

ABA Commission on Women in the Profession

Women Trailblazers in the Law

ORAL HISTORY

of

SHIRLEY ADELSON SIEGEL

Interviewer: Joan F. Krey

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SECOND INTERVIEW

5/19/06

Ms. Krey: ABA Women's Pioneers Project. And I'm interviewing Shirley Adelson Siegel. We left off when you were getting ready to go to Barnard. What year was that and why did you choose Barnard?

Ms. Siegel: It was in 1933 and Barnard was a logical choice, these were still the depression years; my family didn't have the money to send me away. That wasn't even considered. And my sister had been to Barnard. She had done well and it was really an optimum experience for her. So there were no alternatives that we even considered. Barnard accepted me and gave me a scholarship and then I continued there for four happy years.

Ms. Krey: Did most of the students have scholarships?

Ms. Siegel: No, I think the scholarships were not as common as they are today. There was not that much financial aid. Barnard knew my family's circumstances from Dorothy's having gone in ahead of me. I don't recall there was any wrangle about it. I do recall that I was a little peeved when the last year they converted part of it to a loan. I guess the college was having financial difficulties. I remember that.

Ms. Krey: So you said to me that perhaps the fact that it was an all girls college encouraged you to think about achievements versus marriage and staying home?

Ms. Siegel: Well I was still quite young, and I wasn't even dating when I entered college. So I would not be thinking of marriage. I was just turned 15 and I was also shy, socially. I was one of three daughters. There were no sons at home, and I threw

myself into my work with great enthusiasm. My sister Dorothy had made herself a very good record in the classics. In Latin and Greek. I was headed towards a law career, and I was going to major in Government.

Ms. Krey: Now at this stage had you yet met any lawyers? Did you know anything more about the legal field?

Ms. Siegel: No, I did not.

Ms. Krey: So did you have to tell an advisor that you wanted to be pre-law or was that something that you kept to yourself?

Ms. Siegel: If anybody wanted to know, I was frank about it, and they had a pre-law society at Barnard and I joined. And, at some point in the course of my college career, the possibility of doing three years at Barnard, entering Columbia Law School and getting the BA degree after one year of law school opened up, and some others did take the option. I wasn't interested in doing that. I was still so young, and I wasn't interested in saving any more years, of which I had done a lot in my younger life.

Ms. Krey: So there's a pre-law society?

Ms. Siegel: Yes, but I don't recall whether it was already there when I entered. And it was never a large group. It was maybe a half dozen members.

Ms. Krey: Was there a sense -- it was the depression -- Was there a sense that law might be needed for social change? Was that ever on your mind as to why the other girls wanted to do it?

Ms. Siegel: I don't know why the other girls wanted to do it. None of my closest friends were considering a law career. They were headed off in other directions -- more

literary. Or my friends in the Government major were thinking of getting into some sort of a public job. Of course, this was the New Deal days. And I too felt vaguely about that. But what came along in my experience, which was very, very significant for me, was that, I think in my junior year, this must have been about 1936, the Federal Government had developed a New Deal program known as the NYA Program (National Youth Administration), where you could earn 50 cents an hour, up to 20 hours a week and nonprofit organizations could apply to have interns put up with them. A newly formed organization called the New York Legislative Service, which had been set up by the Citizen's Union and the National Municipal League, applied for NYA workers. I was fortunate to land in that agency. It made an enormous change in my life. The head of the agency, Elizabeth Scott, put each one of us in charge of a different subject area on which we would become knowledgeable, in preparation for the legislative session, so that the subscribers, during the legislative session which began in January, could be kept informed of the progress of the bills important to them. What important programs were coming in, what was their status and so on. And I was interested in the public programs generally, but I had not focused on housing. At the NY Legislative Service I was made the one responsible for the field of housing, which meant that I immediately could introduce myself to people in New York City who were active in this field. That's how I met Charles Abrams, who was then Counsel to Langdon Post, who was head of the New York City Housing Authority. And I met Ira Robbins, who was very active as a housing lawyer and who introduced me to basic constitutional issues affecting housing. The State was

readying for a state constitutional convention in 1938. Ultimately, that convention adopted the first article of the State Constitution devoted solely to housing. And I learned about all of this because I had to school myself intensively in this field. I became a very enthusiastic supporter of housing programs, and I then modified my career objectives accordingly. I was going to be a lawyer, but I was going to pursue my interests in slum clearance, public housing, and housing related subjects, such as planning. I would use my legal education as a solid base for doing effective work in the field, because, as a lawyer, I would be able to write legislation and pursue those constitutional issues that Ira Robbins was trying to teach me about.

Ms. Krey: Tell me more about who was Ira Robbins.

Ms. Siegel: Ira Robbins, R-O-B-B-I-N-S. He was a practicing lawyer. But he was very interested in what was going to happen at this Constitutional Convention. I can't remember what was his affiliation. He was one of the persons who were pursuing different approaches to housing issues, that's why I had to look him up. I developed contacts with many wonderful people through this NYA job. These friendships continued over decades.

Ms. Krey: How many hours a week would you do . . . ?

Ms. Siegel: 20 hours a week.

Ms. Krey: Did you get course credit?

Ms. Siegel: No, not that I recall.

Ms. Krey: So did you go somewhere else to do the work, or did they give it to you?

Ms. Siegel: They had an office in the West 30s I think. Unless I had an outside appointment for field research, I went to their office. I would spend a few hours there at a time, I would make calls, and I would also write up summaries of bills. We had to write portions of the bulletin that related to our subject for distribution to subscribers.

Ms. Krey: Who was running the office?

Ms. Siegel: Elizabeth Scott. It was a non-profit organization. It still exists. An invaluable organization. That was formed about 1936 when I started there. Good government type of organization to facilitate a familiarity with state bills and open the whole legislative process for the benefit of citizens and organizations that were interested in public issues. Now there was already a service that was available, and it continues to be available, which is something that corporations could afford, The Legislative Index, but it didn't do this kind of hand holding service that the New York Legislative Service provided.

Ms. Krey: So you did that 20 hours a week and --

Ms. Siegel: Well I had other interests at college too -- Within the field of government, I was interested in Foreign Affairs because of problems brewing in Europe. We were heading towards World War. And I became the President of the International Relations Club. In that capacity, when the so-called Model Leagues of Nations were held that involved all the colleges within a region, we were, I guess, the mid-Atlantic region, I was the chief of the Barnard Delegation. None of this was for course credit. And there was one particular conference where Barnard a was sensation; we represented Great Britain and we walked off with all the honors.

And of course, as I was the Chief of the Delegation, it was quite a memorable experience for me.

Ms. Krey: Where would the proceedings take place.

Ms. Siegel: On different campuses.

Ms. Krey: As a competition?

Ms. Siegel: Yes. I think that the one where we represented Great Britain was at Syracuse University. Of course, the Barnard Group was all women. There were all men's colleges who also participated in this, and, in fact, all of the colleges of any standing whatsoever were coming to these Model Leagues of Nations. It was very provocative, it was very exciting. It was an opportunity to participate in European events. As if we were the diplomats sitting at the table. I also was President of the Menorah Society of Jewish students. M - E - N - O - R - A - H. As Chair, I arranged a series of meetings. Lionel Trilling was a speaker at one meeting -- once a month there would be a speaker. And once or twice a year there was a dance in which the corresponding organization at Columbia College participated.

Ms. Krey: So when did you apply to law school while you were in college?

Ms. Siegel: The only law schools that I seriously thought about were Columbia and Yale. Harvard was not yet admitting women. And I didn't -- I did not consider NYU. I don't think that I was conscious of it. Of course, Columbia was right there, and I don't know why I thought of Yale. Maybe because I had a cousin who was applying at Yale. I'm not sure. Anyway, one of my professors in Government was Raymond Moley, M - O - L - E - Y, who was then very close to President

Roosevelt and the New Deal. His name was in the newspapers, but he was still head of the Government Department at Barnard and was teaching. That was my major. And Raymond Moley, as the end of the college years approached, assuming that I would be admitted to Columbia Law School -- said that if I would, while I attended Columbia Law School, work for him one afternoon a week to assist him in his office, he would pay my tuition. And of course I would live at home. So that was very tempting. And --

Ms. Krey: You must have impressed him?

Ms. Siegel: Well, alright. I was a very enthusiastic student. And a hard worker.

Ms. Siegel: And I was Phi Beta Kappa. And now I must tell you about the Student International Fellowship. For some years, there was a tradition at Barnard, before World War II, that the students, during the year, would drop money into a bucket at Jake in the main lobby at Barnard Hall. I think "Jake" stood for Jacob Riis, a benefactor. So, all year long, the students just dropped in their money by nickels and dimes to add up to something that would send a Barnard girl abroad for a year. For at that time few European fellowships were available. Fulbrights didn't exist, and to get a fellowship that would take you abroad was something quite special. A committee consisting of representatives of the Dean, and the Student Council, and I think the faculty would nominate three or four girls in the Senior Class whose names would be put before the student body for election. All four classes voted on who should be the student fellow for the following year. The nominees campaigned through interviews printed in the Barnard Bulletin. And each one of the four nominated in my year said what she would like to do if elected. I had

made a commitment in my mind to pursue my interest in housing, and so I said that if I were to win, I would go to the London School of Economics ("LSE") and study housing and planning in Great Britain because we were just, in this country, beginning to take little steps to do something about our housing problems, and Europe was way ahead of us. I would study at LSE because I had been reading books by Harold Laski a member of that faculty as part of my Government major. Well, I won handily. That meant that I wasn't going to law school the next year. It meant that I was going to London.

Ms. Krey: Well, tell, just a few minutes about that -- that's not just getting on a plane, I assume. I assume that was a big thing?

Ms. Siegel: It was a very big thing because my family could not have afforded my going. I couldn't have gone to Europe. It was out of the question. So having the opportunity to go to Europe was extraordinary. And I appreciated it. I worked very hard, and I had a wonderful, wonderful year.

Ms. Krey: Did you apply or did the school take care of _____?

Ms. Siegel: Dean Gildersleeve wrote a letter to the London School of Economics. Yes. Her letter was all it took.

Ms. Krey: And then somebody had to take care of getting you on a boat and getting you enrolled. How did that all [inaudible] happen?

Ms. Siegel: Well, the money that was raised by the students was all on deposit in a special account in the bank on Broadway near the college. It was made available to me, totalling about \$1100. And it was enough money to pay for my crossing by boat, there and back, and to pay tuition and all my living expenses.

Ms. Siegel: That was then the value of the dollar. The money paid for a year and a day because when the school year was over in the end of June, I stayed over the summer in order to study housing in Sweden.

Ms. Krey: Your family came to see you off?

Ms. Siegel: No so much my family as my Barnard friends.

Ms. Krey: How did your family feel about you going _____?

Ms. Siegel: Well, that is very interesting. My sister Bernice said to me years later that she could never get over the fact that our mother was willing to let me go. I was the baby of the family and we were quite protected. I was now 18 going on 19.

Ms. Krey: Had to get a passport?

Ms. Siegel: I did whatever I had to do. I don't remember that anyone did it for me. Well, after all I had been educated at a first class institution. I should be able to handle it. I handled it. I went on a boat. Oh. I myself had no concern about going over alone. Knowing nobody in Europe. Not a single person there, and it didn't faze me at all.

Ms. Krey: But also, really your college years you had this opportunity with the New York Legislative Services, this must have given you confidence. You went down to 30th Street, you worked with adults -- it would build a lot of confidence.

Ms. Siegel: It must have. Once I got to London, I got sort of scared. I was cold, and if I came late, I didn't get dinner at the place where I signed up. I mean, I had to find my own accommodations, I went to a place in --

Ms. Krey: So you got off the boat -- just for those first few days, that's an interesting story.

Ms. Siegel: Well, I just made my way to the University after I went to the college. I needed housing. They recommended places in that area, the Bloomsbury area. I secured a place on Torrington Square. One of those nice old squares with multiple dwellings all around which were actually -- I don't know what they had been originally -- but they were like little rabbit warrens.

Ms. Krey: They call them bed sits.

Ms. Siegel: Something like that. It was only one small room. One room, common baths, not substandard really, just European. You went down to the lobby for your meals. I never expected I was going to do any of my own cooking. I didn't know how to cook. And it was cold and a little lonely, I think, until the year really got underway. The room in Torrington Square wasn't heated. And then you had to heat your hot water for your bath. I studied with gloves and a coat on, in the school library. Well, all the other students were doing it, but they were mostly English. There were people also who were from the Dominions.

Ms. Siegel: And from India. Particularly, there was a certain affinity among the Canadians, Australians, South Africans, Americans -- we were a group apart. We were different from the English students.

Ms. Krey: Talk about the courses you were taking. Did you go to school everyday? Was the system different? In other words, what was your week like?

Ms. Siegel: Because I was going for only one year, I would not be eligible for a degree. There was a two-year minimum requirement for a Masters Degree. What I got at the end of the year was a formal certificate from the London School of Economics, which said that I had been in attendance at the following classes. It was a list of

16. I worked very hard; I went to a lot of classes. I didn't do a lot of work for all of these, but I attended them religiously. I went to school every day. The fall season I didn't have to travel far. But around the first of the year, after the Christmas holiday, I moved out of Bloomsbury. Partly to keep warm. I moved into lodgings I found again through the University. On a nice street, Abingdon Villas, in a house that was owned by an Englishwoman who took in several young people as boarders. I was the only guest for whom English was my first language; Mrs. Jones had sought an English speaking student and rewarded me with a nice room, although small, at a rent I could afford. We had meals at her dining room table with her family. That's how I lived for the rest of the year. It was very pleasant, very warm, very comfortable. Then, of course, I had to travel by subway to class. The tube. I had to figure my time more carefully. Meanwhile, in the course of the year, I had become very much involved in studies of housing and planning in England which were developed in conjunction with my classes. For example, I had a class with a Professor Herman Mannheim, a refugee scholar from Germany, who was a criminologist, for whom, I did a study on juvenile delinquency and housing.

Ms. Krey: In what sense?

Ms. Siegel: How better housing would cut down on juvenile delinquency was the general theme. For this study I got in touch with local governments all over England. I was always doing surveys. I don't recall for whose class I did a survey of the local authorities throughout England and Wales on the subject of differential renting, which I found fascinating -- the fact that the rents in these public housing

estates depended on how much money the tenant had. If really poor he didn't pay any rent at all.

Ms. Krey: Because compared to the United States, just explain why you were--

Ms. Siegel: I was not aware of our having any program like that in this country. I was not intimately familiar with the public housing program in this country when I went abroad, but in any case it was brand new, dating only from the New Deal. And it was quickly taken over by the war housing program. So it was a short-lived public housing program as such and there was practically no experience here in managing such units. In New York I had learned of the interest here in the Housing Management Plan developed by an English woman, Octavia Hill, and considered a model at the very new public housing projects in New York such as First Houses. I had met the manager of First Houses. I recall now that having been introduced to her and other public housing managers through the New York Legislative Service, I was asked if I would volunteer to be secretary for a committee of housing managers who wanted to explore housing management policies. And so I took the minutes and learned a lot through doing so. I recently deposited my set of minutes of this group, which was a committee of what was then called the Welfare Council and is now called the Community Service Society, with the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives of the City University of New York, housed in LaGuardia Community College. **[END OF SIDE A]**

Ms. Siegel: While in England I attended several housing conferences in different parts of the country. As a student who was interested in these things. I bothered people with

questionnaires and questions and got up a lot of little card files. Acting like a good college student.

Ms. Krey: Did you write back?

Ms. Siegel: I particularly wrote back to Barnard. Because I was the Barnard International Fellow for that year, the Barnard Bulletin frequently carried a letter from Shirley Adelson. I also wrote letters to Dean Gildersleeve, who politely acknowledged them. I gave them my views on what it was like to be a student in London, what living was like there, because in those days people didn't travel so much. And how their university system was different from ours here, and I told them about my various trips and my contacts in housing and what I was doing. And how during school vacation, five weeks at Christmas and five weeks in the Spring, I immediately left England and went to the continent. I may also have stated in these letters that it was cheaper to live on the continent even after paying your fare than to stay in England. I wrote how in Paris and the low countries with letters of introduction from England I saw housing estates and I took elaborate notes.

Ms. Krey: So besides you writing to Barnard, did you also write to Mr. Abrams and Mr. Robbins or did you wait until you get back?

Ms. Siegel: I don't recall. However, towards the end of the LSE year, at some point Harold Buttenheim, who was an important figure in New York City in housing, got in touch with me. I don't recall whether I had met him before I went to London, I probably did. But he was aware of me in any event because my sister Bernice happened to work for his publishing house. And she had mentioned to him that I

was interested in housing and was going to London. And so, as my year in London was coming to an end, I heard from Mr. Buttenheim, who offered me a job. Harold Buttenheim, B-U-T-T-E-N-H-E-I-M. He had just founded the Citizens Housing Council of New York. That was founded in 1937. Its name is now the Citizens Housing and Planning Council. Harold Buttenheim was the President and brought into it other leading figures, a few of whom I knew. And he wrote and offered me a job and as he was a person in a key position in the housing community, my career would be assured. He said he would like me to come back after I finished my year in London and work for him.

Then another thing that was going on was that in the course of my meeting people in housing in England, I met some wonderful women. I always thought of them as the women of the generation whose men had been killed in World War I. These women were very active in the public life of the community. I'd like to include here the name of such a woman who was so important to me. Elizabeth Denby. D-E-N-B-Y. She had just put out a book called "Europe Rehoused," in which she discussed the housing programs in Europe, and I had the opportunity to meet her through these meetings that I attended. I may have met her at the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association, where I was well acquainted (which offered me job if I'd stay in London).

Elizabeth Denby persuaded me that I was really missing out on the best housing policies if I did not go to the Scandinavian countries. And so she arranged it. She said rather than go home in June could I extend my stay. And I did have enough money. I'd been living so frugally. She offered to be in touch

with the American Embassy in Stockholm and have me interned to a big Swedish housing society in Stockholm, in the summer before I returned to New York. So I accepted her offer and I did that. I was with them for a month. But I must tell you now about Harold Laski, because that's very important. Harold Laski's name may be known to you, but it was very much known in my time. He was a great leader of the Labor party. I had read a number of his books when I was in Barnard. Well, I was formally assigned to a faculty member as a regular student at LSE and that person was Eileen Power, P - O - W - E - R, who was an economic historian. I didn't really work with her. I think that she probably kept an eye on me. But I took classes with Harold Laski. Most of his classes were held in a football field, I mean a very big auditorium, and everybody came and listened with rapt attention. He spoke brilliantly and all in one long sentence. Fantastic. But he did have a seminar or small class which attracted people like me, from South Africa and America and so forth. And so he got to know me, and he knew my interest in housing. It turned out that his wife was a member of the Fulham F U L H A M Borough Council. London County was then made up of boroughs. Because of that contact, I could go into the Borough of Fulham and do whatever looking around I wanted to do about housing. That was a great opportunity, because I then was able to go out with the building inspectors, get inside of slum housing, as well as see the new housing estates. I attended their slum clearance hearings and got a feel for the programs followed in acquiring land for public housing. And I got to know Harold Laski better through this, too. When Harold Laski asked me at the end of the school year what I was going to do

next, I was approaching the Summer in Sweden and I had the offer from Harold Buttenheim, which I may have just turned down, and I was in a turmoil as to my future. I had the Raymond Moley job offer and I also had just received a letter from Columbia Law School offering me a scholarship. I happen to have, in my notes which I reviewed for this session, a scribbled letter that I wrote home in June, in which I revealed my quandary. I was pretty young and I had no real mentor. I was very confused about what to do. I was hesitating about law school. I had these housing opportunities that anybody would give his eye teeth for who wanted to get ahead in housing, to be taken as an assistant to Harold Buttenheim. And have Elizabeth Denby, who was a published author and an important woman, so interested in me that she would initiate this set-up with the American Embassy in Stockholm. I had such contacts also in housing in New York. So I was really a little scared as to what I was doing with law, and I wasn't sure, after all, why I was going to law school, except that I now had this idea that it would help my housing career. But are all of these housing opportunities still going to be there, or after three years, will they all have been filled up with other people _____, you know. Is this the moment for me.

Ms. Krey: Sure, I understand that.

Ms. Siegel: Well, Harold Laski, as important as he was, always had time for students. Extraordinary, extraordinary man. And I had no introduction to him, I was just an American student who was interested in housing. When he asked about my plans, I mumbled something like, I guessed I was going to law school at Columbia University. I blurted out the whole story of my distress – the housing

opportunities and my indecision about law school. And he proceeded to take hold of me. It's as if he got hold of my shoulders and shook me. He influenced me to go to law school, and he said I should go to Yale, that it would be a mistake for me to return to the same campus. He was very definite. So at that one meeting with him, everything got resolved.

Ms. Krey: What were his reasons?

Ms. Siegel: I'm not sure of his reasons. I know that he spoke with conviction. He had been watching me all year. It seemed to me he was particularly interested in American students. Periodically, he came back to America. He had American friends, like Felix Frankfurter. Well there were other Americans at LSE at the time. David Petegorsky was there, no he was Canadian, he wasn't American. Who else was there from the States? I'm not sure I knew any. It was rumored that David Rockefeller was there.

Ms. Krey: Were you one of the only women?

Ms. Siegel: There were a lot of women at LSE. A lot of women were there studying to be social workers. Its full name, I think is London School of Economics and Social Sciences. It got to be known as LSE. Laski really screwed my head on tight. He gave me direction and it was solid. Law and Yale. For him this was a perfect road for me to take. And he persuaded me of it. And I said, "But it's too late to apply." I mean it was the end of June. Well, I had gone up to Yale for an interview at one time, but I hadn't pursued it. Not when I got the offer from Moley. I hadn't known how I would ever have paid for Yale, anyway. So, right then and there, he called in his secretary. And he dictated a letter to the registrar

at Yale Law School. I got a copy of that letter years later. He didn't give it to me. I got it from one of the Professors at Yale with whom I was friendly, McDougal. When President Ford became President, reference was made in the press to notes that were taken at the time that he first came to Yale law school. He was a classmate of mine. Yes. And so I said to Professor McDougal at that time, I said if you were able to dig into the files and find all this information about President Ford at the time that he was admitted to our class, maybe you could find the letter from Laski that got me into Yale Law School, in effect. Well, he got me a copy of the letter that Laski had written to Arlene Hadley the Registrar, in which he said that it was all his fault that there was a delay and enclosed his check for \$50. Because I had said to him, "Professor Laski, there is a \$50 application fee and I don't know if I have \$50." Of course I paid him back later on.

Ms. Krey: So he wrote the letter and now you were going?

Ms. Siegel: He settled it. I was going to spend the summer in Sweden and then enter Yale and . . .

Ms. Krey: I take it they gave you a scholarship?

Ms. Siegel: Yale gave me a loan to cover tuition. In later years, they changed it to a loan and a gift. And my sister Dorothy, eight years older than I. This wonderful sister who had preceded me at Barnard.

Ms. Siegel: She supported me. She then had a job as a teacher, earning a good salary in the New York City public school system. She was supporting a couple of cousins with college costs, so now she supported me too. Until I found work, because by the end of the first year I had a job. I then worked all the time I was in law school.

Ms. Krey: Please we have to talk about Yale. So now you enter and how many women in the class. Tell us how you lived. Tell us what your courses were, anything.

Ms. Siegel: I was the only women in the class. Professor McDougal told me that he was the person who had screened everybody for admission to my class. He told me at one point that they had admitted three women, but that two didn't turn up. I turned up.

Ms. Krey: What was his first name?

Ms. Siegel: Myres. M Y R E S. Myres S. McDougal. I never can remember if it is Mac or Mc.

Ms. Krey: And how big were the classes [cross talk]?

Ms. Siegel: The class had 125. The classes are now larger.

Ms. Krey: Yes, I know. So what was it like to be there? **[over talking]**

Ms. Siegel: Well I will tell you something, I will tell you something funny. I came to my first class and nobody would sit next to me. Empty seat to the right, empty seat to the left. That's the way the year started. After I was in school for a week, I became ill. I ended up in the New Haven Hospital and was diagnosed as having a very serious illness. The head of the hospital who was also head of the School of Medicine at Yale, Dr. Blake, said that it was leukemia. And the registrar Arlene Hadley put a notice on the bulletin board that they were calling for blood donors. Well these fellows who didn't know me, who hadn't sat next to me in class because it was only after a week of school when I became ill. A number of them came over to the hospital to give their blood. It was a nice generation.

Ms. Krey: Very nice. Was this 1939? What year?

Ms. Siegel: This was the fall of '38. Well, it turned out that it was a misdiagnosis. I'm here. But still I was in the hospital for a month. It was pretty bad. They had to give me many blood transfusions. I recall that there was a little article written about me for a Yale Medical Journal to describe the illness.

Ms. Krey: Why was this?

Ms. Siegel: I suppose because it was thought to be leukemia and it turned out to be something else with similar symptoms. I had lost all the platelets in my blood. When they decided that I was well enough to leave the hospital after a month, the doctors recommended to my parents that I take off the rest of the year and go to sunny Florida or something like that. I was absolutely against that. If I'm well enough to go back to class, I want to go back. That first week I had been so thrilled by law school instruction. I took to it like a duck. I absolutely would not consider not going back. And so I went back to school and I had to report to the hospital every day, for awhile for a blood check. It was Thanksgiving before I was finally declared out of the woods. At that time my family came up to my digs in New Haven and everybody celebrated because I had recovered. At about that same time Harold Laski was in America, and he was at Yale. And I got a message from the Dean's office that Professor Laski would like to see me. And so I went to see him, and he wanted to know how I liked law school. I was so enthusiastic I couldn't find the words, I was so excited. He talked to me as if I were his kid as he had before, in London. He said don't gush.

Ms. Krey: Don't gush?

Ms. Siegel: Don't gush, calm down. I was telling him how I liked law school. I liked it so well. And then for that semester, my mother came to live with me in New Haven because I really was not strong, and in that weakened condition would find independent living particularly difficult. I had been living in home like situations in England and in Sweden also. And so my mother came up for the rest of that first semester to see that I get fed and that I'd sleep. I didn't do anything except study and go to the hospital for a daily checkup. It was that kind of a semester. I got all A's. I came out so well, I was in one of the first five. I was number five.

Ms. Krey: And considering you'd missed a month at school. Were you taking property. What kind of classes were you taking?

Ms. Siegel: Well, I took property, civil procedure, torts, contracts and constitutional law.

Ms. Krey: Did they use Socratic method in the classes, did they call on you?

Ms. Siegel: They didn't call on me much.

Ms. Krey: Did they call on students.

Ms. Siegel: To some extent. They didn't use a Socratic method the way they did notoriously at Harvard. It was a smaller school.

Ms. Krey: **[over talking]** Professors that you have that people might be interested in?

Ms. Siegel: Oh well, I had Harry Shulman for torts. S H U L M A N. Brilliant teacher. He seemed to be another friend of Felix Frankfurter. I had Arthur Corbin for contracts, you know, *Corbin on Contracts*. I'll tell you something about Arthur Corbin. I had no further classes with him. Just the first year. When we got to the third year and it was time to go down to New York to look for a job, because recruiters didn't come to the campus then, so there was a general exodus during

the Christmas season for New York. And the School gave us a list of firms to visit. Arthur Corbin stopped me in the hall and he said that he thought that I could probably use a little help. He gave me a list of firms to whom he had written, about a half dozen firms. And names of the individuals to see there. Each one of these may have been a former student of his who had become partner. At one of the firms that I went to in this job hunting, Chadbourne Hunt, the fellow who interviewed me -- he wasn't the one addressed in the letter, a young partner, Carlos Israels, said, "Have you seen a letter that Professor Corbin wrote about you?" And I said that I had not seen it. He said would I like a copy. I said, "I'd love to have a copy." And I can now tell you, that the letter says that she is a woman and a Jew. I didn't wear a sign saying that I was a Jew, but my name was Adelson and I was a New Yorker. I don't know how they tell, they know. And I came up through the public schools. So Professor Corbin wrote that she is one of our best and you will be rewarded for anything you can do for her and so forth and so on. It's a beautiful letter, which I have. Now, whom else did I have? I had Fleming James, Fred Rodell. I had George Dession for criminal law, in a later year.

Ms. Krey: That sounds like a woman?

Ms. Siegel: No, it isn't. George Dession, D E S S I O N. I had Underhill Moore and Wesley Sturges for things like banking. I had Edwin Borchard for constitutional law. I had James W. Moore of Moore's Federal Practice and Moore's Collier on Bankruptcy. And then what happened was that a couple of these people offered me a job while school was going on.

Ms. Krey: As a research assistant?

Ms. Siegel: Yes, now most of the kids in law school in those days came with enough money from their families. A very few of us worked. And I think the fact that I was not a well-to-do person got to be known very quickly.

Ms. Krey: **[OVER TALKING]**. You know, if you think about being the only woman in the class they'd be curious.

Ms. Siegel: So they were very curious. Eugene Rostow was then.

Ms. Krey: He was Dean?

Ms. Siegel: He became a Dean later. At that point, he was a young faculty person. But he was interested in economics, and, of course, I had come from the London School of Economics. And so he asked if I could work with him. But I had already signed up with J.W. Moore. I assisted J.W. Moore from then on from sometime in my first year, right through the rest of three years. I assisted him on the volume on Corporate Reorganization and earned my keep. And he also had me write articles with him, where he gave me credit. We were Moore and Adelson. A series of articles in the Virginia Law Review on the U.S. Supreme Court, 1938 term. Long articles. I did all the research, and a lot of the writing. And then, of course, I was on the editorial board of the Yale Law Journal.

Ms. Krey: Were you perhaps one of the first women -- the first time a woman had been on the board?

Ms. Siegel: I doubt it.

Ms. Krey: So you don't remember any particulars?

Ms. Siegel: No, I'm not sure. But, you know, they had been taking women students ever since about 1920.

Ms. Krey: Oh, I see. So in other classes, as you went on, were you always the only woman or would they have women from different years?

Ms. Siegel: I think I was always the only woman in the class. Classes ahead of me and behind me had women. One class had four girls, and as I said, there were three admitted my year. I never found out who were the other two. Irene till, who was married to Professor Walton Hamilton, and who as I recall was an economist was a special student and may have been one or more classes with me.

Ms. Krey: Did anybody ever say, "Oh you're taking a man's place and why are you going to law school?"

Ms. Siegel: Never. My experience at law school was that the members of the faculty were extremely supportive. Couldn't have been more supportive and couldn't have encouraged me more. Knew that I wanted to do housing. Loved to see me do it. Professor McDougal was interested in housing before I came along. For the first time, he gave a seminar on housing, because he knew I would attend it. This was my second year in law school. I recall that my friends Morris Lasker (later a federal judge) and Norman Williams also signed up. What I did for the seminar was a paper on constitutional law: the use of the police power to demolish substandard housing and not have to compensate the owners. This paper was based on my European experience and also, of course, on research I did for this seminar. And at my suggestion, Charles Abrams already the author of "Revolution in Land," was invited to come and speak to the seminar. He said to

me many years later that this seminar had made such an impression on him that it was responsible for his starting to teach – part time – which continued throughout his life and was very important to him. I kept Ira Robbins informed about the seminar but he didn't come up.