

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Northeast Ohio Legal Services

Personal Experience

O H 1487

DONALD A GRIESMANN

Interviewed

by

James B Callen

on

April 1, 1992

C This is an interview with Donald A. Griesmann, Executive Director of Northeast Ohio Legal Services, for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Northeast Ohio Legal Services, by James B. Callen, at 700 Metropolitan Tower Building, Youngstown, Ohio, on April 1, 1992, at 2:00 p.m.

Don, could you tell me a little bit of your background prior to going into Legal Services?

G That is a terrible question. Before coming into Legal Services, I was an Episcopal Clergyman. I had been an assistant priest in Clingfield, New Jersey and got into some disagreements. This is in 1956. I got into some disagreements with the Mayor of Clingfield. Years before, there was a riot there, over the condition of the city jail, actually. I got into some trouble with the congregation there because of a sermon I preached on segregation and desegregation of schools and communities, which ended up in my being encouraged to seek a job in Camden, New Jersey, where there was a small congregation in the inner city St. John's Episcopal Church. I was there for a long time. It was pretty much a white congregation in the ghetto of Camden, at that point. The whole city is now a ghetto, but at that point, there was a ghetto.

I was there for pretty close to ten years, and part of what I did there was both to integrate the congregation with blacks and with Puerto Ricans coming into the congregation and into the vestry, which was the authority of the place, then develop a community center in Camden which the Episcopal Diocese paid for. It was a huge building, pretty close to the size of the YMCA here. We had some three hundred children daily coming in for tutorial programs. We had a full gym, we had a movie theater because there was not a movie theater in the city any longer. We had a day care center for high school girls who were kicked out of high school at that time, this was back in the 1960's, early 1960's and into the 1970's, so that they could continue to go to school in our building. It was also the center for black power organizations at that time, and Free Puerto Rico organizations and community groups. That was what I was doing with Vista Volunteers, with church monies and state money, bussing five hundred kids all summer long to state parks. With state environmental money, we had black history classes, we had a youth corps job training for little kids on through to high school. Rent-a-Kid was part of the program we had.

I also served as a volunteer probation officer to the juvenile courts. It was that experience that starting me thinking about going into law. As both my feeling that I had taken the community center as far as I could and my own frustrations of being a priest and not accomplishing a whole bunch, and having been part of the development of Camden Regional Legal Services. Both from concept as well as testifying in a subcommittee of the Senate on the war on poverty about Legal Services in 1962, or 1963. I decided to go to law school to go work for Legal Services.

C What was your background in Legal Services before you arrived in Youngstown?

G Before I graduated from Rutgers, I started work in my second year in law school in Camden Regional Legal Services as an assistant administrator to the director, to do some management stuff. By my third year of law school, I was able to go to court under New Jersey rules for law students. I was handling some cases. I was hired by Camden Regional as a staff attorney when I finished law school and passed the Bar. About a year later, I wrote an application for the development of the senior citizens' law center within Camden Regional and became the director of the senior citizens' law center, which was funded and did several utility rate cases on the electric, gas and telephone on behalf of seniors state-wide.

I was then asked to open up a brand new rural office in Cluster County, New Jersey. We were not serving clients but we were receiving funds to serve them. I applied for some Vista lawyers and I received four Vista volunteers, two paralegals and two lawyers. So we opened up an office, the five of us and two support people, and I ran that for a couple of years, then applied for a job with Sacramento County Legal Aid program and was hired as an Executive Director. I was hired on there in 1976 and worked there for seven years. The program went from a two county, \$300,000 program, to a seventeen county, program. I observed two small programs in hooking up other offices around, what has amounted to, twenty-five percent of the entire state of California.

I worked there for seven years and decided that international experience would be useful, so I applied for, and got a job with, the Attorney General of American Samoa. I worked there for two contracts, or four years, doing consumer protection stuff for the territory used for government representation. The most exciting part was doing international things with other governments and writing contracts, and multi-international contracts for the government, and doing some stuff even for the CIA. Who were bringing in some microwave telecommunication systems in case the Philippines ever blew up, which eventually they did and which is sort of interesting to do.

After that, I decided to come back to the country and applied for and got a job with Central Kentucky Legal Services as Litigation Director and worked there for three years. They were not getting any state funds like the other funds that we got here. Folks were not getting the salary increases and I did not think I was really needed for the job that I was doing so I applied to Youngstown. Here I am, and I am happy as a lark.

C You have been a director of a large legal services program in terms of both population and geographic area. How does that compare, what differences do you see, what similarities between that and the program like Northeast Ohio Legal Services?

G Well, the times are different, that is probably the major shift. I was hired in Sacramento to expand the program and not to practice law. They had no interest of my being a member of the California Bar, which was a blessing because that is a terrible bar out there. To take a small program and expand it

into a huge program in about two years time and hire people and be able to buy offices. The Legal Services corporation gave us a lot of money to do that, there was a lot of new funds at that point in 1977, 1978, which about the time that NOLS was being combined between Trumbull and Mahoning County and spreading off into Columbiana and Ashtabula.

So there was a lot of new money then and the goal of Legal Services, nationally to provide two lawyers for every 10,000 people and have a program serving every single county in the United States and in territories, except for American Samoa, was a goal that was being reached for. Congress wanted it to happen. So out in California we were a major operation in trying to get new money and I had a lot of meetings in Washington, there was a lot of frequent flyers went in at that time. There was a lot of traveling between D.C. and California. So I never practiced law there, except on a few occasions in federal court. I missed some of that but I thoroughly enjoy the management and the learning experience and when the crunch came in 1982, 1983, when Ronald Reagan started to take funds away and folk were looking at RIFing, Reduction in Force.

One of the unique experiences I had was a scholarship, that my administrator and I received, to go study at Wharton School in the University of Pennsylvania for a hard month or longer with some other folks in another programs around the country to look at computer modeling on RIFing and what that means in service, what that means for affirmative action, people in employment. It means the types of people you have, and that means to rebudget and to do a lot of modeling around that. It was awful on one side, but certainly very interesting on the other. So management is what I did predominantly there.

Here, practically taking a very experience program with very experienced attorneys, you and Staughton and Elliot and Chris, who are really highly skilled. It has allowed for me not to spend so much time in management so I can be more an attorney as well as a manager and also be much more community oriented. I missed the lawyering and I missed the community orientation while I was in Sacramento and here, I am able to do both of those things and still do a little bit of dabbling in management.

- C. Over the years that you have been associated with Legal Services, how do you think the problems of the poor have changed, if at all?
- G. I think the problems have changed. One is we have got more poor people now than we had. We, as Legal Services, along with daycare, Headstart kinds of things, are probably the only two components left out of the war on poverty, which have pretty much stayed the way they were when they were created. With maybe some limitations and maybe different funding but the basic thrusts are still there. Training programs have changed radically. Community action programs certainly changed radically from the maximum feasible participation by the poor, certainly is not the key word for those programs any longer, in my opinion. That

has been legislatively done, not by local problems

At any rate, there are fewer program available now. I think "Regan-nomics" truly dissipated activities on behalf of the poor. Far fewer units are available and the cities have crumbled more. Housing availability is less. I think that the racism that a lot of us were holding up as we can overcome, through sort of the Curren Commission report in the 1960's, and the marches on Washington D C., and Dr King and others. Those hopes and ambitions have yet to be realized in a massive way. There is still a large portion of minorities that are poor. Family life continues to be a hardship.

I think one of the other symbols is that, while we know more now, perhaps, about spouse abuse. It is true that spouse abuse is predominately in the poverty community. That they have indicated that seniors, get abused as much as others, but poor people, poor women, get abused to a greater extent. I guess our learning about that is helpful, but it may also be an increase in that kind of abuse and beating. I am not sure that the poor have a better life because we are here. I have the dream that Legal Services will do more than make poverty palatable, I think in a lot of ways we barely even begun at that. I think we work hard and I think we want to. I think on occasions we are successful at changing people who actually get out of poverty. Or they keep their house or something of that nature. How we really overcome it with Legal Services alone, I think it happens through more and more through the community development kinds of things and interfaced with private industry, and other agencies, and public agencies, is the only way I think we can really make a major dent in poor peoples' lives.

Then there are new populations of poor. Mental health patients were hospitalized twenty years ago. Now they are released without follow up, without maintenance. Those folks are much more in the community without interfacing with agencies that they need. Drugs were high in the 1960's, so I do not know that the drug situation is more accepted. There are more deaths because of the dangers of drugs, at least the way I see it. So, some of those things are worse than they were before.

C. Are the problems facing the poor in Youngstown any different than those that were faced by the poor in the communities that you were in? Allowing for, of course, the passage of time.

G. Yes, I think there are some forces in this community that do not exist in some others. The similarity between here and Camden, I think, is a long, ugly history of mafia control. I lived with mafia control in Camden. They may have just changed color, it is still there. Instead of the white, in the old days, it is now the African-American in Camden now. I get back there every couple of months. So, here the history of the mafia is centered from New Jersey. Sacramento, California had probably the cleanest government I ever worked through and with some of the folks I worked with then are now in the House of Representatives. They were not part of the check kiting schemes of the House of Representatives.

Lexington, Kentucky, where I was three years before I came here, was a pretty clean government. There they had centralized all of their county elections. Everything was in urban county government. So, coming here, with 300 elected officials in the county, really gives me pause as to just how effective and efficient government is when there are so many turftans and surftans available in this community. So, that is different.

I think the history of the mills, I am still learning about that, but I think the history of the mills has left a lot of very good people tired and frustrated, beaten down. A lot of folks who needed the help, they did not get it. The other communities did not have these--at least not from when I was there--have the same kind of affect that the closing of the mills has had on this community. I think it has created an inferiority complex. I do not know whether it was here before the mills closed, but I think there is a strong one in this community. I am still hearing after two years of being here, "Why would you come to Youngstown? Why would you take a job here? Was this a promotion for you?" On the other hand I have heard people say, "You mean they hired somebody from outside? Why did they not hire somebody from inside Youngstown?" So there is a sort of a feeling on one side of being just really inferior, I think, overall. As well as a sense that there are too few opportunities for local people to find jobs. I am talking with the employment bureau on sort of their projections on job offers for people between twenty and thirty-five are very few in the way of jobs. The unemployment, the loss of those jobs, just have not been replaced it appears. Those are very distinctive features of massive government, history of the mafia, and the loss of the mills have created, as far as I can tell, something different here than I have experienced in my other jobs in Legal Services.

C How do you think those differences have impacted on the poor population and on the delivery of Legal Services to this community?

G That is a funny question because when they operated the community center, we used to get thousands, upon thousands, of cases of Campbell Soup products. It actually was the local numbers runners and the local pimps who helped deliver that food stuff for the community center, for the church, to the community. Folks with the guys would drive up in Cadillacs and Lincolns and cart off hundreds of boxes of food. It always went where it was supposed to go. So there, that was just part of the scheme. It was part of the system. I assume there is some sort of a system that the mafia works in. I just do not know that it is reaching poor people.

I think that the problems here, really impact on keeping poor people poor. I think racism and some of that stuff fosters in the lack of the appreciation and diversity here among peoples has been fostered by the loss of the mills, pitting poor people against poor people on the basis of historic places of birth. I guess I could sort of live with gang stuff if, in fact, it was helping poor people a little bit more. It may be the only viable economic development in some communities. Unfortunately, it seems that it is tied to drugs so severely here that encourages

all the young people to try them out I do not know whether that really responded to the questions you phrased

C What was your understanding of the reputation that this area had in Northeast Ohio Legal Services prior to the time that you came here, and how is it compared with your experience?

G. What I knew of the town, the area, was the loss of the mills and I knew murder land U S A I knew the union fights against the company I knew Youngstown Sheet and Tube and the law school, and the action by Harry S Truman during the Second World War on serviceman Sort of historical things I met with Bob on other occasions around the country but we never discussed Youngstown per se I guess my expectations about Youngstown have been predominately unmet because of so many positive qualities that I have not really talked about here, on this tape The access of roads, the Mill Creek Park, lots and lots of very good people who would like to be able to get some things accomplished, and who love the community, and appreciate the diversity of the people in this community, and want to see things happen I am very positive about those I knew from early meetings with staff and others in town These past few years have proved that what I knew was too little There are more good folks here than I expected

Let us see, there is second part to that question

C The reputation of NOLS [Northeast Ohio Legal Services] and how the reputation that you heard about the city and the community has compared with your experiences?

G The reputation that NOLS had, before I even thought about applying here, was one of top quality, ethically, very aggressive representation of people, and yet very stern rebukes because of its perceived response of clients I had heard of Staughton Lynd I knew of his reputation he had locally, which was one of being a Chinese kind of sympathizer or some such, or a pinko, or a red His reputation nationally was one of being a hero on behalf of poor people I am familiar with the nationally laid defenders association, a national group of public defenders and civil legal services, and naturally wanted to honor him He asked not to be so honored I was aware of that So there were things that this program had as a superb reputation of being an avant-garde on a number of things and other programs being a tad jealous that things were being done here in a way that had not been had I believe it still has an excellent reputation for solid litigation and working with the community I had worked with Legal Services that had a good reputation for litigation but almost no work with community groups This program had both, and both attracted to me So the national reputation has been very, very strong If anything, it will only be even more because of its quality

C What is the most pressing problem or problems that you see facing the poor

community in Northeastern Ohio in the service area of NOLS?

G I think there are too few agencies and groups working on behalf of the poor I think that the turf that some agencies, and some directors of agencies have carved out for themselves, leave an awful lot of holes in them for poor people There are not enough legal services lawyers, there never will be The private bar has, in my opinion, not taken a forward look at their ethical obligation as attorneys to provide legal services I think to those lawyers who do some free legal services there is a fear of even being publicized that they would do that, or being organized in some reasonable way with us to provide an orchestrated and rational basis for the program to work

I found it hard in two years of working here in the valley, just getting a sort of developing trust with some folks, but at the same time meeting with the bar and some judges Columbiana County has been encouraging working with some committees through the bar. Through Mahoning County there is at least a little bit of glimmer of hope of seeing some more stuff happen I am certainly working with a lot of agencies on homeless issues This has led me to believe that there are people who are prepared to meet, to talk, and to try to act together in a cooperative way, in a different way than they have before

I am talking with Bill Brennan, at United Way, David Sherard, Rescue Mission, Ron and Marion at Mental Health and name after name. Of meeting every two weeks to try and work on homelessness has been a new experience for all of us Those are signs of some good things possibly coming about I think that the lack of leadership on a lot of people's part, maybe a fear, or because they have been hurt before, that fear of branching out, reaching out and saying, "Let us try and do it together " One of those things that needs encouragement in this community Without it I think the poor are suffering Last piece is, I think, we have got to include the poor in the planning of a lot of these things Coming up to folks who are willing to take a stance, who are willing, is still yet to be done, I think, in a lot of ways

C Since your arrival in Youngstown, what events stand out as significant to you? In terms of your experience in Legal Service, what has been accomplished in those two years?

G I think that our adding a couple more staff people has been very healthy I think the work, particularly around Medicaid and getting quality medical benefits for QMB, sort of known in this community for the elderly The work that Alice Lynd and Staughton Lynd have done on behalf of GF retirees and LTV retirees, Genie Traylor, and a number of other companies, to try and protect their medical benefits because those companies have gone to bankruptcy court, has been an enormous, agonizing battle and unfortunately continuing to receive the frontal hold, the political views of some judges Somehow or other, when it comes to poor people, they just do not deserve a fair break in court, has been pretty shocking to me Well, for the little time that you and I have been together over

the past few years, of just getting staff solidified to help free you up to be getting into some other things that I think you have enormous talent to work on, such as this. Beyond this kind of thing, working with client groups and getting things together on community reinvested act, with you and Pat Rosenthal. As well as getting things started up on remediation program, are real important to the community and to people.

I would like to see us much more involved in getting housing done. I would like to see us much more involved in making job training responsive to poor people, and job creation responsive to poor people, jobs and housing are pretty critical. The school system, we worked hard on that for a long time, and the quality of education appears to be bad here but it is bad in most places around the country. I do not know whether it is worse here or not. Certainly something had to be done on the quality of education. It is another part I think that to trying to break through as a problem of the poor.

C Can you describe a little bit your experience working with Youngstown on the homelessness issue?

G It has been a lot of enjoyment to me. It is sort of frustrating because I do not think there should be homelessness in this country. The first time I went to a meeting of the coalition for the homeless in this community, it was in a large room with a lot of tables, and four, five, and six chairs around each table. Nobody sat at the same table. There were about eight people in the room, everybody at a different table spread throughout the room, at the YWCA. My understanding was the agenda was to close out the coalition. Some consultants had been hired by the mayor, live information and resources out of Cincinnati to do a study on homelessness. I had met them the day before and so I sat down with them at the Wick table, and since that time that organization has not disappeared but it is now close to forty organizations and people who are part of the coalition. It has four very active subcommittees.

I guess I was here three weeks when a homeless person died over by the Salvation Army, in a dumpster. It is the only death we have had since then. The next winter we had the winter emergency project, which I was able to cajole and force and push and prod folks to start doing some cooperative work together. We are getting some money. We have since raised close to \$45,000 in the last fourteen months. We increased the beds for single people at the rescue mission, by forty. We built twenty bunk beds this winter. We have gotten funds and a lot of other money together from churches and individuals. So, nobody has died from exposure the past two winters. We are now trying to expand the program to include the recent G A cuts that started today, April 1, so that the program will probably continue on maybe as far as June, when we close down, until the following November.

Getting sixteen agencies to talk about a centralized intake in the tracking system on the homeless to make referrals more meaningful, has been good. Getting fifteen other agencies, including government and private agencies, to sit

down with Youngstown Housing Authority and Metropolitan Housing Authority, how can we as agencies assist the authority with their tenants. Particularly Kimblebrook and Westlake Terrace. To have that group of people sit down in the same room seems to be fairly unique. A lot of hostility certainly came out at the first meeting, people remembering some old wounds that I was no part of. Nevertheless, nobody walked out, nobody stormed out, nobody called each other names. There was a willingness to continue talking about how we can do better outreach to particularly those two projects and have a larger presence of other people. I guess Westlake Terrace is going to open up, between now and October, another 150 rehab units out there. So, some concern over how to track those 150 families also helped precipitate the discussions and how we can work more cooperatively around that and prevent homelessness.

Working with government, particularly Youngstown, but also now trying to stimulate the County commissioners to come together on joint housing projects. Beyond Youngstown Metropolitan Housing Authority, but how to utilize these federal grants on affordable housing. Our joint approach has started. It is the community agencies such as Choice and Commonwealth, as well as Society Bank, Catholic Diocese and NOLS going together with those two units of government to see what we can do to bring them together. All the useful ways to try and respond to, what I found to be, thousands of homeless and near homeless and doubled up people in the community. We pointed out that there are people in this community looking for houses. Youngstown is different from most places, there are houses open for people.

C Earlier you mentioned the growing problem of spousal abuse. What has Legal Services done for their families?

G Well, NOLS has a history of a little case called VALU. Which, I guess, got stimulated by Martha Waller, who is working with YWCA, that person's crisis center in Struthers. The junior league had also been part of the process but nothing much had progressed until I guess Dina and I spent some time and energy. Richard is from Junior League and it now is in operation. We started up in October of 1991 with twelve VALU volunteers, most of whom are YSU students. I forget the name of the program, but they are older women who are coming up to be certifiable, trying to make career plans for themselves. They are there at the court house every Monday and Wednesday to assist battered women, and some men and some senior citizens get civil protective orders to stay on their homes, to have an adjunctive relief and the courts keep people away. There are several hundred people who have been helped through that, even though it is a two day program. We have always wanted to go five days, we have always wanted to add a paralegal or a legal assistant to oversee it. We have applied to United Way locally, to see if they favor towards idea to make it happen.

The other part has been working with Chris Rego and Joanne Ford to expand programs on domestic violence in Trumbull County, with United Way

there They increased, I guess, from \$6,700 a year to \$10,000 in the past two years to work with domestic violence and then to encourage Mark Flack and Steve Hill in Columbiana to do work I have worked with each other's in Columbiana County Mark and Steve put a program together there with Project Save They are representing eligible clients who have heard about Project Save Battered Womens' Center in Columbiana County To get restraining orders As that has continued, now that they have a new referee there, she has been working with Mark and Steve to revise the forms The private attorneys are starting to do it now in Columbiana County now that there is a five day a week court referee available to handle those cases I think in the three counties we have increase our availability in that area

It is interesting reading articles about other people, such as Barbara Court, were cited in the Vindicator in one of those one-on-one articles In there she mentions NOLS as being a lot more work around battered women. And seeing another article put out by the Junior League congratulating NOLS for doing things on battered So, it is other folks making acknowledgment about things that they program is doing That makes me feel good that we seem to be on the right track

- C Northeast Ohio Legal Services provides representation in three counties -- Mahoning, Trumbull, and Columbiana -- and is contracting a fourth county. How does the delivery of Legal Services and the needs vary among those counties?
- G I think two salient features are the other three counties do not have an urban area like Youngstown Among the four counties, Youngstown probably has sixty percent of the minority population of the four counties So, the emphasis and other problem's impact upon the center city of Youngstown that do not necessarily have a repetition in the rural counties Part of the rural counties problems are long distances to an office. Ashtabula is the largest county in the state and the office is not centralized there The one we contract with is up on the northern part on the lake So that, for a number of communities, it is pretty much an impossibility to get there

Columbiana County, I think we have a hard time delivering Legal Services to a number of folks in the southern part of the county There are offices in Lisbon, where the courthouse is we don't have any full time lawyer staff to do outreach into the southern part of the county So, I think we are loosing there I think Trumbull and Mahoning County Staffs have worked up a system informally to make sure that we are folks sort of the cusp of the two counties Somebody is picking them up We have basically kind of toll free numbers for people to call Mahoning County from Lisbon, or from Warren, without cost if they need to reach us I think that we need to be looking at more effective ways of reaching the unreached I think the unreached are greater in Columbiana and in Ashtabula than they are in Trumbull and Mahoning and I think the major reason is in Ashtabula we are not the ones delivering it The office there is a combination of public defender and civil law They have their own difficulties because of that

combination. In Columbiana, where we do have an office, we just do not have full time staff there to do the kind of outreach in community development work, and community reeducation work, which helps to encourage people to seek us out, and establishes a better presence for us.

C If there is such a thing, what is a typical day like as executive director of Legal Services?

G A typical day is, for me at least, is seeing to it that those who have been delegated certain responsibilities, whether they are fiscal with Joan Wiesberg, Janine Carr, and Phyllis Ford, that whatever they need from me gets done. Because the fiscal stuff, if we do not have the money going then we are in a crisis. So to the extent they need me to approve things, we need to talk over, we need to do up a grant or something of that nature. That group of staffers is so qualified I probably do not put much more than about 10% of my time into that in a year. Some weeks it goes weeks without doing very much other than signing checks and approving expenditures.

From a staffing side, which is one of the things that I think I spend a lot of time at, is attending case review meetings. I attend almost three a week. I attend the civil ones normally and the employment team. Then I have a case review in Columbiana County just about every other week. That can be as many as seven and nine hours a week doing that, going over intake, listening to other folks talk about their cases, offering opinions, offering whatever wisdom I might have from a legal standpoint, but more especially around policy of priorities and whether folks are eligible. Those kinds of discussions. And try to make linkages if there are other ways that the case can be approached. Or challenge people to come up with a discovery plan or something. Most of that really is you with a civil team and the day to day sort of delivery of Legal Services functions very, very well, I think, without me spending much time at it. You put in more time than I. The employment team is predominately Alice and Staughton doing it and now that Paula Clauster is pretty much up to speed on discrimination cases and unemployment compensation, she pretty much handles her own case load. I guess I do more worrying over Columbiana than I do anything else because we only have contract lawyers there.

In terms of administration management kinds of things, Peggy Callen and Janet Weisburg do a ton of that. I do a lot of delegation to both of them on getting things done. Getting reports out to funding sources, seeing whether or not the hours are there for somebody to take a vacation. Sort of day to day kinds of things. Or replacing somebody because they have to have an operation or they are sick. Really Peggy does a ton of that, and she does it very, very well. It makes delegation an authority, which I think are two sides of the same coin, easy for me to go do some other things. A lot of the things that I think, in a different kind of program, that I might have to do, I do not do a ton of it, but I oversee it and I get reports back and I ask questions. So, my typical day is probably more spent in policy advocacy, than anything else. Working with

several client groups, I have gotten a couple of groups incorporated. I have worked with development of boards. I worked with a lot of other community agencies in stimulating executive directors of other programs to come meet and talk about things and try to work on things together, pull resources on.

Some time for study. A little bit of just keeping up with the literature on a number of things and distributing information. One of the things I like doing is trying to see where money is available. If I can find money on mental health to get it over to Ron and Marion. Or if there is some new article on chemical dependency to get to Sandy DeSantis at the Chemical Dependency board. Frequently what I find is that the stuff that we get here is advanced. That the other agencies have not seen it. Do the same thing with juvenile homelessness and family services, of trying to be a resource to other agencies is what I do a fair amount of. Where money may be, to encourage them to go looking for it, and to apply for it and if they need letters I write letters of support.

I meet with individual staff members pretty frequently. Probably more around domestic relations because of our contracts with private attorneys; meeting with Tammy Sanitate a lot because she oversees a divorce program that we have, with Hazel Bowing because she makes a lot of referrals on Social Security and SSI. Those are things that, again, from a policy standpoint, I do a lot of one on one.

The phones, there are some days when the phones are outrageous. One thing that I enjoy doing from time to time, and wish I really had the time to do more of, is phone intake. I know there are times when staff are ready to throw things against the wall from a phone intake. But when I have had the chance, and had the time to sort of put it, it has been interesting. Because it is a way of touching base with the clients that I do not get otherwise. That has been encouraging to me to try and do some things for some people.

The last part is handling complaints. The last stop, generally, for a complaint about, "Oh, why are you not taking my case?", or, "Your lawyer never calls me back," or, "How do we get to you? Your phone is always busy," or, "How come you do not work at nights?" or whatever the complaint may be. "I do not like the way you are handling my case now. I want a new lawyer." We get those complaints and part of what I am hired to do, I think, is handle those complaints. I guess so far they have been handled fairly effectively. Or at least nobody has filed any serious complaints against the program. Not to the Legal Services corporation, at least to date.

And then working with the Board. The Board of Directors, when they hired me, made it real clear they were very anxious to have board material available before the board meeting. Which was fine by me, because it was something that I was used to doing in Sacramento, was having the board know things before we had a board meeting. So, getting the material available for the board. Having very open information to them, responding to anything that the Chair wants me to respond to, working with the committees requires a lot of work. Now if the board only meets four times a year, the committees have grown in terms of their importance in information sharing, policy development before it gets to the

board That requires a fair amount of time and on occasion a little bit of delicacy But it is a good board I think it has shifted over the two years I have been here to feel as if they are a little more prepared We have had Board training that we had with three other programs, that I think turned out to be enormously successful For the Board to understand their role we have a board orientation kit which they get We are doing training once a year with the board on some subjects or others They get huge mailings of information and material, which I think they have all said they appreciate

The last piece is evaluating staff and being evaluated myself I think my being evaluated is a unique experience for an executive director in this community I knew that when Chris Newman called other people to ask about me and what they thought about me, I had to other executive directors come to me and say, "Please do not let my board know your board is doing this Not something I want to go through " So, I do not know whether it will change anybody but it was something I needed to have that kind of feedback from the Board as to whether I was on the right track or not And if not, sort of give me some help I give them sort of my planning document for the next year, as well as an appraisal of what I think I accomplished the previous year and what was left undone and why, so they can critique it So, evaluating staff and being evaluated takes a little bit of time but the evaluation process here is, I think, is a growing one. It is fairly easy mainly because it is such a good staff I do not really put a lot of time into it Policy development, evaluations, are a part of what I do in a day

- C. You mentioned the Legal Services Corporation, and that, of course, is the organization that provides the majority of money for Northeast Ohio Legal Services, and whose rules that Northeast Ohio Legal Services has to comply with What is NOLS current relationship to the Nation Legal Services Corporation and how does that compare to relationships you have had at other programs and how has that changed over the years?
- G Probably, our relationship with the National funding source is one of filing reports, being monitored every two years and they send us a check There is nothing at a personal level at all, at least not from me It was not while I was in Lexington, either with the director there or with me with anyone, at the National Level It simply did not exist with the Legal Services Corporation When I was in Sacramento there was seven years, as well as here at the same time, I mean here in the Midwest at the same time, there were regional offices of Legal Services I guess you were either out of West Virginia or Chicago
- C I think we had the Virginia
- G I think we were Virginia, too I think Bob had a good relationship with the regional staff I knew mine when I went out to California was Dan Bradely He was the regional director Dan eventually became the president of the Legal

Services Corporation, the head haunch, for a number of years. A real hero and saint to the poor, and for Legal Services, who died of AIDS just a few years back. Dan had a personal relationship with every director in California and Nevada. I mean, one of very strong feelings and I know that, while I was in California, the regional offices would do fund programs. I was part of a panel on the defunding of two programs. There was strong monitoring and it was formal and informal but they also were responsible for training us on how to manage. There was a lot of national training going on that no longer exists. Regional offices were closed, people fired, people sued each other, and it was a mess during the 1980s as Legal Services tried to survive. One of the heroes is Senator Rudman, Grand Rudman, has been a hero in keeping us protective, along with some other Congress people, both in the Senate and the House. Rudman is now retiring, sad for us.

But the Legal Services Corporation of the 1970s and early 1980s is no longer user friendly as it were. Their monitoring business during the 1980s became more of a tax on local programs, trying to find fraud that did not exist, or existed in such minute detail it was not all the effort they tried on every program. One of trying to get rid of us. The reduction in funds was very severe during that time of the 1980s. While I have seen some indication that things are a little warmer now than they were, massive turnovers at the head of Legal Services Corporation has been severe. They have had more presidents come and go in the past few years than I can remember and their board never gets approved by the senate. The President nominates them and then the Senate never gets around to confirming them because they are just not that quality of people that the Senate can honor. While some of it may be political, I think also the fact of the matter is that Reagan put people on there who particularly wanted to dismantle us. Bush has not done much better than us. Especially with his most recent one, Norman Shumway, who was my representative out in California. In gold country where I had an office, Norm was not a friendly to Legal Services nationally and always voted against us, although he always wrote favorable letters about our program. But, nationally, he was no friend at all.

So, I think from the standpoint of how things have changed, the Legal Services corporation was a very friendly, open, let us get things moving, let us do it together kind of operation in the 1970 and into the 1980s that changed radically and it was "Let us get rid of Legal Services." Now it seems to have warmed a little bit but there is no, at least for me, no personal relationship. Some programs such as the Detroit director, there is a director out of Atlanta, Georgia and a few other places, they go to Legal Services corporation meetings every time they meet. They go to committee meetings. They are there all the time and they may have something going on. But I am not seeing that as a resource to take away from poor people, trying to relate to those people.

C Is there anything else you think important to add that we have not covered?

G No

C I thank you

End of Interview