

ABA Commission on Women in the Profession

Women Trailblazers in the Law

**ORAL HISTORY**

of

**MIRIAM WOLFF**

Interviewer: LaDoris Cordell

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ORAL HISTORY OF MIRIAM WOLFF

SECOND INTERVIEW

January 10, 2007

Ms. Cordell: Judge Wolff, we left off last time when you were going to tell me about your first job search. You'd just finished law school and now you were out in the job market. So why don't you tell us about that.

Judge Wolff: I think I told you that originally I thought I would look in San Francisco, and because I'd hoped that I would get a job in San Francisco. Then my mother asked me to come home. So, coming to Los Angeles to look for work was unplanned. Stanford law school had no placement service at that time, but the business school did. I did not contact their service but they called me a number of times, asking me if I would like for them to place me in a job. I had made up my mind that I wanted to practice law. It had become a challenge because I had years of skeptics saying, "oh you won't ever go through with it." So I kept saying to the business school, no, I really want to look for a legal job. Stanford did have friends in Los Angeles and one was a very nice man at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher. His name was Mr. Prince and he tried to place me. He would call from time to time and make suggestions about jobs. Now, mind you, I had taken the bar, but we didn't have the bar results yet. And so, and because the dean had really scared me about the idea that I was going to flunk the bar, I foolishly decided I would not take any job or look for any job that was dependent on my passing the bar. And, by the way, I did a lot of counseling for women looking for jobs later on.

Ms. Cordell: Oh, I see; advising other women.

Judge Wolff: Yes, and I always sat on that committee for Queens' bench and the San Francisco Bar Association. And I always told other applicants not to have that attitude. It was a foolish attitude to have had. But at any event, it had become part of my principles. But to back up, what Mr. Prince said was, "I'm so sorry that my firm can't take you, but there is no way we can take a woman lawyer."

Ms. Cordell: Did he say that to your face? (Inaudible).

Judge Wolff: That was a common response and was considered socially acceptable. It was mostly made in telephone conversations. The interviewer would state cordially that his firm was interested in hiring a new Stanford graduate – providing he was male.

Ms. Cordell: This is 1939?

Judge Wolff: Yes. This is 1939.

Ms. Cordell: '39. And so he says to you, in one way or the other, but very directly; you can't work here.

Judge Wolff: Yes. You can't work here but I'm going to try and find you a job. Which was much nicer than most people. In the O'Melveny office, for example, I could not get by the receptionist.

Ms. Cordell: So that implies that indeed you tried. Tell me about that.

Judge Wolff: I did. Because people were saying, people being men that I knew, were saying "Go to the various offices that you think you might like to work in and introduce yourself. Ask who is doing placement." Meanwhile, I was

working. I was volunteering at “legal aid” and I was going in a couple of times a week. And of course I couldn’t appear in cases, because I was not yet admitted to the bar. But I was preparing cases for the one man at legal aid who was admitted to the bar. An older man; I have no recollection of his name. He was a very nice person and what the rest of us did who volunteered we interviewed people. Helped them get their witnesses and their written material together. Do the things that have to be done to prepare a case to go into court. Write out their problems and so forth. Meanwhile I had space and a phone; that is, I had a desk and typewriter, in a law office of a young lawyer. In exchange for that favor, I was helping him research a couple of cases and one of them turned out to be *Bernhardt v. Bank of America*, which created bad law for California for about 20 years on the subject of “res judicata” and I actually wrote up the brief on that case. And so I was going between his office and the law library.

Ms. Cordell: Do you remember his name by any chance? Who’s that?

Judge Wolff: Oh yes. Joseph Brenner-Cohen, a very bright young man. He eventually left practice in Los Angeles for some job in Washington, DC where he later died. Actually I lost track of him over the years. He was very nice and very able. Part of the mystique which is always of interest to me and I like to point this out was we were really -- we being the United States --really coming out of the depression in 1939 and ’40. But the legal profession was still taking advantage of the depression, so it was common to hire young lawyers in effect and pay them nothing. In exchange they got a desk and if people were very

generous, maybe a secretary, maybe some payment for work you were doing and maybe not. Another recently admitted lawyer had lunch with me and said, "Miriam, you know, Joe's a very nice guy but you really ought to look for a place where you have a better office, where you have secretarial service and so forth." I agreed, so he phoned Samuel Greenfield's office. Sam eventually became a superior court judge in Los Angeles County.

Ms. Cordell: So, I'm trying to understand. You're volunteering a couple of days a week at legal aid. This is before you get your bar results. You're working out Mr. Cohen's office, right? And then before you moved on to the next place had you then gotten your bar results and you were now a lawyer (inaudible)?

Judge Wolff: Yes. I think by the time I went to Sam Greenfield's office was about the time I got the bar results.

Ms. Cordell: And what did you do for Mr. Greenfield (inaudible)?

Judge Wolff: Well I did more of the same. He had a very busy and successful practice. I helped with cases that he had and that was not too demanding. I filed papers, drew up documents. Then he had a multi-party case in the Federal court involving many plaintiffs, a class action suit. I cannot remember exactly what the real issues were but the first issue was which workers fell under Federal law and which if any did not. Because these people worked during the day, I did a lot of the interviewing at night, then wrote up the results the next day.

Ms. Cordell: And you say (inaudible) you're going to, coming to your office in the evening or are you going out to . . .

Judge Wolff: Yes. The interviewee came to my office. I also did interviews for negligence cases at night around Los Angeles. Fortunately taxis were very cheap. We lived in Huntington Park so it was a long way from downtown LA. Then, theoretically, you had your own practice. Well I didn't find getting a practice was my thing. I just didn't like doing it. So very early on I concluded that for me, if I really wanted to practice law, the thing to do was to go into public service.

Ms. Cordell: Before you go there, you started to tell me about your interview or attempting to get an interview with O'Melveny and Meyers so just what happened there?

Judge Wolff: I went upstairs. Joe's office was in the same building as O'Melveny & Meyers. They were a couple of flights above. I went up and said I'm Miriam Wolff. I graduated from Stanford, and I would like to have an interview with the placement person in your office. The receptionist said, "I'm very sorry. This office would not consider employing a woman."

Ms. Cordell: Now this is a woman telling you this?

Judge Wolff: Yes.

Ms. Cordell: And your reaction or your response was?

Judge Wolff: Thank you.

Ms. Cordell: Were you devastated?

Judge Wolff: I was not even surprised.

Ms. Cordell: Why did you do it, if you knew they were going to say no?

Judge Wolff: I didn't really know that. And my men friends were saying why don't you go up if you're interested. You're qualified. They're taking people from behind you in the class. Why don't you go up and see.

Ms. Cordell: So after you...

Judge Wolff: I do not give that advice to any other woman.

Ms. Cordell: So after you were told they will never consider hiring a woman, you go back to Joe's office. So do you have a conversation with anyone at that point and say did you go or this is what happened or did you just keep it to yourself?

Judge Wolff: Oh no. I told many people. I thought it was outrageous, but not unexpected. Most places would at least give you the courtesy of an interview. The problem in the O'Melveny office was the advice to go in cold.

Ms. Cordell: Did you have other interviews with other firms, though, where you went in and . . .

Judge Wolff: Frequently the interviewer you called said: "Well, I'm sorry we would not hire a woman." Firms said that for a long time, long after they started hiring women. Firms in San Francisco were saying, we wouldn't hire a woman.

Ms. Cordell: Was there also a Jewish, you know, prohibition too you think?

Judge Wolff: I don't know.

Ms. Cordell: Do you know anything -- about that?

Judge Wolff: I didn't sense that particularly. And certainly Stanford was something that opened doors. People really did not want to get a bad reputation at Stanford. Also Stanford was soon to get a placement service even in Los Angeles. But the point I really want to make was between the time that I went down to Los

Angeles in late October and the time that I got the Bar results in December, I had pretty well decided in my own mind that I would go into public service. It was not a difficult decision to make.

Ms. Cordell: Tell me about that. Why?

Judge Wolff: Because it was evident that if you wanted to really practice on a high level and do things that were really productive in practicing law and still be an independent woman – that was the route to take. It seemed to me it didn't take a genius to figure that out.

Ms. Cordell: Did you talk it over with anyone before deciding that that's what you wanted to do?

Judge Wolff: I probably told a number of people.

Ms. Cordell: How about your parents?

Judge Wolff: That was fine with them. I mean they assumed it was a perfectly sound decision. So I did take the examination.

Ms. Cordell: Is that the Civil Service exam?

Judge Wolff: Civil Service examination for junior counsel, and I passed. And that's before there were veterans additional points. So I passed it in the top three for junior counsel.

Ms. Cordell: So tell me again. You said that was before there were points for veterans? I'm trying to --

Judge Wolff: Yes. Once the war had started – the war was in the offing by the way. We all knew from the time I was in law school that we were going to be in it. We

assumed we were going to be in the war. In fact, most of us were really surprised that we weren't in already.

Ms. Cordell: So the Civil Service took into --

Judge Wolff: Yes, and then what happened is-- and also it was appropriate I think -- when people -- when veterans came out, they got an additional point preference on the Civil Service exams so that if you both got 90 percent and they got an additional five points, they were 95. But at any event, in the first Civil Service exam I took, there probably weren't any veterans getting veterans' points. So I placed -- actually I think I placed number one, but I placed high so that I was interviewed for all the jobs that came up. Meanwhile I was very busy and none of the jobs sounded very great to me. And I was busy, so I put myself on a reserve status. I don't recall what the terminology was which meant that I kept my eligibility, but I did not have to take the job. At the end of that year I retook the exam, and that also was partly because the good jobs were in Sacramento, and my father was still very ill and I really wasn't in a position to leave Los Angeles. No job was coming up in Los Angeles. So I retook the examination, and I very nearly left at lunchtime because I had some sort of an engagement in the afternoon, some sort of social engagement. And one of my men friends that was there said, oh Miriam, stay and take the afternoon exam with us and I'll drive you where you want to go. So I did stay.

Ms. Cordell: Okay.

Judge Wolff: And that one I did pass number one.

Ms. Cordell: Well, why did you take it again?

Judge Wolff: Because it expired at the end of the year or two years or whatever it was – at the end of the year.

Ms. Cordell: Right. So you stayed that afternoon?

Judge Wolff: I stayed that afternoon and passed very high and immediately got an offer – almost immediately got an offer from the Department – what was then the Department of Employment. Meanwhile, I had come to the conclusion that what I needed was trial experience. Stanford had not had any kind of trial work for law students. I felt perfectly comfortable doing research work, perfectly comfortable writing, but I felt that I was putting a client at a disadvantage if I went into court, that I really couldn't do that to a client and that I needed trial work experience. Someone came down from Sacramento to interview me, and I had turned down other jobs which turned out to be pretty good in retrospect. I said, I'm only interested in a job where I will have trial work. And he said, I guarantee that if you come with us you will have all the trial work that you want. So I did accept the job and what he said was true.

Ms. Cordell: This is the Department of Employment?

Judge Wolff: It was then the Department of Employment. It's now has a new name, but it still administers unemployment insurance. They did have cases all over California. I tried something like two cases a week, all over the State of California.

Ms. Cordell: Let me go back a moment. So this is what year, 1940?

Judge Wolff: 1942.

Ms. Cordell: And were you --

Judge Wolff: We were in the war by then.

Ms. Cordell: Were you the only woman or one of --

Judge Wolff: No.

Ms. Cordell: So --

Judge Wolff: No. There were two other women lawyers in that office in Sacramento, Beth Doyle who had been a classmate of mine at Stanford and Doris Maier who was later on the chief deputy in the criminal division -- head of the criminal division of the Attorney General's Office in Sacramento, both very good lawyers.

Ms. Cordell: So for this job did you relocate to Sacramento?

Judge Wolff: I relocated to Sacramento.

Ms. Cordell: So what about the impact on your family? Your dad?

Judge Wolff: Well they were, you know, by then they were reconciled to it and also because I had a lot of trial work, I was actually in Los Angeles a lot. And I could always arrange it so that I could go down, do a trial, spend Saturday and Sunday in Los Angeles, come back. We were not allowed to fly because this is wartime by then.

Ms. Cordell: Okay.

Judge Wolff: It wasn't until I was almost ready to leave the department that I had even one trial in Sacramento. But I had a lot of Appellate Court appearances and Supreme Court appearances.

Ms. Cordell: And what kinds of issues? What are we talking about?

Judge Wolff: The issues concerned the Unemployment Insurance Act. For example, Agricultural labor was exempt from paying unemployment insurance on the theory that farms did not keep records and therefore – and of course that’s basic. Part of the whole farmer’s problem has been this concept. So Board issued a ruling, that if farmers keep records then it was not agricultural labor. Now in California, farms are very sophisticated. They not only keep records, they send product to the East Coast, they stop it en route and direct it to another destination where the market is half a cent higher. It’s a very sophisticated operation. The Board’s ruling was ridiculous. I mean we had something like 20 writs of mandamus filed against the Department in one day. I tried a case in Fresno, that still embarrasses me, against the grape growers because that’s a very sophisticated operation. When Thompson Seedless come on the market, they are the first grape to the East Coast, and it’s big business. And there are whole rail cars that are being diverted from New York to Chicago to Philadelphia; wherever the market is higher. And I tried that case for a couple of days in Fresno before I lost it. And I tried a case involving apple growers in Santa Cruz county involving the same problem.

Ms. Cordell: So was it you against the farmers?

Judge Wolff: Against the farmers. Wonderful court experience. I mean lousy cases, but wonderful court experience. But I didn’t lose all my cases. I also got a judgment against an oil company, Sun Oil, which was the biggest judgment to that date that the Department had ever recovered and that record lasted for many years after I was out of the Department.

Ms. Cordell: And this is a judgment so that you're recovering tax money?

Judge Wolff: That's right, for the government.

Ms. Cordell: So who was your mentor during this time? Did you have anybody saying, okay, you want to litigate your trial work, here's what you need to do, or --

Judge Wolff: Well, the head of the Department, you know, it was a very busy department and I liked doing trial work. And I liked writing briefs. And I was willing to work at night. It was a great experience.

Ms. Cordell: So tell me about court. What did you, where were you?

Judge Wolff: Well, I learned my way around the court. I learned how to question witnesses. I didn't feel, you know, I didn't feel like I was exposing some poor client to an inexperienced lawyer. This is the State. It had a lot of resources. I had auditors with me. And I could call on other counsel if I needed them. It was different from private practice. As anyone knows, once you learn in court, you learn. I mean you're very soon a relatively sophisticated lawyer.

Ms. Cordell: Were you given respect in the courtroom?

Judge Wolff: Yes.

Ms. Cordell: There was no issue -- oh God, here's a woman -- none of that?

Judge Wolff: There may have been to some extent, but if so I was pretty much unaware of it. Also I was the representative of the State of California. It was different than going in as a single lawyer on a divorce case, for instance.

Ms. Cordell: So when you started, you were junior counsel, is that the title?

Judge Wolff: Yes. It started as junior counsel, but they retroactively advanced me to assistant counsel.

Ms. Cordell: And why was that?

Judge Wolff: Well, I think they wanted to keep me.

Ms. Cordell: That's a good way to do it.

Judge Wolff: And, so as soon as I got up there I took the examination for assistant counsel -  
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Ms. Cordell: Another exam?

Judge Wolff: Another exam. I like taking the exams.

Ms. Cordell: Apparently, you do quite well.

Judge Wolff: I would hate to do it today. They were kind of tricky. Most of them were true and false questions. They were not really that difficult.

Ms. Cordell: For you?

Judge Wolff: For me.

Ms. Cordell: So you were trying cases all over the state?

Judge Wolff: And I'm writing briefs. I was doing a lot of court appearances.

Ms. Cordell: This is what you wanted?

Judge Wolff: Yes. And then – and I actually enjoyed the work at the Department. The other thing was I was willing to work on a variety of cases – one of the things I had done in Sam Greenfield's office was a bankruptcy. Bankruptcy is a field that very few lawyers other than specialists know anything about. The case I did in private practice involved a woman who had lots of assets and should not have been bankrupted. She was being driven into bankruptcy by an irate male friend who was a publicly elected official. She entered bankruptcy with more than enough assets to pay all her debts and ended up bankrupt. So I

learned something about the intricacy of bankruptcy and debt collection in general. Well when I got to the Sacramento office, they had a collection department. None of the lawyers in the office wanted anything to do with the collection department. I thought the collection department really was fun. I liked the man who headed it. His name was Charles Ross. He had found somebody willing to take on his kind of thankless task. I remember doing a case in San Francisco that involved putting the sheriff in a restaurant on its opening day to collect the funds as they were being deposited. The debtor was a real deadbeat who was the kind of person being written up in all the columns as a very fashionable restaurateur, opening a very fashionable restaurant. I thought it was kind of fun to do it. And the collection section was forever grateful. So I had a variety of experiences with the Department that I still look back on fondly.

Ms. Cordell: So how many hours per day? When you get to the office about what time?

Judge Wolff: We got to the office at 8:30, and I had a room directly across the street in the beginning.

Ms. Cordell: Across the street from?

Judge Wolff: From the office in the old Brunner house. I had a room. Then I moved into an apartment about a block away. Then I left that and moved into another apartment across from the Capitol Rose Garden during the 18 months that I was there.

Ms. Cordell: So you get to work at --

Judge Wolff: I got to work at 8:30.

Ms. Cordell: And you just walked across the street?

Judge Wolff: I walked across the street. And then at 5:00 usually or whatever, you went home, you ate or did whatever you did. And I usually went back to the office because actually it was a good time.

Ms. Cordell: Cause it was quiet.

Judge Wolff: It was quiet, the books were available. You could write. We had dictating machines.

Ms. Cordell: So this is about what, seven in the evening you're back?

Judge Wolff: Seven, seven thirty, eight.

Ms. Cordell: You're back over at work.

Judge Wolff: Yes. And the only person I saw basically back at the office was the night watchman. He'd come by and talk to me.

Ms. Cordell: How late would you generally just stay? You were there 'til when?

Judge Wolff: Ten thirty, eleven. Like most young lawyers. You work long hours if you're really interested in what you're doing. The secretaries were very good to me.

Ms. Cordell: All women?

Judge Wolff: All women. And my fellow lawyers were great. You know, I had no problems with anybody.

Ms. Cordell: So we're talking typewriters, dictating machines?

Judge Wolff: Well, yes. I didn't have to type.

Ms. Cordell: Right. You're dictating, you had, you know, the secretarial pool, whatever, someone to work for you. During any of this time, you said it was 18 months you're at this job, did you think about, oh I think I want to be a judge ever?

Judge Wolff: Not ever. Never.

Ms. Cordell: And you've not seen any women judges at this point, is that fair at that point?

Judge Wolff: Well, no. Los Angeles always had a woman judge. I had appeared before a woman judge. I didn't have the impression that any of them had come out of a big law office. They'd become judges some other way.

Ms. Cordell: But you're not thinking, oh I want to wear a robe?

Judge Wolff: No. On the contrary, I did not. I wanted to practice law. I didn't really consider being a judge practicing law. I never did consider being a judge practicing law.

Ms. Cordell: So you worked for the Department of Employment, and you're there for, you said 18 months? Then what happened.

Judge Wolff: By then Stanford had a placement service. I had a call from the placement service in San Francisco saying would you like to become a chief – what did they call them – chief law clerk I think they called them for the District Court of Appeals. And I said yes.

Ms. Cordell: Why? Why did you say yes?

Judge Wolff: I wanted to go to San Francisco.

Ms. Cordell: Why?

Judge Wolff: I wanted to live in San Francisco. I wanted to work in San Francisco.

Ms. Cordell: Why? I mean why there and not San Diego, not Sacramento? Why San Francisco?

Judge Wolff: Larodis, that's a very good question. I have no answer for it. I like Los Angeles.

Ms. Cordell: Right.

Judge Wolff: I like San Diego. But San Francisco is where I really wanted to be. It was my idea of the place to live.

Ms. Cordell: And this job offer was in San Francisco?

Judge Wolff: And this job offer was in San Francisco and obviously a good job.

Ms. Cordell: What was the job?

Judge Wolff: It was chief law clerk for the District Court, Division 2. I came down to the interview and the three judges then were Judge Nourse, Judge Spence, and Judge Sturdivant. I considered them outstanding judges.

Ms. Cordell: So they're all sitting in a room? You come in and they start --

Judge Wolff: No. They interviewed me separately.

Ms. Cordell: Oh. Okay. Were you nervous?

Judge Wolff: Probably. I mean I wanted the job, and so -- and Judge Nourse, the presiding judge, said, of course you understand it will only be for a year, because that is the way that Court employed its Court Clerks. Actually it was a little over a year as it turned out. It was a wonderful job. I like that kind of work. I like appellate work.

Ms. Cordell: So you took this job, this would have been I think 1944 now?

Judge Wolff: Yes.

Ms. Cordell: Okay. So you take this job knowing you'd have this job for a year, and you moved to San Francisco then?

Judge Wolff: I moved to San Francisco which was no hardship. I'd done a lot of travel to San Francisco and I liked it. I moved to San Francisco. The war was on and I

discovered, first of all, that living in San Francisco was going to be expensive and secondly that it was not comfortable; you couldn't go around at night.

You couldn't walk from place A to place B. The streets were not that comfortable. And so almost immediately I came down to Palo Alto and became a commuter, which was my idea of what I really wanted to do anyway. I wanted to live down the peninsula and work in San Francisco.

Ms. Cordell: How did you get to work every day? Train, driving?

Judge Wolff: On the train.

Ms. Cordell: You took the train.

Judge Wolff: Yes. The train was great. And I played bridge on the train.

Ms. Cordell: Oh really. So you had developed this group of --

Judge Wolff: Well, I had always played bridge.

Ms. Cordell: But the people on the train, I mean you had to meet --

Judge Wolff: Yes.

Ms. Cordell: And so you had a regular group? Are they men, women?

Judge Wolff: Oh, they're all men.

Ms. Cordell: All men. And then you're a bridge player. Just to go back a second, when did the bridge playing start?

Judge Wolff: About the time I was in law school. I refused to play bridge as an undergraduate because there were a group of women when I was an undergraduate who played bridge, and I decided that would become too demanding. They were playing constantly. And if you play bridge, you play bridge.

Ms. Cordell: So you took it up in law school?

Judge Wolff: Yes.

Ms. Cordell: And we're – I'm assuming there were many other law students who played bridge, or not many?

Judge Wolff: No. I didn't play often with other law students. I played with my personal friends.

Ms. Cordell: And so bridge came into your life in law school and then on the train you were playing bridge? Going up? Coming back?

Judge Wolff: Yes. Going up and if we came back at the same time. But going up, and I was invited into a game with very old men who were not very great bridge players. (Laughter) But then subsequently at some point, I was invited to, and joined, a group of lawyers.

Ms. Cordell: And we, meaning the bridge players.

Judge Wolff: The bridge players.

Ms. Cordell: Those were a group of lawyers. And again, you're the only woman in the group?

Judge Wolff: Yes.

Ms. Cordell: And so now they're lawyers playing. Were their bridge skills better than your first group.

Judge Wolff: Oh, yes. Yes. Much better. And we – the bridge on the train was really something.

Ms. Cordell: That's very nice. So did it take about an hour to get to the city?

Judge Wolff: Yes. A little less than that.

Ms. Cordell: So you go up – can you tell me about this job now, the chief law clerk?

Judge Wolff: Well I had an assistant who was very good, a woman lawyer.

Ms. Cordell: You don't remember her name?

Judge Wolff: No I can't remember her last name --

Ms. Cordell: What's her first name?

Judge Wolff: Margaret.

Ms. Cordell: Okay. So she's your assistant?

Judge Wolff: Her husband was a dental student at Cal, and she's my assistant. In that division we wrote recommendations for the court. It's the kind of work that all courts have, but they very rarely – I don't remember that we ever were asked to draft the final opinion on a criminal case. Apparently the court had kind of interesting standards about criminal cases. They felt they should do them themselves. And during the war, interestingly enough, the criminal appeals were way down.

Ms. Cordell: Why was that?

Judge Wolff: Crime was down. And in fact, another interesting insight into crime is that almost all of the crime you had was from people who had received dishonorable discharges. But we also had some really awful cases.

Ms. Cordell: Were you the first woman to be chief law clerk?

Judge Wolff: Probably. Yes. I'm sure I was. I'm sure we were probably – and very probably were the first women, except in the other division – Judge Peters had brought someone with him, Martha Naylor from Cal, who was a very brilliant lawyer. In that division it was not a one-year assignment. She was with

Peters all the time that he was on the Appellate Court and until he went to the Supreme Court. And then she went into a firm in San Francisco which told her that they would employ her but she would never be a partner.

Ms. Cordell: And you know this because she told you this?

Judge Wolff: Yes.

Ms. Cordell: Was she outraged?

Judge Wolff: No. I don't know why she accepted it, but she did. For me, working for the court was a very good experience. And at some point, of course, Spence was elevated to the Supreme Court, Judge Dooling came in, and then Sturdivant retired. Judge Goodell from San Francisco succeeded him. At any event, it was always a very good division.

Ms. Cordell: So after a year, what?

Judge Wolff: About a year and three months, the man who I had succeeded came back from service, so that job was going to disappear.

Ms. Cordell: I don't understand. So the position you had had been filled by someone who was doing military service?

Judge Wolff: That's right.

Ms. Cordell: So when he comes back, he says this is my --

Judge Wolff: He has automatic rights.

Ms. Cordell: Right. So you're out?

Judge Wolff: So I would be out anyway.

Ms. Cordell: So then?

Judge Wolff: So Judge Nourse said, what would you like to do. And I said, well I'd like to go into the Attorney General's Office. And he said, oh, well Jack's in that office, his son. And Jack really is thinking of going into private practice. Do you really want to go in there? And I said, yes. I said well it's different for me. I think I'd really like to stay in public service. And he said, well I think it's civil service now. And I said yes, and I'm number one on the examination list, because I had taken the exam at some point for the Attorney General's Office. And he said, oh, all right, put his pipe down and left the room and in a short time he came back and said, okay, go up and see Hart Linney who is head of the office. And I went upstairs and Hart said when would you like to start work?

Ms. Cordell: So why the Attorney General's Office. Now where is this coming from? So here, I mean you know you have to leave the Court of Appeals, but why?

Judge Wolff: Oh, I thought it was the best office in the State.

Ms. Cordell: You'd been thinking about it a little bit anyway?

Judge Wolff: Yes. I had taken the exam because I was thinking about it, and I knew that, you know, the Clerkship was supposed to be a one year job.

Ms. Cordell: Right.

Judge Wolff: And I wanted to stay in practice and that was an office that really practiced law.

Ms. Cordell: So you took an exam for chief law clerk. You took an exam, right, or did you?

Judge Wolff: No.

Ms. Cordell: All right. So by looking at all these exams that you have taken, but you did take an exam for the AG's office?

Judge Wolff: Yes.

Ms. Cordell: And then you finished topping that as well?

Judge Wolff: Yes.

Ms. Cordell: So you get the job?

Judge Wolff: Yes.

Ms. Cordell: So when did you – did you start right away?

Judge Wolff: Yes. Soon as I could – within a month. I didn't even ask about the salary. I actually took a salary cut to go up there.

Ms. Cordell: Really?

Judge Wolff: Something like \$15 a month. But \$15 was a lot of money.

Ms. Cordell: So talk to me about salary. So do you recall what your salary was say as the chief law clerk or in the AG's office?

Judge Wolff: Yes, but you know you're talking about a different money valuation.

Ms. Cordell: Sure. I'm talking about dollars back in 1943.

Judge Wolff: It was something like \$345 a month. But bread was 8¢ a loaf.

Ms. Cordell: Right. Oh Yes.

Judge Wolff: So you're not – it has no relevance.

Ms. Cordell: And your rent, say was about what?

Judge Wolff: Well when I bought my first house, my payment on the first house was either \$56 a month or \$65 – it soon became \$65.

Ms. Cordell: And you bought your first house in what year?

Judge Wolff: In 1946. And I will tell you the story about buying my first house because it's relevant to this discussion. I felt that Wells Fargo had been very good to me. One of the things that the Stanford business school did was to go to the city one whole Saturday and the class was hosted by Wells Fargo. I was the only woman that was doing any work in the first year class. There was no other woman in the Graduate School of Business at that time. There had been a woman who'd been an undergraduate classmate of mine, but she had already graduated. I went to the city with the class, and Wells Fargo took the entire class to lunch on Saturday at the Stock Exchange Club. I did not realize until afterwards that no women were admitted for lunch at the Stock Exchange Club. Had I realized that, and had they refused me entry, I really would have been devastated. I mean that was the kind of thing that was very hard to take.

Ms. Cordell: But you had lunch?

Judge Wolff: Then I learned later that this was really a very big thing. Had it not been the Wells Fargo, this would not have been allowed. So when I decided that I wanted to buy a house, I thought I will go to Wells Fargo and let them carry the loan. And the house was – it's a very nice house \_\_\_\_\_.

Ms. Cordell: In Palo Alto?

Judge Wolff: In Palo Alto then. Now it's on the other side of the creek so it is in Menlo Park. But the mailing address then was Palo Alto. The house was just being framed, and I bought it as it was beginning. So I went into Wells Fargo and Mr. Lipman – Wells Fargo had one branch then, which was two blocks away from the main office. Mr. Lipman was head of the office and he had been our

host in the business school outing. And I said, "Mr. Lipman, I am interested in buying a house in Palo Alto. It is an FHA (meaning it was insured by the government), and I would like to place the loan with Wells Fargo." And he said, "Oh that's fine, my dear. You send in your husband," and I said, Mr. Lipman, I don't have a husband. And he said, oh my dear, we would not consider making a loan to a single woman. And I said, Mr. Lipman, wouldn't you like to know what I do for a living? And he said, my dear, that is totally immaterial.

Ms. Cordell: Oh, my God. So did Mr. Lipman ever find out what you did for a living?

Judge Wolff: No. But I can tell you the loan was carried by the San Francisco Bank, and sold by that bank to Wells Fargo.

Ms. Cordell: That's quite a story. So --

Judge Wolff: So those things existed. My life was not particularly impacted by the prejudices that existed, but they were there.

Ms. Cordell: But, you know, I think the truth of the matter is you refused to allow these things to impact you, because I can imagine reactions from some individuals being they were devastated, completely derailed trying to figure out how to do it, and your alternative in the face of this was, okay, well I'll go find another bank.

Judge Wolff: Oh yes.

Ms. Cordell: You know, and just the irony is that Wells Fargo, you're trying to do them a favor, and --

Judge Wolff: You just could not let that prejudice that you were running into affect you. You knew it existed. You're not unaware, but you just cannot let that run your life. I must tell you because – an aside, but I think it's a great indication of what was going on. George Osborne decided somehow that Stanford really had no real fundraising, and the law school had the closest to fundraising for Stanford I think that any group had. And George Osborne.

Ms. Cordell: Now he's at the law school?

Judge Wolff: This is during the time I was down in Los Angeles. Gorge Osborne decided he was going to set up a series of lunches with young heads of business in Los Angeles as the start of fundraising for Stanford. And he telephoned me at the office – at Sam Greenfield's office – and said, "Miriam I'm sending down a list," I guess a hundred names or two hundred names probably. And I'm sending down a form letter and I would like you to write and send the letters to the people named and act as my official hostess,. They're going to come to lunch at the California Club. And we will host them: 20 people for lunch, five days a week – I guess it was two weeks – and if they cannot come on the day designated, you will be the person who reschedules them, so that each day we have 20 people. And they're all young executives, and I will give them this talk about Stanford and that's it. So I wrote the letters. I think he wanted the invitations handwritten. I can't remember that. But anyway I got them out. Everybody accepted. We set up those lunches at the California Club. And each day that I hosted those lunches, I had to come in the back entrance of the California Club, go all the way around the club to the back elevator,

back service elevator, up to the third floor – whatever the top floor was, walk down the corridor to the luncheon room and exit the same way. And then when I got to the luncheon room, I greeted all of the young top executives in Los Angeles and they're –

Ms. Cordell: All men?

Judge Wolff: All men, and I am their official hostess. And furthermore, George ordered exactly the same lunch for every single day of the week and that included – the main entrée was a small lamb chop, double lamb chop. I will tell it was a year before I could eat lamb again.

Ms. Cordell: Did any of the men attending the luncheons know that you couldn't come in the front door?

Judge Wolff: I don't think so. I mean I got there – on purpose, I got there early; I did not want to create any embarrassment.

Ms. Cordell: How did you know you couldn't come in the front door? I mean, they didn't have a sign.

Judge Wolff: They very probably did have a sign.