

Interview with Phil Leis

Interviewer: Amy Goldstien

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Amy Goldstein: So can you just start please by telling us who you are, and what your affiliation has been with Brown?

Phil Leis: My name is Phil Leis, Philip Leis, I'm a professor emeritus of Anthropology at Brown. And I retired, let's see, two years ago.

Goldstein: So I bet you had a long history at Brown.

Leis: Yes, I came '62, so that adds up to 49 years, teaching. But I wasn't here all those years.

Goldstein: You were doing some fieldwork at times.

Leis: Yea, fieldwork, sabbaticals, research leaves, so it wasn't total of that number of years.

Goldstein: Okay, well going back to the beginning of those 49 years, could you just talk a little bit about how you arrived at Brown and how you arrived in Anthropology?

Leis: That goes way back.

Goldstein: Way back. [laughter]

Leis: Well, I think I arrived at Anthropology, to start the story, by going to Antioch College, which would've been in 1950... let me just think for a minute, that would've been 1949. And I went to Antioch without quite knowing what the school was about. But I had an older sister who was in education and she recommended it, so there I went. And I got into Antioch, I think, because I came from a small town in New York state; I wasn't from Bronx Science, or Stuyvesant, or the best schools in New York where everybody was coming from. So they wanted some diversity, and they took me, along with others. Anyway, I didn't know what I wanted to major in. I was taking various courses and as you may know, Antioch has a co-op program, whereby you go out and work half the year and then come back to campus. So the relationship of Antioch to anthropology is both explicit and very implicit. The implicit part had to do with the work-study program. And that is, many students took work-study programs in the field they actually went into, so it was a kind of pre-job training. Somebody might work in a law firm and become a lawyer, or work for the newspaper and become a journalist. In my case, I ended up doing a whole variety of work jobs: selling clothes in Detroit, and working for an international accounting firm in San Jose, Minneapolis, and Chicago. So I had all those experiences, and the, kind of the implicit relationship was I knew what I didn't want to do by the time I graduated. I also knew from working with adults how unhappy they were in some of these professions, and I decided I didn't want to be that, I wanted to find a

career that really engaged me. And I didn't, being idealistic, I didn't think money was the main objective. And I knew that I want to work with people, supposedly to do something good, not with numbers or things. So that was the kind of implicit connection to the two.

The explicit connection to anthropology was in several different ways. One was, in going out to these various cities, I went by myself, in many instances there was a kind of an Antioch group that would go and live in New York and would continue their experience. But for reasons which I can only look back and imagine, I was trying to prove my self-reliance, find out who I was, all those questions, and I therefore went to these cities by myself. And it was somewhat like a fieldwork experience. Maybe at Antioch, I could wear blue jeans, I guess whatever I was wearing; by Monday you had to have your suit and tie, and find a place to live, and be at work on time. So, you transform from a kind of an adolescent to an adult over the weekend. So for me this kind of self-reliance was what really connected to doing fieldwork. Now indeed, when I went to African Niger Delta was a bit of an exaggeration to think about self-reliance and independence, but I do think, that helped me a lot when I went to do that. So that was the part of what the Antioch experience was about which was my connection to anthropology. But intellectually I think there was another part to it. And that is Antioch was a very progressive school, little did I know when I went there, but it was very progressive—well known, as it turned out. And, there were two things I think that were really involved with being in Antioch, and the things I just described were out of Antioch. But in Antioch, I think there were two things, as I recall, that were being stressed. One is...

Male Voice: Can we hold for, for just one second? We're getting, [5:00] I'm getting a little bit of your head in the side of the frame, so we're going to have to pull you back just a touch.

Goldstein: Oh, okay.

Leis: That's good, I want, [laughter and other voices] I want to be talking to somebody...

Goldstein: [laughter] It's my, my curly hair is getting in the way.

Leis: Other than just rambling on. Well, you gotta stop me if I ramble too much, too, you know.

Goldstein: That's okay.

Leis: I know you can cut it out when you edit it, but.

Male Voice: Go ahead, and thank you.

Goldstein: So you were talking about the culture at Antioch, and the, and let me just sharpen that question, which is: Antioch did have a very progressive culture, and I'm wondering how that related to the culture that you found at Brown when you got here?

Leis: Oh, that's what I'm getting to, exactly. I'm sort of doing it through anthropology, but I'm getting there. The culture, or ethos, I think involved two aspects of the in-house experience, as I say that time we were at Yellow Springs, Ohio, which is a very small community. One had to do with the idea of community. That is, there was a lot of stress on community, and community as a kind of a theoretical

notion, not just everybody lives in a community, so to speak. But there it was treated as an ideal. And community meant that there was a certain kind of equalitarianism; students played a role in government, that other universities sort of got the idea of 25 or 40 years later. And there was an emphasis on volunteerism. So all of those things were part of that ethos. So that was sort of an in-house ethos. And at the same time, Antioch was very much involved in the external society. And I think this is where you'll see the connection, in that the things that were... that was happening outside our little Yellow Springs community, was very important. So that ideas of racism, sexism, colonialism, even capitalism, all those "isms" were part of what everybody was active about. People were taking off to Washington to protest, Martin Luther King's wife had gone there as a student a bit earlier, so it was a very dynamic, connective community despite the isolation of that part of Ohio. Also, it also turns out, Yellow Springs is just above the north an—Mason-Dixon Line, so there was racism in the community, the barber wouldn't cut black people's hair, so there was all of this kind of thing going on.

Goldstein: So you were really sensitized to these issues by the time you came here?

Leis: That's my point. So that was the first step. And I therefore had some of that, and also I grew up in this small community in New York state, so I had experienced some anti-Semitism. My fieldwork was in an all-black isolated community in Africa, in Nigeria, so I knew something about racism, plus my experience at Yellow Springs, so I felt that I did know something about discrimination. Then I went to Northwestern for my graduate degree. I didn't know about anthropology until my senior year at Antioch, just not to lose that thread of how these things are connected. But an anthropologist did come to teach at Antioch in my last year and... I knew what I didn't want to do, I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I went to anthropology. And, I went to Northwestern, turns out there was the first program of African Studies there being taught by Melville Herskovits. He is cite—he was a student of Boaz's, he had done scientific research on the question of racism. And of course Africa was the primary focus of this very small department. So that's how I got into African studies, and the notion of doing anthropology. Well, at that time there were no courses on methodology, field methodology; almost every department now has such courses for undergraduates as well as graduates. But all of our courses were devoted towards not just the data, you know, how they do it in the Tropic Islands, but also the whole question of: one, ethics—we don't do anything to hurt the people that you're studying. And the second one had to do with, I would say maybe a philosophy of how you go about understanding or knowing anything. And, you know, in short-hand terms you might call it relevance, or relativity, but what relativity refers to is the notion that people act the way they do and know what they do on the basis of learning rather than on the basis of genetic transmission. Well, therefore the task of the anthropologist is to know what other people know. [10:00] And how do you do that? Well, first of all, you have to recognize your own assumptions, and proceed on the basis of—your object is to know what other people's assumptions might be. So all of our classes had that really as the underlying premise of what anthropology's about. Now I don't want to go off on a tangent but there are four fields in anthropology, cultural anthro—

Goldstein: We can probably skip a little bit. Why don't you tell me the parts of that that you think are germane to my understanding your role at Brown and what was happening when you came here, how's that?

Leis: Well, the germane part is that anthropology has tussled with the relationship between biology and cultural anthropology. So it's been part of our field. And certainly if we talk about sexism and where that comes from, the question has often been, is it biology? is it culture? and so on, and so I'm just saying that that's, that was part of it, in those terms. But I felt very comfortable in anthropology just to get back to this idea of what I was sensitized to, because I felt very much at home there. Now I should add another dimension of how it connects to Brown is that Herskovits was somewhat of a tyrant. You know, he's a big man, of European persuasion—or tried to be, I guess, in some ways—but that was also my experience with a graduate department. Which by the way, again, wasn't at all like Antioch. So there I left Northwestern. I did two years of fieldwork in Africa. My, I went with my wife, who by the way was a professional anthropologist, so I'm also aware of sexism in, professionally speaking. So there was a sensitivity of it. I went to Iowa State as my first teaching job. I went there as the sole anthropologist in a department of Economics and Sociology. I introduced anthropology courses. Part of my nine course-teaching load per year was to teach some sociology courses. But I'm just mentioning it because I began there to have the independence of forming my own courses, and developing anthropology, because they were all happy to have somebody else do it. Same time, this is 1960, anthropology was catching on. When I first went to graduate school, people were dying to find jobs, by the time, just a few years later there were jobs. Hallelujah! My parents were finally happy, you know. What were you going to do when you become an anthropologist? Any case, I go to Brown with those kinds of experiences and sensitivities, to use your word. And there's a three-person department. I was very happy to go; the teaching load at Brown was four courses, rather than nine. And of course, Brown was, probably wasn't known then as quite being as good a school as it is now, but it was still Ivy League, and still had a good reputation. So I was very happy to come here. And lo and behold, we had a very small department; there were three of us. We were part of the Department of Sociology, which then kind of scoped into Sociology and Anthropology. You don't want me to get started on how Anthropology got here, is that all sort of tangential?

Goldstein: That's fine, but, so the program was very small, it was appended to Sociology, and eventually it broke off and started building in its own right, right?

Leis: Yes. Anthropologists got started because the museum was given to us, and we needed anthropologists to deal with that.

Goldstein: And that was the Haffenreffer, right?

Leis: That was the Haffenreffer Museum, that's still out in Bristol but now we have something on campus. Lou Giddings was brought here from the University of Pennsylvania, to, in fact, head that up. So there was Lou Giddings, another anthropologist, and myself, who were the three. And at that time, 1962, there was a master's degree program, but it was primarily the students of Lou Giddings who came here to do their specialty and arctic—archeology, that gets us into that four field thing. Well, a few years later, this would've been about 1967, '68, he died in a car crash between Bristol and here. He lived out in Bristol. He didn't die immediately, but at any rate he died. And at the same time, or almost coincidentally, there was the notion that Anthropology would expand. And I was all for that. And as it would happen I became director of Anthropology within the Sociology Department. Then in 1970 we split. And we got

our own building, which is now located in Giddings House named after Lou Giddings. And we went and introduced [15:00] a Ph.D. program, and we started to expand.

Goldstein: If you could just circle back a little bit between that point when it became your program and 1970 when it broke off. So, there was hiring at the time, and Louise Lamphere, since that's what we're partly talking about...

Leis: I was just going to say that, that's right.

Goldstein: ...was hired during that interim. So maybe you could talk about whatever you remember about why she was hired, what she came here to do, anything you remember about her arriving?

Leis: Well, I was director of Anthropology, and I, I think it was 1968 that she was hired. And my recollection of why we hired her? Number one, obviously, she was a good candidate. Number two, in those days you could still talk to people at other departments, it wasn't necessarily a publication. And as I recall, Alfred Harris was teaching at Rochester and I knew him, and he recommended her highly. And we also were aware that it would be nice to have women on the faculty. Why? Well, first of all there were no women in the sociology department that I recall. Number two, I've already said I've had some personal experience with professional women anthropologists, so I clearly was biased in that direction. And third of all, as I recall, and did I premise all this on my memory being so faulty? [laughs] I mean, I can't remember things.

Goldstein: You're doing pretty well. If so, I haven't noticed so far, how's that?

Leis: Anyway, my memory was, we have a lot of female students, then, it would be good to have as models, women faculty, so that's my recollection of it. Okay, then Louise came and then I left the year we were becoming a separate department. I think I went to England that year for the year, '69, '70. Just as we were, became our own department. Louise then was here a year I wasn't here. So that was the connection with Louise, all I remember at that time is just what I've said. I don't remember anything negative about her, it was all fine.

Goldstein: And her field was what?

Leis: Her field was American Indians at that time, Natives. But all of us had, again about anthropology, we cut the cake two ways, forget the four divisions, though it does apply, but within cultural anthropology, we cut the cake two ways. One is analytical or theoretical on the one hand, and the other one is field on the other. So my field was Africa, and my area of analysis or whatever you want to call it, theoretical orientation, was a whole scoop of things, because I was teaching everything. But my Ph.D. was on educational. I was studying social change, education, I've done politics, I did religion, and the history of theory and so on. Louise came with Native American Indians, and then she could teach anything else, like political... and so on, I don't know what courses she taught. We also, I'm not sure whether we had on the books at that time, maybe we didn't, because if not the study of women per se, at least we were certainly concerned with gender, with, because it was part of kinship and social

organization, which are traditional elements of anthropology. I mean, it all started there in many ways. So she might've been teaching kinship, social organization, that was certainly part of her area.

Goldstein: And if, if she was—excuse me—the first woman not only in Anthropology before Anthropology was its own entity, but in all of Sociology, I mean, how did that go? Did she, you know, fit in? Did she get along? Did she socialize with, you know, her colleagues? How did that all ...

Leis: Well, I think she married a sociologist, so.

Goldstein: Well, there was that. [laughs]

Leis: [laughing] So she must've gotten along with them. [Laughter] My recollection is that she got along with everybody. I mean, I don't remember there was any... But remember when she was being hired, we had gone from three, and I don't know what the number was then, seven or so? So there was a whole core, cohort, and we were all young, relatively speaking, we were all the same age, I mean I wasn't that much older than they were. And not that much older than the students. And I've already talked about my sensibilities, so I, from my perspective, I thought it was very egalitarian, the students, faculty, and so on. And, as the director of Anthropology, and as the chair, I always felt that we were a democracy. Unlike Herskovits, I didn't intend to be a tyrant. Our decisions were made largely through consensus. I think there are a number of my colleagues who will say I was terrible because I spent too much time trying to arrive at consensus rather than just doing it. But that's the way I think I did it. So my memories of Louise arriving were just part of that group. We partied together, it wasn't like, [20:00] you know, we do our work and then go home and don't see each other until the next day, we knew each other as friends, and not just—and that was a very important part of the whole story. It's not like we disliked each—I mean, well I don't know what her feelings are. It's not like I disliked her or so on. We were friends and we were colleagues. And colleagues is important. I've already talked about anthropology, notions of community, I mean that's the way I saw it. Well... what's the next stage? Here we are, 1970—.... I come back from England. 1971, I believe, George Hicks gets tenure. And I mention the name because that's an important part of the whole thing. So, then 1973 rolls around...

Goldstein: Let me ask you one thing before we get to 1973?

Leis: I'm gonna talk about what's happening between the two.

Goldstein: Okay, go ahead.

Leis: All right. So between 1971 and 1973, that the decision was made on her...?

Goldstein: She asked for her early, but we'll, we'll come back through the chronology, but she asked for early consideration the fall of '72 and then '73/'74 was the real tenure review year.

Leis: Okay. Well, that period of time is in my mind, critical. The whole story really fits in those two years, in my thinking. Now, a lot went on afterwards, to be sure. But what happened between '71, when Hicks got tenure in that fall, and by the way, Louise coming up for early decision, my recollection of what

went on afterward is there was... she doesn't agree to that. I mean she says she didn't come up, she didn't ask for it. My understanding was she did ask for it, but that's beside the point. It wasn't held against her that she asked for early decision, so it really is irrelevant. But she was denied, whether she asked for it or not, unanimously the department said she should wait a year. Well, why did we ask her to wait? And what was the problem between '71 and '73? The university experienced, and I think the whole country did, a tremendous crisis. And as the *BDH*—

Goldstein: Economic crisis?

Leis: Economic crisis. Which affected the educational program. And if you look back at the *BDHs* and you were there, you will see that the president was writing things like, I don't remember whether it was in the *BDH* or to us, but I remember him writing, "You gotta be, you've got to think about tenure differently. You gotta up the standard." Those were his words, I think.

Goldstein: Well it was not just up the standard of tenure, but you had also, if I recall, tried very hard to persuade then-President Donald Hornig to expand the department both in terms of hiring and promotion, a little more that he was comfortable with. Would that be a polite way of putting it?

Leis: Oh, yeah.

Goldstein: I mean, you had quite a disagreement with him.

Leis: Well, he wrote back to me and said, "I understand what you're saying but I can't do that."

Goldstein: And what did you think when that happened?

Leis: Well, I had my own plans.

Goldstein: And they weren't his, right?

Leis: Yeah, well, my plans were to try to, number one: have the best department we can. That was my underlying assumption, from day one. So that all of this development from Sociology on always had that as the model. Now, you know, how do you get to be the best department? Clearly the faculty that you have. Now, when you talk about the best faculty, that's a relative judgment. Best compared to what? And it is a kind of a floating measure. Well, the measures get affected by the economy, by your staffing plans. That's one way to look at it. The other side is to say, "no, I was hired with these notions in mind and when I come up for tenure, those notions shouldn't have changed." Now that was part of the case.

Goldstein: But he also, um, we'll get to the tenure standards in a moment, because I think what you're saying is quite right, relevant, and interesting. But, you had an expansion plan in mind.

Leis: Yes.

Goldstein: That was not what was happening.

Leis: No.

Goldstein: How did that feel?

Leis: Well look, you know, if you're part, part of being a chair is a very uncomfortable position, partly because it's so ambiguous. And I've written about it. I wrote a, something for the Faculty Bulletin, I believe. It's, there's a paradox involved. On the one hand, you're a faculty member, these are not only your colleagues but I've also said they're your friends. But more than friends, they're your colleagues, I mean, your academic peers, your intellectual peers. And my notion as chair was always to hire people more intelligent than I was. And better than I am. That's, to me, was the role of a chair. And chairs who thought they should hire people who are, what, lesser than themselves? That was not my thinking. [25:00] But to think that... So the paradox is, that's on the one hand. On the other hand, you're a quasi-administrator. I mean, the vice president and the president say, "It's the chair's duty to help us in this economic crisis. It's your responsibility to examine this crisis just as the president and the chief financial officer." Well, I take that seriously. My strategy, however, if it was such, was, having said all that I have, is to say, "Okay, you're telling me to do this, I object." For example the previous year, we had two positions. One was held by a linguist and one was by an archeologist. And they said, "get rid of one of them." And I wrote, and maybe you've seen the correspondence, I said, "That's ridiculous." You know, I'm going to get rid of one and then hire one later on? They got rid of one, okay?

I should say, also, prior to this, it wasn't as though everybody we hired stayed on. Given the notion of excellence, if you look at the record of people who came here, a couple of them were terminated. They were white males, by the way. So there was no history of hiring females and then firing them once they came up for tenure. Louise was the first. There was no history of that at all. But there was a history of our attempt to achieve excellence in that sense. Well, what I did, and I think some of my colleagues will remember, is to say, "This is what we have to do, but we're not going to give up; we'll just keep going on," you know? They say, "Cut back your budget," well okay, well, we will and we won't. And just to give you an example of how different departments handled it, my recollection is a couple of years later, the Political Science department cut out their Ph.D. program because they didn't have the funding. So that was one way to deal with it. They said, "You know, we don't have enough money, we're not getting our students supported," and so on. Well, we said we'll just carry on. And by say "I," I'm talking about this consensus of our department. So that's the way it is.

So between that period of time, from '71 to '73, we had this dramatic shift. Here Hicks had been given tenure, you know, everything seemed alright. Then that same season, Hornig comes on and says "we're in a financial crisis, we've got to cut back our budget by three or five percent. We've got to cut back your staffing plans, you can't have these two people continue on." Now, he didn't say, and the letters were coming from him as well as from the provost and so on, is you do have one tenured position, and you'll have another one, you know, assuming things are okay in the future.

Goldstein: But they're so few and far between.

Leis: Not only were they few and far between, but given our notion that we may only have one, and we had hired, we had already expanded, we were up to eight people. What about the young people who were

coming on? And giving a tenured position now effectively would cut them out. Because they're going to come up for tenure before the next one comes up.

Goldstein: So let me ask you this, because that was clearly an important strain of what was happening, pressure on the department. If I understand correctly, and I'm curious the extent to which this was something that you were aware of or weighed on you, from a different vantage point: there were also some affirmative action pressures going on with the university. And there was argument over whether the plan was good enough, the affirmative action plan. But did you have some sense that, I mean, yes, you had some hard choices to make coming up if you'd been hiring young faculty and there weren't enough tenure slots for them in the coming years for all of them, but did you also have some sense—I don't know, maybe you did, maybe you didn't—that with a woman coming up, that could be a particularly sensitive decision, or was that not a factor in your thinking?

Leis: My recollection is that it was. That I mean again, we weren't living in a, in this kind of bowl without any knowledge of what was going on. I mean, these things were all out there, I mean, certainly this the affirmative action plan had been – When did that come into effect I think the previous four or five years? – The law.

Goldstein: Well, it hadn't been approved, I think, federally, but it had been around on campus.

Leis: I thought it had been approved, or at any rate, it was around and it was certainly clear. Now, there was not an affirmative action plan, I mean, that all came later, but certainly the idea of being concerned that one does not deny tenure on the basis of gender, was certainly a real issue, and no question about it.

Goldstein: And similarly, may I suspect that you were aware that Professor Lamphere herself was becoming active in feminist issues on campus? So, and her intellectual interests were migrating a little bit? So, you know, what [30:00] were your thoughts about all of that?

Leis: Well, that's all in writing, you know.

Goldstein: Right, but we're talking.

Leis: I know, I'm just saying, it was very explicit, from our terms, that that was not the case, in at least two respects. One was, as I said, the idea of gender was always a part of anthropology, I mean, that was one—now, one could say that with Lamphere and her colleagues and so on, they were cutting out a new way of thinking about it. And, that's fine. But as far as the department was concerned, that was not an issue that would deny her tenure. If anything, we had on the books courses that she was teaching which would continue to be taught; we were looking for somebody to teach the course. So, if we were holding that against her, why would we proceed with the subject matter itself? Now, it doesn't mean that one can't be critical of the kind of work that she was doing. If she was doing work on political anthropology, one could say one wasn't being anti-political, so that was our position on it.

Goldstein: Right, so there's a difference between being uncomfortable with the direction of her work, versus being uncomfortable with the quality of her work. That's the distinction you're drawing.

Leis: [pause] In our discussions, that certainly was a part of it. But let me just emphasize again that these are not black and white issues. And as I said not only in writing to her, but in many other circumstances, that if conditions had been different, if we didn't have that economic pressure, if there was no hesitation on expansion of the department as far as awarding tenure, she probably would have gotten it. Because we're not talking about the best person in the world, none of us were best, but we were trying to, and I had no doubt that she was trying to, too. So, as a person, there I am caught on the one hand my friend, my colleague, and some of letters I wrote I tried to be as nice I possibly could. Well, those came back to bite me. But, you know, that's okay. [laughter]

Goldstein: Okay, so let's go back to 19—the fall of '73. You had already as a department decided the year before that an early review was not warranted. Now the year comes. So why don't you tell me what happened?

Leis: All right, now the year comes, and there were, I believe, seven tenured faculty. And as anthropology goes, you know, we're coming and going, and as I've already explained I was away for a year. So at that time there were, I think, three faculty off campus. But this had been going on for a period of time, after all she had been in the department for six years, it wasn't like the three people who were away didn't know her. And even as the case today, when somebody's off campus, they're not relieved of the duty to review somebody up for tenure.

Goldstein: And we're talking about the tenured faculty because those are the relevant people who are involved in the tenure decision, right?

Leis: Yes, yes, and that's still the case. So there were, I believe, three people off campus, and three on, or four on. Anyway, so the discussion went on and the decision was made. [pause] All right? So the decision was made—

Goldstein: Do you want to just elaborate a little on the decision was made and what direction?

Leis: Not to give her tenure.

Goldstein: Okay. And what were the factors that went into that? Well, let me just ask you a few things about that. So we talked already a little bit about the quality of her scholarship, and... Are you saying the thinking was that the work she'd been doing recently, just, in this new mode of, "It's gotta be better than it would have been to get somebody tenure a little bit earlier," it just wasn't up to snuff, or what was the perception of her work?

Leis: Yeah, and also when you make a tenure decision it's not just on the past, it's about the future. So that's certainly one factor. And as a recent member of the tenure committee here at Brown, I can tell you, it's a very difficult thing. And you hear people... This tenure committee that we have, it's from all departments; everybody up for tenure comes there. And you hear the physicists saying "well, gee, this might be a Nobel Prize winner, but, should we give them tenure or not?" Because of what's... whatever

the judgment is at that time, it's partly trying to guess what the future might be as well. And we're all, you know... that's part of it. So that was one thing.

Goldstein: And let me just ask you, did you concur, I mean, because I know the department was a little bit split in its view. Did you concur in the judgment that her scholarship was not, you know, currently sufficient and predictably fabulous enough to warrant tenure? And was that, you know, your thinking?

Leis: No, there was disagreement. [35:00] And in fact part of what, I mean, there were other factors that enter into this clearly as well. But, part of it was that there were different degrees of feeling about it. I mean, quite personally I think I wrote all those nice things because for me it wasn't a clear-cut decision, you know? But, once these things are made, we kind of look at it that way. And as I say, it was not unanimous. But the reverse of that is, and again this applies to the present day, if you get a recommendation from a department, and half are for and half are against, that in itself is not in favor of the candidate. So once you get a split like that, departments know to this day that if you don't have unanimous decision, by the time you get to the tenure review committee, you're gonna be in trouble. Because then they're going to say well, what's the problem? So that was part of it.

Goldstein: So I'm a little reluctant to put you on the spot, but I'm going to do it anyhow, if you don't mind. Which way, which, you know you said the department was split, but which side of that were you on?

Leis: Oh, I don't really want to get into it. I mean, as chair obviously I supported what the department's decision was.

Goldstein: Okay. So that was one factor. There were student voices also?

Leis: There were student voices for and against. Again it was split. There was some division there.

Goldstein: And it seemed as if, at least she had been trying to, you know, elicit some support on the part of some students. Was that happening?

Leis: Oh, sure.

Goldstein: Can you just talk a little bit about that? You had awareness that...

Leis: We send out letters to all the undergraduates, to all the graduate students... I mean, it was very explicit. That was a part of our review. Also, going back to what I said earlier, this idea of our social relations to each other, a lot went on that wasn't just written down. Students were talking to faculty and they wouldn't necessarily write things down. Well, that's not fair; everything should be in writing. But, in those days that's the way communication proceeded. So that was part of it. Part of it was we attended each other's off—we had people lecturing in our classes, you know? We'd have a visiting lecturer, we had other opportunities to examine each other's... Now, given that split some people will say she was a wonderful lecturer, and others will say she wasn't. What we were getting, again, as part of this "best person," was that teaching was important. And one of the things that came out of the Lamphere case is

every department now had to have a teaching evaluation that was accepted by the administration and so on. That was one of—I mean, I'm jumping ahead, but we took teaching really seriously. We were a young department, we were trying to attract the best students, turn out the best students, and teaching was relevant. So if you look at it today, you say what's teaching, research is 40 percent, teaching is 20 percent or 40 percent, service is 20... or 45-45-10. In some departments, teaching is nothing. If you were the best scholar, I mean you're doing break-necking work in physics—what is it? break-through work? [laughs]—in physics, forget your teaching. But I'm just saying, we paid a lot of attention.

Goldstein: So you paid attention to teaching; It was serious before it was required to be serious.

Leis: That's right. That's right.

Goldstein: And thinking about her teaching, whether it was your view or the views of, you know, a faction of the department, or some of the students. What was it about her teaching that wasn't uniformly adored?

Leis: [pause and sigh] Let me think. I mean, what were some of the negative comments?

Goldstein: Yeah.

Leis: I think one of them was the way in which she talked to large groups of students, that she was not very—

Goldstein: Meaning?

Leis: A large class.

Goldstein: I know a large group, but what about the way she talked to them?

Leis: Not an effective speaker. [pause] Some of the graduate students, I think, felt that they were not getting... whatever from her.

Goldstein: What would the "whatever" include?

Leis: Well, I'm not exactly sure except to think that maybe it was theoretical work, orientations. Whatever it is that graduate students think they should be getting from faculty in terms of advancing their knowledge. If they don't feel they're being challenged sufficiently, if they don't feel that the faculty person knows more than they do... For better or worse, I'm not saying that's necessarily correct but if you want to know what some of the negative comments were, that was part of it. The other part was the good part. In small classes, apparently students connected to her. She was very personally connected to students. I think they felt that they could go to her and speak to her [40:00] personally which was all for the best. So again, there was this kind of division that was on academics and it was partly on teaching. So here we have two problems.

Goldstein: Let me ask you one more thing on the students' side: I hear you say that there were mixed assessments of her. So, did those just kind of arise spontaneously, or was it sort of a... you know, little battle going on that she was gaining support for her side and her detractors were gaining support for students that they thought would be like-minded? I mean, how hot did this become?

Leis: I don't, I wouldn't put it, characterize it as hot or cold. As I said it was part of our review of her tenure. It was very open that we were sending out letters. And I gather it was very open on her part that she was recruiting letters because I think that seemed, I think that was made public... I mean most faculty didn't, I say, go out and recruit students, but I think she felt she was being ... unfairly treated and wanted to get people to assist her, which was fine.

Goldstein: And as this process was going on, did you have any awareness that if this didn't go well for her, she might make trouble?

Leis: Hmm, I'm not, I'm not sure. I know that the first time when she had early decision, is that she asked me to write letters of recommendation for her because she was applying to jobs elsewhere. So in that sense, I guess in the normal course of things, when people feel they may not get tenure, indeed they do look for jobs elsewhere. And my, I mean, I think she has said that I wrote letters that were not positive; that certainly is not my memory. But I think we could look at the letters if we could find them and see that that was not the case, though. I sent very positive letters on her behalf. So in that sense, what was the trouble that I was anticipating? Did I think that she was going to go get a lawyer and so on? No, I didn't [laughs].

Goldstein: So you had no inkling of that?

Leis: Not until it happened. I mean, I knew that she was upset, I knew that she wanted to have a review, and that the grievance procedure had been stated. So in that sense, yeah, I saw it coming once that happened. But I think the decision as far as the department was concerned was made in early May and that she was informed by the administration in late May of '74. Well, between— I think that was part of the grievance, that somehow I had not informed her in time. Well, number one, the time was June first, not May, that she had to be informed and there was time for her to do whatever she wanted to do after that. Number two, I was told by the administration to wait. So while that was one of the complaints against me, I really felt that one was totally unfair.

Goldstein: I'm sorry, because why?

Leis: Because we made our decision May, early in May, and she was informed by the administration in later May. That period of time between our decision and the administration informing her, I believe, was one of the things that Arlene Gorton's committee found against me, that this was one of the things that I had done wrong, or whatever the legal language is. But to go back to your question, did I know all of this was going to happen? No. [laughs]

Goldstein: Do you, I mean, I know this is a long time ago—

Leis: But let me just add one thing. I shouldn't have been so naïve about it though, if that's the right word. Because at that same time at the university there were other things going on. In fact, I think the month that—was it the month? or the year?—Brown was, in fact... lost a case to the... whatever committee is in Rhode Island, the State Human Relations Committee, saying that this woman, I think a psychiatrist or something, had been fired because of sexual discrimination. So it's not like I wasn't totally unaware of these kinds of implications. But from my premises we hadn't done sex discrimination so wow, you know? If I'd been aware that somehow we had done wrong, I think I would have anticipated what went on a little bit more. But if you think you're right, you don't think anything's going to happen.

Goldstein: So in early May, when you informed her in writing, I don't know whether you also talked with her, about the fact that the decision had gone against her, what do you remember about that? I mean, you know...

Leis: I didn't inform her in early May, I informed the administration. [45:00]

Goldstein: You informed the administration but you then had to inform her. So by the end of the month, you had to tell her.

Leis: Yes. Right.

Goldstein: So do you remember anything about that communication and her response to it?

Leis: [pause] I think she said she wanted to appeal it. I mean, I honestly don't remember at that point. I do know that she was here another year, and I thought she acted admirably during this whole period of... you know? She was a good colleague, she didn't say, she didn't pout, whatever we do when we're, you know, under that kind of duress. She did her job and I thought that was great.

Goldstein: Let me just go back to one thing about the factors that weighed against her; we talked about students' evaluations, we talked about her scholarship. You know, I'm sure you're aware that her contention, you know, over time has been that it was held against her that her field was shifting away from Navajos and towards, you know, women's studies, feminist critiques. Was that a factor? Was she right or wrong that that was held against her? I think even today she would say that that was partly why she didn't get tenure.

Leis: Well, we've been through that already, you know. As I say, it wasn't the subject matter. So to the extent that we felt that wasn't necessarily the direction, but our looking down the line at where that direction was going, not that necessarily the substance but the way in which she was doing it and so on is what affected the judgment.

Goldstein: So that interpretation of hers is just, from your vantage point, just wrong?

Leis: Yes. [pause] We disagree. And I'm saying, you know, looking at... look if you do something and I tell you what your reasons are for doing so, and you say no those aren't your reasons, well where do we go from there? Well, take your actions, okay? Now if the actions are what would make it seem that that

was your motivation, you can connect the two together. But I don't think it always works that way in terms of what people do and what their motivations are, you can't always connect them. You can look at the consequences, and in some ways we can get into that, in terms of how we get at the truth, because that's an anthropological problem. I've already suggested that we try to understand situations examining the different assumptions by which we look at the problem. Well, what is the question? Was she sexually discriminated against or not? That's the question. Well, how do we arrive at a decision? Arlene can tell you tomorrow what her committee found. But my recollection is what she found, what the committee found, was that there was no sex discrimination and there was no abrogation of her academic freedom. She did find that there were structural problems in how that was handled. What I would say on reflection, of course, if you're going to ask me that, you know, should it have been done differently? Absolutely, it should have been done differently.

Goldstein: But these were technicalities and not on the substance of her merits.

Leis: But even on the substance, since we're arriving at how we arrive at that. If somebody introduces a grievance, how that grievance is to be handled reflects back on how the judgment was made. And if you don't like my judgment, I mean, in America we have twelve people in a jury, and the jury comes forward with a decision you don't like, can you call another jury? No. But, in this case, we did, to some extent. Because as part of this procedure, and you can look up the dates and all the rest, but my recollection is that after Arlene's committee came in with that report, the administration—not the administration, but the faculty...? What was it called then? FPG? By the way, when I first came to Brown I was on a committee that revised governance which ended up with the faculty... it was called the Committee of January 7th, when we revised this. At any rate, that committee, in the grievance it went through, in the series of grievance procedures after the court and they recommended that it go back to the department. And then I think Louise said no, their hearts have hardened, we can't do that, they'll simply come up with the same decision. Then I think...

Goldstein: Was that right, by the way?

Leis: Pardon?

Goldstein: Was that right, by the way?

Leis: It was difficult at that time, because I don't think that's the way the grievance, I don't think that's the way the problem could have been resolved. It would have been difficult, I think. Because, by that time, it became [50:00] a matter of, you know, what's the responsibility of the department, and what's, is it academic freedom, and, you know, who makes the decisions.

Goldstein: Well, I was about to ask you is that. Was this whole, from your vantage point, was this just really infringing on departmental autonomy, academic freedom?

Leis: At that time, the way the university was structured and the way academics were being carried on in America, that was the way it was. Now one of the first things that I did after we had received the grievance report is I always ask for my comments on how the procedures went. So even at that time, I

think, before all of these new structures were set up. Because she was saying that the people we had gotten to write these reviews for her and so on, didn't really... weren't fully cognizant of what her contributions were to women's studies and so on. And, we were saying, well, we had expertise, you know. We hired people whose main specialty is in—let's say political anthropology, we don't have a political anthropologist necessarily on staff but we, you know, we asked people and we all do some of it, and some of my colleagues were saying they were doing gender studies. It wasn't like they were totally, didn't know anything about the field, so you know there was some of that problem, and I think it wasn't a hard-heartedness, but given the structures it wasn't exactly clear whether the department would change its mind because she decided she didn't like our decision. So my feelings at that particular point were, we should have had a mediator come in who was a professional mediator. And really examine why we were having the disagreements that we did. And that in that situation, it might have been handled differently.

Goldstein: What do you think that would have showed if it happened? Do you think it would have validated what the department had done?

Leis: I think only in the case if, if the mediator had come in and said the financial context is irrelevant, changing of standards of getting tenure is irrelevant, then I don't know, it would be up for grabs, it seems to me. Because, as I've already said, if those conditions weren't there, we probably would have given her tenure. So that's why I say it was this kind of mixed problem. But what happened is after the Gorton committee came in with their report, then my recollection is that she got a lawyer, Stanzler. And then the next step was suddenly the corporation, or was it the corporation or it's called the Academic Committee on Promotions or something, I... CAP, said, "Okay we will look at new evidence." Because up to that point, I think the administration was saying, "Well, it's illegal, we can't bring in new information et cetera the case had been settled, but now well a lawyer's there, well, okay, let's look at it a little differently." So I believe what happened was that they did accept new information. They did have, now maybe I'm wrong on this, but I believe they did have new information. Or allowed her to submit other information that she had wanted to do. And their decision was on the basis of their reviewing the documents that the department had made the right decision. So that's where we were. Then I went off again for a [laughs] this time I left for Hungary, I think, for a year.

Goldstein: So were you on campus or gone by the time the lawsuit happened?

Leis: Well, I'm trying to remember that. You know, when the depositions were taken, I believe, when I was still here. That would've been the summer of '75?

Goldstein: I guess I'm wondering about the moment when you realized that you were a named defendant in a federal lawsuit, and what you thought about that.

Leis: Well that happened right away, I mean that was right after she got a lawyer. I think it was certified as a class action suit pretty early on. Was that '75, maybe? '74?

Goldstein: It was after the Gorton Committee... had come out.

Leis: Right. So the Gorton Committee was '74?

Goldstein: '75.

Leis: '75.

Goldstein: Winter of '75, yes.

Leis: What did it mean for me to be named?

Goldstein: Yeah.

Leis: I was the chair of the department. I mean, that's the way I took it. It was, you know. I happened to be the chair. Did I personally take it...? I mean I thought I... you know, made the decision without relevance to sex discrimination. That to me was absurd.

Goldstein: You know I have to say, you're sounding very, um, detached from this. And it's hard for me to imagine that in that moment, you've made a decision, you're doing your job, suddenly you're part of a federal lawsuit. I cannot imagine this is an experience that you or a lot of your colleagues had had up until this point. It was totally fine that you were being sued?

Leis: I'm 40 years detached.

Goldstein: Well, put yourself back a few years.

Leis: That's hard to do.... I mean, again, I mean, I was, I can't say I was happy about it. Not the kind of thing I'd like for my birthday present. [laughs]

Goldstein: Because why?

Leis: I honestly didn't know what was going to happen. To be named, I didn't realize all that stuff was gonna happen afterwards. I mean, I had never been accused of anything before. I think once I got a traffic license but— traffic ticket but, you know I mean I don't know what's involved in being named. And as far as I was concerned, we hadn't done anything wrong. So, okay, so I'm named. But I didn't, I don't remember being shocked or [55:00] crying or upset about it. I certainly felt she has the right to do whatever she wants to do; this is America! We all sue each other for whatever we want to sue, you know, I mean that's part of what we do. I don't mean to be flippant about it but I mean, it wasn't like, "Hey, wow, this is among the worst thing that ever happened to me in my life." Turned out it was one of the worst things that happened to me [laughs] but, I mean, apart from that, I didn't know at that time what was going to happen.

Goldstein: So what did you learn?

Leis: From what?

Goldstein: Now, you said you didn't realize it was going to be one of the worst things but ultimately you realized it was, so what were the intervening things that...?

Leis: Oh, the deposition that was terrible, that went on a whole summer, I mean—

Goldstein: What was bad about being deposed?

Leis: Well, this is fun here, right? We're talking for an hour. How about a hot summer day, you know, for hours on hours? People asking questions which I thought were totally inappropriate, inappropriate. And...

Goldstein: Because?

Leis: Well, somebody wants to prove that I'm a sexist? I mean, you're gonna ask me who I'm sleeping with? I mean, what are we talking about? So I mean I think that kind of thing was very unpleasant and unfortunate, and the extent to which they proved anything about me being a sexist, I don't know. Let's remember it never did go to trial. And all this talk about how sexist we are applied to the university, not just the Anthropology department. So when they're talking about uncovering, I don't know what was uncovered. But it wasn't just Anthropology. And I don't mean to be defensive about it in that sense. But if we're thinking about the big picture, and women at Brown, I don't know what they uncovered in other departments. I know what they uncovered in my department, and if we had gone to trial we would have gone to trial; whether we would have lost or won, I'm not sure. You'd think as the *BDH* reporter we would have lost. But I think it was a question. You never do know what's going to happen. I think it would have been very embarrassing.

Goldstein: I was quoting other people thinking you were going to lose, just to correct that.

Leis: Okay. But I'm just saying, there weren't quotes around it as I recall, but at any rate it was perfectly reasonable to think that and I think a lot of people did think it. In fact, it was just not too long ago, somebody on the Gorton Committee, I don't even remember what the committee, what the context was, came out and said, "Well, it never did go to trial." Well, to me that was a very defensive position because we lost, I mean in the sense that in whatever the trial was going to be about. But I'm just saying if it had gone to trial, and stuff was brought up, I don't know whether we would have been proved to have been sexist. I do think, as, if we want to move on, that the numbers that came out, as far as university appointments, were devastating. That is, the number of women who had tenured positions at Brown, one might say if you could do a statistical examination of this one might imagine looking for the truth, a statistical truth, that sex discrimination probably played a role in this. So that might've been and that's what became the case, to a large extent. So the settlement was indeed personal to the Anthropology department; Louise got tenure as well as two other faculty members. And, for the university, wow, we got these kinds of oversight by a judge and these kinds of rules and regulations by which we had to abide, which was of course embarrassing for a major university to encounter.

Goldstein: Can we just go back a step? So, you were talking about that long, hot summer deposition. It wasn't the favorite part of your life. In addition to the deposition, there was also a contempt hearing,

involving some correspondence between you and a colleague George Hicks, [1:00:00] who you've mentioned. Can you explain what that was about?

Leis: Yeah. Well, interestingly enough, I honestly don't remember being in court. I mean, a lot of other things I remember. I don't remember I— whether I even saw Pettine or Judge Pettine. I might have been in court, I don't know. But the point was, as I understood it, was that as part of the deposition, it came out that I had correspondence with members of the department, not just with George Hicks. And that as part of this deposition, which again I was totally unaware of what was entailed, that correspondence had to be produced. Well, as far as I was concerned, hey, this correspondence is going to assist others trying to understand my state of mind to see that I'm talking about Lamphere in an academic way, not in a sexist way. However, there was other parts of that correspondence which one could easily refer to as sexist language. There was lots of comments of a personal nature because Hicks was my friend, and we were talking about other matters. And, I guess there was other stuff in the correspondence that offered different interpretations than I would have given. What I would have given is this was feeble sense, this was a feeble sense of humor, in many instances. And if you're talking to somebody who you know, you will use language, and you will convey meaning in ways which anybody listening to it would have an entirely different interpretation. I don't think I have to, that's no revelation to you, as a, as a journalist. But we do know that words have entirely different meanings in the context in which they're used. Take the word *negro*, *black*, and so on, we know who's talking to who and how it's used, and so on. So that was my view of it. So, I said, "Okay, here's the correspondence." Well the lawyers looked at it and of course, they're not naïve. They were horrified, I guess.

Goldstein: What do you think, and I understand that things can look different from the inside than from the outside. That's the point that you're making.

Leis: Yeah.

Goldstein: So what was it that an outsider and lawyers as a subset of outsiders might have seen that would have horrified them?

Leis: Just what I said, some of this sexist language that was used. Some of the... I guess that's what they were concerned about. I was never quite clear about what it was that was so upsetting to them because again, in my own point of view, I was not a sexist, nor was the people I were talking to. We were anthropologists. And I've already hoped to suggest that as anthropologists, we study sexism, we are trying to help the poor and the voiceless people express themselves in ways in which they can fight racism, sexism, and all the rest of it, and colonialism. Well, one can show that's not always the case, you know, there's some anthropologists who in their heart of hearts may have been sexist despite what they did, I don't know. But I mean I'm open to that, but I'm just saying, that I can see afterwards, and this is why I thought I was so naïve. Yes, you give me a letter you've written to somebody and I guarantee I can make something else out of it than what you intended. So that's the way I took it. And the lawyers I guess saw that. Well, what they did, and I never saw it, they proceeded to go through that correspondence and I guess they cut out huge hunks of it, whatever it's called, didacted or redacted, or whatever the word. I don't know what, they didn't ask me to cut out parts that I thought were irrelevant. So I guess they went through and like this, [gestures crossing out] and they protested, I think it was appealed that they should

look at the correspondence... Well, Pettine was disturbed that the lawyers had produced the correspondence, and that's what the fine was about. That's my understanding of the situation. Now if you look back at the records, maybe that's not the way it was. But that's my understanding of what happened.

Goldstein: And, what were your thoughts about, I mean, when the university was ultimately ordered to produce un-redacted versions of this correspondence? This had been correspondence between you and a friend and colleague. Was it—

Leis: Several, yeah.

Goldstein: Yeah. Was it, was it proper for a court to have told you to hand it over, or told the university to hand it over?

Leis: No, I thought it was awful.

Goldstein: You thought it was awful, because?

Leis: Because it's my personal correspondence. Why should a court have to look at my personal correspondence? I mean, to me, that was the kind of information that I thought was going too far. If they had wanted to examine all of the records that were available to them, all of the correspondence that, in fact, was official and relative to it, that was one thing. But to take my personal correspondence? [1:05:00] I didn't think that was appropriate. Now, that's a matter of contention, as to whether it is nor not, and clearly Judge Pettine thought it was relevant. He thought he could ask for anything that he wanted. And as I understand it now... You know, I watch these TV programs on law; if you have a grand jury they can ask for anything they want, and ask anybody. Well, I didn't know that at that time. And certainly when it comes to that correspondence, if I had known that in fact they were going to take it seriously, I'm not sure I would've handed it in. You know, because now, I'm saying after the fact, yes, I think it was irrelevant, and I thought it was inappropriate, but it got us into a lot of trouble. I mean, I think people were looking at that correspondence, and making the connection to the fact that the university conceded because there was all this information that was so disastrous to the university's case.

Goldstein: So we were talking about why you thought that it was intrusive or inappropriate to have your public—your private correspondence dragged into these public proceedings.

Leis: Well, let me answer in two ways. One is, who does want their personal correspondence to be made public? I mean, I think that's a question for everyone. I mean, you write things about people and you say things about people, and that's for you and your friend to talk about. Do you want a microphone in your bedroom when you're talking to your, you know, best friend? I mean these are, in a sense, intimate conversations. You say things that you may not mean at all. You're just saying them. So that's one possibility. The other possibility is what I suggested before, and that is that when you say something, what it really means to one person may mean something entirely different to another. Let me just give you an example: jokes. There are anti-Semitic jokes, there are anti-Polish jokes, there are anti-all kinds of jokes. Well, you can take that joke and say, "Hmmm, that person is really an anti-Semite, look at that joke they're telling." Well, you find it may or may not be true. And it also relates to what a person does. So if a

person is thinking something anti-Semitic, and then the person turns around and doesn't do anything, and sometimes the opposite of what one might consider an anti-Semite to do, then is the person anti-Semitic because they told an anti-Semitic joke?

Goldstein: So that's an analogy. Can you...

Leis: That's an analogy. Well, I'm saying, so therefore, in the case of women, if I were to say something sexist, by some definition of whatever sexist may be, does that mean I am a sexist? If my actions were such as hiring a woman? Marrying a woman who is a professional anthropologist? Having three daughters? Am I a sexist? When all my actions portray the opposite? When having told you about my life, my experiences, and how I came into anthropology, all those pre-dispositions? How does that measure up against something I say in a letter to a friend that might be interpreted as being sexist? So that's it, that's the connection. So, I'm saying that, again to get back to anthropology and how we proceed, we begin with saying we don't know what the truth is, all right? Number one. All we're trying to do is find it, and approximate it. We try to be scientists in the way in which we proceed, but we also have what is called qualitative methodology, and by that I mean we don't start with the questions. We don't set it up in such a way that whatever you tell me, I can then do a statistical analysis of it and say, there's some correlation between how many people are being appointed to tenure and how many people are women, given these kinds of questions that I've asked. A qualitative approach is to start talking to people, asking them what's the basis for your approach, looking at particular cases and trying to examine it. Now, you could say, "Well, doesn't that involve your correspondence? Doesn't that tell me what you really mean?" And I'm saying, when you take the individual case, number one, it doesn't apply to statistics, we always have variation on the mean. And the second thing is, how they say it, the context in which they say it, is what's meaningful.

Goldstein: So if I'm hearing you correctly, and correct me if I'm not hearing you correctly, what you're saying about these letters back and forth is that there were things in it that, even you or Professor Hicks might, looking at it, say [1:10:00] somebody could read these as sexist, but you didn't mean anything by it.

Leis: Right, right. Let me give you another example. One of the sexist comments I look at and say, "Did I write that? [laughs] That was stupid." Was a comment about a, I think a graduate student, the way she looked. Okay? Now, isn't that awful? I mean, that's a sexist thing to do. However, were female graduate students ever discriminated against in our department? There were more female students than males. So where's the evidence that there was ever any discrimination in the department against women? Women were being hired, and in fact part of this notion of keeping tenured positions open was for women who were in the department. So all I'm trying to say is, that if you take that statement that I made, which had nothing to do with Lamphere, by the way, and say, "Oh this is evidence of his state of mind that can be connected to the Lamphere case," I say that's irrelevant. That's what I mean by irrelevant.

Goldstein: So you're saying the standard is not what somebody... thinks about, conveys, writes to somebody, it's how one treats other people professionally, is that what you're saying?

Leis: That's the evidence of it, right.

Goldstein: And everything else is wholly immaterial, is that your point?

Leis: Well, how do you arrive at decisions? I mean, I think it's a back and forth thing. But it's the language that you're using, and the kind of criteria you're using for coming to that decision. So I'm saying, as you recall, that I handed in the correspondence willingly, because I thought the back and forth insofar as it applied to the desire to have the best department, have the best people teaching there, didn't involve sexism at all. It simply meant that that was our intention, to have the best people, not the best men or the best women.

Goldstein: Can I ask you, does it bother you that having come out of Antioch, having married a professional female anthropologist, all the things that you've articulated, that people viewed you as a sexist?

Leis: Of course.

Goldstein: Can you talk about that?

Leis: Well, people think a lot of bad things about me, not just sexist [laughs] I suppose. I mean, you can't live your life, I mean, in the sense of worrying about how people think about you. Certainly, I found it very unfortunate. I found it upsetting. One of your questions I think has to do with what was the effect on me? Personally and perhaps professionally? Personally it was disturbing, on two accounts. One was, as I say, I was not, it was not an easy decision with regard to Louise. Personally. I mean, I'm sure she probably didn't think the best things of me afterwards, personally. But I never felt... anything, and... So that's, so therefore, to tell somebody these awful things, you're not getting tenured, was not happy. That certainly was not something I like to do. Now I know enough sadists in the world who enjoy such things, you know? Firing people is wonderful. That's not my thing, you know. So, it was a very unpleasant thing to do. I think how else it affected me is, I don't know. I mean, certainly when I heard from others what people were saying about me in the university, it was unfortunate.

Goldstein: Can you just describe that a little bit?

Leis: People have told me that whenever my name came up, I mean, I was seen as being some awful person, and having done these sexist things, and I guess there was this stuff going on. Nobody ever said it to me directly, I will tell you that—

Goldstein: Nobody ever said it to you directly?

Leis: Not that I heard it [laugh]. And as far as my career within Brown is concerned, I don't know, I mean, how it affected me? I... became chair of the department again for six years. Later on, I became chair of the faculty. So within the university, I mean, there were enough faculty, I guess, at the university who didn't hold it against me, because they voted for me to be the chair of the faculty. So all those things in the future were there. How it affected me professionally? That I don't know. I wasn't elected to any national positions in the Anthropological Association. So I don't know how these things affect one, but—

Goldstein: Do you think you might have been otherwise? Or are you just saying that because...

Leis: I have no idea. Probably, who knows? But I mean I'm just saying, the question is how [1:15:00] did it affect me. I have no idea how it affects me if I don't know. I mean, if somebody says you didn't do, because you are a sexist, we are not going to nominate you for this or that, or because you are a sexist you are not going to get a grant. I never heard that, nobody ever gave it to me in writing. I don't know what goes on.

Goldstein: But did you sense that that was, I mean, I'm just interested that you raise it. Did you sense that none of that was happening, or that it was sort of in the air but sort of not articulated, or—?

Leis: I, honestly I don't really focus on that. I mean, it just wasn't, I mean, for my concern is we were building this department, and we were hiring the best people we could. We were hiring women and men. And it was a difficult time because of the cutbacks at the university and we were trying to fight that. And, I was trying to do my own work, and I was teaching, and I was doing all these other things as well, and having my family. So there were lots of other things going on in my life. I didn't think the Lamphere case was the only thing going on. But for a period of time it was certainly taking a lot of time, and I, when I was in Hungary and this thing was being settled by the university, I felt that it shouldn't have been settled.

Goldstein: I was going to ask you about that.

Leis: Yeah. At that point, it had gotten to where I felt it was now an admission of guilt. And I didn't feel we were guilty. So in that sense I felt, going back to square one, I did think that the department's decision was based fairly at that time. And if that was going to be what the trial was about, I was willing to go to trial.

Goldstein: Did you—

Leis: The university was not. We had a new president, and I can't blame him for wanting to settle it, but he did, and he did. And that was that. And as far as I was concerned, I was just happy it was over, too. But, push comes to pull, I felt I was not about to admit my guilt then. I'm not admitting my guilt now.

Goldstein: Did you convey to anybody or did anybody ask you what you thought about the possibility of settlement?

Leis: Oh, I think if you look at my correspondence, if it were there, you would see I was writing to the president.

Goldstein: Oh, you were. I didn't realize that.

Leis: Oh, absolutely.

Goldstein: Saying?

Leis: I didn't agree.

Goldstein: Was that before or after the settlement agreement?

Leis: After.

Goldstein: Had you known it was about to happen or you were in Hungary and just discovered, look at what they did?

Leis: I'm not sure. There was some correspondence going on, I know, because it wasn't clear whether it would be settled or not. As to whether I would fly back for the trial or just what was... I'm not exactly sure in my mind what the sequence was there. And of course, being away from it all, I'm sure I had a different perspective than being here. So, I mean, I think that also was part of it.

Goldstein: I can imagine you might be happy to be away from it.

Leis: Yeah, I was. But on the other hand, I felt clearly very responsible for what was going on. So I wasn't trying to escape it, in that sense. I mean, and honestly I felt bad for Louise in the sense that I knew she must be going through this thing too. I mean in some ways it was worse for her than for me. I mean, I had my job. And you know, in the end she had hers too, but it couldn't have been a happy experience to be given tenure in a department where you had been rejected. So I mean, that must have been a problem too.

Goldstein: So, let me just make sure I understand. When the settlement talks were going on, shortly after president Howard—

Leis: Swearer.

Goldstein: —arrived, were you aware that those talks were happening? Or you were not told about them?

Leis: I, I think I was, but I'm not honestly... Yeah, I don't think I woke up one day and found that it was settled. So I must have been somehow in the loop, but I'm not sure what... how much.

Goldstein: I understand. But are you saying that you were... so the, the correspondence saying, "This was not the right thing to have done," from your vantage point, that was only after the settlement agreement had happened, or it might have been before as well?

Leis: My recollection is, that it was before. But I was in a small village in Hungary called Szigetköz as I recall. And I wasn't getting, we didn't have email, stuff like that. So there was, you know, that kind of, you know, people were actually writing letters, and mail and [laughs] it was taking time. It wasn't always clear where we were [1:20:00] at particular times and so. I'm not actually, I'm almost sure, I would guess that I was writing before the decision had been made. That would be my guess. Whether my opinion was

asked, or whether the lawyers were informing me of where we were in this, or what I, I honestly don't remember.

Goldstein: Do you remember finding out the settlement had happened?

Leis: Yeah, yeah. I must've been over—when did it happen? Was it in spring?

Goldstein: September '77, I think.

Leis: Then I must have been back by that time. So I was on campus.

Goldstein: Do you remember doing anything, or saying anything, or...

Leis: Probably, "I'm just glad it was over." [laughs]

Goldstein: You were glad it was over but you weren't happy about the way it was over, is what you're saying.

Leis: No, but you know when these things happen, after all of that period everybody was really tired. That's my recollection. I mean, I had been away for a year. But I think I would guess everybody was pretty exhausted with the situation and pretty... you know, so many other things were going on at that time, too. It wasn't just this case. And as I recall, once the settlement was announced, while it was very onerous to have the university placed under the judge's... the, the real, what should I say? The value of what was being done was not objected to, in the sense that I think the faculty were, were willing to have a new governance structure as far as tenure was concerned. And, as I've mentioned to you directly, the question of tenure is with us to this day. If you count the number of faculty meetings in the last 40 years that have been devoted to revising tenure, it's astounding. Here we are in 20, what, 14? And we're still talking about it? That's 40 years ago. So it's such a difficult issue. I mean, apart from the, you know, larger question, should there be tenure or not, which you know has been brought up in enough different universities. We're not talking about that at Brown, or any major university. But giving tenure, the criteria, the way in which the structure of review is concerned, whether everybody has a fair opportunity, what should be considered? That's a very, very difficult question. And that's why it's constantly being reviewed. So when I look back 40 years, I wish I had had these structures in place. And that's what I said before. At that time, right after I think Arlene or maybe it was before that, Bruce Donovan, as I believe, was the first committee to look at this over, the FPG wanted to decide whether there should be a grievance committee. And I believe Bruce Donovan headed that committee. And then afterwards he asked me for my comments. I think it was back at that point that I was saying, we need something than what we have, because... it just wasn't working.

And ours was the first real grievance procedure that the university had experienced, that the faculty had experienced. So we were sort of, you know, working our way through it, as the first example of it. You know, now I think we would hopefully do it better than we did then. I think there would be more review cases, that the timing would be better. I think part of Louise's issue was that she didn't have time to proceed with the grievance. That was her take on it. My take was there was time. But, in any case, we have more steps now, and certainly it's much harder to get tenure now than it was then, if one can

define what “harder” means. But there’s just more involved in it, the stakes are higher. And now, one could say we’re in another crisis as far as academia is concerned. We’re not an expanding universe. And hiring is a very delicate issue. So, on the one hand we have this personal contact, we’re still giving tenure on the basis of people in our department who we live with for seven years, so we are a peer review. And on the other hand, we’re trying to think, you know, 20, 30 years down the line. What’s gonna happen? So how we make the comparison, how we make the decision, do we compare somebody now with their tenure review with Louise’s tenure review? Is that a fair way to proceed? That we should not have made any changes to the present time in how this should happen? So all these things, you know, come to play. Does Brown, now having more money [1:25:00], Brown didn’t balance the budget for ten years during that period of time. They had a decline, believe it or not, in student applications. That was one of the *BDH* headlines. So there was pressure. Students wanted Hornig to resign. I mean, there was a lot of pressure going on. Well now, things are different, we’ve got more money supposedly, we’ve got more people wanting to come to Brown than ever before. Should students be admitted on the same criteria that students were admitted in 1970? You know, there’s all these things change in time. You’re asking me to think back 40 years. I’m trying to do as best I can but whether it was really that way or not, who knows.

Goldstein: Let me just ask you one more thing. Are you and Louise Lamphere in touch? Have you been in touch over the years?

Leis: No. I see her occasionally at meetings, and as you know she’s donated money to our department, which has named the chair for her. So I guess she has no hard feelings about Brown. And when I see her, I think we are cordial to each other. We don’t sit down and necessarily chat but we say hello. I certainly don’t have any bad feelings towards her.

Goldstein: Okay, thank you. I’m going to ask whether there are questions from the listeners.

Leis: Sure.

Barbara Raab: Well, just for the sake of the tape I will say my question and then Amy will then ask you, but—

Leis: Okay.

Raab: I’m really struck by the fact that even today, 40 years later, it sounds like you still believe that if this had gone to trial you would have been willing to put up with the full file being open and the correspondence being out there, and Louise Lamphere 40 years later still firmly believes that that correspondence was a smoking gun. It’s like time has not changed people’s... As an anthropologist, and I’m not an anthropologist, but my observation of the people I’m here to observe is that even over forty years, there’s some things you said, “Oh, maybe if we’d done them differently, the outcome would have been different.” But that very fundamental thing that even to this day that I hear you saying, “I wish we had gone to trial. You know, I wish we had.” And even to this day I hear her saying, “Wow, you know, that would have been terrible for the university,” and so I’m just kind of surprised. I’m not sure what my question is...

Goldstein: Yeah, what is your question?

Raab: I guess my question is, am I hearing you correctly that even now, it would have been okay with you at that time, to have gone to trial? That it would not have been a fatal thing to have done. And that it sounds as if you think that perhaps the university would have prevailed?

Goldstein: Okay, let me just rephrase the question. So it's been a long time since 1973, '74, '75, but you seem, even now, to have some regret that the university was not willing to take this to trial. And that, looking back, you're not sure that anything was done inappropriate in Louise Lamphere's tenure decision? And you would have liked to have had the chance to hear this at trial, is that right?

Leis: Well, well, not quite. I mean let me rephra—let me answer a slightly different way. Let me, let me say it in a slightly different way. If we'd gone to trial, it was a class action suit, it was not a suit against the anthropology department per se. We might very well have lost that for the reasons that I've said. You start bringing in numbers and all the rest of it. If it had been a case against the department, I would go with Gorton's conclusion, that there was no sexual discrimination or loss of academic freedom. Now, if you want to say, "We would have lost because of the correspondence," that's what I would go to trial about. I mean, I would say as embarrassing as it might have been, that with a jury of my peers, or whosever peers we're talking about, they would not have concluded that the decision was made on Lamphere's case because of that correspondence. That's what I'm saying.

Goldstein: And that that correspondence was not indicative of sexist behavior in the department.

Leis: Exactly. That if we want to examine what did the correspondence—if it was a smoking gun, what was it a gun about? I mean, what was the smoke? If the smoke was, well, she didn't get tenure, well that, that was the case, but what was it hiding? Our deep-set sexist feelings? Well, how do you get at that? And I'm, I don't want to repeat everything we've gone through before, but I'm saying it becomes a problem in determining what does that correspondence mean? Was it as revealing as all the innuendo, and by innuendo I mean the way it's reported and without really saying what it is. I mean, how awful it was [1:30:00], and all the rest, how disgusting the correspondence was. Well, you know, I'm not going to argue that. As I say, I read other things I might find it disgusting too. Did the people mean it that way? Well, I'd have to ask them and see, did you really mean that you would not give tenure to Lamphere because she's a woman, is that was you really meant? Well, let's have a jury trial and see if you would determine that or not. So I'm saying you take the correspondence out, and if the case were just about the Lamphere case, it was settled, as far as the Gorton—they spent 20 hours interviewing everybody and looking at a lot of material. They felt, on the face of it, we had erred in these technical matters, which I've already said I didn't think were fair. But any rate, [sigh] I don't know it's, when it comes to trials, who knows. I mean, she would have brought her expert witness, we would have brought our expert witness, who knows? I'm glad we didn't have to do that. I wish it had been settled through mediation and some other fashion. And the university could've said, "Forget the money, we're putting all that money up here, let Lamphere have tenure," take that out of context. All the money they spent in the lawsuit could've been used for that. [laughs] And then it wouldn't have been an issue. So thinking backwards, it all becomes a pattern. But as members of that time looking forward, each case was not necessarily connected to the other. And that's you know, that's life, you look back everything seems reasonable. Progress is going in

this way. It's obvious that this was all that the way it should be. But history isn't like that. So... Does that answer your question?

Raab: Yeah.

Goldstein: What else?

Wendy Korwin: I have, I have a question, just about the, from the grievance procedures but then once it turned to court, what did it, what did it do to the department? I mean, sort of the feeling of this, sort of, being part of the day to day reality of Anthropology [unclear]

Goldstein: Okay, yeah, let me rephrase the question. So we've got to pretend now that they don't exist. So it's not a customary thing for you, for you, for a department... it's not a customary thing for a department at this university to be dragged through a faculty grievance process. So for Anthropology, which you were chairing at the time, to have been the subject of this, what did it do to the spirit of the department or relationships within the department, to your feeling as the leader of the department?

Leis: My recollection of it, and I sort of mention it earlier, is that despite all that going on, we were carrying on with Louise as a member of the department. Nobody said, "Gee whiz, we're not going to talk to Louise because she's suing us." And Louise wasn't saying, "You bad guys, I'm not going to come into the department because I know you hate me." Or whatever. It wasn't like that. That's my vision of it. Now, of course I thought I was a very good chair. I thought I was a democratic chair, I thought I was fair, I thought I listened to people. That might not have been the view of my colleagues, they might have thought I was a tyrant like Herskovits, who knows. But I don't think I was like that. So I just tried to carry on, you know. There's a grievance procedure going on over here, and we've got our job to do over here. [gesturing to either side] And, my recollection is we still had parties, we still carried on. There was no antagonism that one might expect in that situation.

Goldstein: So there's a sort of perception, I don't know whether it's truth or urban myth, that Louise was sort of, that Professor Lamphere was one of the boys for a while, that she was, you know, at parties, that she socialized, that she was a drinking buddy of all of yours, and that when she got heavily into this women's studies stuff, those relationships changed to a little bit less warm. Is that accurate, or is that just urban legend?

Leis: That's certainly not my recollection of it. And it certainly wasn't my viewing about it, as I recall. Whether she felt that way or not, I don't—you'll have to ask her. But that wasn't my recollection of it. The first part of which you said I think was true. I think she was. Now, how that changed or whether it changed, I'm not... but she certainly was, we were one of the girls [laughs].

Goldstein: Okay, what else?

Leis: I mean, just let me say when it comes to sexism, am I a feminist? I mean, what's the definition of [1:35:00] a feminist? If you believe that women should have equal pay, that they should have opportunities, that they shouldn't be discriminated against on the base of gender, all of which I deeply

believe, doesn't that make me a feminist? So, you know, what are these words referring to? I think we're really talking about whether there was job discrimination, that merit was not involved. And that's the way the case started. I mean, I think once the lawyers entered into it, it became a sex discrimination case. That's my take on it. Up to that point, I think Louise was arguing that comparatively speaking, she should have gotten tenure because a male, George Hicks, got it earlier. I think from within the department's perspective, Louise was not the only one who was up for tenure. There was a white male up for tenure at that time too, and he was rejected as well. So we were doing comparisons at the same time, given that context, not between times, as I've already said between '71 and '73, it changed. So that was a comparison, for us, that was significant. So. Was I a sexist? I mean, I don't know. I, both of them didn't get tenure. [laughs] So that's my vision of it, for better or worse. And again I say these are his—this is oral history, so I'm just trying to remember what went on. How you use this, I'll be interested in seeing. [laughs]

Raab: I just have one other question. As I think about everything you've said, it strikes me that, kind of, but for the want of a nail, you know? That there are two factors here that I think I hear you saying that had there not been a budget crunch, or had there been a more systematic, or a more clear system for tenure, if either one of those things had just been different, we might never have had a Louise Lamphere sex discrimination suit. Is that accurate?

Leis: Not quite. I think the budget part—

Goldstein: Can you just look at this...[gesture toward camera]

Leis: Oh, sorry.

Goldstein: So this case arose at a moment in time, when there was a budget problem within the university, and tenure criteria and the method for judging tenure were a lot more fluid than they are now. If those two circumstances hadn't been present, would this case ever have happened?

Leis: Well, of course my immediate answer is who knows? I mean, you know, it's that "what-if" history, you know? "If... if this had happened, then wouldn't things be different?" I think I use that analogy with Churchill and Chamberlain, you know? If Churchill had been prime minister, we might never have had Hitler do what he did. Anyway, I don't know. But I do think that the context, as I see it at that time, was economic, to a large extent. Whether the review procedures had been different at that time, I would say that was a different step. I would say that had to do with the grievance procedure problem. Because the initial step which had to do with a combination of, number one: economics, number two: that tenure had become more difficult to achieve, that those things resulted in the decision of the department as they made it at that time.... How that might have changed, I don't know. I've already suggested that if there were all the money available and times had been different, she would have gotten tenure. I've put that in writing in any number of circumstances. So. Does that answer, did that answer your question at all?

Goldstein: Okay, does anything occur to you back here? Okay, that's it. Thank you so much.

Leis: Okay.

Goldstein: That's great.

Leis: Thank you so much.

Raab: Can I ask you something not on camera?

Leis: Sure.

Raab: It's just something I'm curious about. So you were married to an anthropologist, you said you have three daughters, how did this all play out with them at the dinner table? You're being accused of sex discrimination in a federal lawsuit, and you come home to a family of women and girls.

Leis: Well... are we off the camera?

Raab: Yes.

[End of Interview]