

ORAL HISTORY OF HARRIET SHAPIRO
Fourth Interview
May 23, 2012

This interview is being conducted on behalf of the Oral History Project of the Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit. The interviewer is Judy Feigin, Esquire, and the interviewee is Harriet Shapiro, Esquire. The interview took place at Harriet's apartment in Rockville, Maryland, on Wednesday, May 23, 2012. This is the fourth interview.

MS. FEIGIN: Good morning, Harriet.

MS. SHAPIRO: Good morning, Judy.

MS. FEIGIN: When we left you, you were in law school and you'd met Howie, and we know you married. Tell us a little about that and how you juggled it all.

MS. SHAPIRO: We decided to get married, and Howie wrote a really sweet letter to my parents, which I have a copy of, and got a wonderful letter back from my father. I had told them, "He knows everything and he's interested in everything," and Mother said, "Does he like fishing?" [laughter] That was a rather peculiar question, but the answer was "no" [laughter]. He's a Chicago boy, he doesn't do fishing.

MS. FEIGIN: Did your family?

MS. SHAPIRO: No [laughter]. So, we went to Jack Weinstein – he taught Evidence, and he was somebody that we thought would know a judge who would marry us, and in fact he did.

MS. FEIGIN: Jack Weinstein who went on to become a renowned district court judge in the Eastern District of New York?

MS. SHAPIRO: Right. Black Jack. We said we wanted to get married. Howie was absolutely adamantly opposed to any kind of a formal wedding ceremony.

I said I thought it would be kind of neat to have him stamp on a glass. No, that was not going to happen.

MS. FEIGIN: We should say that's a Jewish custom, and I assume Howie is Jewish?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes, Howie is Jewish, but completely secular. If he had been religious, it would have been a real problem. But anyway, we wanted to get married by a judge, so we went and asked Professor Weinstein who we should go to, and he recommended a New York Supreme Court judge named Henry Clay Greenberg. We got in touch with Judge Henry Clay Greenberg, and he said sure, he would do it. So we went down. 'Becca and Donald Lancefield, who I talked about before, came down to be witnesses, and the judge said the important words, and we said the important words. I wish I could redo what came next because then he said, "Would you like to come to lunch with me?" We thought this was not an invitation exactly, it was kind of a command performance, so we sent 'Becca and Donald off, which we really should not have done. That was bad. But anyway, we had lunch with him, and then went off on our honeymoon. We were married on Friday, June 25. I had just started as editor-in-chief, and we were working on the first issue.

MS. FEIGIN: What year was this?

MS. SHAPIRO: 1954. So, I didn't have any time off. Howie didn't have any time off either. He was working as a summer associate for RCA in the general counsel's office. So we took the weekend off and we went up to Woods Hole, and Howie remembers with great pleasure the fact that we

ran into some old family friends downtown in Woods Hole, and I introduced him as Mr. Shapiro. He thought that was a little odd [laughter]. I guess it was a little odd. Anyway, we came back Sunday night and I went back to struggling along on the Review and Howie went back to work.

MS. FEIGIN: Let me just ask one question before we get past that weekend. When you say he wrote to your parents, was that an old-fashioned letter asking for your hand?

MS. SHAPIRO: Not exactly. Asking for their approval, I guess, but no, it was we have decided, we have thought about it carefully, and we're responsible adults, and we're going to do this.

MS. FEIGIN: Had your parents ever met him?

MS. SHAPIRO: Father had. Mother had not. Father was on some kind of a lecture thing for Sigma Psi. They have distinguished scholars give lectures at various universities, and he was doing that in 1953 so he was nearby. He came to New York, and I met him. Howie was going to come and join us, and Howie didn't turn up, and he didn't turn up, and he didn't turn up. Then he came, and he thought I had asked him to get a first day cover of a stamp. I don't know why he thought that [laughter], but he had been waiting in line to get the first day cover. So when he turned up, he had the first day cover [laughter]. They hit it off. Obviously they both had a common interest (me). They really did hit it off.

I think Mother was perhaps a little bit troubled by the fact that

Howie was Jewish, although for me it would have been an awful lot more trouble if he had been Christian because I had been so indoctrinated against Christianity. But ethnically and culturally, he's Jewish. His full name is Howard Eliot Shapiro, and 'Becca suggested that maybe it would be a good idea if he dropped his last name. Howie would absolutely not do that. He's Jewish, and he's proud of it. And it hasn't been a problem at all, except (when the kids were little) for Christmas [laughter]. But anyway, Mother hadn't met him. But his Jewishness wasn't the real problem with Mother. Mother's problem, it's peculiar really, was that she never thought any of her children's spouses were worthy of us. And what's peculiar about it is that I think we were all kind of surprised at that reaction – when we were kids, we knew she loved us because we were her children but that she would think people wouldn't be worthy of us, for heaven sakes! But enough of this.

We came back from our honeymoon, and I moved into the apartment instead of his former roommate, Leonard Sims. I don't know how we managed. We managed, of course. I thought I knew how to cook [laughter], but I did not. I knew how to make mayonnaise [laughter]. I learned how to make hamburger.

MS. FEIGIN: Did he cook?

MS. SHAPIRO: Howie? No [laughter]. He can when I go away. Particularly when the kids were little on the rare occasions when I would go away, he would cook for them. But that's not something that he enjoys doing. Neither do

I, particularly. I can put together a meal, but I'm not a fancy cook, and I don't particularly enjoy it. I don't mind it. I don't like planning for it and getting the stuff in the house. Before we moved here, the planning and cooking had to be done every darn day. It got a little tiresome. Other than the cooking, I don't know that life was that much more difficult than when I was single. Howie certainly was very supportive and always has been. We just did it.

During that time, Howie found his Uncle Herman. His father's younger brother was a very interesting character. He joined the Jewish Legion that was supposed to be helping the British drive the Turks out of Israel. I'm not exactly sure about the history of all of this, but at some point, the British were using the Jewish Legion to fight the Russians. Herman, who was a Socialist, decided that he didn't sign up for that, and he wasn't going to do that, so he deserted. He was a stowaway on a French boat that took him across the Black Sea. He eventually made his way to Europe and then to Mexico, learning French and Spanish on the way. Howie is very good at languages, and perhaps that's genetic because evidently Uncle Herman was too. And then Herman's mother got him into this country.

Howie doesn't know what happened, but there was some kind of a breakup in the family, and Herman went to New York. What Howie knew was that Herman was teaching Spanish in the New York school system. Howie is a great researcher. He found there was no Herman Shapiro in

the New York school system, so he figured Herman changed his name. So he looked for variations of Herman's Jewish name in the school records and Howie found him that way. Fortunately, Uncle Herman was really pleased to be found. He was living in New York in a rent-controlled apartment. He was a funny little man, he really was. With his wife, Sunia, he kind of took us under his wing. When we moved down here, Herman, who had a car in New York for reasons that aren't quite clear to me, drove us and what little stuff we had down here. We had come down beforehand to look for a furnished apartment, and we found a place right next to the zoo in Mt. Pleasant, which wasn't a particularly lovely neighborhood then, but it wasn't dangerous. It was on the third floor of an old row house. Uncle Herman and Sunia stayed the night. Herman said he had a terrible time sleeping because it was so quiet outside. He couldn't bear the silence [laughter].

We took the standard D.C. bar exam review course with Mr. Nacrelli and took the bar exam, all during a very hot June without air conditioning. Howie was convinced that he had only barely sneaked through, and I was convinced that I had done very well. As usual for us, before the exam, I worried like anything about it, and after the exam, Howie worried like anything about it [laughter]. But we both passed.

MS. FEIGIN: You came down because he had a position in the Honors Program at Justice, right? Did you have a job lined up?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes. I had a job lined up with the Atomic Energy Commission, but I couldn't start work until I got my security clearance, which took a couple of months. Howie started work at the Justice Department even before passing the bar.

MS. FEIGIN: Anything particular about graduation from Columbia?

MS. SHAPIRO: I went back up to New York for our graduation. Howie didn't go because we couldn't afford it. He was a GS-5, and he didn't get paid until July I think. But I went back up to receive the Jane Marks Murphy prize, which at that time was for the top woman in the class. It was established in honor of Ms. Murphy, a Columbia Law School graduate, by her widower. I think it was just based on grades. Now the prize is not gender-specific. I don't remember much about graduation.

MS. FEIGIN: So all your possessions, Howie's uncle and aunt, and you and Howie all fit into one car?

MS. SHAPIRO: Oh yes, easily [laughter]. I think that was when Howie started saying, as he has said at every move since, "When I was in the Army, I could put all my possessions in a duffle bag, and what are we doing with all this stuff?" [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: I'd like to know a little bit about what it was like looking for a job. How did you go about doing it? Did they come to law school? Who did you interview with? What was it like?

MS. SHAPIRO: We decided we wanted to work in D.C., not New York. Howie got into the Department of Justice Honors Program. I didn't apply for it. I don't

know why I didn't apply for it, but I didn't. Recruiters for the federal government did come to the law school. The recruiter for the Atomic Energy Commission was Jimmy Morrison, a lawyer from the Commission's General Counsel's office. He was enthusiastic about the work in that office and persuaded me that it would be interesting to work at a new agency where fundamental issues were being decided. It was.

MS. FEIGIN: When was the agency founded?

MS. SHAPIRO: It was created by the Atomic Energy Act of 1954. Though I didn't interview for any other jobs, I had a couple of personal problems. One, Father, being a geneticist, was fighting with Strauss, who was the chairman of the AEC at that time and Father believed was so ignorant that he didn't even know how to pronounce his own name (he pronounced it Straws) [laughter]. Strauss maintained that a little radiation posed no health threat; basically that fears of radiation were exaggerated. Father, knowing that x-rays were one of the standard ways of inducing mutations in experimental animals, disagreed. He was convinced that even low doses of radiation were harmful. Such doses would not be fatal, but they should be avoided. He wouldn't let us use those machines they used to have where you could see your feet in your shoes, and he believed that you shouldn't get your teeth x-rayed unless there's some real reason to do it. Even before the full health effects of non-lethal radiation exposure were recognized, Father was convinced that the Atomic Energy Commission was not being straight. He believed they should have known

of the potential dangers, so their public reassurances were either due to ignorance or intent to deceive.

Since Father was in this ongoing fight with the AEC, before I accepted the job, I called him and said, “Would you have a problem with this?” And he said no, he wouldn’t. After all, this was me and this was my life.

MS. FEIGIN: Maybe he thought you would straighten them out [laughter].

MS. SHAPIRO: I don’t think so [laughter]. His reaction was typical of his conviction that his children should make their own life choices.

My problem was, I guess I told you about Hope, her run-in with the U.N., and I told Jimmy Morrison that I was kind of afraid that that might mean that I couldn’t get cleared. He said that the FBI collected the information and passed it on to the agency for decision regarding whether to grant the clearance. He said that the people making the security decisions at the AEC were more reasonable than at agencies where security wasn’t as important, so he didn’t think it would be a problem. I’m not entirely sure they ever found out about my relation to Hope. The AEC security people only asked me about one thing: Father had written, I don’t know how many letters or whether just one letter, to the House Un-American Activities Committee during the McCarthy Era objecting to their activities. So the AEC security people asked me what Father’s views on Communism were. I told them he had told me once that, despite their very different theoretical differences, in practice, there was very little

difference between fascism and communism. So anyway, they decided that Father's letter didn't make me a security risk.

MS. FEIGIN: Was the AEC the only place you considered? Did you interview other places?

MS. SHAPIRO: I interviewed with Hogan & Hartson, and they sent me a letter.

MS. FEIGIN: A D.C. law firm.

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes. They sent me a letter saying that they had decided to hire, I don't remember who it was, but it was a law professor. They had one spot and they had given it to somebody more qualified.

MS. FEIGIN: Did you have any sense at the time, obviously your academic credentials were stellar, but that being a woman was a factor in any of the interview processes?

MS. SHAPIRO: I didn't really. Wechsler recommended me to Justice Clark, and he interviewed but didn't hire me. Howie is convinced it was because I was a woman. I don't think so.

MS. FEIGIN: How about in the law firm interview?

MS. SHAPIRO: No. I don't think so. I didn't have any sense of that at all. Obviously, the professor they hired was more qualified than me. I told you, didn't I, about George Washington, only it wasn't George Washington, it was Judge Washington. After we came down here, I got this call. I thought he said, "This is George Washington," and Howie says it must have been Judge Washington, and I think he is right, but fortunately I didn't say, "And I'm Martha" [laughter]. But anyway, the person he wanted to hire

for his clerk had dropped out and he said would I be interested, and I said, “Well, yes, I would be very interested but let me check with the AEC first because I have accepted a job with them and they are in the process of clearing me.” I checked with them, and they said no they really wouldn’t be willing to release me from my commitment to them.

MS. FEIGIN: What kind of judge was he, federal?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes, a federal district judge. But he’s not George Washington, he’s Judge Washington.

MS. FEIGIN: Could be both. Could be Judge George Washington.

MS. SHAPIRO: No [laughter]. Howie told me what his name was but I forgot.

MS. FEIGIN: You don’t sound at all bitter about that experience.

MS. SHAPIRO: No. It seemed to me entire reasonable. The AEC had already put a substantial amount of time and money into the clearance process. They needed me, so okay. I had told them I would do it.

MS. FEIGIN: I’m sure in part because your record was so great you had no problem, but there were twenty women in your class. Did you have the sense other women were having problems?

MS. SHAPIRO: The only sense that I got was from a woman in the year after us. She was a second-year student when we were third-year students. I think she must have been looking for a summer job after her second year, so I was on my way out. She went down and interviewed with one of the New York white-shoe firms, and they asked her what her typing speed was, and she was devastated, so I was kind of patting her head. That’s the only time I

came across overt sex discrimination. I find it hard to understand how Justice O'Connor had such a hard time – I mean she was the top of her class at Stanford and apparently had an awful time getting a job. Perhaps that was the West Coast, which strikes me as a little peculiar, but I mean that was after my job-hunting experiences. I just never faced that. Of course, my job search was largely limited to the government, not private practice. I told you that there were a few remarks made in law school, and this constant question of what are you doing in law school, but I never felt real discrimination either in law school or after. The only other time that I kind of got that impression was when I was telling the people in the military that I was not recommending a case for the Supreme Court or that I was not about to do what they wanted me to do.

MS. FEIGIN: This is when you were in the SG's office?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes. And I kind of got from them every once in a while a feeling of what does a mere woman know about military stuff. It was never explicit, and it was never a problem because I was telling them and they were listening, but they didn't like it. Nobody liked to be told no, but that's the only time I felt that kind of resentment. Of course there was the secretary in the SG's office who wouldn't work for a woman. But again, so what?

MS. FEIGIN: The secretary said, "I won't," and that was okay?

MS. SHAPIRO: They got me another secretary, and she worked for one of the men in the office. I didn't want her working for me if she had a problem with it, for

heaven sakes. But I never had any real feeling that life was tough because I was a woman.

MS. FEIGIN: Before we get to what life was like at the AEC, here we are in 1955. What was D.C. like?

MS. SHAPIRO: Well, I guess it was a small town. We didn't have a car. We were in Mt. Pleasant, and there's a hill. My geography is terrible, but on the 4th of July, we used to go down and sit on the hill. Was it in Meridian Park? Could have been. We watched the fireworks on the Mall. We got a good view of the fireworks from there.

We didn't go out to eat much. We decided we couldn't afford butter, so we didn't get butter. We couldn't afford coffee, so we had tea. Once we went out to the Hot Shoppes nearby and didn't have enough money to pay for it [laughter], so Howie left me as security and went home and borrowed some money from the landlord who was on the first floor [laughter]. We were poor, but we knew it was temporary.

MS. FEIGIN: When you say you didn't have a car, we should say for people who won't know this, D.C. didn't have a metro system then.

MS. SHAPIRO: No, but D.C. had a trolley, and we used the trolley. The trolley would take us from where we were in Mt. Pleasant down to Federal Triangle.

MS. FEIGIN: D.C. must have been quite segregated.

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes, it was. Mt. Pleasant, I guess now it's mostly Hispanic and black, but in those days, it certainly was not a wealthy neighborhood, but it was mostly white, I think, as far as I remember. We didn't have air

conditioning. Howie went to work before he passed the bar. He went to work in June, right after we took the bar exam. He wasn't working when we took the exam. Right after we took the bar exam, he started working at Justice as a law clerk, as a GS-5, and I was still waiting around to get cleared. When Howie went off to work, I would go down to the National Gallery of Art and sit in their air conditioned waiting room and write letters or read or whatever just to enjoy the air conditioning [laughter]. And then when he left work, we would come home together. It worked out just fine. It was kind of a small town. Although it was segregated, I wasn't particularly aware of it.

MS. FEIGIN: Weren't some of the stores, lunch counters, drugstores segregated?

MS. SHAPIRO: Probably, but I wasn't particularly aware of what was going on. Later, when I was working for the AEC in Germantown, one of the people in our small group of four friends was black. One of the places that people went for lunch was supposed to be segregated. So the four of us went to this place for lunch, ready and waiting to be outraged, but it was fine. Nobody said anything, and we were served without incident. But that's all I really remember about the segregation stuff. It makes me sound very kind of out of it, but it really didn't impact. I didn't run up against it. I was busy with what I was busy with without really being particularly conscious of what was going on around me.

MS. FEIGIN: Did it feel like a Southern town?

MS. SHAPIRO: No. Well, it clearly wasn't as cosmopolitan as New York. The restaurants had no idea what bagels were [laughter]. One of my favorite stories which is later than this actually, it was after we moved to Bethesda. A friend of mine came to town on a visit and while my older son was taking his drum lesson, we wanted to find a place where we could sit and have a coffee, just sit and talk. There wasn't any place in Bethesda where you could do that. Not one place.

MS. FEIGIN: And now there are thousands.

MS. SHAPIRO: Thousands. Yes. Absolutely. And that's the other story. Howie went to work, as I say, and I was sitting at home. He was in the Honors Program, and there was I think one woman in the Honors Program, Helen Buckley, and she said she couldn't quite figure out this guy with a wedding ring. He kept standing next to her, making conversation, and what was this all about. And finally Howie said to her, "Would you come home and meet my wife?" [laughter]. Howie had figured that I needed a friend.

MS. FEIGIN: That's sweet.

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes, it was sweet. And it worked. We got together once a week in the evening and sewed. She lived up in a slightly better neighborhood than we did. And we've been friends ever since. She likes to remember, and I like to remember, that Howie brought her home to me.

MS. FEIGIN: And last thing before we get to the AEC, just because you said he was in the Honors Program at the Justice Department, any early DOJ stuff that we should recount?

MS. SHAPIRO: He started out in the Civil General Lit Section and went from there to Civil Appellate, and then he went to Antitrust, and he ended up as Chief of the Appellate Section in Antitrust, and the benefit of that for me was that I never had to work on any antitrust stuff. I find it incredibly boring [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: Was Justice a very different place in the 1950s?

MS. SHAPIRO: I don't know. I do know from talking to Alan [Rosenthal] that Civil Appellate had a much smaller staff. Outside the government, Jews had a fairly hard time. They were discriminated against in law firms — or I guess there were Jewish law firms and non-Jewish law firms — so what happened was that the Justice Department got these incredibly good lawyers. Oscar Davis, for instance. He was absolutely my hero.

MS. FEIGIN: Why was he your hero?

MS. SHAPIRO: I guess I must have told you, he was the First Deputy in the Solicitor General's office.

MS. FEIGIN: You met with him when you came to D.C. in law school.

MS. SHAPIRO: Right. He sat us down and talked with us. That was the first time I met him or knew anything about him. He was a wonderful man. Not only incredibly bright, but really just a great man.

MS. FEIGIN: Did you get to know him?

MS. SHAPIRO: A little bit, yes. He left before I came to the Justice Department, of course. The other person that was there who was also one of my heroes was Bea Rosenberg who was in the Criminal Division. Oscar Davis and

Bea Rosenberg were really good friends. Those are the two that come to mind automatically, but there was a whole cadre of top-notch Jewish lawyers in Justice, just because that was where they could get an interesting job. And I think that perhaps to a somewhat lesser extent, that was also true of women, perhaps somewhat later. You got these really good women because they were accepted on an equal basis, and if they were competing on an equal basis, they got the job.

MS. FEIGIN: So at some point your clearance came through. How long did that take?

MS. SHAPIRO: I don't remember exactly. Some time in the late summer.

MS. FEIGIN: What was it like to be at a new agency? What position did you have?

MS. SHAPIRO: Interesting. The lawyers in the General Counsel's Office were assigned to particular divisions. I was a junior lawyer assigned to the Civilian Applications Division working under Bob Lowenstein, the senior lawyer for that Division.

MS. FEIGIN: What did that work involve?

MS. SHAPIRO: The Division of Civilian Applications was developing standards for the licensing of nuclear reactors. There were lots of regulations to be written, particularly safety regulations. We worked closely with the technical people in developing those regulations.

MS. FEIGIN: You had no background in any of this, I suppose, right?

MS. SHAPIRO: None.

MS. FEIGIN: So you just immersed yourself or became immersed?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes, I did. What I found fairly quickly was that some of these experts could explain things, and some of them just couldn't talk in English [laughter]. It's true of my son, the computer expert. He can't speak English. I cannot understand any of the technical problems that excite him. He tries to explain them, and he just can't. That's the number one son. The number two son is pretty good at explaining the technical details of his job. Anyway, at the AEC I found somebody who could talk in ways that I could understand, and he kind of gave me some lessons.

MS. FEIGIN: Was there a sense of mission in this new field? What was it like?

MS. SHAPIRO: Oh yes, there was. Certainly there was the notion that atomic energy was the wave of the future, and one of the things the technical people were working on very hard, and they were always just on the point of finding, was commercially useful fusion energy because it would not involve the risks of splitting the atom. Instead, you would be getting energy out of basically water. This was what was always just down the road and almost, almost, we're getting there, but it hasn't happened yet.

MS. FEIGIN: What about things like the Rosenberg trial?

MS. SHAPIRO: That was before I came to the AEC. We published a controversial note in the Law Review. Howie always said that the note should have started, "Sss boom bah! went the atomic bomb" [laughter]. After criticizing several aspects of the trial, we concluded, as I remember it, that the Rosenbergs were innocent, but her brother was guilty. There was a whole big uproar when the Law School administration learned of our proposed

note. Dean Warren, the dean of the Law School, called me into his office and explained carefully to me that we really ought to back off on this because it would upset the alumni and interfere with the Law School's fundraising.

MS. FEIGIN: So did you back off?

MS. SHAPIRO: No. Of course not. We believed fiercely that one of the missions of the Law Review was to shake things up [laughter]. We were kind of young Turks. We certainly weren't going to take any directions from the administration; we were independent [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: I can't imagine what it would be like at the dawn of a new field, writing the rules that are going to govern it for all time you think.

MS. SHAPIRO: It was fun. I did enjoy it, but I don't really remember having this feeling of being a pathfinder. The only time I really got that feeling of "my god, it's just me doing this," was in the SG's office, when I was writing a memo, an appeal recommendation on a First Amendment case, and I realized that what I thought about the First Amendment really mattered! Oh, how can that be? And that's the only time I really remember feeling, "wow." Otherwise, you did your job.

MS. FEIGIN: How long were you there?

MS. SHAPIRO: I was at the AEC from the fall of 1955 until the agency headquarters moved out to Germantown, Maryland, which I think was in 1957. I didn't want to drive all the way out there.

MS. FEIGIN: You were still living in Mt. Pleasant?

MS. SHAPIRO: Either there, or in an unfurnished apartment near Catholic University, to which we moved at about that same time. Charles was born in 1958, and we were in the apartment. Anyway, I decided I wasn't going to go all the way out to Germantown, so I went to the Justice Department in the Office of Legal Counsel.

MS. FEIGIN: This was after the baby was born?

MS. SHAPIRO: No, before. And I was there for about a year until Charles was born. Then like a good 1950s mother, I believed that when you have a child, you stay home with that child.

MS. FEIGIN: Was that an issue for you?

MS. SHAPIRO: No. There was no question in my mind; it was simply a given – of course my job was now to be a stay-at-home mother. So I stayed home, and it was okay. I sort of missed my job, but I was a new mother so that was fine. Then the second child came [laughter]. I dearly love my children, I really do love my children, but Charles was born in February 1958, Alfred was born in March of 1960, so they are basically two years apart. Staying home with the children was still reasonably doable until Alfred got on his feet, and this poor kid, he was just kind of toddling around, and he would interfere with something that Charles was doing, and Charles, being about 3 or 4 years old, would whop him. I spent the whole darn day trying to persuade Charles that it was not all right to hit your brother [laughter]. It was a struggle, it was a real struggle. And then Howie would come home, and I would be just dying for adult conversation, and Howie had had a

hard day at work. He was tired of talking; he wasn't dying for adult conversation. It was a struggle. It was a real struggle, until finally we both decided that it really wasn't doing the kids any particular good to have me tear my hair out.

About that time, a friend who worked at the NIH told me that the NIH wanted a compilation of state laws regarding property rights in dead bodies. It was important for NIH to get body parts fresh, really fresh, so they needed to know who had the authority to authorize the taking of parts from a cadaver. That right was governed, of course, by state law, and so they wanted a compilation of state laws regarding property rights in dead bodies. That was a perfect project for me. We had moved up to Glenbrook Village, which is right below Naval Medical and close to NIH, when Charles was a year old. So I went over to the library for a few hours a week. This was enough to give me a chance to use my head and to work without the interruptions of caring for two young and very active children.

MS. FEIGIN: Let's pick up on the part-time work for a second. Was that an unusual thing, to be able to work part-time?

MS. SHAPIRO: I was like a contractor employee. I think they were paying for the product rather than the hours, although I really don't remember what the financial arrangement was. Working part-time wasn't a problem. NIH wanted a specific product, and I wasn't looking for a permanent position. It could have been a problem when I went back to the AEC, but that's another story. I started the NIH project in the summer, so at first I had a babysitter

who was a high school student on vacation, with her mother as an unofficial backup. The following fall was the first time I hired an adult to stay with the kids. I went to the state employment office, and the first person I hired was awful. It's hard interviewing somebody and trying to figure out is this somebody you want to leave your kids with. I was just right down the street, but still.

MS. FEIGIN: It's a big responsibility.

MS. SHAPIRO: It's a big responsibility, and it's a big delegation that you're making. I guess probably by that time Alfred must have been about three, and Charles was two years older. With my first child, I didn't realize that you had to make arrangements for pre-kindergarten early on, so by the time I woke up to the fact that Charles was about to be ready to go to pre-kindergarten, there weren't many options. Fortunately, there was still a place at Green Acres School, so we sent him there. Do you know Green Acres?

MS. FEIGIN: I know of it.

MS. SHAPIRO: It was then, and I think it probably still is, quite a progressive place. Their basic philosophy was that the students were delicate little blossoms that had to be cherished, which was fine, especially in pre-kindergarten. Charles really enjoyed going to school, and the bus came and picked him up at the door and dropped him off after school, while I was busily checking all the state laws and cases on disposing of dead bodies.

MS. FEIGIN: We should say again for people down the road that there was no Lexis or anything like that in those days, so this research was a major project. It wasn't just pushing a button.

MS. SHAPIRO: No, no. The way I learned to do research was that you get a book down from the shelf and you read the case. That's the way I know how to do research. There were some wonderful old cases. One of the standard ways that this issue came up was when descendants were fighting over which cemetery the body should be put in. Many states had statutes that are relevant, but a lot of them didn't. Anyway, I kept at it. I did it.

MS. FEIGIN: It sounds like you found it interesting.

MS. SHAPIRO: Oh, I did find it fascinating, not simply because I could sit quietly and do what I was supposed to be doing, using my head [laughter]. Then, as I finished that project, Bob Lowenstein, with whom I had worked at the AEC, called me up and said, "I understand you're working part-time, how about coming back and working at the AEC part-time?" By that time, of course, we were halfway out to Germantown because instead of being in downtown Washington, we were in Bethesda.

MS. FEIGIN: Halfway toward the new location?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes. And I guess we must have had two cars by then. Anyway, I said sure, I would be interested. It was unusual then for women to be working part-time, but by a piece of dumb luck, the wife of the General Counsel of the AEC at that time was a doctor who worked part-time, so he was perfectly comfortable with that idea

MS. FEIGIN: What does part-time mean? How much did you work?

MS. SHAPIRO: My schedule was complicated, but it worked out to two full work days a week, two part-time work days when I picked the boys up from school, and one day a week, Friday, when I didn't go to work. It worked out to a little more than three days a week. By that time, both of the boys were at Green Acres, and we were in a morning carpool. They still took the school bus home. The way it worked was that I worked mornings when they were in school, and then two days a week I picked them up from school, one day a week they went home on the bus, and one day, Friday, I didn't work. So Friday mornings were my time to catch up on everything more easily done without the distraction of the children, mainly grocery shopping, and other errands.

MS. FEIGIN: When you went to the AEC, this was as an employee, not as a contractor?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes. A part-time employee. Actually, at first Alfred was still too young for full-day school. By that time, we had a good caretaker for the boys who was there when I wasn't. Alfred would wake up in the morning and know by whether I had on my "staying clothes" or "going clothes," when it was Friday. On Friday, he would say, "What are we going to do today that's special and fun?" [laughter]. Sometimes I could get away with going to the food store being special and fun, but not very often. I think we went bowling sometimes, but it was usually just something we did together.

MS. FEIGIN: Were you a groundbreaker? Were you the first person in the agency to do this?

MS. SHAPIRO: I don't know. Maybe.

MS. FEIGIN: Were there other women lawyers at the agency?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes. One of them, Katy Shea, was in the group I hung out with. So was Bill Stewart, the black guy we desegregated the restaurant with. So there was at least one other woman. They weren't particularly common.

MS. FEIGIN: What were you doing this time at the AEC?

MS. SHAPIRO: This was the time that I was working with the Classification Division. We spent a lot of time trying to avoid overclassification, trying to be sure that only documents that actually merited it were classified and that they merited the classification given. Again, that involved the careful drafting of regulations. And certainly at this time everybody was still thinking fusion was just coming down the road. Then John Palfrey, from Columbia Law School, came down to be a commissioner at the AEC. Howie had had him at Columbia, I hadn't. He asked me to be his special assistant, and that was what I did for several years.

MS. FEIGIN: What did that involve?

MS. SHAPIRO: Doing whatever it took to keep him up to speed. He was one of two lawyer commissioners, so he was mainly interested in the legal issues. My job was to act as a filter for him, identifying issues that deserved his attention and making sure that he was on top of whatever legal issues there were, and providing help as requested. Commissioner Palfrey had two

secretaries, and I supervised them. I did once lose a top-secret document and that was big

MS. FEIGIN: Did it get found?

MS. SHAPIRO: No, I don't think so [laughter]. The top-secret documents periodically got destroyed when they were no longer needed. The destruction process was very complicated and required careful documentation of each top-secret paper destroyed. I was responsible for signing the document certifying destruction. The loss turned up in a regular top-secret document review shortly after we'd destroyed a number of top-secret documents. I'm convinced that what happened was that I just slipped up and didn't sign off on the certification document when that one got destroyed properly.

MS. FEIGIN: Was it a problem?

MS. SHAPIRO: Oh yes, it was a big problem. The security people came around, very upset. "What do you remember about the circumstances, what was this, and whoa, wow" [laughter]. They weren't very confrontational, at least they didn't accuse me of intentional wrongdoing.

MS. FEIGIN: Any repercussions for you?

MS. SHAPIRO: No, though the incident probably went into my personnel file. It was a top-secret document, but it wasn't anything the Russians would be particularly interested in as far as I could tell.

After several years in which, working part-time, I was Commissioner Palfrey's sole Special Assistant, he finally hired an

additional assistant, a scientist. From then on, he had two of us, but for a long time it was just me, and it worked.

MS. FEIGIN: Did you work on anything of note that you'd like to comment on?

MS. SHAPIRO: I don't think so.

MS. FEIGIN: How long did you stay there?

MS. SHAPIRO: I stayed until the end of Palfrey's term as commissioner. I don't know how long that term was, maybe five years, maybe seven. Then I went back to the General Counsel's office, and I was there for maybe two or three years, until I went to the SG's office. My father died while I was still at the AEC General Counsel's office.

MS. FEIGIN: We'll probably get to the SG's office the next time because that starts a whole new chapter, so let me just ask about your father's death. Was that unexpected?

MS. SHAPIRO: No. He had cancer. He was a smoker, but his death was really traumatic for me. As far as that goes, it's the only time that I have ever suffered the death of somebody who was really close. Until then, I hadn't realized that when somebody like that dies, a whole part of you dies. The part that was me in relation to my father is just gone. It felt like a glacier losing a large piece of itself. But no, it was not unexpected.

One very precious memory is when I went to California to take care of him. Mother had an undiagnosed ruptured appendix and Father was pretty clueless domestically. Our children were about 8 and 10 so Howie could manage at home. I just picked up and left for however long

it took for Mother to get home.

We had a wonderful time. My household chores were nothing compared to my usual schedule. Father's cancer was painful, but he was still fully functional. He was in a reminiscent mood so I learned a lot about his childhood. We were a great team at solving crossword puzzles. It was just a nice time, though it was the last time I saw my father. He was suffering, so it was a good thing that he finally managed to get out of it. My mother and younger brother were there. He died in the night, and they were there the night before. Helen Buckley was out there and had visited him. She called me and said, "You better get out here." So Bill and I were on our way out to California when he died. These things happen.

MS. FEIGIN: When we start next time we'll start with a happy period in your life and a really productive period of your life which is of course the SG's Office.

MS. SHAPIRO: I'm sure I'm going to have holes in my memory there.

MS. FEIGIN: We'll fill them in. You'll remember. Thank you so much, Harriet.