Guy Lescault

Conducted by Hulett “Bucky” Askew

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BA: This is the oral history interview of Guy Lescault. It’s taken on September 3, 1991 in Atlanta at the law firm of Powell, Goldstein, Fraser and Murphy. Bucky Askew will be conducting the interview. The topic of the interview will be legal services in the south from 1977 to 1982. Guy, why don’t you tell us a little bit about your background before you became involved with legal services.

GL: Well actually this is being 45 years old half my life has been involved with legal services in one form or another. I grew up in the northeast in a conservative family and had no legal background in the family. Went to Union College in Schenectady, New York during the 60s but would not say I was an activist, studied American studies and basically was interested in design urban design with Ed Loeb who had ironically enough was the creator of mass urban renewal which came later on in my life to oppose. Initially you that was my field of study and my father died when I was in college and my guardian being a judge said I should go to law school and I could do what I wanted later. A lot has changed since then. The law school was Albany Law School . . . started there in ’67 as part of Union University in Albany, New York, a very conservative law school where we sat alphabetically, wore a coat and tie and there was perhaps one woman in the entire school and no minority students. Entering law school I thought that one would simply go through and get a law degree then go into design at some point. A long-winded answer to your question legal aid never occurred in my mind initially upon entering law school. It
was actually only upon I think one’s life is shaped to a large degree by exterior events and the emerging at that time of the Vietnam War and the loss of deferment for law students found me I think in ’68 as the Nader point . . . I was somewhat reeling from the death of Martin Luther King I think . . . impact of the fact that you’re in law school studying law and seeing what’s going on around you seemed hard to reconcile. And that coupled with having to join the army something I simply didn’t understand and I spent the latter part of my first year in law school at Camp Drum at the reserve Army. When I came back to law school the school was closed and on June 6, 1968 I took my exams by myself when Kennedy was assassinated. So rather than responding to the question they wrote I wrote somewhat oracle on lack of law . . . some how or other the law school passed me barely. I thought that might close out my career at the law. I then took off for California, and lived in San Francisco again in 1968 was the at the peace movement there, came back and clerked for a judge in the supreme court in New York who was a rock star Republican and as clerk as long as I didn’t wear any McCarthy buttons or do anything outrageous he would accept me as a clerk. The army lost my papers, therefore I lost of a year of law school if I was looking to go back and it was only in January following the election of Richard Nixon that . . . something . . . I went in the army in January until June of 1969 and had decided I simply would not go back to law school but would go to Aspen and be a ski bum and then those people who influence you for whatever reason a friend who say you can ski later in life said that it was probably harder to go back to law school. I returned and went to the work for the attorney general of Massachusetts and lived in Cambridge and the attorney general at the time, Eliot Richardson had left to go to Washington, a new guy named Quinn came in and actually
gave his student interns, which is what I was, a large degree of responsibility or at least it appeared that way at the time but we wrote a guide on how to sue in small claims court and created an ombudsman in retrospect it’s somewhat appeasement but he took a lot of activist people in which was probably was unusual. Some of them kept in touch with one is now the U.S. Attorney for the Commonwealth. It’s interesting to see to what degree that class . . . returned to law school begrudgingly with the idea that I would transfer and I finally got in contact with Legal Aid in 1969 somewhere I clerked that fall for a law firm who . . . the senior partner was the founder of the ACLU chapter in New York in great admiration and respect for him, he was Jewish and said the hardest case he ever had was . . . He was one of the founders of Legal Aid and suggested I work at legal aid. Legal aid at that time . . . was a legal aid society that was not activist oriented and took begrudgingly cases and in my humble opinion was not utilizing the services of law students that well and there was a lot of strife within that particular program. Still I would sign upon for my hour in legal aid and go work for Lawyers Guild which was doing a major case a penalty on voting rights, that somehow balanced my interest. But I thought that I did have the benefit of different experiences and I returned to the attorney general’s office because there was in Boston again (1) personally I wanted to go back to Cambridge and (2) more exciting than any other job offer. But at least I had been exposed to legal services and even went back and clerked there again my senior although the external events of closing down the university and all of that, marching, activism and demonstrations to the degree when I was finally graduating a year later than I should have, the Dean said to a perspective student if they wanted an opposing view of the school they should talk to me . . . high compliment for what I set out to do. But I hadn’t elected to pursue a career in
legal services. If anything I think I was tired of all the civil organizations and activism and saw that return to rural life appeal. So the first mentor in legal services was George Bruno whom had advertised for VISAT that appealed to my social activism that Peace Corps could apply the law, work in legal aid in a rural setting. So I went off and interviewed with him and I think all my life I thought of him . . . lot initial impression but I think most of us are bound by that. I went George who was prematurely gray conservatively dressed I thought ah you are supposed to have overalls on and be working for the people at least a sign saying working for the people. But he assured me that his vision of legal services was compatible with mine that he wanted to put together a statewide program this would be 1971

**BA**: In New Hampshire.

**GL**: In New Hampshire. And I thought well fine give that a try. I hitchhiked across the country that summer prior to going to VISAT and was arrested for having long hair and all kinds of adventures like that that sort reconfirmed any doubt about the nonsense going on with the war and as luck would have it my VISTA assignment the first people I met through that were Paul Newman and David Gilbert who were supervising the assignment to the old OEO of VISTA attorneys to legal service in New England and both impressed me at that time. I was sent to Lebanon, New Hampshire, which is near Hanover so from a personal perspective I had the best of all worlds I was a VISTA earning $3,000 a year living in this fantastic house in Hanover availed myself of all the facilities at Dartmouth. George was the program was headquartered in Concord and he had a backup unit under the law reform aspect of legal services at that time which was a tremendous resource because the attorney with whom I was assigned was a atypical in
my opinion the old legal aid society a good day was a no business day. And he was an elderly man about 65 and a native and was a friend of everyone there in a tightly knit legal situation I was obviously the long-haired outsider. In retrospect too that was probably a good balance because my entrée to the court expedited by my working with him. Legal aid in New Hampshire was a wonderful and invigorating experience. Some of the entities we founded are still in existence, some of the law suits actually could go into court and challenge at that time everything . . . judges have to get a TRO it’s all very wonderful and exciting coming out . . . New York which had much delay and frustration. And you could also go back to the glamour of the past but there was also I moved eventually to Manchester and became a managing attorney and deputy director. But there was insularity as well that I think is a negative aspect of legal services. I found it most disturbing as I got older perhaps there was always a we/they mentality. We against they being everyone else reinforced being in a rural community like that you were only small knit gathering. I remember introducing Barbara Star to the U.S. district court judge who wanted to know how to pronounce Ms. Star to be one of the first women attorneys in the state she very quickly said you may call her Attorneys Stars and end all confusion. There were some fantastic people who came through that particular period of time. One had been a clerk to Brennan on the Supreme Court he came to do a major utility challenge and I view George Bruno as being an excellent architect of what a services program with very narrow funding during this period but we applied and received three times funding from outside sources. To a large degree it was George’s perception of public relations, good bar relations, going around the state and you were in a hostile environment somewhat like in Mississippi . . . where he had his newspaper and a governor who was
adamantly opposed to legal services, called it Communist. . . . Melvin Thompson, native of Georgia and the Manchester Union Leader which were consistently attacking anything that legal services did. Legal services had statewide support and did a good job I think in putting together a program where none had existed before and I found that my real interest I liked working with the community groups, I liked the training, we did a lot of paralegal development and training and tried to teach people that it was broader than we and they, that one had to act in the client’s best interest. Some of the situations we had where people felt to be a real legal service lawyer you had to be working 12-15 hours a day in the office had reached a point in Manchester, when I was managing attorney one night when I realized I had fallen part of that when the receptionist was there at 10:30 at night . . . at her desk because she didn’t want anybody to think that she wasn’t a true supporter of legal services the absurdity was obvious. The fact that we did good work sort of negated it but I think on the whole it was probably an unhealthy environment because there was not a broadening of participation I think it would have made probably a far greater client acceptance

BA: It was a very effective program though wasn’t it?

GL: Very effective and it attracted an incredible number of applicants, had no problem recruiting, primarily because of its geographic area but legally and structurally it did very well. Have some people there now Bob Gross who came the first summer I did, has been the director since 1976.

BA: Robby Gross. Does the directorship turn people’s hair gray up there?

GL: I think it’s the old man in the mountain syndrome. I thought that personally speaking I realized my interest lay in management, administration of legal services. I had
an opportunity to work on the congressional act in Washington, in terms of lobbying on
he Hill and some out-of-state monitoring, one of which was here in Atlanta, the National
Paralegal Institute. This was the first time I met Dan Bradley and Bucky Askew and Dan
was the regional director at the time came over to observe the training. I knew of Dan
from George because they had been in Reggie class together and so I was very interested
in what I had heard in terms of what they were trying to manage a number of programs, a
vast number of areas in the south not covered at the time and I simply wasn’t aware of.
And under those OEO days you were somewhat of a tight knit community in terms of
nationally who was where.

**BA:** Is this ’74-’75 something like that?

**GS:** January 1, 1975. About that time I realized that under a five-year plan that I
had set out my life, tried to change every five years, that I had done and just got a
$250,000 grant from the Catholic Charities . . . and felt that program was rock and rolling
along fine, that anything else would be repetitive and told George I wanted to leave. He
offered me a sabbatical but I thought it was probably in everyone’s best interest to leave
and without any idea I think what I wanted to do more than anything was just some time
to think and had never really been off on my own so to speak. I mean my jobs that I had
previously had been somewhat connected so . . . intern at the State Department, rejected
foreign service but had never really gone off and do whatever you want. There was the
luxury there that the timing allowed for so I left the country in August of ’75 and vowed
to be on the top of Kilimanjaro for my 30th birthday, that was the impetus to go but it was
a wonderfully broadening experience in retrospect . . . I had an opportunity to travel to
Egypt and met very interesting people and down through Africa, lived in Africa, had little
or no contact with legal services, did some snippets but not any real communication and had no idea what I was going to do. I ended up working on a kibbutz near the Lebanon border, traveled around Europe, living in Greece, one of my brothers came to visit he and his wife and said to wander is to travel is to experience but to wander is to be nomadic that I was becoming nomadic and I didn’t appreciate the Greek sunset anymore. And he was correct and made me realize that I would probably continue to drift with no goal and direction. Came back in October of ’76, the election of President Carter, still a registered voter in New Hampshire and decided that I didn’t want at that time Bob Gross was the director, I think I probably would have gone back and worked in the program but it didn’t seem like stepping back in time and there were some things going on I thought on a personal level live in Washington. And then again one of those people that comes up in your life my friend Caroline . . . whom I had met in January of 1975 in Atlanta monitoring the Paralegal Institute we went to lunch and she said it’s most exciting thing with the new corporation would be the Atlanta regional office because there was great opportunity to do great things. Dan had decided to go out to California but to contact Bucky Askew who was looking for a quote regional management specialist.

**BA:** Have you ever forgiven Caroline for this advice?

**GL:** I remind her of it periodically but it’s one of those events that I came down in December ’75 and met with Bucky, talked about what a regional management specialist would do since no one had any earthly idea it was a brand new position but at least it wasn’t filling someone’s shoes. He had been given a territory 21 programs covering from Louisiana and Arkansas and the rest of the traditional south having somehow or other lost his mind and given away the Virgin Islands so that one-person
show was to cover the entire territory and desperately needed somebody there that at least would try to help get around. And made the decision with that sort of well I think it was based on why not, I don’t know anyone in Atlanta, (2) it will give me an opportunity to continue my wanderlust to travel to areas that I never lived in and it’s all high growth which I liked because it wasn’t coming into any bureaucratic position. And arrived in January. The corporation was brand new and went off to Leesburg, Virginia to retreat with everyone else and no one knew what they were doing under Charles Jones field service but somehow had the sense and Bucky having hired Clint Lyons as deputy director that was it going to be an exciting opportunity, some of which I had not been prepared for, arriving and there was Opie Byrd and Bucky and an office full of audit reports that someone . . . regional management specialist seemed the likely person to look through those. I never really had an accounting degree but we pulled it together and did what I thought was very exciting. I mean I had been to a lot of these places before but flew to Birmingham and met with the board of the Legal Aid Society of Birmingham and saw within a matter of a few moments who said they could not abide by the promulgated LSC rules and regs so they were de-funded. I mean there were no guidelines as to how one went about it we just created a new Birmingham Area Legal Services the next day and they received the money. There is something to be said for the lack of a lot of bureaucratic procedure but it was . . . heady days

**BA**: Was the state of legal services in the southeast in 1976 or ’77, what were programs like generally?

**GL**: Well the programs that existed were only the urban traditional urban legal aid society, the land of being the elder . . . in the region but in any state there would only
be maybe three or four small located in Tennessee, Memphis, Nashville, Knoxville, Chattanooga so your rural areas was really not . . . geographic area in the south . . . so the whole expansion . . . was going to be under the formula adopted an opportunity to for the first time go into rural counties and to pump up existing programs, make new ones or some method or means get every county, parish in Louisiana, covered as quickly as possible.

**BA:** Can you generalize about those old OEO-funded programs, what they were like when you first had a chance to visit them or experience them?

**GL:** Having come from an old OEO-funded program I was somewhat taken aback. I think the biggest surprise was Louisiana. I thought when Bucky sent me over there my first tour of duty that it was just perhaps he was giving to exaggeration but no in fact this was beyond the pale of anything I had seen. It made the gentleman with whom I worked in New Hampshire seem dynamic in comparison. Basically other than New Orleans program you had a little program in Baton Rouge, Shreveport, southwest Louisiana wherever that is, Delta, the one-attorney program. Bucky sent me through to do a grand sweep and I think was wondering about my whole decision to accept the position and had come back from meeting with some of these people who made absolutely no sense, had no perception of legal services as we envisioned it to be.

**BA:** Lake Charles.

**GL:** Lake Charles. Backing up a bit before I came to accept the position there was a project directors meeting in New Orleans and having just come off my around the world and not really knowing many of these people I came and it was an old hotel in New Orleans and the first thing I heard was a complaint about the accommodations and I
thought wait a minute I’ve been sleeping on hard ground in the outback of Africa and these people are only worried about but that put aside I quickly realized that most of the people had a long standing commitment some are still serving as project directors in the programs when I met them in January of ’77.

**BA:** Not in Louisiana thankfully.

**GL:** Not in Louisiana. But I think of people like Ashley in Nashville and Dennis . . . in Louisville, Thorns, North Carolina been around a long period of time. I think that was very helpful in making strategies to develop legal services. These people were not all brand new. They understood the lay of the land and served I think as good advisers as to how to proceed to cover the states.

**BA:** Seemed to be a real mixed bag back then of all of them under-funded but some fairly decent programs that were like Atlanta Legal Aid or . . . maybe that were doing good things and a mixture of these really terrible little programs that had never gotten any direction or support from OEO or the corporation and what was some of the things you tried to do, did you put resources into those bad programs and try to straighten them out or did you pay attention to the good ones and try to help them?

**GL:** A combination I think. It would have been devastating to try to cover every county, boost up every program and do everything at once. The philosophy of the regional office Clint and Bucky was one of technical assistance where there was going to be the formation of a new program or there was going to be working with an older program that perhaps needs some assistance. I think you touched upon it with . . . if one isn’t given any assistance which OEO had not primarily through lack of funding in those programs, Louisiana and Arkansas had never even seen or heard of legal services, there
was no guideline, no measurement, no what are you trying to accomplish or any standard of achievement. Given that scenario it’s not altogether surprising that there were so many weak programs. I think one of the early exceptions in this region was trying to share as much as possible by creating a state support Kentucky comes to mind because I think that was one of the early and first Office of Kentucky State Legal Service Programs served as a conduit for pooling the resources providing the technical assistance and looking for direction assistance in expanding to the counties. Preceding my visit up there I think Bucky had gone to Owensborough and then . . . get out of the county and obviously

**BA:** I turned that one over to you . . .

**GL:** . . . figured out on our own given the size of the territory what was work and not but relied on project directors like John Rosenberg and Dennis Bricking . . . help put together the programs to cover the remainder of that state. It became apparent to me that this region was unique in that it was approaching it had perhaps the most expansion to be accomplished and it was also approaching it in a much different mode than some of the other regions. The corporation had never said how things were to be expanded simply as a task to be accomplished but this region with its history going back and their relationship with the project director . . . one of assistance mode rather than a bureaucratic monitoring function. And that was very healthy because I don’t think I would have felt comfortable if I had been in an office that perceived that as it sole function. Legal Services Corporation was growing so fast if you think of the fact in ’77 when I arrived we had 21 programs receiving I think it was something like $30 million

**BA:** Seven or eight million
That’s right had gone from $7 or 8 million to the ultimate 80 programs . . . more than funded nationally in a very short period of time three years. It was very exciting work because you are creating new entities hopefully in your own image and likeness knowing of course what that was to be but you had an opportunity to meet with very exciting people who continued their involvement in legal services. I remember in Arkansas with Hillary Rodham who Bucky and I flew some little plane to Fayetteville and she brought us to the best barbecue in the Ozarks, but to create programs that she was working with in Arkansas and people who came forth in previously unserved areas I think some of the most interesting and had stayed involved in the program. The greatest difficulty we faced was where is the staff going to come from and one of the things I enjoyed working with Bucky and Clint was one would conceive of things and the other would do the details and put it in place. I’m not sure who did what but somehow they thought it would be fun . . . sort of reminded me of the old Andy Rooney let’s have a recruitment party. We will do for the south we will have all these law students come to Atlanta and all of the new programs, that particular year some 30 programs and they will be hired and it will be easier. Betsy Neeley had joined us at that time, Betsy at least had the modicum of sense to say huh. Pre-computer age we somehow managed to pull off index cards which gave every student five interviews and held a weekend marathon which impressed the corporation . . . that period of time ’77-’78 because of the substantial . . . that we did here impressed the corporation which later became incorporated so it became a . . . division with field services. I think of that as a tremendous success with little or no staff. I mean there was Betsy, Michael Terry and myself by that time. We
finally did get a real management specialist Joe Rose but I’m not sure that happened until the end of ’78. And I think those are the types of things that the regional office role

**BA:** How did the regional office role view of itself in the south compare to the view that other regional offices had? Was Washington telling you what your mission was to be and how you were to carry it out or basically left on your own to set your own course. And how did that conflict or compare with what was going on in other regions?

**GL:** Well interestingly enough I had my contacts with Paul Newman and David Gilbert had moved out to Colorado, Meg Connolly so there were people that I felt comfortable with but I had a sense that Charles Jones, as the first director of field services, set out a policy which brought together we would come together at least four times a year it seems but without a lot of guidance and direction, it was more of a reporting function and I think I had some pride in the fact that my reporting was somewhat looked up to by other regional offices that we had not thought of or had the energy perhaps on their own to implement what we had sought to do. I don’t think we perceived that we were going to be number one it’s just that the task that had to be done and therefore applied a little more creativity to the application of the job at hand.

**BA:** If the Atlanta region staff had this attitude of technical assistance partnership with programs, sharing decision-making even with programs certainly came expansion do you think that was the attitude in the other regional offices around the country?

**GL:** No I think it was more perceived as a monitoring function, that we are your grantor, these are the rules and this is our job and you can see the consequences even to this day in the various roles relationships with programs I think little effort was being made in a lot of regional offices to provide a state support mechanism which we saw
selfishly perhaps as a tool to assist us but at the same time a vehicle with which to provide training internally as well. Now also in a large number of programs that had to be created the energies were going in that direction so that the monitoring capacity yes we saw the need to make sure the programs were fairly compliant but there weren’t the older programs maybe in the northeast or in states like Pennsylvania where you simply went around, we were starting new opportunities I think that may have made a difference but there was not a universality within Legal Services Corporation. Also there was internal jockeying if you will between the office of program support and the office of field services and a rush to get the dollars out of Congress. It all seemed like you would go to these national meetings and . . . going in somewhat of a little different direction.

Charles Jones left in ’78 and recommended to Tom Erhlich, my recollection was that Clint Lyons came in as deputy director, come to Washington the office of field services and Clint and Bucky went in tandem and I had tremendous respect for that decision. I was pleased to see them leave but I think it coincided with again our creative effort to . . . series that’s in the first announcement was made . . . being the project director training which had not been done before. A lot of what Bucky and Clint had done I think if one takes into context a larger entity it was an opportunity to expand that into the office of field services in Washington and perhaps implement it on a national level. Well being somewhat sorry to see them leave I still viewed it as all for the greater good because it was giving us an opportunity to do what we had done here but on perhaps a larger scale. So I felt comfortable in their departure only for that reason.

BA: That coincided with a lot of frantic expansion activity in the south. What was expansion like for a regional office in the south back I those days?
GL: Well somewhere along the line it had been decided that there should be a process and so we began I think by late ’78 at least by ’79 holding public hearings in every county and parish where there was to be any funds and it became more bureaucratic but within time it was a wonderful human experience not for the individual having to do it. One typical expansion week 95 percent of the time being on the road would be three hearings a day, morning, noon and night. Saw the Day in the Life of Justice so many times that I think I can recite it verbatim. We would show the film, we would listen to again either a representative from the bar would stand up and say they had always taken take of their poor and they didn’t see any need for the expansion, why a representative would stand up and explain they were now too old to paint the attorney’s barn that they needed free legal services. So many of times it was very moving and I think may have dispelled by going around and showing the film that this was not some Washington-inspired entity coming in. Betsy Neeley and I did a lot of them and it was a long day at the time you thought it was worth it but I think in the end that perhaps . . .

BA: A lot of decisions were made during those years involving lots of money in retrospect do you think those decisions that were made were qualitatively made, were there mistakes made along the way.

GL: Sure I think there were mistakes made but I don’t think they were made if there were any mistakes made it was perhaps not deliberate I think they were made in a good faith effort. For example Louisiana was a problem trying to I think a great deal of time and effort was made to bolster up the existing programs so they could expand, to introduce the whole notion of what legal services perhaps should and shouldn’t be and a refusal by many involved to accept the notion that there was a regulation and one could
not have outside employment . . . an anathema to the state. [GAP IN RECORDING] . . . expansion in the Alexandria area where the young attorneys said only a fool would work for legal services when you can make at that time which was a considerable amount of money when just getting out of law school as an assistant parish D.A. so there were those types of reactions. I think that a positive thing was the tremendous amount of money that was available was our effort to use that money in a deliberative sense to take the applications for the technical assistance money and do things that were not being done before, primarily around state support or training. I think we viewed that a large entity would be in a better position to provide legal services that would withstand political pressures that would . . . proceeding with one county program. We entertained all applications and I think the vision of the Legal Services Corporation of Alabama had survived because of the effort of time put in to a year or two process of putting an organization that was going to have . . . rather than going after every little county. And I think that except for those programs going to that what some perceived as a holding back on funds but I think if you are going to create a new entity you are going to have to spend those monies and still have a management structure to allow for . . .

**BA:** Was it you that defended Representative McCullom to the extent that he’s still with us today or was that someone else in the regional office?

**GL:** It must have been Michael Terry, Michael Terry had Florida I think that was probably the case at the time there.

**BA:** What happened in terms of growth? You started with 21 programs in 1976 or whatever, what did you ultimately end up with in the south?

**GL:** Over 80.
BA: Including state support offices?

GL: State support including even a willingness as we were expanding to entertain judicare, we made judicare grants and those were exciting days too though with Bucky and Clint in Washington and Dan Bradley coming in as president. He was the first person who came from the legal services background . . . it seemed like tremendous growth with the number of program, increased $320 million in funding. That it was finally going to be in a position to go after serious money to even get the programs up to the standards you would like to have them, so you basically took in rural areas young staff. I can remember going to rural Kentucky and we had people say that you don’t understand what’s it like to work in and fill in the blank. We don’t have time to do priority setting, too many cases, too many people. I said you’re always going to have too many cases and you’re just not going have enough money to do it and that’s the whole purpose of the regulation not an imposition. And I said by example you can’t do a utility case because you don’t have anyone with experience and someone raised their hand and said yes I read about a case in law school which was the example to me of the mindset was that’s all you needed and you could go out and do anything. So the idea that you could eventually provide training backup centers draw a network task force really accomplished . . . very exciting. One of the negatives I think in the south, come back not necessarily in chronological order, was the fact that the clients council took the position that all clients had to be eligible clients. And I think the advocacy that clients would have in the rural south . . . it was good for both entities perhaps in the northeast which had a history of housing . . . perhaps . . . welfare organizations but in most of the areas we were attempting to expand there were not entity apply. So the individuals who were the most
articulate spokesperson would perhaps be a minister who not a client . . . but someone who had the best interest of the community at heart and had done some work but was not found eligible. Those individuals were eliminated from the boards and I think it made it more difficult in many instances to create stronger boards. I think in the expansion era we had some difficulty with organizations in trying to put together boards where for this reason the rural areas as well as not real strong bar support and I think . . . great respect for the people who came forward to help put together some of the organizations that were not very popular areas.

**BA:** A lot of these grants were made over bar opposition or grants were selected from organizations that the bar was competing with for the grant?

**GL:** Yeah I don’t think there were that many hostile as I recall, there were some every now and then, grant that would be brought in. I don’t recall going to battle much like they had been in Mississippi back in the old OEO funding days. Some of the good work had been laid out already. I think there was an acceptance if you will used the comparison to the civil right that okay may not like it, may not agree with it but you go along with it.

**BA:** At worse they just took a walk.

**GL:** Yeah uh huh. And again tried to inculcate that thing that I had learned in New Hampshire, it’s not a we/they so that we would make efforts in recruiting individuals that they were not take that hard stance and only legal service people here can understand all the bar is against us, etc. Some of the areas, yes.

**BA:** So all this led up to 1981. What happened?
GL: What happened in ’81?

BA: Well what happened with the regional office for instance when and the election and the entrenchments and the changes it started in ’81.

GL: The regional offices all grew as a result. There is a funding mechanism based on being the largest funded region, and we had the largest regional office staff and nine people something like that, more than nine at one point. Kathy Mitchell had come down and worked for Tom Ehrlich as the deputy director, David Webster and Jackie Bennett came over from Atlanta Legal Aid. There was Betsy and myself, Bob Millem came as the regional management specialist, Joe Rose as a regional management specialist. Every region had a regional training board. Plus we were the first to use consultants to a large degree to assist us which is very helpful because in going into programs we did do monitoring, . . . we would take the position that we are come to visit what particular problem are you having and I think of for instance in Ozark Legal Services where they had a director who was gung-ho on video and telecommunications and we brought down a professor from BU who had legal service background and telecommunications to help us . . . technical assistance grant being made by that program who wanted to link up everybody by TV. And we saw the role of monitoring not as a are you in compliance but helping us to make a decision. A lot of it was very beneficial to people. It interchanged with different regional offices they had an opportunity to see what we were attempting to do. But we had huge . . . Legal Services Corporation in Alabama, North Carolina . . . technical assistance we wanted to go in and offer something concrete to the program which was difficult . . . I think if anything the program that got the short end of the stick for all of these years was probably Atlanta Legal Aid. We knew that they were doing
okay so we’ve got a lot of other things to do out there. But the regional office grew, Washington and I remember going to a meeting in Washington right before the election and Dan Bradley saying that it looks like Reagan was going to win. Reminded me back in New Hampshire when that Hanover Boston Washington, D. C. didn’t know anything about . . . governance and couldn’t understand why it wasn’t going to in. And I guess into that legal service it’s discomforting to have leaders say that . . . and things didn’t look too good. I’m trying to think when I had met Victor Gemanani as the consultant down in Miami in 1977 and thought who is this character because

**BA:** Still wearing his purple suit

**GL:** Came darting through talking a mile a minute sort of exit enter and didn’t stop, had an opinion on everything, I thought . . . this guy back to Massachusetts. Then when Michael Terry left in '82 Victor came in as acting regional director which was actually a breath of fresh air because I had contemplated leaving the regional office myself . . . any work situation where it hasn’t become pleasant no sense of staying there, I felt assured by Bucky and Clint that they were concerned and they were going to send down someone to help from the office of field service came Victor whom I thought but immediately realized his creative energies were necessary at that time. And probably turned out to be one of the most exciting legal services experience for all the wrong reasons. The election of Reagan and having spent all the gung-ho expansion opportunity find you are now faced with a projected zero funding galvanized people and different reactions. Survival by term alone I think some . . . and I think one of the people who helps me most during this period was Joe Lieberman whom I have tremendous respect for as one the first regional management specialist I had ever met who didn’t know what it
meant either but at least you could sit around worrying about that went about educating people as to what management of legal services was all about. There was a woman whom I had tremendous respect for, she would drive you, push you in these all night sessions and you wondered if she ever slept all but the training that was provided by field services to regional staff at this time I think was superb. To help you realize that I think it’s somewhat like rearing a child and the child’s kneecaps cut off and that that is what was going on with the reduction of funding. Rather than become catatonic the then Atlanta Regional office had it highest burst of energy . . . I think they had gone through a period of doing the processing of expansion but now saw itself in a reduction of work force mode of operation where what we foresaw as the work plan of ’81 and ’82 was to mobilize as fast as we could and concentrate in four areas and again the regional office was ahead of legal services specifically the private bar people came in at that time which mandated an X percent or whatever it was would go to the private bar. Jackie Mitchell, Victor Del Geddes . . . responsibility and made people like Dan Bradley very nervous, not that it was Jackie doing it but that we were going to host a reception for bar leaders in Atlanta over here at the Atlanta Lawyers Club all to mobilize what we thought to bring together the leaders of the private bar throughout the south with project directors could go about dialogue what would be mutually beneficial. I think . . . strategy as to how to use that piece. I’ve always maintained the survival of legal services . . . private bar and ABA. The other part was to create what we saw as the demise of regional offices nothing owing to the office of field services to look into a crystal ball and if you are going to eliminate an entity the best way to do it is to eliminate the internal supporters of the legacy that permitted legal services to survive and what would have happened under
OEO restrictions and efforts to keep the lines of community down. So it was the state support network that had been created saw those as hooking together advocacy, technical support and advocacy groups and brought together through a series of training events on substantive issues. Having Alan Houseman help put those together and the backup centers the idea being there was no regional offices that state support could take care of task forces on a regional basis because . . . We also set about putting the regional training center out of the regional office I'm not sure we succeeded well doing that but the concept was good that the training center should be out of the Atlanta regional office and . . . that training . . . An the last step that we saw . . . developed this region had no history of any outside funding you had pockets of maybe a little United Way but no one had any

[END OF SIDE ONE OF TAPE] . . . 1981 most programs were 100 percent LSC funded If you eliminate the funding . . . eliminate the program. Where some of the older programs throughout the country may have had a bit more because of their history so we sought regional resource development center. We use the term resource . . . got away from must money, it could be all kinds of assistance . . . and put that in Atlanta Legal Aid. We used a lot of the technical assistance money as we could for most regional concepts, task force, research level, training and state support as much as possible. We did triad events using programs helping programs work through the process. The corporation at the time, again under Bucky and Clint gave direction with . . . through Wharton School . . . provide tremendous amount of resources to help us . . . she articulated if I recall correctly was analogous to a divorce, you had part of an entity no longer going to be as you knew it and that you would have to disengage yourself in individual . . . And it was hard I think to accept because if you had this made this as a
lifetime commitment and goal and had to the wonderful chance to see the expansion to every county which we had essentially accomplished . . . but there was an entity in place. The horror of if all disappearing in a short period of time was very overwhelming and the energies . . . and then at that time and Victor brought together different people from across the country to work with the program. I think that a lot of the people we worked with are still there as project directors

**BA:** The decision Joe made about to put your time held up over time. It’s ten years late now and task forces are still functioning I think.

**GL:** Task forces, the resources of many of the Atlanta Legal Aid is a huge success story is now off and running with a Ford Foundation grant to help other programs learn how to raise additional money. The private bar worked on behalf not against legal services programs and I think a lot of what we accomplished has had a long legacy. There still is a lot that you can see that could have been that effort had not been simply fight for the survival of legal services over all that time . . . draining and at some point in time you wonder if it’s worth it and then you go back and you feel it all does make it worthwhile. I think the fact that this interview is being held at Powell Goldstein is testimony to the fact that the Atlanta Legal Aid training was held here and I can remember when I came to Atlanta in ’77 it was those firms there was not a partnership whereas now there is much more of an acceptance so I think that concept of we and they has gone by with the acceptance that we want law firms that meet those functions, that would be able to function as law firms and take a more active role in the community and I think they are doing that to a large degree. It hurts when you go the an ABA session and you have the president of . . . there are programs out there that need to be de-funded and I thought in
my mind when I heard that I could probably name them because they probably but I’m not sure de-funding . . . by the time you go in . . . the only de-funding we participated in was in Louisiana where the program that we had spent an enormous amount of time . . . wasn’t a hatchet mentality so we’re going to de-fund you, you are going to give you every opportunity . . . continue to function . . . whereas . . . feeling to monitoring . . . federal de-funding mentality . . . no opportunity for and it’s very sad.

**BA:** So it must be pleasing in a way in retrospect to look back and see what happened over the last ten years in spite of all that the hostility of the corporation and killing of regional offices and stopping of all those things that programs seemed to have survived . . . in this region pretty well and done pretty well in fact a lot of it to do with what happened in those couple of years to get them ready for what was coming and put them in shape where they could take care of themselves, wouldn’t need a regional office, wouldn’t need a friendly corporation to protect them after the change ultimately came. What happened when the change came, when Bradley left and a new staff of the corporation came in? What was it like in the regional office in those days?

**GL:** . . . had preceded by exist which was September of ’82 . . . and Victor left it just seemed that wouldn’t be any reason to stay I mean I never wanted to take a job to take a job. I think it hurt when I left too . . . but you didn’t feel you had accomplished all you had wanted to accomplish nor did you feel that anyone recognized what you had accomplished. People were basically were trying to figure out what to do . . . was to the bar . . . and to lobby in Congress to take that former leadership of LSC and put it over in NLADA so it became LSC . . . although I don’t think anyone anticipated the waiting would be this long. Up to the present day to find nominations to the board of what . . .
going back to the history of the working of non-political entity there would be free of political harassment and interference it’s just mind-boggling that you still have this degree years later. And I think that I would like to believe that legal services will survive in some manner and form, I don’t think it will ever be a division of what we had initially hoped for, I think too much has gone on in the past ten years, but its supporters in Congress . . . many problems. There have been people like Warren Rudman who was AG in New Hampshire when I was there, its sort of funny how some of these people come back through, Hillary who I mentioned came back LSC chair of the board who knows

**BA:** Maybe First Lady one day.

**GL:** Maybe First Lady one day. But it’s heartening . . .

**BA:** Who in retrospect who are some of the characters you remember from legal services in the south?

**GL:** The good and the bad?

**BA:** Well you don’t have to describe them that way but just characters.

**GL:** It’s full of characters, I mean it’s like going to . . . day every day.

**BA:** Do you remember a man Howard Bushey

**GL:** I remember the Colonel, Colonel Bushey was director of the Baton Rouge program and was retired military who thought it would be nice to manage a legal aid society, no one could quite believe him. He reminded me basically of Elmer Fudd . . . but he didn’t want anything to do with any people from Atlanta coming in and telling him what to do in his program. Clint Lyons went over there one time and the Colonel got so flustered and mad he was going to call Tom Erhlich and have him removed that day. He
was later removed himself. I’m not sure that the program has done any better in retrospect. We had Waddy Tucker up in Shreveport. He had no concept of legal services at all and brought a lawyer to get around the issue in Louisiana you don’t understand the Napoleonic Code . . . brought a lawyer I think . . . who had brought a lot of cases on voting rights to Louisiana courts and went to the U.S. Supreme Court and he went up and was aghast when he met Waddy . . . deputy director of administration deputy director of litigation . . . looked like Humpty Dumpty on a wall. They were earning a huge salary and not one having done a case in their lives . . . So it was he asked Waddy what was the most memorable case you ever handled and after about 20 minutes pregnant pause Waddy couldn’t remember anything so it must have been one and Waddy said yeah he did, he said let me tell you he said I helped a little old nigger lady one time get back her . . . Well that just did it, the guy lost his cool, went over to the desk, picked him up and said I never want to see the likes I haven’t spent my life working on behalf of voting rights and civil rights to have you put it down. He was instantly terminated . . . someone who knew the Napoleonic Code but this was not the type of direction we wanted. Somehow Louisiana comes to mind. Fred Spelding, Fred was the director in Lake Charles . . . Fred came to our attention first when he sent a memo over wanting to know if it be approved to go to London for a training event . . . probably just kidding to see if we were serious so Bucky and I went over to Lake Charles which somewhat like living under 20 feet of water but arrived one evening and Fred had found the only space in town that he knew of to put us up, the first time we had ever checked into a hotel that a . . . wanted to know why we were going to be spending more than an hour but Fred I truly believed
didn’t even understand what he had done and if he did had no common sense in doing it.

Bucky and I checked out but

**BA:** I checked out before you if I remember.

**GL:** That was . . . Lake Charles

**BA:** How about some good characters that were in this region.

**GL:** Some of the good characters, some of those characters are still around. I first met someone named Ashley Wilshire I wasn’t sure that Ashley

**BA:** Gone With the Wind

**GL:** Gone With the Wind and doctor of divinity and as frugal as they come and he will never be accused of having spent more than .29 on a stamp. Ashley would debate whether to put in another phone in a one-phone office but I had provided direction for continuance of that program and I think for the state throughout . . . I think Dennis Bricking and John Rosenberg have been models in Kentucky. John Rosenberg I often thought of as someone if I had . . . be somebody I would call if I needed legal advice and probably would drive from . . . to come and give it to . . . I had tremendous respect for him because in the dilemma of what . . . you rear your own children . . . public schools if you can afford them . . . that good and how he and his wife went about trying to work on the education . . . eastern Kentucky. And it has consistently attracted high quality people. Dennis would be embarrassed by being named lawyer of the year by the Louisville Bar Association. I think there is a maturation we’ve all gone through Thorns . . . in North Carolina I think helped work through the creation of legal services in North Carolina immeasurably by his longevity if you will in Winston Salem. There were some other memorable characters out of Florida as well. Howard Dixon and someone like Marcia . .
has been able to take a real tough program with its . . . multicultural diversity of clientele and manage it exceptionally over a period of time. I can remember first meeting her at about 1970 we did a lot of training and she came and her main issue at that time was the misspelling of her first name Marcia and I thought well if that’s your main focus lady you’re probably not going to last too long but she survived and I think survived well and I think it was a realization that she could call Atlanta and she didn’t have to go it on her own, that there were other project directors in Florida like Paul Doyle who she could call up and who could provide assistance. And I think that standard was set probably at the regional office. There is a lot of work to be done and you can’t do it all by yourself and there is no shame in calling up somebody and so we devised the buddy program. People like Thorns and Ashley and Jerry Becker would be buddies to new project directors and I think of them had survived as a result of that. It’s not a comfortable position I don’t think . . . my one experience as interim project director, in Memphis was only palatable by a very hostile board. The fact that I could call up people and say I need help, we need this and that, there is a lesson and I don’t think it’s appreciated in any of the other regions where there . . . problems were so bad . . . come forth and say I need some help. The present corporation was never one in which set out to provide help. So when my example before the program . . . be funded well where else . . .

**BA:** Well I closed my interview by telling Victor that when he became president of the corporation I’m ready and waiting to come back and work for him so I suppose you would send him the same message, the day he becomes president you’re ready and willing to go.
GL: Well Victor taught me . . . which has kept me active in legal services and I appreciate that because it gives me at least some feeling of continuum and at any time legal services comes back . . . I would be glad to serve in any capacity. I’m glad people have survived without . . . and I think through large measure through NLADA and the other entities that have kept . . . going MIE . . . ought a lot to showing or at least trying to continue . . .

BA: Well thank you for your time.

GL: Thank you.