

Arizona Bar Foundation
Oral History Project:
Arizona Legal History

Interview with Amelia D. Lewis
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ARIZONA BAR FOUNDATION
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT:
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HISTORICAL NOTE

Although Arizona was frequently referred to as "the Baby State," due to its twentieth-century entry into the Union, the history of the legal profession in the state is rich and colorful. In the earlier days, lawyers were mostly self-educated men, who practiced alone, or with one partner at the most, and spent much of their professional time alternately defending and prosecuting some of the most colorful characters of the Old West, and trying to collect on bills from people who had come West to escape their creditors.

Through the first half of this century, some of the nation's finest lawyers took up practice in Arizona. As the state's population grew, a law school was added to the University of Arizona and lawyers formed an integrated state bar in 1933. After World War II, the state exploded in development with the rest of the Sun Belt, and the law profession kept up with this growth, experiencing many changes in the process.

Today, there are law firms in Phoenix and Tucson which employ upwards of 100 attorneys, who may specialize in fairly narrow areas of practice. Half of the students in the state's two law schools are now women. Over the years, Arizona's influence on legal matters at the national level has been significant. Several landmark cases have originated in Arizona,

such as In re: Gault, and Miranda. Arizona can claim the first woman to sit on a state Supreme Court: Lorna Lockwood. Two members of the State Bar now sit on the U.S. Supreme Court, one as the Chief Justice and the other as the first woman to be appointed to the Supreme Court.

However, because Arizona is a young state, there are still attorneys living who knew and remember Arizona's earliest legal practitioners during Territorial days. Many of these senior members of the Bar practiced or sat on the bench before the profession, and indeed society itself, experienced the changes of the last forty years. In an effort to preserve their memories, the Archives Department of the Arizona Historical Society/Tucson developed the Evo DeConcini Legal History Project, an oral history project. From 1986-1988, twenty-one oral history interviews were conducted, focusing on the reminiscences of lawyers and judges in the Southern Arizona area.

In 1987, the Board of Directors of the Arizona Bar Foundation expressed an interest in continuing to document the history of the legal profession in Arizona on a state-wide basis. In particular, the Board felt that the collection of oral history interviews with senior members of the State Bar would stimulate scholarship and publication on various topics relating to legal history, such as water rights, land use and development, and civil rights, as well as on the history of individual firms and the State Bar, itself. The Bar Foundation and the Arizona Historical Society/Tucson agreed to work together to expand the

DeConcini Project statewide, calling it the Arizona Bar Foundation Oral History Project: Arizona Legal History.

Raising funds for two interviews initially, the Bar Foundation designated that the first two recipients of the Walter E. Craig Distinguished Service Award, Mark Wilmer of Snell and Wilmer (1987), and Philip E. Von Ammon of Fennemore Craig (1988) be interviewed in October, 1988. Both interviews were conducted by James F. McNulty, Jr., who conducted most of the interviews for the DeConcini Project. Subsequently, other interviews have been conducted with Congressman Morris K. Udall, Frank Snell, Estes D. McBryde, Amelia Lewis, and William Copple. Joana D. Damos conducted the interview with Lewis and John Westover conducted the Copple interview. The Legal History Committee of the Bar Foundation is developing a list of prospective interviewees in consultation with Adelaide B. Elm, Archivist, Arizona Historical Society, coordinator of the project.

Because it is open-ended, it is not possible to fully define the scope and content of the Arizona Bar Foundation Legal History Project. However, in order to archive the greatest depth and balance, and to insure that many viewpoints are represented, every effort is made to include both rural and urban practitioners, male and female, of varying racial and ethnic perspectives. Interviews are conducted as funds are made available. Transcripts of the interviews are available to researchers at the Arizona Historical Society in Tucson, the libraries of the Colleges of Law at the University of Arizona and

Arizona State University, and at the Bar Center, in Phoenix. The Historical Society is also cooperating with the Ninth Judicial Circuit Historical Society in making copies of interviews with Arizona lawyers and judges for their project available to researchers here in Arizona.

The Arizona Bar Foundation Legal History Project is important not only because it is documenting the history of the profession in Arizona but because legal history encompasses every aspect of society's development. To study legal history means to study land development, environmental issues, social and educational issues, political history, civil rights, economic history--in short, the history of our society. All of these topics are, and will continue to be developed in these oral history interviews. They may be seen as a valuable and unique supplement to the written record, as scholars begin to write the history of the legal profession in Arizona.



Amelia Dietrich Lewis Interview

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Amelia Dietrich Lewis Interview

Amelia Dietrich Lewis was born in New York City, June 25, 1903. She attended Hunter College, then graduated from St. Lawrence University School of Law (now Brooklyn Law School) with an LL.B., in 1925. She later received an LL.M. from New York Law School. She was legislative assistant to the minority leader of the New York City Council and was an attorney for the Legal Aid Society. During World War II Lewis served with the Office of Price Administration. In 1957, after the death of her husband, Maxwell Lewis, she moved to Arizona. Upon being admitted to the Arizona Bar in 1958, Lewis accepted the post of Deputy County Attorney for Navajo County. In 1970 she moved and set up practice in Youngtown, later moving her offices to Peoria.

In 1964 Lewis undertook the representation of Gerald Gault, a minor, in an appeal of his case. She appealed, first to the Arizona Supreme Court, then to the United States Supreme Court, where Gault's conviction was overturned in an eight-to-one decision.

Lewis is a member of the New York Bar, the Arizona Bar, the Association of Trial Lawyers of America, the American Bar Association and the Maricopa County Bar Association. In 1988 Lewis was the first recipient of the Amicus Award of the Association of Trial Lawyers of America. She has served on the Arizona Governor's Advisory Council of Aging and is a volunteer for the American Heart Association in Sun City. She has also

served the Arizona Democratic Party in a variety of capacities, including as a member of the State Executive Committee and as party parliamentarian.

In this interview Lewis reflects on her legal work in New York City and her experiences in the law in Arizona. She speaks extensively about *In Re: Gault* and provides much insight into this precedent-setting case.

Lewis tells several anecdotes about other law cases with which she is familiar, such as the Jaramio murder case in Winslow. She reflects on her experiences with various judges, including Don T. Udall, Lloyd C. Helm and Sandra Day O'Connor. Lewis' reflections on her experiences as a female lawyer in Arizona are of particular interest.

AMELIA D. LEWIS INTERVIEW

This is the morning of August 17th, 1989, at the home of Amelia Dietrich Lewis, 10432 105th Avenue, Sun City, Arizona. Amelia Dietrich Lewis has consented to be interviewed. I am Jo Ann Damos who will be conducting the interview. [Adelaide Elm, Archivist, Arizona Historical Society/Tucson, is also present.]

Damos: Would you tell me please--may I call you Amelia?

Lewis: Surely.

Damos: Can you tell me where you were born, when you were born? Describe briefly your family.

Lewis: Yes. I was born in New York City on June 25th, 1903. My parents were born in this country, but my grandparents came, three of them, from Germany, and one, my mother's mother, from Vienna. My father was rather artistic. He was a window trimmer in men's wear, who was receiving awards all the time for the artistic displays that he made and his window trimming. But I never seemed to inherit any of that. He was insistent that at fourteen I leave school and work in order to help contribute toward my support. I was the oldest of four children. We lived in the Bronx, having moved up there from Manhattan. At that time I was attending Walton High School. So I did what he told me, and I found out that it was possible to get the equivalent of a high school graduation by studying and taking tests that they gave to give you an equivalent high school education. So I

took the equivalent of four years of French with a French teacher, and math with a math teacher, and English. And I had bought myself an Isaac Pitman shorthand book and taught myself shorthand from the book. I taught myself typing. And those things were given credits also. So I got a high school certificate at sixteen, and went to Hunter College.

I worked in between that to satisfy my father's requirement that I support myself. And I worked in various places. At that time--that was 1919. As a matter of fact, in 1918, at fifteen, I had started working in a law office as a gofer. This was the first time that they ever admitted a woman, a female to work in a law office. At that time the stenographers were males in law offices. And this particular law office had taken on a woman bookkeeper, first time, and then they took me on as a gofer. I found the work that the lawyers were doing so interesting that I decided that this is what I wanted to make my profession. Particularly, at one point, when I had an accident. I fell down between the platform and the train on the subway, and injured my leg, injured my knee--that's probably one of the reasons why I've just had two knees replaced--and that bothered me all of my life. I could never--I had

difficulty playing tennis. I'd trip over myself on account of my knee.

Anyway, I said to this attorney to whom I'd been assigned to be a helper--his name was Saul Kohn, and he was one of the founders of the group that started the Jewish Appeal for Charity. I remember their first year, they decided that they were going to have a very high goal. Something that would stun the Christian community with the amount of giving that Hebrews did. They were asking for \$900,000 for the appeal for Jewish charity. And it did stun the Christian world. I remember at that time I was attending the Congregational Church of North New York--that's where I was confirmed. Anyway, I said to him after I got back to work after the accident, I asked him, would he handle my case against the city because I felt that they were negligent in permitting their guards to push people as they did, to push me to get me into the train and cause me to fall. He was a very short man and I was tall, and he stood up and puffed out his chest and said, "Amelia, I know you didn't mean to insult me, but I am not an ambulance chaser." And I felt from that time on, that there must be people who needed lawyers to help them in cases of that kind. Because I knew the man was not an ambulance chaser, but for some reason these cases were not acceptable to

him. And I found out, of course later, that there were ambulance chasers.

In any event, I left Hunter College before graduation in order to enter law school at eighteen, which was the earliest age at which they would take you in law school. And I graduated before I was twenty-one. I had to wait for admission until I was twenty-one. At that time there was a long list of the law graduates waiting to be admitted to the Bar in New York City. The admissions were handled by attorneys, a committee of nine of the Bar who had their own practices and weren't able to give much time to the admission of attorneys. One day in the New York Law Journal, they published a notice that anyone who had served his country could apply for early admission by making an affidavit and giving proof of that service. This was 1925, and I was pregnant with my first child--or it was the fall of, late 1924. So I said to my husband, "I'm serving my country in the only way that I could, that's allowed to women. So I'm going to make application for early admission."

I prepared my papers, and I was told by the chairman--I'll never forget him--Eugene V. Daly, an attorney in downtown New York, "Mrs. Lewis, you will have to have something to confirm that you did something during the war for your country." And I

said, "You know, I was--what--fourteen, fifteen years of age. The only thing I did was to sew clothes for Belgian war orphans over in the Methodist church. We had a sewing group over there." My mother had taught me how to sew. And he said, "You'll need an affidavit on that." So I had to go to the home for deaconesses where this woman was who had led the sewing group. I had prepared the affidavit and taken it with me. The woman was completely dotty. She didn't know what was going on. She was laughing all the time. She gladly signed the affidavit. They gladly notarized it for me. I knew it was wrong because, while the facts were true, she had no recollection of them, but it was the only way that I was going to be able to get on the list for early admission.

When I went before the committee for interview, one of the nine attorneys was a man from Riverhead, Long Island, who indicated to me how shocked he was that in my condition I would come out of my house into the public. (laughter) And that, of all things, I would have the temerity to suggest that that was a cause for which I was serving my country. Anyway, Mr. Daly said, "Mrs. Lewis, of all the applications I have received of papers from would-be attorneys over the years, your application is the best I've ever had. I am sure that you will make a wonderful assistant in

the office of attorneys, preparing papers for them."
And the rest of the committee apparently went along
with Daly. I never knew what the vote was, but they
voted for early admission for me. So I got admitted.

Diamos: The law school you attended . . .

Lewis: I attended St. Lawrence University School of Law. The
campus for St. Lawrence was up in Malone, New York,
but the law school was in Brooklyn. It was in the old
Eagle Newspaper Building. They had rooms there up on
the, at least the second floor, for the law school
groups. Later it became Brooklyn Law School. So I'm
considered a graduate of Brooklyn Law School, because
the law school of St. Lawrence University is no longer
in existence. I went on, later, to take a master's
degree at New York Law School. That degree wasn't
conferred until 1956, I went there, because I was
working in downtown New York, for the Legal Aid
Society in the criminal division at that time. It was
pretty much as a volunteer, because they asked me,
"What are your expenses?" And they gave me a check
for my expenses.

Diamos: And that was it?

Lewis: Yes. But I was, my husband was supporting the family,
so there was no problem about it, and he was happy to
have me do it.

Diamos: Your husband's name was?

Lewis: Maxwell Lewis. He had come up in social work and went into hospital administration. When the LaGuardia administration was preparing to come into office, Sigismund Goldwater, who was the head of Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, called my husband in and asked him if he would join the Department of Hospitals. There was an institution on Welfare Island where a scandal was going to break and they needed somebody to clean up the situation. And of all the people he knew working in hospital work, he thought my husband would be the best person for it. He said, "The salary is very low, but you get complete living for your family." My husband was anxious to take it, and I said, "Go ahead. You know, I'll go to work and earn some money. There won't be any problem." But the salary was increased as time went on, so there was no problem about that.

Diamos: Were you married before you started law school?

Lewis: I was married in the last year of law school. I had been going with this young man who was from an Orthodox Jewish family, and I was very much in love with him, as he was with me, and I have been tremendously, I had a tremendously good life. Tremendous. I've just loved it. I've been among Jewish people during my lifetime with him, and have

found them to be very wonderful people. At least I was fortunate in those that I met.

I decided that I didn't want my kids calling "dirty kike", as youngsters in New York at that time were wont to do, so I took them over to Stephen Weiss'--I guess it's a temple, but they called it a synagogue, because it wasn't an orthodox place--on the westside in New York. And I went to Sunday school with them. I sat there in the Sunday school hearing the young Rabbi Edward Cline say to my children, "Don't trust the goyim," goyim being anybody who is not a Hebrew. And I argued with him about this and later I went back and apologized to him, after Hitler.

Diamos: I don't blame you. When you first came out of law school, did you go . . .

Lewis: Well, I continued to work for the same firm that I was working with while I went to law school. I went to law school in the evening.

Diamos: Saul Kohn's [firm], I mean.

Lewis: No. At that time it was Elfers and Abberley. I had switched to them because the Kohn firm would never consider, to their last days, taking on a female attorney. But I was the office manager and my job was to get the lawyers to take their feet off their desks and go to work, so there would be enough money in the till at the end of the week to pay them their

salaries. Because we had some lawyers, believe it or not, who were lazy. I could not believe it and I have never met a lazy lawyer in Arizona. I'm here since 1957. But I met a few lazy lawyers in New York. I was one of ten thousand lawyers on the tip of Manhattan. And I was getting nowhere. But I was amazed when my son Frank and his wife came to me in New York. They were both--Frank was under Frank Hogan, the district attorney in New York County at that time, doing a good job, and Frank Hogan liked him very much and he was going up in the department--and his wife had her masters degree in economics and had a good job with a stock brokerage firm. They came to me saying, "As soon as we've saved enough money we're going to Arizona to live." And I said, "That god-forsaken place? Give it back to the Indians. I was through there in 1936 and the only place we could stay was some kind of a run-down inn and the woman there gave me an agate basin with a cake of ice in it and said, 'Play the electric fan on this and open your window.' And it so happened she was right. It was nice air conditioning. But all the same, those are the conditions under which you'll have to live out there."

Diamos: Do you know how many women were admitted to practice law in New York City when you were admitted?

Lewis: No. But there were twelve women in my class in law school, which was considered a large number. And that school was very liberal. The reason being that they wanted the tuition. They'd take anybody's tuition.

Diamos: Now, after you were with that firm, did you go to work for work for the minority leader of the New York City Council?

Lewis: Yes. I stayed at home to raise children because I'd found--I had two boys--and there were too many problems so far as their health was concerned, with help. I had a marvelously healthy first baby who weighed thirty pounds at a year, and he got pneumonia twice, being taken care of by a housekeeper. And I almost lost him. He went down to eighteen pounds. I was just too concerned that if I didn't stay home and take care of those kids I was going to have problems with them. So I decided if I was staying home taking care of two, I might as well have a third. And when I wanted to have a fourth, my husband said, "No. I can't educate more than three kids through professional education. That's about the limit of what we're going to be able to afford." So that's why we stayed at three. I have three boys, two of whom have gone wrong. The oldest one is a physician who heads the Physiology Department in a medical school in

Linköping, in Sweden. The other two, Peter practices law in Baltimore and Frank, of course, in Phoenix.

Diamos: Frank is with the firm of Langerman, Begam, Lewis and Marks?

Lewis: That's right. Frank is having an enjoyable time conducting a people's law school. The Association of Trial Lawyers of America set up this program for bringing the public closer to understanding what the law is. It's really intended to understand what the lawyer has to do and for them to understand a little bit of what the law is, so that they can find out whether they need a lawyer, whether they can handle it themselves. And if they have a lawyer, to have a better understanding of the work that he's doing for them. And he had the session last time, over four hundred people desired to register for it, but the place that he had only had seating for a hundred twenty-five. So Paul Bender has offered him the use of the great hall [at Arizona State University Law School] and this fall the classes will start--I don't know whether it's September 26th. I've forgotten the date. But he will have people's law school over there. And right now they're enrolling through the local Arizona Trial Lawyer's Association, paying twenty dollars for the course and for the materials. He's gotten wonderful help from the bench and the Bar

in Arizona last year, for the courses. Chief Justice Feldman, Stanley [G.] Feldman of our Supreme Court, had the opening session and he gave those people a marvelous understanding of the setup of the court system and of the Arizona Constitution and the federal Constitution. He did a beautiful job. And then there were sessions in criminal, matrimonial and juvenile [law]. I think he went through, I don't remember whether it was twelve or fifteen lectures--from seven in the evening until eight-thirty and then with a half-hour of questioning sessions it went until nine o'clock. I assume he'll have the same format this year.

Diamos: That's wonderful. After you raised your children, when did you go back to the practice?

Lewis: When the youngest one, Peter, was seven-and-a-half he came in and said to me, "I don't want you to drive me any more." And really I felt that I was let out of prison. You know, my whole life was ferrying kids back and forth to everything they had to go to. And so I decided at that time, that I could go back. I had tried to keep in touch before. I had done work for various organizations and in addition had taught courses in municipal finance, that is the finance of New York City, and in the then new New York City code and charter, to members of various chapters of the

League of Women Voters in New York City. I would go into the headquarters there with the baby or with a toddler, and conduct the class. Somebody there, one of the girls on the staff, would mind the baby for me while I was doing it. Or else I left them at home with help. My husband always provided me with help in the house, which made life easier.

In connection with the League of Women Voters, I'd like to mention the fact that before the League was formed, Carrie Chapman Catt called a meeting of various women and said, "When Mrs. Leslie died"--that was the Mrs. Leslie who succeeded her husband when he died, as editor of Ladies' Godey Book, which was the forerunner of women's magazines. Because women needed something from which to copy or make patterns to make their clothes in those early days. She left me her estate, which was around nine hundred thousand dollars. We had both been in the cause of suffrage for women, and I knew that she would want me to use this money for that purpose. And I have so much left over"--and I forget whether Catt said it was two hundred twenty-eight thousand or twenty-eight thousand, I've forgotten the amount--and we have to decide, now that we have the vote, what we will do." And one of the women who was present stood up and said, "Well now that they've given us the vote"--and

Carrie said, "Just a minute. They didn't give us the vote. We bought it. It wasn't until I hired a Madison Avenue advertising firm and those people said, 'Chain yourself to the trees at the White House,' that we got the vote. And I paid them heavy for that."

Well, to go on, the prestigious Association of the Bar of the City of New York was one of two bar associations--the other was the New York County Lawyers--to which New York City lawyers could belong. The dues for the New York County Lawyers was fifteen dollars, for the Association of the Bar it was seventy-five dollars. And you had to be admitted three years before you could apply for membership. So in 1928, having been admitted in June of 1925, I applied for membership. I wrote the secretary, enclosed my check for seventy-five dollars and asked for an application. I got a letter back from the president. Now they had a beautiful building on Forty-fourth Street in New York, but the most marvelous thing was their library and their librarian. I had been there for a number of lectures. It was open to any lawyers for meetings. It wasn't kept only to their membership. I had gotten help from their librarian on a number of occasions, and that was the reason why I was willing to travel to Forty-fourth Street--because I worked in downtown Manhattan--and

was so anxious to join. At those meetings I had learned where the ladies' room was: under the stairs, there were stairs on the right-hand side as you came in. There was a little powder room under the stairs. I got a letter from the president of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York--and this is now 1928--saying, "Dear Mrs. Lewis, we are very sorry that we cannot have women members because we do not have sufficient powder room space."

Diamos: You accepted that?

Lewis: I went over and joined the New York County Lawyers. A number of years later, I got a letter asking me to membership, and I could not contain myself. I wrote on the bottom, "To hell with you." And I sent it back to them. I was sorry afterward that I did it. But the thing that that did to me was something that may or may not be right. I don't know. But it would not permit me to join a women lawyers organization, until this last year, when I joined the one here, being asked by so many women lawyers here to join, that I couldn't refuse. Because I did not want to do what the men had done to me. I didn't want to get into an organization that was closed.

Diamos: But the Arizona Women Lawyers Association does have male members.

Lewis: I understand. I understand. That's why I was prepared to join that. But all through the years, in New York, the women would say to me, "We've got to push ourselves. They're not giving us appointments to the bench. We're sending our business to men. We're not sending it to each other." And I'm saying, "I'm sorry. I'm not going to be part of doing what they did to me. I'm not going to be part of that."

I had one other incident, it doesn't have do with law. I had a friend who had graduated a year before me, and who was an executive assistant to Stanley Resor, who was the head of the J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency in New York City. She called me up one day, and she said, "Amelia, I want you to come over to lunch--you know we have an executive dining room here--on such and such a date. Mabel Walker Willebrandt"--W-I-L-L-E-B-R-A-N-D-T, who was on the staff of the U.S. attorney in Washington, D.C.--"is coming up to visit. And I want you to meet her." So, I was there and I met her, and we went into the dining room. She was trying to recruit women for the U.S. attorney's staff in Washington, D.C. And I told her, "Aside from the fact that I'm not qualified, I couldn't leave here because I have a husband who's working here, and I have a child. So there's no way that I could go to Washington, D.C."

My friend said, "You'll have to excuse me for a minute. I have to take care of something for Stanley." And she got up and asked for everybody's attention in the dining room, and she said, "We have a winner for our contest, and I want to make the presentation today, in Mr. Resor's name." She said, "I have a check here for five thousand dollars to present to," and she named the young man. And he came up and everybody applauded. She gave him the check and shook his hand and came over and sat down. I asked, "Who is he and what did he do?" And she said, "Oh, he's a copywriter." And I said, "What did he do?" And she said, "Oh, we had a contest. We have a client, Dutch Cleanser, and it was a question of trying to increase sales for the company." And I said, "Why did he win? What did he do?" "Oh, he said, 'Make the holes on the cans larger.'" I immediately went into a campaign: "Housewives, only open two of the six holes. Because they want you to throw more of their product down the drain." The next thing I knew, they had punched out the holes and put a paper over the top. So my next appeal was, "Only pull the paper back so that two holes show." The next thing that happened was, if you pulled any of the paper, the whole thing came off. So I said, "Don't buy their damned product."

Diamos: Did you work for the Office of Price Administration [OPA] during World War II?

Lewis: Yes. At that time I was working as legislative assistant to Genevieve Earle, who was an Independent, politically. Her husband happened to be the Republican leader in Kings County, which is Brooklyn, New York. But she remained an Independent. She was the minority leader of the city council, and she talked to the League of Women Voters and said, "Have you any idea where I could get a woman who knows something of the law, who knows the New York City Charter, knows anything about the New York City budget? Does there exist anybody like that?" And they said, "There sure does. Amelia Lewis." So, at that time I was acting as executive director for the Parents' Association in New York. It was what would be in other places the parent's-teacher's group, but in New York only the parents wanted their association. The teachers at that time had the teacher's union and they felt that they would do better being in an organization by themselves. So I left there and took on the job of being her legislative assistant.

My job was to take all the bills that were introduced, to examine them. I had--this is what led me to take a master's degree in writing legislation, later when I was able to go to New York Law School

some years later--examine the legislation, make any research necessary to determine whether it was good or not, and then write up for all of the people in her unit and give one copy to the leader of the Democrats, the opposition.

The only thing I remember particularly about that was, a company, a drug company offered Narcosan to the City of New York Department of Corrections without charge. Narcosan was touted as the best withdrawal for drug addicts at that time. And I found out that Dr. Gold, who at that time was an editor of the U.S. Pharmacopoeia, was going to be at Rockefeller Institute. He was coming up from Washington, D.C., and I was able to get an appointment with him. I told him that the city council, one of the Democrats from Queens--the company I think had an office in Flushing in Queens where it manufactured drugs--was offering Narcosan to the Department of Corrections and the Department of Hospitals, free of charge for drug addition withdrawal. Dr. Gold said, "Whatever you do, do not touch that product. It's just a placebo." There's nothing to it." So I said, "Am I permitted to quote you?" And he said, "Of course."

So I went back and I wrote my report , but instead of giving it to everybody, I go to Quinn, of Queens, who introduced the bill, and I give him the

results of the conference. You know, I felt this was the most tactful way to handle it. I thought he'd withdraw his bill. He turned on me. He gave everybody the information. He did it; I didn't do it. If I had done it would have been worse, I think, than the fact that he did it. But anyway, his fellow Democrats, while they wouldn't have anything to do with me, a Democrat who was working for an independent, you know, they felt I was a traitor for doing this. And I said, "All I'm interested in is good legislation. If you introduce good legislation, I'll say it's good. If you introduce bad legislation, I'll say it's bad. It's only my opinion. You can pass it if you want, you know. All I'm doing is working to give you advice., and Genevieve is paying me and she's telling me, 'Give you the advice.'"

So the leader was with me, and a number of the other people were with me, so they never passed it. Quinn never got over being angry with me about that. And I guess maybe it was one of his big constituents and was a problem for him. And he didn't know that the stuff was bad, and he was probably angry with himself, you know, for getting into something like this.

But one day the head of OPA came into our office, and I was sitting and talking with Genevieve about

something, and he said, "Don't you girls know there's a war going on and that your country needs you?" And I said, "I thought we were helping our country by carrying on and getting legislation, proper legislation passed in the City of New York." And he said, "No, I need you up at OPA." He said, "I know Genevieve can't go. She's an elected official, she's got to be there. But what are you sitting here for?" So Genevieve said, "He's right Amelia. You want to go, go ahead."

So I went up to work for OPA, the Office of Price Administration. I had a territory assigned to me I had to visit and see that the local boards in each of these areas was carrying out the matter of setting prices properly. I found, for instance, this situation in one district: there were a number of local candy stores that made lunches for school children, where they made a five-cent sandwich. It would be two pieces of bread with either a slice of cheese or ham or bologna or something on it. With mustard, no butter. And the price administration group there, the local group, insisted they could not raise the price, even though the bologna and the ham and the rest of it would be costing them more than seventeen cents a sandwich. They insisted that these mom and pop shops had to continue to sell these

sandwiches to the kids at five cents. On the other hand, when the bar people came in and said, "The cost of liquor has gone up. We can't charge seventy-five cents for a cocktail anymore, we have to get a dollar." They gave them permission to raise the price of the cocktails. This was the kind of thing in the Office of Price Administration, that you had to keep fighting all the time, at that time.

Diamos: Excuse me--did you run into a lawyer called Arthur Goldbaum, in the OPA office?

Lewis: At this moment the name isn't familiar to me. I don't remember it. I wasn't working as a lawyer. I wasn't in the legal office. Where he wanted me was out in the district, because he couldn't get lawyers to go out in the district. And he told me how important it was, because of my knowledge, that I be out in the district so that I could give him a better report than he was getting from the people who were going out. But I wasn't able to find much in the way of illegalities, except these price changes that I was talking about. And no matter how much I showed them the regulations and how to handle it, they were saying, "It's our decision to make, not yours. Thank you very much for your advice."

There were very many excellent things. I'm just pointing out some of the things that have stuck with

me over the years, as being unfair. But I'm sure that the business of holding down the price of sugar and other commodities was very important. We had black market too. We would have had tremendous price difficulties if we hadn't had the Office of Price Administration.

Diamos: Did you go to work for the Legal Aid Society?

Lewis: Then, after that, my husband became ill and asked me if I would stay at home and help him out. To take care of him. And when he got better--because he had developed rheumatic fever while he was playing basketball for City College, that had damaged the valves of his heart. He had problems with that all of his life. And finally died at the age of sixty-two. But anyway . . .

Diamos: That was in 1956?

Lewis: It was 1955. I stayed home, and then when he felt better, he said, "Why don't you go give the Legal Aid some of your time?" So I made an appointment with Florence Kelley, who was the head of the criminal division. That's where the Legal Aid Society of New York sent me, because she needed people over there. The district attorney in New York had given the Legal Aid Society room in the Criminal Courts Building, to conduct their efforts. At that time my son was on the staff of the District Attorney. In talking with some

of the assistant district attorneys, they said, "We came here for the purpose of fighting mobsters and crooks that are getting away with large sums of money, and we find ourselves having a large juvenile calendar." New York had a youth court for youngsters fifteen to twenty-two years old at that time, that was held in the Criminal Courts Building.

Kelley assigned me up there. And one day there was a sixteen-year-old who was being charged with having stolen a bicycle, and this kid started crying. It was impossible to stop him crying. The judge called a recess and of course I was attorney for the defense, I was representing the kid. So I took the kid over to sit down on the bench and I put my arms around him. And he had his head here.

Diamos: On your chest.

Lewis: When Florence walks in. She says to me, "What the hell do you think you're doing?" I said, "I'm giving my client what he needs. Right now he needs mothering until the court gets back." She said, "What do you think you are, a psychiatrist or a psychologist or something? You're here to practice law. You're not here for the purpose of mothering anybody or filling their psychological needs." And then she said to me, "Out! You're out of this court from this minute on."