



Consortium for the National Equal Justice Library
Oral History Collection
Interview with

Linda Perle

Conducted by Alan Houseman
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Alan Houseman: This is an oral history of Linda Perle. The interviewer is Alan Houseman for the National Equal Justice Library. It's January 22, 2017, in Washington, DC. Linda, let's begin with a brief overview of where you grew up, where you went to college and law school, and the key jobs you've held. Then we'll come back and focus on a number of these.

Linda Perle: I grew up in the little town of Verona in northern New Jersey. It's in Essex County, about 18 miles west of New York City. I was definitely not a New Yorker but I spent a lot of time in the city growing up. I went to the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, where I majored in Intellectual History, a fairly esoteric subject. But it was one that I really enjoyed. Then I was sort of faced with a dilemma about what I was going to do next. I wasn't really ready to go out into the working world so I felt like my alternatives were to get a Ph.D. in History or to go to law school. I'm not sure why that was the second alternative, although I was encouraged by some of my parents' friends who were lawyers to go to law school. I went to Harvard Law School which in the late 1960s and early 1970s was a very inhospitable place for women. There were about 48 women in my class out of a class of 600. Oh, 6,000. No, excuse me, 600. It felt like 6,000 sometimes.

LP: After law school, I briefly went to work for the government and then landed at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. There I worked on two projects. One was on state education standards, about which I knew a little. The second was a litigation project on employment discrimination in public employment. Then my grant ran out. After a very brief stint in private practice, I went to work at the newly formed Legal Services Corporation. That was in very late 1975. I stayed there for eight and one-half years. Then I left in the middle of the first Reagan Administration which had been making efforts to eliminate the LSC, which had become an inhospitable place. I stayed home for a while for several years. I did some consulting and some volunteer work, but did a lot of carpools for my young kids for about four years. Then I ran into Alan Houseman, who's interviewing me today. He convinced me to come to work for the Center for Law and Social Policy, where I spent the next 24 years of my life until I retired in 2012. So, that's sort of it in a nutshell.

AH: What factors led you to go to the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and ultimately to LSC?

LP: Well, I had this very romantic notion that lawyers help people. I don't know where I got that notion from -- I guess maybe from some of my parents' friends who were small-town lawyers who really did help people. So I had this sense that it was a helping profession. It was something that I could do to better society in some way. I did some work during law school. I worked for the legal aid program in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I'm not sure what it was called in those days. I did some work on the Harvard Law School Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review and a few other things in law school that pointed me in that direction. Then when I was getting out of law school I was desperately looking for a job. I wanted to stay in Cambridge but I didn't find anything there before I

finished law school. I had to figure out where I was going to take the bar exam, which I wound up taking in Massachusetts.

LP: Anyway I wound up taking a job in the federal government on a school finance task force, which was something that I knew about because I had been an assistant to one of my law school professors that was working on that issue. The job was not what I had hoped. But, during the time I was there, I made some connections with people at the Lawyers' Committee through working on a joint project between the Lawyers' Committee and the federal Office of Education, which was part of the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) at that time. Now, the Office of Education has become the US Department of Education.

LP: Then the Lawyers' Committee got a grant from an entity within the Office of Education to do this state standards project. The Lawyers' Committee asked me if I wanted to come and do it. I was delighted to because the Lawyers' Committee was a place that I had dreamed about working. It was a place I knew about from law school. I knew people who had either worked with their staff or worked there. Anyway, it was at the time my dream job. I loved working there. It was fantastic. But they like many other public interest organizations lived on grants. And this grant that I was working on ran out, and the grant that was supporting the other project that I was working on half time ran out. So, they really didn't have the resources to keep me. But it was a fantastic place. I was there for two years. I made many really good friends, including David Tatel, who was at that time the Executive Director of the national Lawyers' Committee, where I worked. Then he left there to head up the community service program for the law firm that was at the time Hogan & Hartson, but is now Hogan Lovells.

LP: Then David Tatel was asked to be the staff director (I'm not sure about his exact title), for the new entity called the Legal Services Corporation, which had been created by Congress in 1974. The Board had just been appointed and they were staffing up. David contacted me after I'd left the Lawyers' Committee and was working for a private law firm. He said, "I know you're working for a law firm. You're probably not liking it very much." Which was true. He said, "So, would you be interested in coming to work at this new entity, the Legal Services Corporation, where we're doing a project going around and looking at all of the backup centers and doing a report for the Board? It's a project, not a long-term job, but I'm sure there'll be other things there for you once that project is finished." I was very excited to do that. I mean, working for the Legal Services Corporation in the early days was such a heady experience. I'm sure Alan can tell you the same thing. Alan arrived at least a few months after I did, he can tell you that at the beginning you felt like, "Oh my God, I am creating something really new and exciting, and this is going to mean so much to the low-income community that is going to be served by the programs that were being funded by the Legal Services Corporation." Anyway, that's how I ended up there.

AH: Let's go back to the National Support Study. Explain if you can recall what it was and why it was important.

LP: It was a long time ago. I think that we went around to all the backup centers, maybe 13 or 14?

AH: There were 12.

LP: 12. Okay. We went and we spent several days at each one. We visited with the staff and also talked to other people who were outside. We talked to board members. We talked to individuals that had worked with the centers, private lawyers, just a whole range of people. We were trying to determine the effectiveness of the centers -- how well they were organized, and how well they were operating. What was very important about it was that the support centers were the focus of the kind of right-wing efforts to limit funding for the Legal Services Corporation. I think that's right, Alan?

AH: It is correct.

LP: That's one of the reasons that it was so important to do this study. We wanted to show that these were not sort of left-wing crazy people going around suing people just for the fun of it, or for political reasons, but that they were doing important work that was benefiting the nation, not just the low-income community. The backup centers were doing things that were making the system work for poor people. So, that was why it was important. I think, first of all, that the backup centers were doing fantastic jobs. These were for the most part, not all of them, but for the most part, these were incredible people that were working there and doing amazing work on behalf of the low-income community. And I think that we were able to establish that, at least to the people who were relatively sympathetic to the idea that these entities were worth saving. In the end, I'm not so sure that it made a whole lot of difference to the people who we were trying to convince. But I certainly was convinced.

AH: You held a number of other roles at the Legal Services Corporation. I'll list the four that I have and then you can decide what order you want to talk about them: Assistant General Counsel; Special Assistant to the Vice President; Project Manager for the Delivery Systems Study; and, Counsel for the Presidential Search Committee.

LP: Okay. Well, the next thing that I did after the Support Center Study was the Delivery Systems Study. It was a major undertaking. Congress insisted that the LSC look at alternative delivery systems for legal aid, rather than direct delivery programs by staffed delivery systems that were the norm for the legal services programs that were being funded. Congress wanted us to look at other ways that legal services could be delivered. I think there were about 10 projects that we funded. These included pro bono projects which used private attorneys to deliver services. There was a pre-paid legal services project. There was what they called the Judicare project where private attorneys were paid to deliver legal services. I can't remember all of the others. But the Delivery Systems Study went on for about two years, maybe a little longer.

- LP: At the end of that period, we did a major report, which had been required by Congress. The conclusion basically was that the staffed attorney model was the most effective and efficient way to deliver services. Several of the other models, not all of them, were acceptable ways to deliver legal services. But the staffed model remains the main way that legal services programs funded by the Legal Services Corporation delivers services until today. I was one of the principal investigators for that study and managed some of the programs. We divided up amongst the various staff people who was responsible for which programs. I was responsible for several. I can't remember specifically which ones. So, that was what I did.
- AH: Can I just interrupt for a second? Do you recall who the head of it was, her credentials and where she came from?
- LP: Leona Vogt. I think she had a Ph.D. She's not a lawyer, but I'm not sure that I can remember what her field of study was. She came from the Urban Institute. I don't recall what her connection to legal aid had been before, but she headed up the Delivery Systems Study.
- AH: So, after the Delivery Systems Study, where did you end up?
- LP: Actually, in between the Delivery Systems Study and the Support Center Study I did briefly work in the General Counsel's Office. So, I kind of got my feet wet there. But then I went over to the Delivery Systems Study. After the Delivery Systems Study, I was a Special Assistant to Clinton Bamberger for awhile and helped out the Board on a variety of things. But ultimately I was in the General Counsel's Office when I worked for the last several years at the Legal Services Corporation. I'm not exactly sure what the dates were.
- LP: Working at the General Counsel's Office was the thing that I liked most. I felt like I was directly helping the Corporation in terms of the legal work that needed to be done for it to run effectively. But also I was there in a role that allowed me to help the programs to make sure that they were complying with the various requirements and restrictions that were attached to the money that they were getting. At least initially, it was a very symbiotic relationship in the sense that we helped the programs do their jobs better. But they also helped us do our jobs better in the sense that they informed the Corporation through our office what kinds of issues were coming up from the field that we had to watch out for. Anyway, that was terrific. For me, it was the first job that I had at LSC that made me really feel like I was acting as a lawyer, and in the helping role that had always been in my mind as what lawyers did. So, I helped both the LSC with its legal issues and the programs with their legal issues. I did that for a long time. We had a terrific staff of young lawyers in that office who all worked together in a very collegial way. It was wonderful.
- LP: Then, of course, we had the election of Ronald Reagan, and things changed. Not dramatically, immediately because he didn't get around to appointing a new Board for LSC for a year after the election. But once that new board was in place, it immediately replaced the General Counsel and added a Deputy General

Counsel they hadn't had before. They didn't fire any of us who worked there but the relationship changed between our office and the field. We were limited in our interactions with the field and we were certainly limited in terms of the kinds of advice that we could give the Corporation. We would write memos and we'd get them back crossed out and footnotes removed. Now, I have to admit that sometimes I'd write a long memo that I thought was really what they wanted to see and then I'd have a half page of footnotes which were intended to annoy them, and the footnotes got crossed out. But after awhile, it became really intolerable for me to work in that atmosphere. I remember saying to my husband, "I have to leave here but I can't. I haven't been able to find another job. And we're going to lose our house. And I'm going to lose my self-respect because I'm going to not be working." He would say, "Just quit. Just quit." Finally, in the middle of 1983, I submitted my resignation. Those were very dark days for the Legal Services Corporation. I just didn't want to be a part of a serious effort to completely destroy what we had built. I felt that I had been part of that building process, and I just couldn't watch it being torn down. So I left.

AH: So, after several years you came to the Center for Law and Social Policy, known as CLASP. Why don't you describe the work you did at CLASP? Some of it was similar to what you'd done at LSC as its General Counsel. You also worked with a group of us as a coordinator of field efforts, did some training, and et cetera. So, describe your work for us at CLASP and add whatever you want.

LP: Okay. Well, Alan just sort of summarized what we did, but I was CLASP's lawyer for the field. Alan and I did that work together, but over time he was more involved in the overall work that CLASP did, and I was more involved with the legal work for the field. So, we split off a little bit. But we still had lunch every day together. I was the lawyer for the Civil Division of the National Legal Aid & Defenders Association (NLADAs), and their members, which were primarily the field programs that were funded by the Legal Services Corporation. What I did, in essence, was to help them, to advise them, to represent them in their dealings with the Legal Services Corporation, and on the issues that related to their funding. That was my primary role. I mean I did lots of other things at CLASP. But that was my primary role. So, when they wanted to do something that they were concerned might cross lines with the restrictions, they called me. As time went on they called less and emailed more. Then we would talk about it. And we would try to find some way that they could accomplish the goals that they wanted to accomplish for their clients and do so in a way that wouldn't get them in trouble with Legal Services Corporation. That was one thing that I did. I loved doing that. I loved the problem solving, the helping role that I always imagined lawyers played. That's what I did.

LP: Then sometimes they had done things that they were concerned that they shouldn't have done. So, they contacted me, and we worked through it. We tried to figure out the best way to either fix what they had done, or to defend it, or to work out a way that they could tell the Corporation, "We've done this. We've now changed what we were doing and so it's no longer a problem." Again that was that problem-solving role.

LP: Then of course, sometimes, unfortunately, they did things that they shouldn't have done, and they got caught and then they needed to be defended. So, that was again a role that I played, and I worked with the programs and with LSC to try to resolve these problems in a way that protected the program as much as possible. I think we were pretty successful at that. I mean there were programs that had done things that they shouldn't have done or at least that LSC perceived that they shouldn't have done, that did have problems. They wrote money that they had to pay back. Occasionally, not very often, there were some programs that were defunded. But for the most part, the ones that were defunded were programs that had really messed up pretty badly. We helped them. We tried to resolve the issues. If they were defunded, we helped them to figure out how to make the money that they had left over stretch as far as they could, and to try to make sure that the people that were the clients in that community would continue to be served. I loved the interaction with the programs. I dealt mostly with the upper-level management of the programs. They were my clients. But I also dealt with their board members. I dealt with some of their staff attorneys. I dealt occasionally with some of their clients. But it was the role of a problem solver and helper from a legal perspective. So, I felt like I was really being the good lawyer, which I always thought was what lawyers did.

LP: We did a lot of work on regulations. Sometimes we were able to work with the Legal Services Corporation staff to develop in concert with one another new regulations and policies. There were a variety of policies that weren't exactly regulations, but the process by which they were developed was similar to the process that was used to develop regulations. So, sometimes we were able to work together with them and develop a product that both met the goals that the Legal Services Corporation had, or the regulatory provisions that they were working with, but also met the needs of the programs that were being controlled by those regulations.

LP: Then sometimes we were in a much more adversarial role with the Corporation over these regulations and policies. It really depended on who was in charge at the Corporation at the time and the nature of the particular regulation or policy that was being proposed. But we helped write either the actual language of the regulations or policy, or we wrote comments in response to what the Corporation had proposed. We appeared before the Board, which was the entity that was deciding whether to adopt these regulations or not. Our comments were those that would support the positions of the field programs and sometimes we won, sometimes we didn't win. But after the process was complete we had a very good understanding of what the regulation said, and what it required. So, we were in a better position to help the programs to ensure that they were in compliance with the regulations. So, we spent a lot of time doing that.

AH: On the regulations, did we work with field leaders?

LP: Oh, of course. I'm sorry. Of course. First of all, we had a team of people. It was Alan and I and several people from NLADA who worked as a team on these

regulatory issues. We worked with both NLADA's Civil Division and Management Information Exchange and Project Advisory Group (PAG), to develop the policies that we wanted to implement through this regulatory process. I mean it wasn't just Alan and I kind of making up what the position of the field was. Those positions were developed with a lot of conversation with leaders of the legal services community through those organizations. There were also individuals who were leaders in the community, but not necessarily part of one of those organizations, who we consulted with because they had expertise in the area. So, I didn't mean to suggest that it was just us who made up these positions. We adopted positions that were consistent with the concerns and needs of field programs, after a lot of consultation with the leadership of the field programs. Anyway, that was the second principal role that I played.

LP: We did a lot of work on legislative issues. Every year the Corporation got new funding. A lot of years there were efforts to attach riders to the funding bills. Some of the riders were good. Some of them were things that we wanted and we worked to attach the bills. Some of them were things that we worked really hard to keep out of the bills. We worked with supporters in Congress -- senators and congressmen and their staffs -- to craft bills that would protect the Legal Services Corporation and its grantees. There were also efforts to reauthorize the Legal Services Corporation Act. Alan and I, and the other members of our team (who were basically lobbyists) worked together with congressional members and staff to reauthorize the Legal Services Corporation Act. It never actually was accomplished during the time that I was there but it was an ongoing effort.

LP: There was an entity at the Legal Services Corporation called the Office of Inspector General (OIG) that did a series of audits and investigations of programs. We helped programs deal with those OIG efforts. There's a lot of other things that we spent time on. For example, there was a competitive bidding process that was instituted for grants at some point. We helped programs write their grants and deal with issues that came up under that process. There was a lot of policy development that happened in LSC, some of it less formal that didn't really reach the Board level. When we had the opportunity, when there was a sympathetic staff at LSC, we worked with them on policy development and a variety of issues that came up. We helped with that.

AH: Let's go back to the legislative work. Besides being a member of the team in Washington, you were one of the coordinators of the grassroots efforts. Would you describe what are the grassroots efforts and what your role was?

LP: There was a major grassroots effort run by NLADA utilizing not just our team members, but several other members of the NLADA civil division staff. We found people in every state and territory that was funded by LSC, so it included Puerto Rico and Guam and the Virgin Islands and Micronesia. Most often we did not organize people who worked in the programs, because the LSC Act restricted people that worked for the programs from lobbying. So, we needed to find other people outside of the programs. These people were often private attorneys, sometimes there were people that worked in state bar associations

and other entities outside of the Legal Services programs themselves. These people would lobby their congressmen and their senators on behalf of Legal Services funding, and try to eliminate some of the restrictions that were either in place at the time, or fight restrictions about to be imposed.

LP: It was a very well organized effort. We'd identified people in every state, sometimes several people. We worked with the American Bar Association on this as well. So, every time there was a legislative fight that was brewing we would rouse people up. We would make calls, we would write emails, we would write background papers, we would develop talking points, we would just get everything that these people needed to convince their members of Congress to support Legal Services. I think it was quite an effective effort and it was in conjunction with similar efforts by the ABA. I think the fact that Legal Services survived a lot of these onslaughts by the right that were really intended to eliminate the program was due to the efforts of this grassroots network who convinced a lot of people you wouldn't expect to be supporters of Legal Services to support the program -- maybe not enthusiastically, but at least enough to prevent it from being eliminated. So, that was something that I was very involved in. I don't know how many of us there were. There were five or six people at a time who were managing this network. I had maybe 10 states that I was responsible for and I developed close relationships with the people who we had identified in those states. So, there were people who I could pick up the phone and call and say, "We need you to go talk to Senator Smith and make sure that he supports this, that he understands what this fight is about, and that he either supports or at least does not oppose the Legal Services program on this particular point, or issue, or amendment." As I said, I think it was pretty effective.

AH: As part of our work, we did some training. Talk a little bit about that.

LP: Sure. I think most of the training that I did was on regulatory matters. It was very important for programs to understand what their responsibilities were, and what they could and could not do under particular provisions. I remember one set of trainings, there was a wholesale revision of the eligibility regulations that was done by LSC. It was one of those regulatory efforts that was done really in conjunction with the LSC staff. It was one particular assistant general counsel who was on regulatory matters. She and I worked very closely together to craft this new regulation. It was a product, I think, of a lot of give and take between the field and LSC. It was a very, very good product, ultimately. But it included a lot of changes, some of which were pretty complicated. So there was a real need to make sure that people in field programs understood what those changes were and what kind of an impact they were going to have on how LSC determined eligibility and who was eligible.

LP: After the Board adopted that regulation and before it became effective, I did a lot of training at every opportunity, every conference, every regional meeting. I did this training five or six times to audiences of several hundred people at a time. It wasn't just me, I had panels of people who had worked on the regulation. There was a whole committee of field people who worked on the

regulation. We would do a dog and pony show around the country. By the time we were finished we probably presented that training to people from pretty much every program in the country. As a result there was a much better understanding of how this regulation was going to work. People were able to deal with it and there were very few issues that arose afterwards about compliance with this eligibility regulation. People understood and accepted it, and people dealt with the changes. So, that was one set of trainings that I really remember having done.

LP: I did a lot of regulatory training. Sometimes I would go to a conference, a lot of these were NLADA conferences, but some of them were conferences that were set up by the Management Information Exchange or by regional bodies of legal services programs in different regions of the country. I did a whole series of general regulatory trainings in which I would go through the most important regulations for the programs to understand. I would give at least a brief overview of each regulation and then answer a lot of questions. It was most helpful when I was just there as a resource for people to ask the kinds of questions that they've been thinking about as they figured out how to be in compliance with these regulations and yet do the work that they felt was important. So, that's a lot of what I did at these trainings. There may have been trainings that were done on other than regulatory issues but they're not the ones that I'm remembering.

AH: After the 1996 restrictions, we did a set of trainings to help programs. Just describe it a little bit about that? And I meant in addition to the ones you've talked about it.

LP: In 1996, there were a whole series of restrictions that were imposed on Legal Services programs that hadn't been there before. There had always been some restrictions on lobbying but they were expanded. New restrictions were imposed on private money that programs received. There had always been some restrictions on legal aid and Legal Services programs using LSC funds to do work on certain issues like abortion, for example. But if the programs had private, nonpublic funds, they could use those funds to do the restricted activity. In 1996, Congress imposed an entity-wide restriction. So most of the things that had been restricted prior to '96 with LSC money now were also restricted with non-LSC funds. Then a whole series of new restrictions were imposed as well. So, yes, we did a major effort around making sure the programs understood what those restrictions were and that they understood how those restrictions applied to their non-LSC funds. It was pretty complicated because some of the restrictions applied to all of their non-LSC funds. Some restrictions only applied to their governmental funds (including state government funds) and not private funds. It was pretty complicated. So, we made a major effort again to try to reach just about everybody in a whole variety of ways. Alan and I wrote lots of papers during that time explaining the various restrictions. Those papers were widely circulated throughout the community. Then we did face-to-face trainings as well.

AH: One other thing that you were involved with the transition efforts of the Legal Services Corporation under the incoming Clinton Administration in 1992 and the Obama Administration in 2008. I don't know if you recall any of that?

LP: I'm rolling my eyes because my memory is terrible. I mean I guess the answer is that I remembered that I did it. But I'm not exactly certain what I did.

AH: Okay. Well, we'll get the answer-

LP: Sorry, sorry about that.

AH: We'll get to it in another, in my roles.

LP: Okay.

AH: So, one of the things that went a little beyond your General Counsel work at CLASP was, in 2005 and 2006, you helped out on a process undertaken by the American Bar Association (ABA), to write a new set of standards for civil legal aid programs. Why don't you describe that.

LP: Well, I was as I recall my role was as a reporter -- that was my title. There was a group of people, and Alan was part of this group, as were a number of other leaders in the legal services community and in the ABA, and ABA staff. The group worked to revise a set of standards for legal services programs in terms of how they delivered services, how they were governed, how they interacted with other institutions. It was a very comprehensive set of standards. But it had been in existence for 20 years, and there had been changes in the environment and changes in the rules. It was the right time to look into those, see if they were still appropriate, and revise them when they weren't. I came a little late to the process. I mean it had been going on for a while. Before me, John Tull had been the reporter. He completed about half of it, then I took over as the reporter. It meant that I participated in all of the meetings. I made sure that I captured the discussions and certainly the conclusions. That didn't mean that I wasn't permitted to participate in the discussions. I was and I did. But my role was not as a member of the commission that was doing the work, but outside of it as a reporter to capture all the decisions that were made and then write them down. Then the product that went back to the members of the commission to review was my product. Then obviously there were comments that were made and there were changes that were made but my responsibility was to finalize it, and to create this document that was the new set of standards for legal aid programs. It was an ABA document. That process was a lot of work and the document that was produced was one that ... I don't know if it's been revised again since? Has it ever been revised again?

AH: No. There was some discussion this year but I don't think it's going to happen.

LP: Okay. But I mean it's been in use for 15 years and I think it was again something that was very helpful in guiding programs as they were determining how they were going to run their programs.

AH: In addition to your work at CLASP and LSC, you've also been very involved in bar work. The DC Bar, Washington Council of Lawyers, and others. Describe some of that and how you got involved and your work on these bar activities.

LP: Well, you know it was funny I was thinking about this before, I was kind of the utility player for the DC Bar. I was on the Board of Governors for five years. But I also worked on a variety of committees. Some of them were things that I was a natural for. I was on the Bar's Pro Bono Committee for six years. Then others were things that I just I was there and they said, "Oh, well, Linda can do that." So, I just helped out. I really enjoyed working in Bar activity for a long time. I chaired the local DC Steering Committee on Courts, Lawyers, and the Administration of Justice. I was on that committee and I chaired it for a while. I worked on various screening committees and just a whole bunch of things. It was something that was apart from the work that I was doing at CLASP but it always related in some way because CLASP was always involved on legal services activities with the ABA and local bar folks like the grassroots effort with the local Bar. So, I always felt that it was work that was complimentary to what I did. I actually ran for Bar President one year. I was not the designated winner. Somebody that had been trying to become Bar President for years was running and then others needed to find somebody to run against her so they asked me to do it. Anyway, it was...

AH: We tried.

LP: We tried. It was fine. Alan was very helpful and we worked very hard but it wasn't really meant to be.

LP: Anyway, in addition to the work that I did in the DC Bar, I was on the Board of Directors of an organization called the Washington Council of Lawyers. I was on that board for 40 years and I just stepped down recently. It's a local bar association whose goals are to encourage pro bono and public interest lawyering in the Washington, DC. area. It's primarily focused on DC but there was some work that they did with people in the Maryland and Virginia suburbs as well. The Washington Council of Lawyers grew from a small organization that was founded in 1971 as an anti-war group of lawyers to a broader concept of an organization whose goal was to really support the pro bono and public interest community in DC. At the time I joined the board we had no staff. It was an entirely volunteer organization, which did a lot of really great things in DC. We had monthly luncheons with speakers from the political community, and journalists, and public figures who talked about issues that were of interest to the community. That was one thing we did early on and they still do that. They're not monthly, but they do them periodically. We lobbied on local issues that were of interest or importance to the public interest legal community and legal services community, and access to justice issues. We wrote amicus briefs. We did training. As time went on we got some staff. We now have not a big staff -- it's probably the equivalent of two full-time people -- but it's very active. But it's always been a volunteer-run program. So, the members of the board and other volunteers, with support from the staff, always ran these programs.

LP: Anyway, over these many years, it's developed into the voice at the bar level of the public interest community and has always worked very hard with the DC Bar to encourage pro bono participation. I was very proud to be on that board and I was the president of the organization for a couple of terms and worked on anything that needed to be done. Any committee that needed to have a volunteer, as long as it was something I felt like I could contribute to, I did. I finally felt last year that it was really time to step aside and let younger people have my slot on the board. Although the one thing about the Washington Council of Lawyers that was so wonderful is that it was very multigenerational. When I first came everybody was pretty young. A lot of the people that I came with dropped off the board over time. But there were a number of us elder statesmen who remained on the board and then there were always these really young people just coming into the community who wanted to be part of something bigger. So, they would first do work for the Council on some project and then gradually would become members of the Board. So, there was a feeling that people at every stage in their career had something to contribute, and they did. But I figured by this time it was time for me to step aside. So, I did, last year. I miss it.

AH: They honored you at one point.

LP: Yes, they did, in 2001. They began an award that they gave every year which was called the President's Award. It was called that because the past presidents of the Council got together and chose the recipient and it was somebody that had contributed in some important way to the goals of the Council. I was the first recipient and I was very proud of that.

AH: You also, according to your resume, were involved in the DC Judicial Conference and the DC Federal Circuit Judicial Conference.

LP: I was invited a number of years to be a delegate to the conference and so that was a long time ago. But yeah, I would go and participate in the conferences just as a participant. I mean I didn't have any very significant role there.

AH: Was there any other bar activity you want to talk about?

LP: I was a member of the Women's Bar for many years. Not a particularly active member but I paid my dues. Also, for six years I was on the board of the Appleseed Foundation. Appleseed is an organization that provides some funding and support through a network of public interest organizations in states around the country. I think there may be 15 of them now that do public interest work in various states. For example, in South Carolina, there was a state support program that had been the Legal Services Corporation grantee and they became part of the Appleseed Network. So, they were organizations that did some access to justice and some civil rights. Some of them focused on particular issues that were of importance in a particular state. I think one of them worked on education issues, one of them maybe worked on veteran's issues. There were a variety of things. So, I was on the National Board of Directors for the organization that coordinated that network.

- LP: For four years, I was on the board of the Policy Committee, which is another name of the Board of the Legal Counsel for the Elderly. That's a local DC entity that provides legal services for elderly people.
- LP: For five years, I was a member of the Board of Directors of the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA). I was the public member. I was trying to recall how it was that I got to be selected as the public member. Someone, a colleague of my husband, had some connection with this organization and was looking for somebody in the public who didn't have any specific connection to these accrediting agencies but who was smart and had some sort of a world view that might be helpful. So, they asked me if I would become a member of this organization. I said, "Sure, why not?" And it was really an interesting experience. This is again something that I knew literally nothing about. There are these accrediting agencies for professional organizations. For example, the American Dental Association runs an accrediting agency which accredits dental schools. Similarly, the American Bar Association has an arm that accredits law schools. So these are all professional organizations that do accrediting for professional training schools or institutes that provided training for professionals. I just learned a lot about how professionals were taught and about how the entities were accredited, and what happened when they were failing, and what happened when they were particularly effective. It was just really, really interesting. I mean it was not something I ever continued doing once I was no longer on the board. I had a pretty strict term limit. It was just something that I did that had nothing to do with anything that I was doing in my professional or personal life. It was just interesting.
- AH: Well, one of the things you've been very active in personally is the congregation and so as we end this we're not quite done. But talk a little bit about that?
- LP: All right. Well, Kol Shalom is our synagogue. It was formed about 15 years ago. It was a breakaway from the congregation that we had belonged to for many years. It's a Conservative Jewish congregation which is kind of a little bit of a misnomer because it was the Conservative movement was a breakaway from Orthodox communities and it's in between Orthodox and Reform, for those who understand how the various factions within the Jewish community operate. So it's titled Conservative but it's not conservative. It's certainly not, politically conservative. It's not politically anything. But in terms of the degree to which people are observant, it is much less observant than Orthodox and observant in a different way from Reform. The services are much more traditional than Reform but less so than Orthodox. It's in between. Anyway, we joined this kind of breakaway synagogue 15 years ago and we've been active members. My husband was the President of the congregation for two years. I've been involved in a variety of ways. I have chaired an effort called Good Deeds Day for the last six or seven years which is where you set aside one day of service and you try to involve as many people in the community in these service projects as possible. I've been the chair of that for a long time. Two years ago I was asked to serve on the Board and to be the Secretary. And so that's what I've done. Actually, my days as a reporter at the ABA, and the standards work that I did, helped prepare me to do this. It's really important to be able to capture the essence of the

conversations that go on and to make sure that if there are votes that you get everything. You get the right vote tallies and you know who made the motion and seconded the motion. As the Secretary and also as a member of the executive committee of the synagogue, I've been part of our dealing with a lot of real important issues. The issue that we've dealt over the last few months has been whether to invite non-Jewish spouses and life partners to be full members of the synagogue. So we have a proposal which we're presenting to the membership in the spring or the early summer to do that.

AH: In addition to the Washington Council Lawyers Presidential Award, you've won some other awards. Which of those was the most pleasing to you or did you feel the best about?

LP: There were two awards that I got, one from the Project Advisory Group in November 1996 and one from the National Legal Aid & Defender Association in November 2000. Both of those awards were for my contributions to the legal services community. They were awarded by the people that I worked with and who knew me and knew my devotion to the legal services community. Those awards meant a great deal to me because I felt that they really were from the heart.

LP: When I retired there was a reception for me at the National Legal Aid & Defender Association conference here in Washington, DC. There were a lot of people there. These were people that I'd known over the 24 years that I'd worked at CLASP, and some people from before when I worked at LSC. There were members of the community, LSC staff, ABA people. People spoke about the work that I'd done and the relationships that I had with people and that was better than any plaque. My family was there and they all said, "Boy, Mom, I didn't realize that you meant a lot to this community." I always felt appreciated, but it sort of coalesced for me how much I had meant to the community and how much the community meant to me. So, I think that was the greatest honor, I guess.

AH: Right. Finally, maybe not quite finally, but do you have any thoughts about the future of civil legal aid or a vision for it that you'd like to share?

LP: During so much of the time that I worked both at LSC and at CLASP there was always a sense of doom over the community. We were sort of one congressional vote away from being eliminated. I don't feel that way anymore. When I left CLASP and retired, I no longer felt that way. I felt that the legal services community was an institution that was going to survive because even some of the more conservative members of Congress finally acknowledged that it was important and that it provided a service to the low-income community that was important and necessary. There may have been different views about the scope of what those services should be but the basic notion that the federal government had some responsibility to provide civil legal services I think was ingrained.

LP: I don't honestly know today whether that's still true. I retired almost six years ago. I don't know exactly what's going on now with the Trump Administration, whether there's any effort going on to eliminate Legal Services. I haven't heard of anything. So, unless I'm missing something that's going on now, I think that civil legal services is going to survive into the future. The form in which it's going to survive is not clear to me. I don't know whether there's going to be any time where they'll be a more expansive view of what legal services should be doing or whether there will be relaxation of the restriction -- even the restrictions on non-LSC funding, which would make a huge difference in terms of what that scope of service could be. I've been out of things too long to really have a very educated view of what that future is going to be. But I do think that there's going to be a future. I think the program will continue and will continue to be funded.

AH: Finally, do you have any final thoughts that you want to share that we haven't covered, or something we left out?

LP: I don't know that there's anything we've left out that's important. I want to say, I guess, only that I had an extremely satisfying career. I loved being part of the legal services community. When I retired I missed that interaction that I had on a daily basis with programs in the field and with my colleagues in Washington. I didn't miss getting up every day and going to work. But I certainly missed feeling that I was a part of something really important. I think that I will always feel that I was a part of something really important and that I accomplished in my career what I set out to do when I was a law student, which was to help. I always felt that I was helping. I never felt that the things that I was doing were not going to have a positive impact on the programs that I was working with and the clients that they served (other than maybe a brief period when I was in the General Counsel's Office during the Reagan Administration). Not everybody gets to say that. When I retired it was just that I felt like it was time for me and it had nothing to do with unhappiness with what I was doing. I loved my job. I loved the people that I worked with and I love the community that I served. So, that was it.