

Annabelle Imber Tuck Interview Summary
First Person Plural Project
27 January 2016

Intro – Jo Blatti interviewing Annabelle Imber Tuck at her home in Little Rock, January 27, 2016 for the First Person Plural project

JB Ernie Dumas interviewed you for the Arkansas Supreme Court series at the Pryor Center. Could you give a brief précis of your Arkansas background without duplicating too much?

AIT My father an extension agent. In July 1955, through Point Four program with Latin American farmers, we went to La Paz Bolivia.

JB Childhood memories Heber Springs area?

AIT Little Miss parade in August, Old Soldiers Reunion, pictures of me and the bandshell. Home leave in Heber
Elementary school in Heber for third grade a few months

JB Exotic life?

AIT No – parents' friendships made me welcome, Methodist youth

5 min in

Wouldn't talk about overseas. Had seen other ways of doing things, friends other cultures,
Ex. Bible Belt-Catholicism

JB Parents caution?

AIT Intuition – knew about being an outsider, figure out how to fit in [overseas]
Family very rooted White County- Grandpa, cousins, part of clan
My folks unusual – mother 2 years ASU [Arkansas State University, dad B.S. Fayetteville
Others farmers
Aunt married, went to FBI in WWII in D.C., we stayed with them
Aunt Lena [Lida]
Still have farm – others businesses in Searcy & Bald Knob
Aunt Lida bought Grandpa's house, mother bought acreage

10 min in

Now in hardwoods & grazing, gas well Fayetteville shale

JB Growing up chores?

AIT Mother: when raising [my older] brother & sister, determined both learn same things
Brother learned to cook [tells family story of 'boy' pudding], iron
When retired, did shopping cooking

15 min in

JB How affect your upbringing?

AIT Barely five when overseas – had help, spoiled rotten
Aunt Lida did not appreciate the way I left bathroom
With brother’s family in high school, sister-in –law closed door on my room
Ana Lida taught me how to iron, etc

20 min in

My mother more interested in yard
Both excellent seamstresses, taught me domestic arts
Reportedly my first word was ‘pass’ [bridge term]

JB Huge pastime for women of the time

AIT Evelyn Alexander, Cecile Alexander’s mother, Ollie Debusk, mother of Johnelle Hunt in
my mother ’s bridge club
See these people all the time. Arkansas a very small state

JB Parents expect college of you?

AIT Yes. My brother really enjoyed doing thing with my father 900 acres, had horse, moved
between three farms. Father expected me to have college – Mother different – fine arts –
garden, painting, reading, libraries, liberal arts
Encouraged, me to look at women’s colleges.
Father couldn’t understand – could be nurse, teacher - worries about my future
Graduated cum laude Smith College– he figured I could always go to cosmetology school
– hurt
Had started thinking about law school

30 min in

JB How get interested in law?

AIT Lawyers from Pennsylvania – recruiting at Smith for paralegal program
Great deal – guaranteed a job, way to try out
Law school just beginning to open to women
Couldn’t get a job in Little Rock, nearest option Houston
Started law school there

36 min in

Moved to Little Rock with first husband [audio engineer, fellow Arkansan]
Paralegal job at Wright, Jennings & Lindsey, finished law school 1977
Mother: your late sister wanted to be a lawyer

JB Lot of women? Handful?

AIT Whole bunch of women: Diane Mackey, Kathy Graves, others at Friday firm

40 min in

Second career for many, kids older, most had own firms, often family law

JB

You referred to family law at one point as a stereotyping strategy

AIT

Didn't want to be pigeon-holed –
General practice: jury litigation, tort, commercial,
Having been a paralegal gave me the opening, title work

45 min in

JB

Governor's Commission on the Status of Women 1973

AIT

No doubt touched me
First woman treasurer Arkansas Bar Association 1984
Winn Drummond mentioned to me – wonderful opportunity

Jackie Wright [wife of prof, Bowen Law School] librarian at Law School, Frances Mitchell Ross [first part] and I wrote a history of women at the Arkansas bar. I wrote 1960s- 80s: Judy Rogers came from out of state, Little Rock Club no women's restroom for bar gathering, I still have copies in my office. Dam broke in late 1970s – Judy Rogers, Andree Roaf, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Jo Hart.

50 min in

1984 – appointed to bench, saw where I wanted to go
Bernie Kizer in NW Arkansas [first woman elected to bench in Arkansas, 1973], Dorothy Howard, master in chancery, Ellen Brantley, Elsie Jane Roy, federal bench, 1979-80 [Carter administration].

I was complaining about the quality of judiciary, decided to run.

I benefitted because of things opening up.

We created good old girl system over the years – know each other.

55 min in

JB

Perception law firms pressure cookers

AIT

Young associates, law clerks: make a lot of money, 24 hours a day make choices, mommy track
In my law firm, didn't work that way

JB

Time?

AIT

I must give Mr Lindsey a lot of credit: we're looking at this long term
Didn't feel compelled to compete with male colleagues
Dem Gazette lawsuit
One year 1986 three way major trials

Leave of absence, 3month break
Two new judgeships created
Lot of support in that firm

60 min in

AIT Can't have all at same time

JB Following this line – why Wright Jennings differ in lay terms: interrogatories, medicine bottles

AIT Law more paper-driven than used to be
Could call other lawyer and ask for medical bills, etc.
Didn't have to ask for formal depositions
Hmmm – you're a Wright, Jennings lawyer
Always courtesy, always give the other side a chance to act honorable
Didn't stonewall, ambush

1 hr 5 min

Dates back to Edwin L. Wright, American Bar Association code of conduct
[At same time] not open to women – Ginger Atkinson valedictorian 1960s, couldn't get an offer
Not a business, a profession

JB Litigation tactics, particular person, Governor's Commission 1970s

AIT Married to - I know what you're saying, second husband of Diane Kinkaid Blair [head of the commission]
Carroll County water intake structure Beaver Lake [dog barking]

1 hr 10 min

\$1 million suit – contractor blew up structure
Jim Blair, sometimes like Billy Joe Wilson – 'lady lawyer'
Jim Moody pulled me out, 'this part of the world, just stuff,' [Laughs]

JB Lot of that?

AIT Some. I learned to slough it off. Not going there. One client furious because being honorable. Find another lawyer. Focus on evidence & facts.
Sure, there were things I didn't hear.

Remember this: many judges would allow lawyers to speak in chambers – have to be on the record in front of clients.

1 hr 16 min

JB Difference between your work as advocate and judge?

AIT Brief – best light client

Judge – weaknesses both sides, where real dispute is
Not draw conclusions prematurely, takes discipline, withhold judgment
Couldn't believe how many situations came before me, something went wrong
Want courtroom to be as good as possible

1 hr 20 min in

JB Suggesting avenues still open

AIT In family law, wish rule was mediation
So many parents in their own pain, kids need to know somebody in charge

JB Parents our generation less trouble

AIT We're not our kids' friends – parents

JB Your parents – Africa, junior year abroad [Geneva]
To Americans for secondary education

AIT Would have gone to boarding school in Nigeria/Switzerland/Nigeria
Didn't know my brother, my father – American high school

1 hr 25 min in

Helped me, my friends overseas - never felt at home

JB Interesting– my family background, younger siblings International School Bangkok
Back to your story

AIT Come and gone to D.C., Ana Lida [aunt] – junior high school Roger B Taney Junior
High School
Family in Arkansas in 1963 –parents, dedication Greer's Ferry Dam – shortly before
JFK [President John Fitzgerald Kennedy] assassination [Dallas, November 1963]
LBJ [President Lyndon Baines Johnson] came to our high school – had everything –
vocational, all college prep
I was involved chorus, drama club, languages

1 hr 30 min in

Moves to college experience abroad, University of Geneva, International Institute, Swiss
host family, French-speaking African students
Time in East Africa with her brother
Father's illness, treatment at Bethesda [Military Hospital]
Mother wanted me at one place for high school – to participate

1 hr 35 min in

Father worked with folks stateside in D.C. area while continuing treatment

JB Returning to your formal networks –

AIT Arkansas Association of Women Lawyers, president 1980-81 – debated continued necessity – still there and vibrant

JB Law, medicine 60% now

AIT Yes. Still some glass ceilings in upper management of law firms.
Judy Henry was the first managing partner (operations director)
Law schools 50/50 – on law review, moot court

1 hr 40 min in

Lot of work

JB In your experience, do clients accept women?

AIT I think because of globalization, big corporations, no problems, big into diversity
Interesting Olivia Farrell worked on this in the 1990s- network of high profile women for boards – top 100 women – good candidates
I went on St Vincent's [Infirmery] board
Kaye Kelley Arnold on a corporate board
On Latin and African American, long way to go
Affirmative action in law school – recruiting good contingents
Students don't put [the possibility] high on list: cost, vistas not present

1 hr 45 min in

JB Your office at the law school?

AIT Jurist in residence Bowen Law School
Glad to be available moot court, orientation, ethics, guest lectures, access to justice
Assistance to the field – how not to take it home, not self-medicate
Rate of substance abuse [among lawyers] 18% - higher than other professions

1 hr 50 min in

Also working on judicial info site: www.arkansas.judges.com
Rapid response team for media campaigns

Insurance commission board of advisors – implementation of health exchange

Access education
Medical care
Justice
All work together

1 hr 55 min in

JB Discussed some elsewhere –

AIT 2003 Supreme Court - how to make legal information accessible if can't afford a lawyer, civil system

JB What kinds –

AIT Family law, expungements, parole and probation, will probate, debt foreclosures – basic life issues
With private option [health insurance] – legal aid had had to help because DHS so backed up
Ex. Debt collection matter

2 hrs in

We're preparing package/triage

- Can do it yourself
- Limited representation (client will prepare papers, lawyer will present)
- Need a lawyer

In Arkansas, 25% of population qualified for Legal Aid
How provide?
Raise money, usually from legal community
1600 lawyers volunteers
Only 300 lawyers in private practice (1/2 of lawyers in state)
Rural regions worst off
Strategizing, how use technology

Legal Zoom as challenge for older lawyers, taking bread & butter

2 hrs 5 min in

Tough sell right now
Here's what my argument is: if you took case & underbid, tough luck. This is good for client & lawyer

JB Potential problem – fixes with unresponsive bureaucracies, ex mortgage financing

AIT What to do – lawyers know where to change the system

2 hrs 10 min in

Glue holding all these parts together
Chaired, 2010-2015
Chair now HR person from Tyson, folks many areas

JB Very generous with time, anything back to ?
Supreme Court project, children's names, patriarchal, good model

AIT Came up with several – mother's reputation/criminal/ father's last name/not made fun of
No guidance family stuff

JB So fraught

AIT Relationships – what kind of advisement – punched my buttons
Good system, leeway, not fall into cultural stereotyping

2 hrs 15 min in

- JB My final question relates to stereotyping, not sure other women would follow
- AIT State wide races difficult. Women not in business of raising lots of money, daunting & expensive.
Women on fiscal side tend to be conservative. I was willing to lose a certain amount of money.
Sometimes people just run to help business
I am pleased – I am concerned about the Supreme Court.
- All about *Citizens United* [*v. Federal Elections Commission*, 2010 U.S. Supreme court case]
Tried before - merit selection, Missouri Plan, politics still there

2 hrs 20 min in

- Appointment, no recommendations/commission/internal criteria unknown
- JB You've credited right place, right time -
- AIT Hillary, Bill Clinton, wanted to appoint a woman
In our system, I couldn't run for seat you've been appointed to
I ran against Van Smith
Story of [fellow lawyer] George Jernigan - he'd pay me to change my name [married name at time, Annabelle Clinton– no relation to Governor Bill Clinton]

2 hrs 25min in

- JB Masks hard work
- AIT How do my job and run for Supreme Court: one day a week campaigning & signing orders
Work a whole county that day – all the Rotaries, thank you notes to everyone, my brother set up a computer system, full bore
- JB Paralegal, filling out forms
- AIT Organization, keep track, systems, set up
Now IT, date stamp, all about retrieval
- JB In your experience, how many paralegals go to law school [as you did]?
- AIT Not many. Kathy Cochran Smith trained at Wright, Jennings went to Philly. She later became my case coordinator and later married Van Smith.
Remembers other paralegals who stayed with that profession.

2 hrs 30 min in

- JB Thanks so much
- 2 hrs 31 min conclusion