



Thanks to the extraordinary commitment and expertise of AHLA leaders, the American Health Lawyers Association continues to thrive and serve as the essential health law resource in the nation. The Association's strong foundation reflects a history that is vibrant, meaningful and worth sharing. Finding a way to preserve AHLA's history was especially relevant in light of the Association's 50th Anniversary, which was celebrated throughout 2017.

This transcript reflects a conversation between AHLA leaders that was conducted via audio interview as part of the Association's History Project. More than 60 of AHLA's Fellows and Past Presidents were interviewed. A video documentary was also prepared and debuted on June 26 during AHLA's 2017 Annual Meeting in San Francisco, CA.

March 8, 2017

Donna Fraiche interviewing Sandy Teplitzky:

Donna: I want to thank you first of all for agreeing to participate in AHLA's history project. I know that you and I go way back at AHLA and frankly it's been a little disconcerting to have to remember those times, but in any event as gray as we both are maybe you can tell me a little bit about how you got started with AHLA?

Sandy: Absolutely. I had no idea what I wanted to do out of law school. Health law was not something that I was looking to do because I knew nothing about it. In fact at Tulane law school the only course that existed in health law was psychiatry in the law, taught by Professor Couch believe it or not. Looking for a job after law school, I contacted a number of people up in Baltimore including a former class mate who was working for the department of health, education and welfare. I contacted her, went to meet her for lunch and she put me in touch with the head of her office who said "How would you like to do health law." I said "Sure what is it?" and he said "Well the medicare program was recently enacted it's now 1975, were looking for lawyers to learn the area of health law" and I said "Great, I'm glad to do it." They offered me \$14,500 dollars a year, which is what the largest law firms were paying and in 1975, I became a health lawyer.

Donna: It sounds like our stories are similar but let me ask you about AHLA and how you began to focus on the use of AHLA in terms of your career and how it may have benefited your career and what you did at AHLA during those early days?

Sandy: Absolutely. Well in those early days it was NHLA, National Health Lawyers Association. I learned about the organization while I was working for the federal government. I actually met David Greenburg relatively early in my career and realized that this was a growing area of law, something that I wanted to be a part of long term. I was very impressed by David and the group he put together. When I left the government in 1979, I joined Ober Kaler and Len Homer was a partner in the firm, experienced in health law, well known throughout the industry and a mentor of mine. He suggested that I become involved in NHLA and I thought it was a great idea. Met again with David Greenburg and so although I had been a member while I worked for the government, I really started becoming active once I left the government and joined the private sector.

I found AHLA to be a phenomenal convener of live programs, there weren't all that many health lawyers at the time. It was a great chance to get together and network. Tremendous educational

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opportunities and realized that if I wanted to have a career in health law this was an organization that I needed to both join and become active in.

- Donna: Sandy, that's really interesting because we know that Len Homer was one of the sort of founders of the whole Medicare Medicaid program and NHLA, but at some point you became really one of the more prolific speakers and if you can tell me what's your start at that program, because at some point you evolved to become the go to person and the go to speaker in the whole field of fraud and abuse in Medicare and Medicaid. How did that all come about?
- Sandy: Certainly. Totally by accident and it goes back to when I was in the government in 1977. One day the head of the office walked down the hall and said "What are you doing next week?" and I said "I don't know you tell me?" and he said "You will be attending some hearings" on what were known as the 1977 fraud and abuse amendments. So I became the individual in the government, in the general counsel's office of HEW who was assigned primary responsibility for learning the law and then implementing it once it was enacted, briefing the secretary and working with other senior people in the office. So, beginning in 1977 on the government side, I was the individual that people looked to for guidance on how to implement the new law.

I began giving presentations for AHLA and NHLA at the time and others on the issue and I guess I was just an early joiner on the issue. When I left the government in 1979, I told Len that that was something I wanted to continue to do. Through his connections with NHLA I continued to be a speaker and as people in the industry understood that fraud and abuse was here to stay, people looked to me as somebody who had historical knowledge of the development of the statute, the implementation of the statute from the government's perspective and now I was learning the private bar side of the same issues. So I think I was one of the first people to actually have experience on both the government and the private side issues relating to fraud and abuse.

- Donna: You know we talk a lot about the NHLA then and then ultimately the AHLA and the importance to young lawyers as they develop their careers, but I would think that from description of how you got involved in fraud and abuse and then ultimately the stark law became the sort of go to person at the association to give speeches and presentations in that field, you're describing what sounds like serendipity, that was actually a great success story.

- Sandy: I'm a big believer in luck is just as good as skill, I think you have to have both. My view is that a young lawyer should build a level of skill, particularly in the area where they think there might be activity and future growth in the health care field and then luck is really being prepared for when opportunities present themselves and I think that's what happened to me. As I counsel young lawyers, I've been an adjunct professor at the University of Maryland law school for about 15 years and as I've counseled young lawyers in our firm, I've counseled them on getting experience, finding an area that isn't well traveled yet, learning the area, understanding the legal implications and more importantly understanding what the clients needs will be with respect to that issue. Public speaking and writing is very important. One of the real opportunities that NHLA and then AHLA presented to me was the ability to meet people at programs, to speak, to exchange ideas and views, to learn together and so the networking aspect of this was very important. As I've said through my whole career, we're really just making this up as we go along.

The law in health care changes constantly but you can't do it by yourself. You need to network with others who are doing similar things in terms of learning what they're doing, how they're

doing it, what issues they've faced and that opportunity through AHLA to share those experiences and that growth has been critical to me. I truly believe that I owe much of my career to relationships I've met and made through AHLA and NHLA and I advise young lawyers and in fact even young law students when I teach at the University, I strongly recommend that the students join AHLA to begin that networking process. So it's a life long learning experience as I tell people, but it starts early. The AHLA fundamentals program is a critical step in the development of a health law career and again being an active member in AHLA, attending programs and networking with other experienced health care lawyers is the best way to both learn and in my view, the best way to develop a successful career.

Donna: Well, Sandy in addition to being a prolific speaker, you were also a great leader and one of our past presidents. Can you tell me anything about the period of time that you were on the executive committee, ultimately the past president and have had any other leadership responsibilities with NHLA and then AHLA that stand out to you as something you might want to share as part of our history?

Sandy: Absolutely Donna, thank you. I'm trying to remember now the year that I was president. Actually, Marilou King was the executive director. I really did learn a lot at the feet of David Greenburg about the association and about leadership and then I did become the president. I worked my way up through the ranks of the other officer positions and then I was president for a year when Marilou King was the executive director.

It was an interesting time. Again, it was before the merger, so it was the National Health Lawyers Association and one of the things that we did at the time, was we worked on cooperative efforts with the American Academy of Hospital Attorney's and as we know the merger of those two organizations, is what led to the creation of AHLA. I now recall that I was president in 1993 to 1994. So there was a lot happening at the time. When I started my career in health law and somebody asked me what do I do, I would say "I'm a health lawyer but I don't do medical malpractice work" and that was almost something you had to say. By the time I became president in the early '90s, health law was already established as a specialty for lawyers, an area of focus and so by the time I was president in 1993, we were reaching out to folks who really were coming into health law with a design. As I indicated earlier, I had no design to be a health lawyer, but by the early '90s there were people who really did want to become health lawyers and I viewed my role as AHLA president as a convener of opportunities for folks to develop a career in health law and to this day, as I said, I continue my view of ensuring that AHLA is a way for people to work together and to learn.

I was also the chair of the health care fraud and compliance program from 1992 through 2000. And again, 1992 was the first year that program was offered. By the time I finished my chairmanship, the program was now co-sponsored by the Health Care Compliance Association and AHLA. I think that was an important time in our development, because it acknowledged that there are lawyers who have to address health care issues, but there are other professionals who aren't necessarily lawyers but who also have to understand the issues. So, while it was somewhat controversial to have those two groups join in a program like this, I think this was one of first major AHLA programs that was co-sponsored by an outside group. It did acknowledge the fact that health care lawyers play a role in the health care industry, but so do others and that working together, they can develop and offer programs that expand the experience and expertise of both lawyers and non-lawyers, all of whom are working to consult with our health care clients.

Donna: Sandy, how do you see the organization now, as different then when you were there and when it all sort of got started and I think you've explained some of the very crucial transition periods, but how do you see it now and what kind of relevance does it have now to your life and to your practice?

Sandy: Well that's a great question. It's actually changed quite a bit. I am no longer as active in the association as I was in the past. I'm tremendously grateful for the fellows program, which I think is an opportunity, I view as an opportunity for the experienced lawyers, lead older lawyers to stay active in health care to provide whatever guidance and expertise we can to the younger lawyers and to assist the new leaders in AHLA in making informed decisions, as to the best role that AHLA can play in the development of the practice of health law.

As I said, when I began it was all new. We really were making it up as we went along and there were very few of us. Now I think the membership of AHLA is 14,000-15,000 people. It's much broader than it was before in the old days it was reimbursement and fraud and abuse, now there are probably 10 or 15 different disciplines even within health law. So understanding where the health care delivery system is going, understanding the role of health care lawyers is important and I think that as a Fellow, I can offer to AHLA some guidance as to the best way I believe AHLA can continue to be relevant going into the future. I think health law has changed substantially. AHLA has done a good job in pivoting and being flexible and I think that there's a real role for folks in the fellows group, like myself who understand where health care has come from and hopefully where it's going and to provide AHLA with some guidance as to how it can remain as relevant.

I'll give you a quick example. In the early days, it was all about in-person programs. Today's world, that's not so much. The webinars and online learning are much more relevant, much more important but you lose that personal interaction, the networking I mentioned earlier, so the Fellows are in a position and I think I'm one of the people in a position to assist AHLA in understanding that even technology has changed, that there's still a very important role for the in-person programs, the networking, the meetings, so that people can exchange ideas in person and again continue to grow as health lawyers.

Donna: Well, I think that your interview has just been spectacular and I do appreciate the opportunity. It's been a real privilege to talk and visit with you today and hear where you were and where you are now and where you may be going and how that all fits with the association itself. Are there any parting words that you might have for current leadership and current membership?

Sandy: Well, I have two parting thoughts. One is more personal than the other. As I said, I truly believe that I owe much of my career and success to NHLA and AHLA and everything that its given to me, including the collegiality with other health lawyers. I been fortunate enough to have a successful career, it's not over yet hopefully. I've been fortunate to have a successful career and to receive awards and other things along the line, but I have to tell you that receipt of the AHLA David J. Greenburg Service Award is really in my view, the highlight of my career. I view it as a recognition by peers that I've played a role, I've made a difference, I've helped advance health law and that truly is something that I am more proud of than almost anything else other than my four granddaughters. I had very little to do with them, except I brought into the world their fathers.

In any case, the only parting word I have, is that I continue to believe that AHLA offers young lawyers an incredible opportunity to network, to learn, to work with those of us who have been

around for years and it offers us a great opportunity to do something that I think is very important. I didn't even mention the public interest portion of AHLA, which I think is one of the more important efforts of AHLA, so AHLA still has a tremendous amount to offer. Not only young lawyers but the health care industry and society itself. I feel privileged and honored to continue to play some minor role with the organization.

Donna: I think that's a fantastic way of summing up a brilliant career that you've had and a wonderful relationship with an important organization. Thank you so very much for your time today.