

UFLC 48

Interviewee: Mary K. Phillips

Interviewer: Rebecca Hoover

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H: This is an interview with Mrs. Mary K. Phillips in Jacksonville. Today is May 10, 1989. First, would you tell us a little bit about your background, growing up in Miami, and about your family?

P: I was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and we moved to Miami when I was two years old. We lived in Miami until I went off to school in Tallahassee. During that time I went to twelve years of Catholic school. I grew up with my ten brothers and sisters, all of whom were younger than I was. We were not wealthy by any stretch of the imagination. Somehow when you are growing up, that does not seem to be something that you notice so much, at least until you get into your teens. As I look back on it now, by some miracle my parents were always able to provide for us as far as food and that kind of thing. We did not have a lot of clothes or activities, but we always seemed to be pretty happy. I think the most important thing my parents contributed to me was their emphasis on the importance of education. That was always stressed. As I recall there was no one in any of my parents' families or my grandparents' families that had ever graduated from college.

H: Your parents included?

P: As I was growing up, my father attended college, but he never graduated. He took a couple of courses a semester for a couple of years, but he never finished.

H: What was his occupation?

P: He worked for the federal government, first as a mechanic in a federal motor pool in Miami, and then later as the head of the interagency motor pool for the General Services Administration of the federal government. He held that position for several years. It was one of those jobs that sounds very important but does not pay very much. [laughter] But somehow we got by. As I look back on it now, I know it was with help from other people.

H: Did your mother stay at home?

P: Yes, my mother never worked outside the home. She was very happy to be a housewife, and, of course, she needed to be a housewife, with eleven children. As I look back on it, we were really a very happy family. Some of us were good students, and some of us were not. Some of us were less trouble than others. Any time you have a family of eleven you have quite a congregation of different personalities and different people. But, as I said, I think the most important thing

that my parents gave to me was an emphasis on education, having in mind that with education you can achieve anything you want.

We had seven boys and four girls, and I can never really remember being treated differently because I was a girl, except that the boys were not allowed to hit the girls. That was a very important rule, especially as the boys got bigger. Otherwise, I was never told, as some girls were I am sure, that girls had to be certain things and boys had to be certain other things. In other words, there was never any difference in treatment as far as our futures were concerned. We were always encouraged to do the best we could.

H: They were a little bit ahead of their times--not far ahead, but a little bit.

P: As I look back on it now, that is true.

H: As the oldest, did you have a lot of additional responsibilities helping your mother?

P: Oh, yes. As the oldest, you can imagine what I was responsible for. I was responsible also in the sense that if anything happened while they were gone I was responsible for it. That teaches you early on how to deal with people – who are first your brothers and sisters – to get them to do what you want them to do and not do what you do not want them to do. Obviously, as any young person would tell you, it seemed very unfair to me that I should be held responsible, but that is just the way it was. So early on I learned to deal with emergencies and problems when my parents were not home. That was always a given in my life.

H: What is the age range?

P: I am the oldest; I am forty-three, and my youngest brother is twenty-one. As a matter of fact, my youngest brother was born after I left home to go to nursing school, so really I grew up with only ten children.

H: What are your brothers and sisters doing?

P: My next sister has gotten her master's degree and is a special education teacher up in the Washington, DC area. She is married and has a couple of children. Then I have a brother who is in the Raleigh, North Carolina area with a wife and two daughters. He has his master's degree in entomology from the University of Florida.

H: My husband almost did that.

P: He works for Union Carbide in research and product development. Then my next brother lives in St. Augustine with his wife and child, and they have another

one on the way. He is a teacher in a St. Augustine area elementary school, which is unusual for a man.

H: That is great. We need them.

P: That is right. My next brother is in Miami working for Winn-Dixie where he has worked for about twenty years now, and he is doing well. I have brother in the Miami area who has had various businesses that he has tried his hand at, including landscaping – just all sorts of things. My next sister is trained as a chiropractor but is working now as a bookkeeper at a church school in Miami. She is going back to being a chiropractor in the near future. My next brother is in the Rhode Island area, and he has a wife and two children. He is a singer, particularly in opera. He has performed in various operas with Boston University and the outskirts. He has a wonderful voice and is really very talented. My next sister has Downs Syndrome. She is still living at home with my father; my mother is deceased. She is a wonderful person, very lovable and loving. She is in her late twenties, despite the fact that we were told when she was born that there was no way she would live to be ten. You know, back then everybody was saying that you put children in institutions. My parents said, "Oh, no. The best place for her is at home with all of these children who will treat her normally." It really has been good for her.

My next brother is working in Miami, and he is saving to go back to school. He has finished about two years of college. Then my next brother – and my last brother [laughter] – is in the Lake Wales area where he is working as an auto mechanic at an auto dealership down there. He is doing very well. He has a real talent for that kind of thing. I am very proud of all of them.

H: They are very diverse.

P: They are totally different people. It is incredible.

H: Yes, it is amazing. My husband comes from a large family – not as large as yours, but almost. There were eight in his family.

P: So you know. Well, you think that they all have the same parents, so theoretically they should at least have great similarity of genes, but it is amazing how different they are.

H: Yes, that is true. What about nursing?

P: Well, when I finished high school, you can imagine there was not any money in my family to send any of us to college, so whatever we were going to do we had to do on our own. Back then the scholarship/loan situation was different than what it is now. There was really no way I could go to a four-year college. I had

never wanted to be a nurse, but while I was a senior in high school I learned about Jackson Memorial Hospital School of Nursing. This was a three-year program, which was the way most girls went on to become nurses at that time. It was associated with the hospital, and it was just perfect for me. You had to live in the dorm, which was fine because as an eighteen year old I was very happy to get out of the house. They provided uniforms for the student nurses, which was great because I did not have a lot of clothes. And you could eat for free in the hospital cafeteria.

H: This is a deal!

P: This fit exactly into what I needed.

H: Did you work?

P: Yes. The tuition was relatively low for back then – we are talking 1964 – and I was able to get a scholarship for full tuition. Since room, meals, and uniforms were provided, I did not need a lot of other money. What I did do was work. They did not want you to work the first year. The second year I was able to work part-time in the microbiology laboratory of the nursing school, so I was able to earn enough money for little incidental things. I finished there, and really loved it, which surprised me. It was not like I always wanted to be a nurse.

H: So you were kind of taking a chance with this.

P: I always had in my mind that this was a good idea because it was a good way to get a good education that would enable me to get a job so I could go to college. That was always my goal – to go to college – and I saw this as a way to get a good-paying, stable job.

H: You are a patient person.

P: I did not have a lot of choice. That was always my plan: I would get a job and go to college.

H: What type of nursing did you do? You mentioned the emergency room.

P: Right. When I first got out of nursing school I worked on a general medical floor for a couple of years. Then I transferred to emergency room nursing for approximately five more years before going to law school. I loved it, I must say. I still feel a real kinship with nurses. I am a speaker at a lot of nursing meetings and things like that because I have great admiration and respect for nurses. I loved being a nurse myself, especially in the emergency room. But I always knew there was something more I was going to do.

Once I got out of nursing school I started going to college. I started at Miami-Dade Junior College. I finished there and went to the University of Miami for a year. I decided the tuition was just too much, even with student loans, so I transferred to FSU [Florida State University] where I continued to work full-time as a nurse and go to school twelve hours a semester (or a quarter, whatever it was).

H: So you were a full-time student and a full-time employee.

P: Yes. I would go to class in the morning and work until 11:00 at night in the emergency room at Tallahassee.

H: When did you study?

P: Fortunately, I did not have to study a whole lot and was still able to do well.

H: I want to ask why you chose English literature. What were your intentions?

P: I knew that I did not want to be a nurse forever. If you remember, nursing was a stepping stone to something else, although I was not sure what that something else was. I decided that a liberal arts education would probably be the best kind of preparation for just about anything. I have always loved reading, so it just came as natural to me. I used to think I wanted to be a math major, but when I took a couple of calculus courses I changed my mind. I had English literature as my major and psychology as my minor.

By that time my boyfriend, who is now my husband, had started law school at FSU. We had met in Miami when I was a nurse and he was getting his M.B.A. at the University of Miami. We moved to Tallahassee at the same time – he started law school and I continued with college.

H: Did you graduate about the same time?

P: I graduated from FSU approximately a year before he graduated from law school. Of course, I knew I wanted to go on and do something else. I had decided early on I did not want to be a doctor, but I did not know what else I wanted to do. Phil encouraged me to take the LSAT [Law School Admission Test]. Really, what he said was, "Just go on and take the test and see how you do. If you do terrible, then you should not go to law school. If you do well, you should consider law school." I agreed; I did not know what else to do. I have always had this idea that I wanted to get an education, but I never was sure what I wanted to do when I grew up, even when I was twenty-five.

I took the LSAT, and I did very well. I went over to FSU for an interview there. Fortunately for me, I was going to be able to go wherever I wanted to go, so I started at FSU because Phil was still there. It was a wonderful law school.

I really enjoyed it. It was completely different from the University of Florida. It was smaller, especially when I was in school. I did well there my first year. I then transferred to the University of Florida law school in the summer after my first year.

H: Why did you move to Gainesville?

P: Every time I say this to a real University of Florida Gator fan it sounds so terrible, but the truth is because Gainesville is closer to Jacksonville than Tallahassee. By that time Phil was working as a lawyer with Mahoney & Hadlow in Jacksonville. I was trying to work in emergency rooms every other weekend and go over to Jacksonville on the others, and it was just too much. So I decided to finish up in Gainesville, which was no problem. I started working in the emergency rooms at Alachua General Hospital. By the way, especially in Gainesville I could make more in the emergency room than I could as a law clerk, because there were so many law students.

H: That is probably true today.

P: It probably is. I would go in on Friday afternoon and work twelve hours, work all day Saturday and all day Sunday, and end up making more money than I would have if I had worked as a law clerk.

H: Gainesville is notorious.

P: That is because there are so many law students. At any rate, I did that until I finished law school. Then I came over here to Jacksonville.

H: Let me ask you about some of your experiences at the University of Florida College of Law. In what year did you enroll?

P: It was the summer 1974 when I started my fourth quarter of law school at the University of Florida.

H: What were your impressions of Gainesville then?

P: I did not like Gainesville as much as I did Tallahassee. They are just two different towns altogether. All the [University of] Florida kids hate it when I say that, but Gainesville somehow seemed much smaller than Tallahassee. I think it because in Gainesville there is the college, and that is about it. At least in Tallahassee there is the college, the capitol, and the [Florida] Supreme Court. For law students, all of those very exciting things are going on. Many of my classmates were employed at the capitol or the Supreme Court or the First District Court of Appeals. The law school was only a block or two away from

that. It was just a wonderful place to go to law school because of all of those other opportunities. There really was not that feeling in Gainesville that you could get in Tallahassee.

That does not reflect poorly on the law school; it is just that it is a different environment. Too, you have to remember that being a transfer student is not one of the easiest things in the world. At the University of Florida law school, by the end of the first year your relationships are pretty well cemented with other students. They divide you into groups, and you get to know the people in your group because you go through the whole first year together. When you just pop in as a transfer student at the beginning of the fourth quarter, it is quite a different experience than if you started at the beginning. I knew absolutely no one.

H: I was going to ask you about that. Were you able to get to know other students?

P: Oh, yes, I did get to know people, but it is just more difficult than if you had started at the beginning. Part of that is the function of it being such a big place. It is just up to the individual student to get to know other people, which I did. I have some very good friends now whom I met at the University of Florida law school. I certainly was able to make friends. I do not mean to say that anybody there was unfriendly, because they were not. It was just a different experience coming in as a transfer student.

H: What were your impressions of the law school at that time? What was the atmosphere like?

P: The other thing you have to remember is that I was an older student. I did not go right from high school to college to law school, so I was one of the older students. I was not there on the weekends to go to parties and things like that because I was either working or in Jacksonville. The atmosphere in the law school was probably about the same as it is now. Everybody wanted to do well.

H: What about the competition?

P: Competition was strong, which is good, I think. That is the way it should be. People were very concerned about grades and exams and feared that someone else might know more than they did – all the same kinds of things I think you will find here today at the law school. I remember one thing I really enjoyed was the little cookouts on Wednesday at noon. Do they still do that?

H: I think I see brown-bag forums and such.

P: Yes, right, brown bagging. We would have our hamburgers, hot dogs, and that sort of thing. That was a good way to get to know people. Attire was very

informal, which is probably the same as it is today. Most people just wore jeans and tee shirts and things like that.

H: With a few exceptions.

P: There were very few exceptions. You could always tell when somebody was interviewing because they would have a suit on. You could always tell if they were having to go to work in the clinic, or if that was the day they were going to the court house. There was just that definite difference in the dress. I am sure that is still the same.

H: There are a few students who dress nicely every day when they come to class, with long-sleeve shirt and tie. There are not that many, but there are a few.

P: It is very informal situation. Sometimes I thought it was too informal, but that was also true of the times. I always used to think – and I still do – that the physical plant of the law school did not always lend itself to a real closeness and camaraderie between the students and professors. Once the class was over the professors ordinarily, with some exceptions, just went back to their offices or wherever they went. Their offices were all on one floor – that may not be true now because there are just too many professors.

H: That is true. There are a lot of folks in Bruton-Geer Hall, but they are in different programs, like the Virgil D. Hawkins Civil Clinic or CGR [Center for Government Responsibility].

P: At FSU it was just a more open environment. The professors milled around, shall we say, with the students in the student lounge, in the hallways, and around the school. At Florida it seemed to me that once the class was over they were gone. If you wanted contact with the professors, it seemed to me it was up to you to go on and do it. I am not saying it is good or bad – that is just the way it was. But I thought it was unfortunate.

H: What about the physical facility itself? It was new then.

P: I know, but I still thought it was pretty ugly. It was cold and forbidding in a way. There was nothing warm about it, and there still is not, I think.

H: I heard that it was the lowest bid.

P: I can believe that. Bruton-Geer is a little better, but I guess you would have to go see FSU to see what it was like.

H: Denise and I have a terrible time, because we are always trying to get these

great, dramatic pictures, and we cannot. We do not have the pillars and the red bricks and the ivy.

P: All of this is cold concrete and echoing stairwells. It is just a cold, forbidding place, and that is all there is to it. You make of it what you make of it; it does not lend anything to you. It is not an inspiring building like some of the college buildings are. There is just nothing there.

H: It is too bad, because that does make a difference.

P: I think it makes a difference in how the students dress, how they conduct themselves going to law school, and everything else. It is really a shame.

H: It is. I also hate how they litter the place.

P: It is horrible.

H: It is. I am always shocked at it. It is against the law! It is awful. If the building were different, they might have more respect.

P: It lends itself to that "who cares" attitude. It is sort of like a men's locker room or something. All you need to clean the place is take a huge hose and just hose it down about once every six months. It is just not a warm place.

H: Unfortunate but true.

P: But the students were very nice to know. I did not have any problem with that.

H: What were their motives then for going to school? What were their intentions?

P: I have to really think back on that one.

H: I am just asking in general.

P: Yes, I know what you mean: did they want to be good lawyers, do good for the world, make money, or what?

H: Yes, right.

P: This sounds like a cop out, but thinking back to people I knew, there were people of all motives. I remember several there that were public-spirit minded. I remember those that, it was clear to me, were definitely going to be criminal lawyers and others who were very serious about wanting to be good trial lawyers. I wanted to be a trial lawyer – I figured that out around the middle of my second

year – so I kind of concentrated on the people who felt the same way I did. There were several at the University of Florida who wanted to be good trial lawyers.

But I must say that a lot of it was that law school is just something you have to go through so you could get out and practice law. I am sure it is the same way today. You think this way when you are a student. I am not saying it is right or wrong, but it is just something that students do. It was not meaningful or relevant, to use words that were popular at the time. Why sit through a class on torts if you never wanted to do civil law? Why sit through two quarters of contracts if you never wanted to pick up a contract in your life? Plus, it never made a lot of sense – and it still does not make sense – for students to study cases that did not have anything to do with Florida law. Most University of Florida graduates are going to be lawyers in the state of Florida, so why are we going through all this? Why not just study what the law is in Florida? There was always a lot of talk about how irrelevant law school was. Number two, back then there were not any practice-type classes as there are today.

H: I was going to ask you about that.

P: The only thing that there really was was a trial practice course taught by Professor [Hayford O.] Enwall. I think I had him one of the last terms he taught that course. It was similar to but different from the trial practice and the trial advocacy courses that we have today.

H: I was going to ask you about that, too.

P: It was completely different from what they have today. Of course, the classes were such that you could have experience as a legal aid, a public defender, or that sort of thing. But people did not take as much advantage of that back then as they do today.

H: Did you?

P: I did not because I had decided early on, contrary to what most of my friends thought, that there was a reason that the law school curriculum was patterned the way it was. Even though I may not be able to recognize every aspect, it made sense to go with that. I figured I should get as much of that sort of training as I could in law school with practical stuff afterwards, except for trial practice course because I wanted to be a trial lawyer. That was really great. I do not think it has really changed that much.

H: How many women were in your class?

P: There were more than just a few. It seems to me that by that time about a third

of the class was women. I am sure the law school records would reflect that exact number. But by that time it was sort of a given that women could go to law school if they wanted. It was no longer such an unusual thing to find women in law school. By then there was a generation where men had been to college with women and had become accustomed to the idea. I never really sensed any joking, and I never felt any difference in treatment because I was a woman.

H: The atmosphere was the same.

P: I think it was. There were the usual jokes and such, but I am not really sensitive about things like that, so you probably should take some of what I say with a true grain of salt. I believe in equal rights and all that kind of stuff, but I do not get upset about certain things. The first time a judge's secretary ever met me she thought I was a secretary. I do not get upset about things like that. How is she supposed to know? So I am not very defensive about it. A lot of times I do not notice it as much.

H: How big was your class?

P: You know, I do not remember, really. It seems to me that on graduation there were about 155. That is another thing about being a transfer student: you really do not get a sense of how big your class is. Plus, when you say "class," that includes people who come in September and January. I just never really had a good hold on the class size until graduation.

H: What were the classes like? Discussions? Guest lectures? Did you ever go on field trips or anything like that?

P: We never went on a field trip that I can recall, which is another difference between Florida and FSU. At FSU we went to the Supreme Court, but that was because it was available.

H: But they could still do it.

P: There is no reason why they could not; they just do not. I think at Florida they have some of the justices come over and speak to the class, but that is different from being right there. As I recall, it depended on the professor, but for the most part it was just lecture, with questions. I do not remember very many guest lecturers at Florida.

H: We talked a little bit about curriculum. What classes stand out in your mind?

P: I get the impression that the curriculum now is basically the same as when I was there. That is the impression I get from talking to today's students. In our first

year we had the typical contracts, torts, civil procedure, Constitutional law, and property. Then in the second year you had estates and trusts, corporations, corporate finance, tax I and II, corporate tax, business organizations, what I think they now call creditor/debtor relations or something like that, and evidence. Of course, I took the trial advocacy course, it was called practice court. For the most part I took the substantial courses.

H: Does anyone in particular stand out whom you enjoyed the most?

P: I think Dean [Jeffrey] Lewis, who was not the yet the dean back then, stands out, and [Winton E.] "Skip" Williams, too. I will say Jeff Lewis because I had Evidence I from a professor whose name I cannot remember right now – he was an older man who was there just a short time – and I did not consider it as one of the high points in my law school career. I did not like the way it was taught. I then took Evidence II the next semester from Jeff Lewis, and I also went to his Evidence I class. So I took Evidence I twice, but the second time was just on my own and not for a grade. It was a whole different experience, and it was really more of what I wanted the class to be like. Of course, I had to talk to him awhile to get permission to do that. As you probably know, he is a very warm person. Even back then I knew that there was a future for him, if not at this law school, then somewhere else. His relationship with students and his leadership ability are excellent.

H: I was going to ask you about professors who stood out in your mind.

P: I only had Dean Lewis for one class, really, even though I went to two of his classes. I felt Professor [Winton Edward] Williams was very good. I am grateful that he made something much easier that I thought was going to be very difficult. He is also a warm person. I am not going to mention any of the first-year professors because I was not here for the first year. I thought the tax program was excellent. Even though I never wanted to go into tax, I did take three tax courses.

H: Why so many?

P: I thought it was an area I should at least learn something about so I would not be totally ignorant. Now that I have been out of law school for thirteen or fourteen years, I am still totally ignorant about tax. The rules keep changing. But those are two professors, I think, who come immediately to mind.

H: You said you worked weekends. Did you work during the week at all?

P: No, I did not work Monday through Thursday. I worked weekends and the holidays, and summer breaks.

H: And you alternated those weekends in between to go to Jacksonville. Where did you live?

P: First I shared an apartment with a woman who was not a law student. That did not work out well, so after about two months I rented a room from a woman who lived quite close to the law school and was a nurse at Alachua General. That worked out very nicely, and that is where I stayed the rest of the time. It was inexpensive, comfortable, pleasant, and close to the law school.

H: And you did all of your studying during the week. Did you have time for any extracurricular activities?

P: The only thing I ever really did extra besides working and going to school was running. I started jogging when I was at FSU. That was before we had special shoes or matching clothes for running. I continued that in law school at Florida. Two people who became friends of mine at the law school used to go jogging with me. We used to go jogging through some of the trails.

H: How many miles did you jog?

P: I tried to go at least three miles, and we would try to go three or four times a week. It was good, because when you are working and studying you need that release. That was very good. I really did not have much of a social life at all except when I would come to Jacksonville to see Phil.

H: When did you guys get married?

P: We were married after I started work. I started work at the Bedell firm [Bedell, Dittman, DeVault & Pillans] here in Jacksonville in January of 1976, and we were married that April.

H: Back to law school now. Did you participate in any moot court trial team or anything of that sort?

P: No, I did not. At FSU I qualified, because of my grades, for Law Review. But then when I transferred to Florida that got all messed up and was very difficult to figure out, so I just decided to forget it since I was working anyway. I am not sure if they had trial teams then.

H: Maybe not then. Trial teams are not that old – maybe five years old.

P: It was either Law Review or moot court, and that was about it. Now there is a lot more that you can do. At any rate, I had decided I had enough to do, and I wanted to get good grades.

H: That makes sense. Now, the Vietnam war was finishing then. Was there much activism on the part of the students? Did you notice any?

P: I do not remember that. I remember that earlier. My memories are more of when the Vietnam war started, because – if you can believe this – I almost joined the air force as a nurse to go to Vietnam. Thank God I did not do that. I probably would be dead today. But I almost did it after nursing school. Then I remember at Miami-Dade I was surrounded by all of these young men and women who were seventeen to nineteen years of age, and I remember when the draft lottery was started. I remember one of the young men in our class, who was about nineteen at the most, was number two in the lottery. I am sure he is dead today. I also had friends in nursing school who were dating guys that went to Vietnam, some of whom were killed and some of whom were terribly wounded. That is what I remember of Vietnam the most.

H: But you do not remember it at the law school?

P: By the time I got to law school it was pretty much over.

H: Were there any vets going to law school?

P: A couple – not very many at all.

H: Do you remember Dean [Joseph R.] Julin? He was dean when you were there.

P: I do not think I had much to do with Dean Julin. I remember him more after I got out of law school. I knew more of the dean and assistant deans at FSU. I really did not have much to do with the administration when I was at Florida.

H: Was the law school supportive? Did you have a faculty advisor?

P: No. I do not remember anybody having a faculty advisor.

H: Was there any kind of support at all?

P: No, you were really just on your own. That was part of what I was describing as the less-warm environment than we had at FSU. You were really just on your own here. That was my impression of that. No one ever offered me a faculty advisor or anything like that.

H: There was nobody to help make decisions about employment, even later on?

P: No.

H: They do have a career planning center now.

P: It is much more organized than when I was there. I did my own resume. I really did not approach anyone for help, either. That might have been just because of my own independent attitude and being an older student. It is possible, but I do not recall being interested in having anybody help me or being approached by anybody to help me with counseling.

H: What was commencement like?

P: This is typical for all the law graduates. I do not remember who our commencement speaker was.

H: We will scratch that question, then.

P: It was a wonderful day, I will tell you that--just to be done with the whole thing! [laughter] My parents came up from Miami.

H: Did any of your sisters or brothers come?

P: I do not think so. I do not remember. My brother was in Gainesville at the time, so he probably came. But I just remember this feeling of relief and happiness.

H: Was commencement held at the law school?

P: Yes, outside.

H: Looking back, what did you get out of law school?

P: You probably mean other than preparation for law practice?

H: Yes. Did it prepare you for your first job? Did it prepare you for your professional career?

P: I am trying to remember how I felt about that at the time I first got out of law school.

H: Your opinion changes.

P: Exactly, it sure does. And you forget, too, so you have to think back on how you felt at the time. I think it did. To me, the purpose of going to law school is to teach you how to think like a lawyer, how to do legal research, and about concepts of legal writing. Law school prepared me for that. I would say it did. I was never one to believe law school was supposed to teach you practical

things.

H: There are a lot of people who still feel that way.

P: I know that.

H: They feel there is too much theory and not enough practice.

P: I just think that that is not the purpose of a law school. It may be the purpose of an internship – if you should have that after law school – but that is not the purpose of the law school.

H: After law school you went to work for Bedell. You knew you wanted to do trial practice.

P: I knew I wanted to be a trial lawyer, and I knew I was coming to Jacksonville because that was where Phil was. I knew that there really was no other place where I wanted to work, but I needed a law firm. From what I had learned from Phil and talking to other lawyers – I had gotten to know Jacksonville through Phil – the Bedell firm was the place to be. So I knew that was where I wanted to go to work. I did not know at the time that they had never hired a woman before.

H: That was a question.

P: I learned that quickly. But I knew that was where I wanted to be. I interviewed with the U.S. attorney's office because I knew that would be a good way to get trial practice. But there was no question in my mind that I wanted to go to work for the Bedell firm to learn how to be a trial lawyer.

H: Why did you want to be a trial lawyer?

P: I do not know; I just did. I always thought – and still think – that trial lawyers are "real lawyers." Being an advocate for your client is being a real lawyer. I think it has something to do with my being a nurse, too, because I always felt – and this was very unusual at the time – that being a nurse was really being a patient-advocate. She was the only one who was there to speak for the patient, and I considered myself an advocate for the patient and for good patient care. Sometimes that gets you into trouble, but that is okay. So being an advocate as a lawyer just sort of became a natural step. I do a lot of medical malpractice work now, so I still feel like I am an advocate for patients. It just kind of came naturally.

H: What was it like when you started for Bedell, being the first woman they had ever hired?

P: It was very interesting. When I told Daryl Deaktor, who was my professor for securities regulation – he is not here anymore, he is now a lawyer in Miami; he left after a couple of years and went to Miami to practice – and other professors that I was going to the Bedell firm, they said they did not think I should do that. I did not understand all of that at the time. I was just so determined. It was a very old, traditional law firm. They had never hired a woman and had never seriously considered doing so. My personality, of course, made me more determined to do it. I came over to Jacksonville and interviewed with them a couple of times. I was really pleasantly surprised to receive a job offer. So I started with them.

It was really very interesting because, first of all, here in Jacksonville at that time it was very unusual for a woman to be a lawyer, and it was even much more unusual for a woman to be a trial lawyer. When I came I think there were only about two women trial lawyers. They were really older, and they did not do real trial work like we think of it today. There were very few woman partners in law firms in town. So it was still quite a new thing for a woman lawyer to be a trial lawyer.

H: Do you think that was just Jacksonville, or do you think that was Florida?

P: Well, I think to some extent it was Florida, but, as you probably know, here in the state of Florida things move slowly from the south to the north. That is fine with me, because a lot of the bad things we want to stay down in the south and not ever come up here. But a lot of the women who wanted to be trial lawyers were in Miami and Ft. Lauderdale and places like that.

Now, I must say that I have never regretted coming to Jacksonville. We have a wonderful bar [association] here; we really do. It is a great bunch of people. Once the men got used to having a woman around it was fine. I looked at it as more their problem than mine. The people at Bedell were not used to having a woman in the law library, and they were not used to having a woman in the firm meetings. They were simply high-quality people. They were not mean spirited or anything. They were just not used to that.

H: Why do you think they hired you?

P: I do not know. You will have to ask them that. I have to say that for the first several months it was a very difficult adjustment period for them and for me. Once we got over that it was a lot better. As far as the other lawyers here in town, it was a unique thing for me to be a woman trial lawyer, especially once I started trying cases. You have to remember that juries around here did not see women trial lawyers at all. All of that was very unusual. The judges were not so used to it. Something good about the lawyers here is their attitude: "If you are a good lawyer, we do not care if you are a man or a woman. Just be a good lawyer. If you are a bad lawyer, we do not care if you are a man or a woman."

That is exactly right. I have always felt that there were always some men who just had their own problems, and I have always considered that their problem and not mine. So I feel Jacksonville has been a very good place for women. As the years have gone by, now women trial lawyers are not unusual.

H: That was my next question.

P: There are many in the state attorney's office and the public defender's office. There are many in private practice as civil trial lawyers and criminal trial lawyers. There are also many women partners. So things have evolved naturally.

H: Are women held to higher standards?

P: I think so.

H: They have to work a little harder?

P: I think so, in certain areas. You have to prove yourself a little more than a man would. That is changing, too, though. One thing you have to remember if you look at all the statistics – this is going to sound like a female chauvinist pig here – many, many of the good students coming out with the highest grades are women. If you want to hire the students that are good students – the moot court students and the students with the highest grades – you have to hire women. That is just a matter of fact.

H: We excel in that area. All the way from elementary schools on up women excel.

P: The verbal skills and all of that sort of thing are higher. So if you are a law firm and you want to hire the top students, you will be hiring women.

H: Do you see a difference in the approaches that women and men trial lawyers use in the court room?

P: It is all so unique to the individual. I do not know that I would say there is a difference between men and women; there is just a difference between people. That is one thing that I always tell women as well as men lawyers: "Do not try to do it my way. Do not try to do it his way, or anybody's way. You just do it your way." Every time you try to do it someone else's way, it is fake and does not come across.

H: What do you see are the challenges facing women lawyers in the practice today?

P: I think the challenges of women are overlapping the challenges for men more and more, and vice versa. I think a big part of it is balancing home and work,

which typically is true of all professions. It is also true of men and women. On the "Today" show this morning there was a segment on parenting by men and how the time to do it would be less common in the 1990s. The debate was on how men could balance better the demands of the workplace and the family. We have always talked about that in terms of women, but now I think we are just starting to talk about it in terms of people. I think that is going to continue to be a concern for women lawyers as well as men: how to have a good family life and a good work life. Women have children. In my own case, I am now having my own first child.

H: Was it a difficult decision?

P: It is funny. I never really wanted to have children when I was younger, I guess because I was so uncertain about what I wanted. We have already been through that to some extent. But it was not until I was in my mid thirties that I thought about this. My husband became very interested in this about that time. Of course, then there are adult problems that you face when you postpone child bearing. To me, I have been through a phase of my life as a nurse and a phase of my life as a lawyer, and now I am beginning another phase of my life that is going to be a parent, and it is just wonderful. Young women lawyers ask me all the time, "Is it better to have children when you are young and just getting your career started, or is it better to get your career on track and then have children?" I do not know that any more than anyone else knows. That is an individual decision, but I think that also is a concern for women lawyers. When do I have the family I want to have? Should I worry about the effect having a family is going to have on my career? I do not know the answer to those kinds of questions. I do not know that there is an answer except for each individual. I have known people who have done it all different ways.

H: Somehow it all works out.

P: Because we make it work out, that is why! Not because it is an answer, but because we make it work out. I think another concern for women lawyers will be the changing law practice. I think law practices will change dramatically in the next ten years, as it has in the last ten years. I see more and more women go into what I will generalize as "9 to 5" corporate-type jobs as lawyers. There is less stress, and there is more time for the family and things you want to do. Even though a lot of the women are starting in with the typical pressures of law practice in a big firm, I see more and more of them leaving that environment after several years and going into more corporate-type environments--working for banks, insurance companies, and that kind of thing. That is an interesting trend. I do not know exactly what that means, but I see more women doing that.

H: Are men doing that?

P: That is what I mean; you notice it more where you want to notice it. Everybody acts as if the woman is giving up something.

H: Yes, twenty hours of work at the office.

P: What she is giving up is not such a terrible thing to give up, you see. But people generally – even women – think of that as compromise. When a man does it, you do not think about it the same way. I do not know what that means, but I do see that. As I say, the other challenge is that as more women are graduating from law school there will be changes in the practicing communities. They will be making demands for different things – child care, parental leave, those sorts of things--which are, to me, going to be healthy changes.

H: We talked a little bit about why you chose personal injury. Can you tell me a little bit more about that, and how nursing has helped you?

P: When I first started with the Bedell firm I was working in securities regulation, anti-trust, and things like that. I really did not like it. I was not doing well enough. After about six or eight months I switched over to personal injury work within that same law firm. It was like a light bulb that had gone out just suddenly came on in my head. That was exactly what I wanted to do – it was what I was suited for. Ever since then it has been just great. I really like it a lot.

It is very challenging, especially in medical malpractice field, because not only do you have to be familiar with the law, you also have to be familiar with medicine. It is intellectually very challenging. Each case is completely different.

All of the issues that we have now become so familiar with in the area of medical malpractice make it more difficult and challenging, but also more fun. Putting cases together is very exciting to me. Making the case the best you can for your client is very exciting.

As I said earlier, it just seems more important to me to help people get justice and whatever it is they are entitled to under our system than it is to work with corporations and companies. I just feel much better doing what I do for people than faceless companies. Everybody is different. That does not mean that one is better than the other. It is just what fits your personality, and this fits my personality.

H: Your nursing background certainly has helped.

P: My nursing background it makes it easier to read the records. I am already familiar with the language and the procedures. It makes it a lot easier to work if you just have a little more knowledge.

H: And catch things that other people might miss.

P: You notice things. You also have to keep reminding yourself that other people know what you know. So, especially in a trial, in presenting your case to the jury you cannot take anything for granted.

H: That would be tough. The other doctors know, and you know.

P: It is easy to take things for granted that you know, but you forget the jury does not know, so you constantly have to remind yourself this sort of thing.

H: What prompted you to branch out with Mr. [William C.] Gentry?

P: About three years ago, after both of us had been partners in commerce at the Bedell firm for quite a while – about ten years; he had been there about fifteen – we just decided we had gotten to a point where we wanted to form our own firm and concentrate more on what we were doing. We just felt like we needed a different atmosphere.

H: So you opened your own practice.

P: We started our own practice [Gentry & Phillips] approximately three years ago. We do products liability, medical malpractice, personal injury – that kind of trial work. My partner, W. C. is also branching out into some commercial litigation because he wants to do that sort of thing.

H: When you opened the practice was it what you expected?

P: Yes.

H: Is it a lot different having your own firm?

P: It is a lot different having your own firm, and I am really glad we did it. We have more direct involvement with the administration of the firm than we did at Bedell, and that has been good for both of us. But I have never regretted leaving. It was the right thing for us at the time, and I really enjoy having our own practice.

H: I know you like your work.

P: Yes, I really do.

H: What do you not like about it? Is there anything you do not like about practicing law?

P: I never like having to try a case out of town. We just finished a four-week trial at

St. Petersburg, and we lived at the Hilton in St. Pete for close to four weeks, which is not a lot of fun. So I would just as soon never have to try another case out of town. I wish that it were easier, that there were not as much travel as we have. We have a lot of out-of-town travel, especially in medical malpractice and products liability cases, because our experts are all out of town. I love to travel, but it does get old. Everybody thinks it is very exciting, but it is not. You get there, you go do what you have to do, and then come home – it is not like you get to stay there. So the traveling gets to be a drag. When you first start, it is exciting.

H: Do you travel just within the state?

P: No, it is really national, but mostly state. I do not know what else I do not like about practicing law. It is long hours, but it is not that I do not like that. It is something that is necessary. Before I became pregnant, I usually got here around eight in the morning and left around six or seven in the evening, and I usually worked Saturdays.

H: All day or half day?

P: It depends on what I have to do. I even work Sundays if it is right before a court trial. But that is just part of what goes with the deal. It is not a matter of liking it or not liking it. Plus, you have to take into account our personalities. That is probably why we work so hard, because that is just the way we are.

H: Is there any particular case, good or bad, that stands out in your mind – maybe I should just say good – that you really enjoyed working on? What were the rewards?

P: I think I would have to say that I particularly enjoy working on the medical malpractice cases. There is not any one in particular, but whichever one I am working on at the time is fun. I enjoy them because of the challenge.

H: You are representing the plaintiffs?

P: The patients and their families, right.

H: Do you get a lot of flack from physicians? There is so much going on these days in malpractice.

P: Yes, we get a lot of flack from physicians. Physicians have refused to take care of me when I was sick. And that is okay. I figure that comes with the territory.

H: Especially OB [obstetrics].

P: I have had no problem with OB. I have been going to this doctor ever since I have been in Jacksonville. He knows what I do, and it does not bother him. He is not defensive about my questions. He is the perfect doctor, so that has not been a problem. I think my partner has more unpleasant experiences than I have because of the medical malpractice work we do. That may be one of the advantages of being a woman: people will be nasty to him before they will be nasty to me.

H: That is a good advantage. [laughter]

P: It does work to my advantage sometimes, but I figure that just comes with the territory, and I understand it. I do not like it, but I understand it.

H: In addition to your practice, you are active in professional associations and at the law school. What were your experiences as president of the Jacksonville Bar Association?

P: First I was president of the Young Lawyers Section just in time – just as I was about too old for the organization. A couple of years ago I was president of the Jacksonville Bar Association, which was wonderful. I was the first woman president, and I definitely do not think I will be the last. Being president of the Jacksonville Bar Association was more work than I thought it would be, but it was something I really enjoyed.

H: Did you have any goals in mind that you wanted to accomplish when you went in?

P: Yes. One of my goals was to get away with raising the dues for the Jacksonville Bar Association. (We probably should not put this in writing.) As you can imagine, it is very difficult to raise the dues of a bar association because there is just automatic resistance. But we knew we had to do it. So I said, "Well, everybody will say, 'See what happens when you elect a woman as president? Immediately the dues go up.'" But it had to be done, and so I did that. We have a lot of activities. Just continuing the past traditions is time consuming.

H: There are a lot of meetings?

P: There are so many things the Jacksonville Bar does that no one really even knows about outside of the legal community as far as helping other people, which is a nice thing. That is true of all bar associations, not just ours. That year, also, the woman who had been our executive director for a long time decided to move to North Carolina with her husband, so we started to search for a new one. We had a lot of challenges. But it was a good year, and I really enjoyed it. I

was really glad to see the year come to an end. It is amazing. Just keeping something like that on track takes longer than you think it does.

H: Did you have to take time out from your practice?

P: Oh, yes. Both my partner and I are active on the state level with the Academy of Florida Trial Lawyers, especially W. C. He has been the president of the Academy of Florida Trial Lawyers and has been very active on the state and now the national level. Those professional activities are important to both of us, so we do those kinds of things. Of course, I have always enjoyed going back to the law school to take part in trial advocacy courses and things like that.

H: Are you still doing that?

P: Yes. I did not go recently because I was pregnant, but I have done that, and I will do it some more. You may know about the [Chester Bedell] Inns of Court.

H: I wanted to ask you about that. You are involved in that, also?

P: Yes, I was a charter member of the Inns of Court in Jacksonville. Of course, that was in conjunction with the law school.

H: Why do you think it important to interact with the students?

P: First, when you are a student at the University of Florida law school, or any law school for that matter, you do not really have very many role models. You have your professors, but they are not real lawyers, they are not in practice. If you are clerking you have some role models. But otherwise you do not really have that much opportunity to see lawyers in action or to talk to lawyers, or to socialize, unless you have grown up in a lawyer family or something like that. I think it is important for the students to learn from the beginning how good lawyers look at the practice, the significance they attribute to the ethics of the law firm, and some of the thought processes that we all go through. And I think it is important for them to be able to socialize with the lawyers and talk about opportunities and lawyers. That is what law practice is all about, to try yourself out.

H: Inns of Court meets three times a year, right?

P: Four or five.

H: You have been and still are involved in trial advocacy. Have you noticed any changes in the students over the years?

P: If I just judge it on their performance in the class in which I am involved, I see

some slow improvements every year. I think that that is a function of the better students being admitted to the law school, and then the better of those students being allowed to take part in the trial ad. courses. Then there is also the students' attitude that "this may be the only practical course I will have, and I really want to get something out of it," so they put something into it. The kids are still nervous, like they have been the whole time I have been going over there. Which is good. I always tell them, "If you are not nervous there is something wrong. You are supposed to be nervous." They still make the same mistakes they have made ever since I started going over there. That is good. That is all terribly normal to me. I see some of them – I do not think of this more in women or men; it is both – have no self-confidence and some do have self-confidence.

H: And some having too much.

P: Yes. All of that you learn; you learn as you develop. So I would say generally they are all active about the same as they always have been, and they are all appearing the same. I see subtle improvements in the intellect.

H: That has been the overall goal the last few years.

P: Sure.

H: Why did you decide to do the major gifts committee:?

P: I have just been on that for a short time. I guess Jeff Lewis asked me.

H: With his warm, open heart.

P: That is right. It is hard for me to say no to him on things like that. Who had Randy Talbot's job before he left?

H: Steve Brannon [development director, College of Law].

P: Steve Brannon and Jeff Lewis came to me one day, and I said, "I have been involved with fund raising before for the academy. We have done our legislative fund raising and that sort of thing. I have never been a major fund raiser, but if you think I can help in some way, I am happy to be involved." I have not really done anything of any substance yet, and wouldn't you know that it is just my luck that the meeting here in Jacksonville is next Tuesday, and I am going to the doctor--I am going to be having the baby right about then. But I have agreed to do what I can.

H: You are going to be busy.

- P: I will be busy for next month or two. But I felt that if they felt I could contribute in some way that I would do whatever I could.
- H: That is great, as busy as you are.
- P: Everybody is busy.
- H: So this is only one more thing.
- P: But I have learned to say no.
- H: It takes a while sometimes. You have had a lot of firsts, including being the first woman hired by Bedell. You were also the first woman partner, right?
- P: Yes.
- H: You were the first woman president of the Jacksonville Bar Association, and also of the Young Lawyers Section. How do you feel about all of these firsts?
- P: I think it was just a matter of timing, really, with my being at where I was at the particular time. I do not think there is anything special about me.
- H: Do you feel like a trailblazer?
- P: No, not really. It just seemed to come naturally, to tell you the truth. It was just a matter of "that is what I was doing at the time, and that is what came." If I had been the twentieth woman president, that would have been fine, too. I did not set out to be the first woman president of the Jacksonville Bar, or anything like that. I was just where it was when it happened. I would like to think I am a good example for other women, but I do not write that down on my list of goals. I would rather think of myself as trying to be – but many times failing – a good example for just people. I encourage men to be involved in the Jacksonville Bar as quickly as I do women. I just think everybody has to take advantage of their own experience and opportunities no matter what their sex.
- H: What do you attribute your success to?
- P: Hard work. Anyone who does not put that down as number one on their list is fooling him or herself. You really have to learn to work hard and immerse yourself in whatever it is you are trying to accomplish. As I think about it – this is a function of getting older – I think that applies to your personal life as well as your professional life. Especially if you want to have both. You have to work hard to make it go. You just have to be willing to work hard. With that you have

to have at least a little bit of native intelligence. When you look out there, there are an awful lot of lawyers who started with a little bit of native intelligence but who were willing to work hard – the two of those together got them where they are today. Some have an awful lot of intelligence but not much willingness to work hard, and they just never make it. You really have to have both of those things.

H: Stamina.

P: Stamina is a good point. Stamina that you get from knowing that you have to exercise and all that.

H: From working hard.

P: That is true. I always have said thank you to my parents for encouraging me to get an education and for setting high goals and things like that. Of course, you have to start with that. But then after that it is just up to you and your willingness to work hard.

H: It always gets down to that.

P: I think so. Do you?

H: Yes. Probably 99 percent of the cases.

P: I know you know people who may not be the smartest, but that is why I always say we want to hire people who have good grades in law school. However, I have known many lawyers who did not do well in law school but who really had that drive and ambition, that willingness to work hard, and that makes up for an awful lot.

H: Sometimes I think the students are so concerned about their grades –

P: Which they have to be to some extent to get a good first job.

H: Right, but not to be obsessive.

P: But you cannot tell that to students. You know that.

H: We talked about women having children and the challenges there. Have you continued to work full-time during your pregnancy?

P: Yes, I have. Thank the good Lord, I have been very healthy in this pregnancy. I was concerned because I am an older person. But, thank goodness, I have felt

really good. I have no real problems. I had a lot of energy until this last couple of weeks. It has only been in the last two weeks that I have started coming in at nine and leaving about four. The baby is going to be born next week. When I was about six months pregnant – from the beginning of February to the beginning of March – is when we were in St. Petersburg for that four-week trial. Thank God I felt really good the whole time and was able to do everything.

H: That is a good period, though.

P: It was perfect timing.

H: You have good timing.

P: I did not have control over that, but it worked out to be perfect timing. There is no way I could do that now.

H: In the first half you are sleepy all the time.

P: I was very tired.

H: And in that middle section you really perk up.

P: You feel really good. I have not been sick at all, so that makes a big difference. If I had been ill, as many women are, I could not have done what I have done.

H: How have you been received by the judges?

P: As a pregnant woman?

H: As a pregnant woman/trial lawyer?

P: Well, I have known them all for a long time, and they knew I had a miscarriage about two years ago; everybody knew about that. They have known how much this meant to me, and they are all very positive and very excited about it. It does not bother me a bit to let somebody else carry the heavy things. That is fine with me! That would be fine with me if I were not pregnant. Everybody has been very positive about it. When I have said to people, "Listen. I want to set this deposition, but I do not really want to get a date until about two months from now when I am back to work," and they have said no problem.

That is another advantage for having such a good trial bar. We all have worked together very well. It really has been no problem. I have had wonderful support from my partner, who obviously is going to have to pick up a good part of the load while I am gone. He is worried about it, but he is happy and willing to do it.

H: You said you are going to take about two or three months off, and then come back?

P: I will probably work a little part-time and then come back. I live only about two miles from here, so I will be able to do some work on the telephone and in my house.

H: Then when you come back will you be part-time or full-time?

P: Full-time.

H: Will you get a nanny?

P: Yes. If you know of one, let me know.

H: Good luck. That is tough. No matter which way you go it is hard. Where is your husband practicing?

P: My husband is a graduate of the FSU law school. He quit practicing around five years ago and has become a real estate developer. He has commercial projects out on Phillips Highway.

H: Is that his road? [laughter]

P: No, it is not named after me. He has commercial projects here in Jacksonville, Tallahassee, and Pensacola. He owns a bicycle company that distributes bicycles and various parts.

H: What kind of bicycles?

P: Beach cruisers. Mountain Bikes.

H: My husband is a real cycle nut.

P: Phil does not do the cycle-nut bikes, the lean-over ten-speeds that go fast. He does the more sit-upright mountain bikes, all-terrain bikes, beach cruisers, and things like that--bikes that people like you and I would ride.

H: Is your husband going to be able to help out with the baby?

P: Oh, he will be able to, and he cannot wait to do so. He is so excited about this. This is not my father's (my mother is dead) first grandchild, but it is my husband's parents' first grandchild. They are seventy and seventy-three. So you can

imagine how excited they are. We are naming the baby after my husband's grandfather, who is 96, since it is a boy. It is a very exciting and happy time. He is already talking about how he will not go to the office early (which he does not do anyway) and will come home for lunch every day. He wants to help. He is really excited about it.

H: He has it all planned out. Have I missed anything?

P: I should probably tell you that I am also a trustee of the Jessie Ball DuPont fund. I should bring this up because the University of Florida is an eligible institution. Here is our most recent annual report, which will give you more information about it, instead of talking about it. Several years ago I became a member of the board of trustees of the Jessie Ball DuPont fund. Mrs. DuPont was the wife of Alfred I. DuPont. While she was alive, theirs was the wealthiest family in Florida. In her will she left a lot of money to set up this fund. There are four of us acting as trustees.

H: The funds are grants to institutions?

P: In her will she named several eligible institutions. The other eligible institutions are institutions to whom she gave money during a five-year period from 1960 to 1964. There are educational institutions, churches, cultural institutions, religious oriented charities. There are about 350 of them. The interesting thing about this fund is that grants can be made only to those eligible institutions.

H: And they could be public institutions?

P: Yes, any institutions to which she gave money during that time period. The University of Florida is an eligible institution, and we have given grants to the University of Florida. But do not make a big deal of that because I do not want everybody to think I have favoritism.

H: Right. I hear they need money for the new museum. [laughter]

P: [Inaudible] foundation office.

H: I will not send them this.

P: They already have it. They are quite aware of all of that. I am also involved in that, which is a wonderful thing.

H: So you help make the decisions?

P: Yes, as one of the trustees. We receive grant proposals. We have staff to

work on the proposals, and then the trustees decide which proposals to accept.

H: That must be a lot of work.

P: It is, but it is something completely different from anything else I do in my life. It is very interesting.

H: How many proposals do you get in a year?

P: Many, many, many, many –

H: I can imagine.

P: I have learned more about things I never would have learned about otherwise, and that is really beneficial. I do not know if you noticed that over there. In 1986 I was the EVE award winner in the employment category. Did you know about that?

H: I know about that, yes. What does it mean?

P: Right now they are taking nominations for this year's winners. They call it EVE because E is employment, V is volunteer, and the other E is education. Five nominees in each of those three categories are taken, and each year a winner out of the five nominees in each category is selected.

H: Why are you a winner? Because you are successful in your area?

P: In employment, not in volunteer or education. You have to be nominated. There is a long nomination form. I did not nominate myself – somebody nominates you. Then at the luncheon they announce the winners and why they are the winners and all that sort of thing. I remembered yesterday that I forgot I had not sent you a copy of that article. That was very exciting. Here is one I wrote. Here are the colors we will decorate our offices with.

H: My colors.

P: I am not a real traditional oriented person. W. C. is, but I am not. I am more modern.

H: You have that kind of a mix. It is really nice.

P: This year, just a few months ago, I was the boss of the year for the Jacksonville Legal Secretaries Association.

H: How wonderful!

P: That is a big thing to me, because I think legal secretaries are so important for what we do.

H: You have to be something for them to vote you boss of the year.

P: They have always had a fond place in my heart.

H: That was this year?

P: Yes, just a few months ago. I go and speak to their association from time to time. Then I got to be the one in charge of the investiture of the new officers about two weeks ago. It was just a nice thing.

H: Are there any other awards?

P: No, there is nothing else to say. I bet you are glad to hear that.

H: Is there anything to say about the profession or anything else you can think of?

P: I should say something about the profession. I think lawyers are very important to our society, and I think we are going through a bad time now with the public perception about what we do. People do not understand how a lawyer can defend a person who is obviously guilty of a crime of which he has been charged. They do not understand how a lawyer can defend someone like that, a bad person. To a lawyer, it is just a given that, of course, you are entitled to a constitutional defense. Lawyers understand these things; lay people do not. It is very difficult to explain to lay people. That is one thing law school does for you.

H: It teaches you how to think.

P: It helps you understand that, of course you defend this person, even if you know he did it. There is no question in your mind that that is what you should do. I think it is for students, as well for practicing lawyers, to take the responsibility for helping the public understand what it is we do and why.

H: How do you think that can be done?

P: I think that as far as the students are concerned, they need to have a good understanding of the history of the law and a history of the Constitution: why we have the traditions in the law that we have, and why we have Constitutional protections for criminals as well as innocent people. Then they must be willing to go out into their communities among their friends and explain these things to

them without any fear of being embarrassed about it. They should feel proud of it, because our whole country was built on the Constitution. They should be willing to go out into the community to civic organizations and religious meetings – any time there is a group of people gathered together – and talk about why they are proud to be lawyers and what they do so that people can better understand what they do and why.

H: That would be one of the best ways, I would think. I know that the bar had that media blitz, and they seem to think that that helped, but they are not going to do it again.

P: You see, it has to be ongoing and continuous.

H: We will do that for four months.

P: People forget too easily. It really has to be up to the individual lawyers to care enough about what they do to talk to people and explain what they do and why they are doing it. They have to become knowledgeable of the issues of the day and be ready to explain them. They do not always have to agree with what is going on, but they have to be ready to explain. How else can people get information? We certainly cannot depend on the television.

H: Have you been able to go around and speak to community groups?

P: Oh, yes. We have the speakers bureau within the Academy of Florida Trial Lawyers, and especially when I was president of the Jacksonville Bar I got a lot of invitations to speak, and I still do several times a year. That is one of my favorite things. I think it is so important, and it is the best way for people to understand what we do. I am also a member of the Jacksonville Women's Network committee, and there is not too much of that in this state. It is a group of woman leaders. Then there are professional and volunteer areas, and that is made up of a number of lawyers and people from different groups. That is a good way to meet other women who are in positions of leadership and talk about the common problems and look for solutions.

H: I think Gainesville has a network.

P: I think we were one of the first, but I am not sure. Now they are starting to expand.

H: Are we done?

P: I hope so, for your sake.

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H: I hope I have not exhausted you.

P: No.

[End of the interview]