to the mission, that was creative and innovative and passionate. So that list of things that I gave you was a team effort It was not my doing.

Alan Houseman:
I should have asked this earlier. I think one of the things that struck me was after you came in and after John took over the board is that the annual reports, the proposals to Congress and the Factbook became much more useful and effective tools to sell LSC. The Factbook has been something I've relied on a lot when talking about LSC or writing

about legal aid. I think you sort of covered it already, but I guess the question is why do you see those important to really develop knowledge about LSC?

Jim Sandman:
They were useful both for external purposes and for internal purposes, with the exception of the annual report, which is an external-facing document.

Alan Houseman:
Right.

Jim Sandman:
But the process of having to prepare our annual budget request to Congress, to think every year about how we're going to make our case, to explain what we're doing differently now from what we did last year so it's not the same report and the same budget request year after year, that's a useful discipline. It causes a constant reassessment of what you're doing and a rethinking of how you're going to explain what you're doing and why it should be funded. I use the Factbook, renamed “LSC By the Numbers,” all the time. I kept a hard copy in my top desk drawer. The data in there was very useful to me in thinking about where we needed to improve, how we could do things better, and in making our case. I still use that when I'm speaking about access to justice. I just made a presentation to a class of law students at the University of Southern California Law School this past Saturday afternoon. I had two graphs that I pulled out of the most recent “By the Numbers.” LSC has information in there that you can't find any place else in the United States about access to justice, and particularly about how legal aid functions. So they weren't just marketing tools, although they were effective at that. I found them very useful in leading and managing LSC.

Alan Houseman:
Yes. Well, that's good to know. I find particularly the Factbook the same way you do is quite useful in talking about access to justice and describing what LSC does and doesn't do. It is actually the best thing there is that can do that. Let's shift a little bit to the future. How do you envision the future of civil legal aid for low income people? What role do you think technology and possibly AI can have in the future?

Jim Sandman:
I envision the future of legal aid and the future of access to justice in the United States very differently now from how I envisioned it 14 years ago when I started at LSC. I had an epiphany at LSC about the magnitude of the access to justice crisis. Before I came to

LSC, I didn't think I'd been living under a rock. I had done pro bono work throughout my 30 years at Arnold Porter. I'd been president of the DC Bar. I'd been very actively involved in the DC Bar's Pro Bono Center. I had chaired the DC Bar's Pro Bono Committee for a number of years. But I did not understand how just how big the access to justice problem is until I came to LSC . I don't think most lawyers in the United States today have a clue how big the problem is.

Here are a few statistics about how big the problem is. The National Center for State Courts estimates that in the United States today both parties have lawyers in only 24% of civil cases in state courts, where 98% of civil litigation occurs. Twenty-four percent! That's unbelievable. It was not always that way. The earliest study I can find on the phenomenon of self-represented litigants dates from 1976. It was a study done by two students at Yale Law School who published their results in an unsigned piece in the Yale Law Journal. They looked at 2,500 divorce cases in two trial courts in Connecticut. They found that in 2.7% of those cases, at least one party didn't have a lawyer. And they were alarmed by that 2.7%. They cited a then-recent study in San Mateo County, California, which found that in 20% of divorce cases there at least one party didn't have a lawyer -- a number that they described as “an unprecedented surge” in unrepresented litigants. Compare those numbers -- 2.7%, 20% in divorce cases -- to the number today. Today 76% of civil cases across all case categories involve at least one unrepresented litigant.

Our system has not adapted to a tectonic shift in the identity of its user. The typical user of the legal system today is not a lawyer. It's a person who doesn't have a lawyer, a person who not only doesn't have a law degree, but may not have a college degree or a high school diploma. The system needs to work for them too. So I think we need to take a multi-pronged approach to solving this problem. I think we need systemic change, big systemic change. We have a systemic problem that needs a systemic solution. We obviously need more funding for legal aid. And we need more pro bono lawyers. But if I've learned anything from what's happened over the 50 years since that study was done in 1976, it is that legal aid and pro bono are not enough. And I don't see the day when they will ever be enough.

I think there are three additional things we need to do. First, we need to surge the supply of helpers. We need regulatory reform to reduce restrictions on the unauthorized practice of law to permit competent, well-trained, regulated people who aren't lawyers to provide some services that today only lawyers are able to provide. We need something analogous to what you have in healthcare – where we have not only

doctors, but nurse practitioners, physician's assistants, medical technicians, phlebotomists, all kinds of people who are providing healthcare but not at the doctor level. There are a number of states that have now adopted licensed paraprofessional programs and others that are considering community justice worker programs. These programs allow people who aren't lawyers but who are subject to regulation and to training requirements to provide help in the areas where the largest numbers of people are currently self-represented -- largely family law and housing law cases.

Second, we need to deal with the demand side of the equation. What I just said about surging the supply of helpers is about dealing with the supply problem. I look at access to justice as a market problem. We have a catastrophically dysfunctional market for legal services in the United States. It's a market that year after year proves itself incapable of generating a supply of legal assistance anywhere nearly sufficient to meet demand. So we need to surge supply, and we need to reduce demand. One way we can demand is by simplifying legal processes. Legal processes are way more complicated than they need to be. They are processes that were designed by lawyers for lawyers on the assumption that everybody's got a lawyer. Everything about the system, from the language of the law to the forms that are used to the rules of civil procedure to the rules of evidence, they were all created with lawyers in mind. Those are processes that do not work for the person who does not have a high school diploma. They need to.

There is a project currently underway at the American Law Institute to develop principles to govern legal process in high volume cases where large numbers of people are self-represented. I think simplifying legal process is doable. But it requires a very different way of thinking about legal process. You need to bring other disciplines to the table. You need to implement principles of user-centered design. You need engineers, design experts, business people, economists -- not just lawyers. If you ask lawyers to simplify the legal system, what they'll do is translate the Latin into English and pat themselves on the back for a job well done. No. We need more perspective than that.

Third, I can't imagine a solution to the scale of the access to justice problem that doesn't have technology as a huge component. As I said earlier, one thing technology does really well is scale access to information. I'm optimistic about the potential for generative AI to improve access to justice. It's the most exciting and potentially impactful development I've seen. I know the problems with it. I know that there are deficiencies in the way it operates right now, but I think a lot of the problems are manageable. People talk about AI as if it's one thing. It is not. The risks and benefits of AI

depend on the particular AI tool you're using and the use to which you are putting it. There are safe and effective uses. I'm teaching a seminar currently at University of Pennsylvania Law School on artificial intelligence and access to justice. I have a number of guest speakers who come in who show how AI can be used to improve access to justice.

They focus on two different kinds of uses. One is use by legal aid programs and pro bono lawyers to help them reduce the amount of time they spend on administrative tasks, to make their operations more efficient and effective, so they can focus more of their time on direct client service. There are very significant efficiency gains that are possible through the smart use of AI. The second is direct-to-consumer use, putting understandable, helpful, accurate, usable information directly into the hands of people who have a legal problem. There are some great tools already out there. They are chatbots, plain-language inquiry systems that allow a person to pose questions and get answers that tell them what they need to do, step-by-step. The most reliable of these draw not from the internet, not from general information that may have a lot of inaccuracies and harmful information, but curated sets of information that have been developed by, say, a legal aid organization so that they control what knowledge base the particular tool is drawing from.

For example, if a person is facing eviction, users can be sure the answers they get to the questions they pose are drawn from the local housing code, from explanatory information that the legal aid lawyers have developed. The best tools cabin the body of knowledge that answers to users' queries are drawn from so as to give them a high level of assurance that the information they receive is accurate. I think there's a lot of potential there.

I think we need a spectrum of solutions to the access to justice problem. We need solutions that are commensurate with the magnitude of the problem.

Alan Houseman:
Well, you've been involved since you left LSC in a number of organizations that focus on some of this. One is in Denver Institute for AALS.

Jim Sandman:
It's the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System.

Alan Houseman:

Right. Are you chair of the board or, I can't remember what your role is there.

Jim Sandman:
Yes, I'm chair of the board.

Alan Houseman:
Right. I follow that little bit so I have some idea of what they focus on. But to me, that's an example of an organization that's trying to address the systemic problems that you described around access to justice. At least that's the way I look at it.

Jim Sandman:
Yes. IAALS is a research organization, a think tank, and an action organization. They don't themselves implement the recommendations they come up with, but they make very specific recommendations. They're all about evidence-based research. They base the recommendations that they make on evidence and propose concrete next steps. I don't know of another organization that has their breadth of activity and the quality of their research devoted to improving the civil justice system.

Alan Houseman:
Yeah. Let me switch slightly. I've asked this of everybody. You've won a number of awards, and I wonder which of these awards that you won, which are in your resume, which of these awards are the most important to you?

Jim Sandman:
That's like asking a parent, which of your children do you love most?

Alan Houseman:
Maybe that's the wrong question.

Jim Sandman:
I am grateful for all of my awards. I've never displayed any of my awards – not because I'm not grateful for them, but because they're all the result of the work of many people, not just me. I would never claim solo credit for what led to my getting the award. But I can put them in categories that mean something special to me. One is national awards that remind me of nationwide impact, such as the American Lawyer Lifetime Achievement Award. That puts me in company I don't deserve to be in. The American Bar Association's presidential citation, which I got when I stepped down as president of

LSC. The ABA Journal a few years back named me a “Legal Rebel.” I love that. I may not look like a rebel, but I am.

Then there are local DC awards. Washington is my home. This is where I've spent the bulk of my professional career. There's nothing like being honored by your own. The DC Bar's Justice William J. Brennan Award is their highest honor. That means a lot to me. The Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs’ Wiley A. Branton Award means a lot to me. The Council for Court Excellence Justice Potter Stewart Award means a lot to me. These are my colleagues in my own community.

I've gotten awards from LSC grantees. Those mean the world to me, particularly when I think about what the situation was like when I started at LSC and when people viewed me with skepticism and when I could feel the tension when I entered a room. I've gotten awards in New York and Kentucky and Virginia and Ohio, and from LSC's DC grantee, the Neighborhood Legal Services Program.

I ended up going to 47 states in the time I was with LSC. The vast majority of the invitations that led to all that travel came from LSC grantees. They wanted me to come and meet with their staff, to give them a pep talk or to speak at their annual fundraising dinner. I felt like I was among friends in my later years at LSC when I went to visit grantees. That meant so much to me. I made a change in my career 18 years ago to leave the big law firm world and to go into public service and public interest work. The people who inspired me to do that were people like the legal aid lawyers at LSC grantees. To be accepted among them, and to be honored by them, means everything to me.

Alan Houseman:
Finally, we may have left out something you would like to share or missed in this discussion. So is there anything you'd like to add? Anything we've missed? Anything else you want to say in this oral history?

Jim Sandman:
I mentioned at the beginning the judge for whom I clerked, Max Rosenn on the Third Circuit. I don't know that there's a day that I don't think of him. At the outset of my career, I had the example of someone who was community-minded, public-service oriented, respectful in all of his dealings with every human being he ever encountered. What a role model. He was a role model in how to live a life as a lawyer that I was incredibly fortunate to have right at the dawn of my career. If you'd asked me at the end

of my clerkship what I learned from the experience, I would've told you that it honed my research and skills. But after that one-year clerkship, I had a 30-year relationship with my judge. It was the 30 years that had such a profound impact on me. Today I would say that what I learned from Judge Rosenn is that good people finish first -- that personal character and integrity, kindness, generosity, and service to others promote professional success. How very lucky I was to come across a person like that at the beginning of my career.

Alan Houseman:
Well, thank you very much. This has been a wonderful oral history.

Jim Sandman:
Well, thank you for asking me, Alan. You're one of my heroes.