

Harini Iyengar interviewing Philip Monham

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Harini Iyengar This is Wednesday 2 October 2013. I'm Harini Iyengar, a barrister at 11 King's Bench Walk Chambers and I'm conducting an interview with Philip Monham, a retired Senior Clerk, for the Inner Temple oral history project. We are sitting together this morning in con-room 5 in our Chambers at 11 KBW.

Philip Monham I confirm that I am Philip Monham, born in London on the 28 February 1948.

HI Thank you. Now Philip. I am going to start early on, before you became involved in the Inn and the legal profession. Could you tell us a bit about the education you had?

PM Certainly – I attended a local primary school, Down Primary School, close to where I lived in the village of Down, which is just south of Bromley. Then I attended South Bromley College from the age of 11 until 16. Then I started my first job in chambers as a Junior Clerk at the set of Mr Arthur James Q.C., who was a chief prosecuting council at the trial of the great train robbers. The robbery had taken place in 1963 and I started in chambers in 1964.

HI When you were studying, did you have a particular job or career in mind?

PM I hadn't, although the law was something in which I was interested, just for observing how trials took place. I found it fascinating, hearing about them on the radio and television, reading about them in a newspaper. My uncle was the Senior Clerk at a set of chambers in 3 Temple Gardens. The head of the chambers was Mr Charles Schofield and his practice was primarily in the area of local government law.

02.10

Talking to him one day, to my uncle, he told me about his life in the Temple and wondered if I would be interested and I said I would be, and eventually I got a job in Mr James' chambers starting in October 1964

HI Do you recall your first visit to the Inns of Court?

PM Yes. The first visit to the Inns of Court was actually to the Inner Temple library, which was just around the corner from chambers at 2 Crown Office Row. I was sent there to borrow a book quite early on in my time in the chambers and I went there on many subsequent occasions to borrow books, or to find a member of chambers who would be working there, summoning him to an urgent telephone call that had come in.

HE When did you first come into the Temple area?

PM It was actually about the summer of '64 when I came up for an interview. I had a couple of interviews to begin with and then eventually heard that I had got the job.

HE Do you recall your first impressions?

PM Yes, it was one of peace and calm that differed so much from the walk I had along the very busy Embankment coming out of the central tube station. There, a

couple of hundred yards walk, the traffic was extremely busy and noisy – just walking into the Temple from the Embankment, I was struck how quiet and peaceful everything seemed.

03.58

I know that life within chambers is very hectic but just walking around the area struck me as being a very special place.

HI What were you asked at that first job interview?

PM I was asked, what was I doing at that particular time? I was working on a local farm with some friends. The area where I lived was very much out in the country with farms all around and it was a popular thing for the young people in the area to find work on the farm, seasonal work picking strawberries, runner beans, blackcurrants and that sort of thing. I was asked what I was doing, so I explained and also then explained that I was seeking a career as a clerk in chambers, having heard about life within chambers from my uncle.

HI What was the job title?

PM Job title was Junior Clerk. In those days the staffing was certainly much less than it is nowadays. Chambers were generally very small, much smaller and this set had about a dozen members. There were three clerks: a Senior Clerk, a first Junior Clerk and I, the Junior Clerk.

HI What did you wear for the interview and how did you know?

PM I wore a suit and tie – grey suit, black shoes, white shirt, very formal, life was very formal in those days.

HI What kind of training did you have for that first job?

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PM Training was very much along the lines of being taught how to answer the telephone. That was one of my tasks. We didn't have any receptionist or telephonist in those days, so the 'phone was answered by whichever of the three clerks happened to be available.

HI What did you say?

PM I said "Good morning," or "Good afternoon, 2 Crown Office Row," which is what I was told to say. Then I'd direct the call either to the Senior Clerk or the first Junior or one of the members of chambers and if I had any difficulty I would ask one of the other clerks how I should deal with the call. In the early days I had to ask on many frequent occasions.

HI I was asking about the training.

PM Oh yes, the training. The 'phone was one thing, otherwise a lot of the work was finding legal books for members of chambers and a lot of them would be in the extensive library the chambers had, or if we were in difficulty we'd go to the Inns of Court for those. That was one thing with which I had to learn quickly how to deal. I was told to walk around the library within chambers as often as I wanted, so as to familiarise myself with the books within chambers and where they were situated, so I could easily access them upon request. Another thing I had to do which didn't actually require much training was frequently to go up to a local mainline railway

station and put briefs and instructions on the train to members of chambers in the outlying country areas.

08.15

The chambers was on the Midland circuit. That was in the days before it merged with the Oxford circuit. Members had their homes in the Midlands and a lot of them would work from home when they weren't in court. Going up to St Pancras, Euston or King's Cross was a regular feature of my day.

HI How did you go there?

PM I would go by taxi in the main. Very rarely would you use public transport – I was told to get there as back as quickly as possible and 'take a cab son' was the usual expression [laughs] by the Senior Clerk or the first Junior Clerk. It was a bit of a revelation, because I was told by my uncle that the job would be a deskbound job, apart from the occasions when I'd have to go to the library or take books across to the High Court but I spent a lot of time between chambers and railway stations putting parcels and so forth on the train. That struck me as a pretty good job: I'm getting out and about and seeing London! I suppose those were the early features of the job. As time progressed and I perhaps think after three or four months, I was told to familiarise myself with the typewriter that was in chambers in order to type out fee notes. So that was something I learned to do – typing skills I learned there have stood me in good stead in the latter part of my career.

HI Did you do touch-typing?

10.13

PM I could do a few letters but I'm not as good as a properly trained touch typist.

HI How did you train yourself?

PM Initially it was looking at the letters on the keyboard, finding out where they were and I was told to type "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog," which incorporates every letter of the alphabet. So I got to familiarise myself with where the letters were on the keyboard and there were some that I could easily type without looking at them. I forget which ones exactly but over a period of time I got to know where they were and it became second nature. Typing skills were essential for the job. Occasionally I would have to type a letter, a small letter which I had to compose, so that was another feature, learning how to draft a letter in response to one that had been received. And my first attempts were rather like a test paper at school. I'd pass my draft to the Senior Clerk or the first Junior, who'd get the red pen out and put lots of comments and crosses over the bits I'd drafted and I'd have to redraft it in accordance with instructions. After a while I got to know the sort of things that they would like incorporated in the letter and the red marks became fewer and fewer.

12.01

So those were the main tasks. Another task was making chambers tea. That was essential for eleven o'clock if I was in chambers and generally my duties outside were geared around 11 o'clock, because I was asked to make tea then. In the early days various comments came from members of chambers saying "Well, we're not sure about the quality of this tea," or "This is too strong or too weak," but gradually I got to know who liked strong and who liked weak tea. I think it found better favour as the months went by.

HI What do you recall as the best part of that first job?

PM I found that going up to the mainline stations was good, because it gave me a very good idea of what life was like in London. I'd been up on quite a few occasions before I started work but actually working in the centre I found very interesting and another thing which equals that is the camaraderie, which I found develop in chambers, not only in the clerk's room but also with the members of chambers. Gradually I found that we got to know one another and I developed a good rapport with all of them. It was a very happy time there.

14.01

HI What was the worst part of the job?

PM Worst part would be having to take many books over to the High Court on a very wet day. In those days we didn't have a trolley, so that the books had to be carried in bound up straps, web straps and occasionally there might be two straploads of books, each strapload perhaps containing a dozen books, so they were pretty heavy and on a wet day it was a job to get them across without getting too wet, so all manner of covers were devised. Newspapers might be wrapped around them, or in those days it would be paper bags rather than plastic bags, so there was always a good supply in the store cupboard of old newspapers and old paper bags for that purpose. That was probably the hardest part. Maybe the worst part.

HE You said a bit about the atmosphere, when you first started what was it like. Did it change?

PM Yes, I found that it seemed to me rather stiff and quite formal but over the months that softened and it became less formal as we got to know one another.

HE Can you describe a typical workday to me?

PM A typical workday might be along the lines of arriving at 9 o'clock or just before.

16.00

Dealing with the post was one of the first tasks. In those days the post would always be there by the time I arrived and I'd have to dish it out into the various pigeonholes, where it was a personal letter for a member of chambers. Otherwise there would be instructions and briefs and so forth which I would open and pass to the first Junior Clerk, who would deal with them in terms of entering the instructions received and then making sure that those instructions got to the appropriate member of chambers promptly. If it was a set of instructions or brief that member of chambers needed to see quickly, and that member might be at home that day, then I'd be instantly out in a taxi going to Euston or St Pancras or somewhere, there to put them on the train to them. Then you'll be dealing with perhaps correspondence, drafting a letter and maybe getting some books from the libraries, maybe making the tea – that was always an absolute must. I think I was told to make sure I started before 11 o'clock, probably about ten or 15 minutes beforehand, to be sure people never had it after 11 o'clock, because that was thought to be a bit too late in the morning – and the Senior Clerk would always say "Keep an eye on the time."

HE Was it always tea?

PM For members of chambers it was always tea, although the first Junior Clerk always liked coffee, so he had his own supply of coffee.

18.03

It came in the form of one of the jars of Nescafe, I think, or Maxwell House, which was also popular in those times, I'm not sure if that's still around these days. For members of chambers it was always tea. Occasionally there were biscuits, they'd be served around as well.

HE What did you do for lunch?

PM For lunch I used to go a nearby café with one or two of the Junior Clerks who were in other chambers within the building. At that time there were three other sets of chambers in the building. In two sets there were a number of Junior Clerks, so I'd go with them to a nearby café. On my very first day, three of the clerks took me to a café in Surrey Street which is just West of the Temple, near to the old Aldwych tube station, close to some Roman baths which used to be down that area – not sure where they are now, I think the whole area has been redeveloped. They took me to a café there and I used to go there on a number of other occasions and meet them. Other times I'd see another friend in chambers at 1 Crown Office Row. We'd go somewhere, perhaps slightly to the east, just down Fleet Street for example.

HE Did you have a fixed lunch break?

PM Yes indeed, it was always one until two.

20.00

I was certainly told that if it got to a minute or two past one, then I was always pretty much pushed out of the door by the other clerks on the basis that "We need you back here by 2 o'clock, so you must go now." So it was very regulated in that respect. In latter years I know that the procedure changed and it became much more flexible, but it was always one till two. When I came back at 2 o'clock, the Senior Clerk would go. It meant that generally there were always two people at least in the clerk's room.

HE What tasks did you have in the afternoon?

PM Generally there would be work started on the post, which had to go out – members of chambers would bring out opinions and pleadings and so forth. The only way of getting them to solicitors in those days was by post, and it was my job to write the honourable notes, put a compliment slip in and then send every item off. Before I did that, the members of chambers would have to pass their work to one of the Senior Clerks in order that the work would be recorded and the fee put in and then it would be passed to me to envelope and put the appropriate stamps on it. I would always take the post up to the local post office in Fleet Street. At the time, I left at 5.30. Sometimes there would be a trip to the station and I can remember on one occasion putting a parcel on a train from Marylebone to a member of chambers who lived at Gerard's Cross

22.03

and got back to chambers, had a few hours of chambers and then the position with that member changed and I had to go back to Gerard's Cross, later part of the afternoon, retrieve the parcel and bring it back to chambers. I got back quite a way after my usual going home time. I think it was about 7 o'clock, which didn't worry me, it was all exciting and next day the head of chambers, Arthur James, called me into his room, and said that he was very sorry that I had been asked to do that job, which meant that I was late going home, which I thought was quite amazing that he would

even get to hear about it, let alone making any mention of it. It showed a soft side to him, which I didn't know existed to that extent, certainly not when I first started.

HE What was the tone of your relationships with the barristers?

PM It was friendly but formal. We certainly developed a good relationship as the months went by and, being in the most junior position and their being some years older than me, they looked on me like a younger brother or something like that.

HE I know in our chambers it's changed during the time I've been a tenant. At that time how did you address one another?

PM Members of chambers it was always 'sir'. It was a completely male dominated set of chambers in those days, so member of chambers were always addressed as 'sir'.

24.04

Or occasionally if I had to speak to somebody who was amongst a group of members, perhaps talking in the hallway, then I'd address him by his proper name, as Mr X or Mr Y, or something like that. And the Senior Clerk I used to address as sir at the beginning but he told me not to, just called him by his Christian name and the first Junior straight away called me by my Christian name.

HE And what were you called?

PM I was called Philip. And there was a typist who used to come in not every day of the week but most days of the week and she was always referred to as Mrs Norris even though her name was Rose Norris and I had to address her like that.

HE Did you socialise with work colleagues outside working hours?

PM Not within chambers but I did form a friendship with a clerk in a set around the corner at 1 Crown Office Row and it turned out that he lived quite close to where I lived and we used to see each other occasionally at weekends, just to meet up but that was the only occasion.

HE Would you mind if I asked what you earned in that first job, to get a sense of how it compared to other jobs you might have chosen?

PM Indeed. I was offered at the interview when I was told I got the job. It was initially mentioned £5 ten shillings was the going rate but the head of chambers, Arthur James, said "Well, actually we ought to make it £6, because you ought to give your mother the certain sum of money each week, I think that will be a very good idea." I remember those words.

HE Did you do what he said?

PM I did what he said! [laughs]

26.20

Yes I did what he said. I think it might have been something like £1 ten shillings to begin with, what I gave.

HE Did you ask you uncle what he thought you should be getting?

PM I didn't actually, no. I just accepted it for what it was. I didn't ask him. I've got a feeling he did ask me what I was getting some way down the line, so I told him and I don't think he made any comment other than just to acknowledge what I'd said.

HE In terms of that very first job is there anything you want to tell us – any special memories?

PM It certainly was a very good stepping-stone to my later career. I thought that they made sure I knew all the basics of the things that needed to be done at that level. And it struck me that in spite of the rather formal beginning that there was real friendship to be found with members of staff in the chambers. I think those are the things which particularly stick in the memory.

HE How did you move on from there?

27.59

PM I moved on after about 18 months, as my uncle passed away and in the set of chambers that he had occupied – a smaller set than mine – he only had one Junior Clerk, so when my uncle clerk passed away that Junior Clerk became Senior Clerk and I joined that set as a Junior Clerk. So it was promotion in that respect. I found that I was doing different tasks. There were no longer the runs up to the stations that I had done in my first job but I found that there was a lot of telephone work and I would be responsible for looking after the diary and taking bookings for members of chambers, in terms of cases. Eventually after I'd been there for three or four months I was asked to start giving thoughts on the fees that would be charged. So I spent some time looking back through the ledgers at the sort of fees that members had received for perhaps one-day cases, two-day cases, three-day cases and then, using that as a guide, I'd speak to the Senior Clerk on every occasion as to whether the level of fee that I thought would be appropriate was all right. I then started agreeing fees, so that was a big step up.

30.00

I thought that was real promotion.

HE In what form did you keep the diary, the records in there?

PM The diary was a manual diary and everything had to be written in it. It came in the printed form of members of chambers' names written in a particular space down each page, and the pages were foolscaps size, which I don't think is any longer used. But foolscap size and with right entries in pencil, that was the main way of doing it. Pens were not allowed to be used in the diary, because occasionally cases would be removed for one reason or another and it made a bit of a mess. So a sharp pencil and a rubber were always by my side in such occasions. There was also a space at the bottom of each of the two pages. Two pages to a day, a space at the bottom of each page for any notes which might be needed and also I think that a couple of times during the course of my time there new members joined and so if the diary that hadn't been printed to include their names so we would have to put them at the bottom of each page. So very different from nowadays where you have computerised diaries. It was quite a big thing to have the diary printed. It used to arrive generally round about October, November each year.

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Leather-bound. It must have cost an absolute fortune because the pages were very thick paper. It was a very ornate piece of printing.

HI When you negotiated fees, what kind of marketing terms did you have?

PM I used to always find out as much as I could about the case and how important it was to the client, what might be riding on the result of a successful outcome; also having regards to the member of chambers being instructed at the time; finding out or being aware of his seniority and how much of an expert he was in a particular area. I'd be able to trade on those things when assessing a fee. Certainly in the early days I used to bounce everything off the Senior Clerk who would be extremely helpful. He used to give me little tips – "Perhaps you might say this or might say that." Gradually I came to know the tips that he would give me and incorporate those in my fee negotiation.

HI At what point had you decided that this was definitely going to be your career.

PM I think when I was in my first job, probably after about a year, certainly realising I've been here a year and I enjoy the life very much – there are prospects, a definite career ladder, I think I'd like to stay in it.

HI Did you have any involvement with the Inn apart from visiting the library?

34.04

PM No, no involvement with the Inn apart from the library.

HI What about the buildings, were there any changes that you remember?

PM The only changes really were that they used to be painted – I think in all the sets of chambers in which I've been, there used to be a regular programme, perhaps on an annual basis, of chambers being refurbished, cleaned up and so forth, particularly in the client areas. So for example in the first set of chambers, the client area was the hallway, which one would enter after one had been to the building. That was kept smart by cleaners and regularly polished, possibly even on a daily basis but certainly a weekly basis. Each year in there and in subsequent chambers there would be an approach by painters to do the painted areas, so that they all looked smart. That was always thought to be very important.

HI What was the Clerks' room like?

PM The Clerks' room was good accommodation. The room wasn't large but it had a window and I shared the room with the first Junior Clerk and we each had our own desk and there were some additional desks which would be used as work surfaces. So we had a decent amount of space. The Senior Clerk would have a small room on his own adjoining our room.

36.00

So good facilities there.

HI How long were you at that chambers?

PM The first set was 18 months and the second set was also of a similar period. I think it might have been about 20 months there.

HI What was your next move?

PM The next move which was the third move was to a set headed by Godfrey Le Quesne whose practice was primarily in dealing with Privy Council appeals and constitutional law and commercial law. And they also had one or two members on

the Midlands circuit, so I found that on joining that set, I'd have some contact with my first set, which was good.

HI What was the job title of that move?

PM The job title was First Junior Clerk again.

HI What prompted you to make that move?

PM I felt that might be a bit of a step up because the chambers was larger and the work was very different and I just felt that it would be good to diversify a bit. In my second set, the work was primarily planning and local government law and the next set I joined dealt with privy council work, constitutional work, commercial work, as well as there being a little bit of crime, plus a good mixture of general common law work.

38.08

I thought that would be a good move. I think at that stage when I applied for it, there was quite a significant increase in salary, which I found attractive.

HI How did you come to know when there were vacancies like this?

PM I got to know a number of the Junior Clerks simply by going across to the Law Courts, taking books and finding out that we were against certain people. Perhaps a day or two before we'd exchange lists of authorities for cases and then meet in the Clerks' Room on the day of the case. I happened to bump into one particular clerk who was at Godfrey Le Quesne's set who was leaving and he mentioned he was leaving and said there'd be a very good job for someone who's interested, "So perhaps you might think about it." So I thought about it and made some enquiries. It would be a good move.

HI How did you approach the chambers?

PM I mentioned to this particular chap some days later, maybe a week later, that I would be interested and he mentioned it to the senior clerk and then I was contacted by the first junior to say "You might like to come in and see the Senior Clerk." So I did and had a very informal interview with him. Then some days later I had a formal interview with the head of chambers, together with another senior person and eventually got the job.

40.00

HI What were you asked in the interview?

PM I was asked, what sort of jobs I'd been doing in my present set, which was the set with Charles Schofield, the planning set and what sort of jobs I'd been doing in my first set, so I had to give some detail as to the various tasks that I'd been doing. Really since I started, they wanted to know all about my background, terms of work in chambers. I think at the end they thought, You look as though you've got the sort of things that would be useful here and I was offered the job.

HI Did they check a reference?

PM They did check with the Senior Clerk. That was the only reference. Whereas moving from the first job to the second job there wasn't... I think the Senior Clerk spoke but there was nothing more formal than that.

HI How long were you at the third set?

PM The third set, I was there eleven years, or twelve years, so sorry, twelve years. '68 to 1980: Twelve years.

HI Why did you stay so long in that job?

PM I enjoyed it very much and there always seemed to be lots of things going on in terms of new challenges. After I'd been there a couple of years, chambers moved to larger premises and that was certainly a big stepping stone in those days.

42.02

There was concern within chambers about leaving an address at which they had been for many years, going to new premises and how that would be perceived by our clients. Eventually we took the plunge and moved but there was a lot of activity in terms of making sure our clients felt entirely comfortable with the move. Quite strange really looking back that we should have worried about that but at the time it was a major concern. After we'd been there, I think about three months, we had a big party for all the clients, and all members of chambers and staff were all anxious to know that the clients were happy with where we'd gone. We'd only just gone round the corner from 1 Harcourt Buildings to 1 Crown Office Row, so it wasn't far but concerns were expressed at the time but it turned out to be all right. After we moved, it took quite a few years for everyone to get used to it. It seemed to be a period of activity after that where one or two senior members left and we got more junior members in, so I think I just stayed, occupied with all of those things. Looking back it's amazing how quickly that time passed. It never felt as though I were stuck in a rut or anything like that.

43.57

HI Because of the lengthy time period, perhaps I can ask some of the questions about the atmosphere. What was that like at the beginning and then at the end?

PM At the beginning it was a period of getting to know people, and conversations would be fairly brief and very much to the point of just talking about practice, about chambers, and then over a period of time, conversations widened and there'd be conversations, sometimes of a slightly social nature and people ask about family or something like that, so it did alter in that respect.

HI What did you wear to work?

PM I always wore a suit, a dark suit, dark grey or dark blue, black shoes, always a shirt with collar and tie. I always kept to that right to the time I finished as a Senior Clerk, here at 11 King's Bench Walk, although in later years, I did get to wearing different clothes in terms of travelling, because I found that sometimes a suit would get a little bit worn or damaged. Sometimes shoes would get a bit wet on the walk to work. But otherwise certainly within the working day always collar, tie and dark suit, with black shoes.

HI What did the barristers wear?

PM In the early days, particularly at the first and second sets of chambers, and some at the third set, it was very much traditional three piece suit – not a suit – it would be grey pinstripe trousers, grey waistcoat and black jacket and that was particularly common in my first set.

42.18

Slightly less so in the second set and slightly less so in the third set but some people would always wear that. It would only be rarely that we'd see those people in an ordinary lounge suit. Otherwise the other members would wear lounge suits. As years went by, probably up until mid to late 1990s, that would be the garb that they would wear but mid to late 1990s things seemed to change and there was a thing called dress-down Friday that was introduced. I think it came over from America and it caught on quickly in England in the offices in London. Members of chambers would wear very casual clothes on a Friday. Then over the years since then, it would be pretty common of members of chambers to wear that sort of dress at all times, only changing when they have a client in conference or had to go across to court. Otherwise dress code has relaxed a lot.

HI Who was the first female barrister whom you met?

PM The first female barrister I met was a lady called Betty Knightly, who was a practitioner in my third set. She had been called to the Bar in 1951 and her practice was primarily matrimonial work, very broad based matrimonial practice, with solicitors both in London and around the country.

48.23

She was kept extremely busy. She did one or two cases in the Privy Council as a junior to one of the leaders but that only happened once or twice. There was always matrimonial work. She was a great character and extremely friendly and would always take the opportunity to talk every morning when she came in, even just for a few minutes, about how life was and things like that and then get down to her practice. She'd ask about this and that and so forth, then she'd go into her room and start writing furiously, drafting opinions and pleadings.

HI How did you address her?

PM I always called her Mrs Knightly, although the Senior Clerk at that time used to call her by her Christian name as Betty. Sometimes it would be Betty, sometimes Mrs Knightly but I was always Mrs Knightly.

HI What did she wear?

PM Whenever she had a conference or was in court, it would be a black dress or black skirt and a white blouse and always a black jacket.

50.05

On occasions when it was nothing doing in terms of conference or court, she would wear perhaps quite a highly coloured dress or something like that, which certainly it brightened a place up.

HI So in the third job, what was the best thing?

PM I think the best thing there was the extra responsibility of eventually being able to deal with fees for all the members of chambers. In my previous set when I started to deal with fees, it was only at the level of juniors. Q.C.s' fees were dealt with by the Senior Clerk but in my third set I was permitted to agree fees for the Q.C.s and I enjoyed that very much, because the size of the cases was larger and I might have to take that into account, together with the seniority of the various members, when assessing a fee.

HI Was there a standard format for the fee?

PM There was a standard format for the Privy Council petitions for leave to appeal: Godfrey Le Quesne was the first choice council for the Commonwealth Governments whenever they had any appeals and in the mains solicitors were Charles Russell and there was a standard which I can't recall but I know it was a standard fee for such petitions.

52.15

On substantive appeals there didn't seem to be any set format. It was perhaps a case of comparing it to what he had had on a previous appeal or previous couple of appeals for that particular firm, just thinking "Well, the previous one or two were two day appeals, this one that's coming up next week or month is of a similar length, perhaps the same sort of fee." Pretty much based along those lines.

HI What were your relationships with solicitors like?

PM Good relationships with solicitors. I was always told and found out from my own experience that solicitors are the clients and they are the ones whom we have to thank for bringing the work in and it's important that on no account must anything be said or done that upsets any relationship.

HI When did you meet them or come into contact with them?

PM When they came into chambers for conferences or when I went over to court with the member of chambers, they seemed to robe them and come into court. I'd come into contact with solicitors then. I'd often be down the Privy Council with members of chambers, with the good opportunity just to talk to them in an ante-room before we were called into court, for example at 10.30.

54.12

Or on a Monday it was always 11 o'clock – the time set for Mondays because that allowed their lordships to come back from the country that morning. [laughs]

HI Tell me about robing the barristers.

PM It was essential the day before to ensure that you had their robes in perfect order, so you had to check in the case of the Q.C. that the court coat was there, the gown was there, the wig was there, a collarless shirt was there together with cufflinks and front and back studs. Then you had to ensure that the band was there and the collar was there. If it was a case lasting more than one day, then you had to make sure that it'll be two shirts, two collars and two bands, clean for each day. It was essential always to check the day before that everything was in order, so on the morning when things would always be lively prior to going to court, always last minute things, you knew that the robes were in apple pie order. Then accompanying the member of chambers to court to the robing room, it was a question of taking off his jacket and waistcoat and then putting on the court coats. In fact it was a waistcoat, court coat and gown. They went on properly after the shirt and then usually helping with the collar, make sure that was properly done and then tying up the band at the back.

56.09

Usually in those days it was a tie band as opposed to an elasticated band. It was essential to tie the band properly, so that the knot at the back was just beneath the

back stud. Otherwise the band would have a habit of slipping off at the top. That was something which I was taught to do at an early stage, even in my very first set, I was taught how to do it by the First Junior Clerk and then did it on a regular basis thereafter.

HI What was the female equivalent?

PM A female equivalent was taking the robes across with Betty Knightly to the door of the ladies' robing room, where she would politely say "Right, I'll leave you here, wait for me, I'll be out in a few minutes."

HI How long did that robing ritual continue?

PM It continued right up to recent times, probably only in the last few years that I stopped going across to court with members of chambers. I remember in the early days of the present set here, at 11 KBW, going across to Lord Irvine, James Gaudy, Eldred Tabachnik and others and make sure they were properly robed. On occasions, when members of chambers might be rapidly called into court almost at an hour's notice, I'd go across with them and we devised a technique whereby their existing shirt would be modified by turning the collar inside out.

58.17

And then a stiff collar put on top with the band on top of that, so as to comply with the rules. [laughs]

HI Was there ever an occasion when a barrister had failed to comply?

PM No, we always managed to get them to comply. Everything was fine when we knew they were in court, although I recall one occasion when I did forget to take the robes down and had to hurry back from the Privy Council to get them. Otherwise everything was fine. Even on the occasions when the member of chambers would be hurriedly put into court, we always managed to get by.

HI What would have happened if something wasn't quite right?

PM I think probably a Judge might well have said something to the member of the Bar who was appearing in court. I recall one case in which Lord Irvine was instructing, where he had a senior silk come in with him and I noticed at about 25 past 10 that the silk, did not have his band on, so I pointed it out and he said "Oh gosh, can you help me?" So I ran down and I forget whose robing room, whose locker I plundered, but I managed to find a spare band. It got there at 10.29 and a half, just before the judges came in.

1.00.10

HI You moved again in 1980. How did that come about?

PM I heard of a position in a set that was opening in Gray's Inn, a set that was being started by a practitioner by the name of Mark Littman Q.C. Mr Littman had been a practitioner in the chambers now known as Blackstone Chambers and he retired from the bar in 1966, to go into industry. In 1979 he decided to come back into practice and he opened a new set in Gray's Inn that had about six juniors. I thought, well, that being a Senior Clerk was probably the next logical step for me and I thought starting off in this small set would be interesting. I'd be able to make the mould and do the sort of work which I knew he did, which was very much commercial

work and some international work appealed to me. So I applied for the job and got it and we opened chambers in Easter 1980.

HI What was the applications process that time?

PM It was a letter of application to him saying that I heard he was planning to open a new set and understood he was looking to appoint a Senior Clerk and I'd like to be considered for that.

1.02.00

I enclosed a brief CV just setting out my experience. I was called up for an interview which I had with him, then had a second interview and was appointed. So it was quite a short process.

HI What was the main difference between being a First Junior Clerk and now being a Senior Clerk?

PM The buck really stopped with me with everything. Being a First Junior Clerk there was always a Senior Clerk to whom I could refer in times of difficulty and I used to sound the Senior Clerk out on a lot of occasions but being Senior Clerk, there was nobody to whom I could turn, so I had to work out my own answers to problems. On occasions I did ring a number of my old Senior Clerks just to bounce things off them and get their views. I would also speak to colleagues, some of whom were still First Juniors, some newly appointed Senior Clerks, just to get their views. I found that very helpful. I think particularly Mr Littman had been in practice in 1 Hare Court for about six months after leaving industry and before the new chambers had been completely refurbished. He was looked after by a clerk there, so I used to speak to them on occasions. 1 Hare Court was the chambers of Sir Patrick Neil, now Lord Neil.

01.04.00

Lord Slim as well was also there. The clerks there were very helpful. They also knew, for example, a certain amount Mr Littman's practice, having looked after him for six months before I started. They were good sounding boards, as it were.

HI How many members did you have in that chambers?

PM There were seven in all to begin with. A couple of additional members joined during my time there. I think there was something like ten when I left about 20 months later to join what is now 11 K.B.W.

HI How many were in your team of clerks?

PM In Mark Littman's chambers I was the only clerk there. I was the only member of staff, although his secretary used to come in on occasions to assist in small ways with certain things but otherwise I was the only one there.

HI So what was a typical day for you in that job?

PM Typical day would be always to check the Telexes, which might have arrived overnight. Telexes were the equivalent of modern e-mails. We had a Telex machine and there used to be messages coming from various solicitors and I would check what had come in overnight, then deal with them accordingly. I'd always speak to Mr Littman first thing in the morning to make contact and see whether there were any special things or requests that he had.

1.06.00

Also for my own part to make sure I had any queries, so I could deal with them early. There was dealing with queries from other members of chambers, organising their diary, taking calls from solicitors, bookings, dealing with issues which cropped up in chambers. For example, all of a sudden in the course of a heavy rainstorm there'd be some water coming in one of the windows and I'd have to deal with that by contacting the Inn's maintenance staff and getting them to come down and deal with it. Sometimes it would be a quick fix, other times it would be something more permanent and substantial – really dealing with anything that cropped up in chambers. That was very good grounding for the next job which was with Lord Irvine.

HI Please tell me about how you came to work in our chambers.

PM It came about because I felt with Mark Littman, although I enjoyed life there and the practice that he had and the other members had, in areas that I enjoyed, commercial and some international, that it was very difficult to promote chambers and expand them, being the only member of staff and I heard that Lord Irvine, or Alexander Irvine as he then was, was leaving his existing set at 2 Crown Office Road to start a new set and there'd be nine juniors going with him and he was looking for a clerk – I thought, That sounds good.

1.08.06

I knew of Lord Irvine and his reputation before joining. His name was frequently in the press, particularly acting for or against unions in some of the big strike actions that took place in the '70s. I knew the name of Eldred Tabachnik and I also knew the name of James Goudie. I knew him from days in my second set when he was a solicitor and we had one or two instructions from him and also when I was with Mark Littman, James Goudie was the Junior in a case where Mark Littman was brought in to lead action for the London Borough of Lewisham on a judicial review case. James Goudie came up to chambers on a number of occasions for consultations with Mark Littman. So I knew him and I thought, well this sounds as though it could be very good and I'd like to apply. So I wrote a letter of application to Lord Irvine and had an interview up at his home in Priory Road, West Hampstead, in July 1981. Then I had a subsequent conversation with James Goudie and was told that I'd got the job.

1.10.01

And then we had a whole series of meetings up at Priory Road in the run-up to chambers' opening in December of 1981. There were also meetings that I had at what were then the new premises at 1 Harcourt Buildings – they were being refurbished so I used to go down for site meetings there. I also met Norman Betso, who had worked with James Goudie and other members, I think for some months after he retired from his job as a bank manager at one of the banks. Norman was to be a future member of staff as well, dealing with a lot of the admin and the finance. I found Norman was absolutely terrific. There was nothing he didn't know to all the questions I had and he was an absolute rock and pillar of support. Certainly throughout the whole of my time we were together but particularly in those early days his help was invaluable. We eventually opened in early December 1981, with just Lord Irvine and my juniors. Elizabeth Lane was a pupil in those days and she was taken on as a member of chambers in 1982 and another feature of that year is that Eldred Tabachnik was appointed QC. Chambers had only been going 5 months and he was appointed Q.C., which was a cause of great excitement and joy and we had a very good Silks Day party in chambers on the day he was sworn in. I remember his wife Jenny bringing in a huge amount of food, including a very large salmon which she'd cooked and there was lots of salad and things and everyone tucked in heartily.

1.12.30

Eldred Tabachnik's father came along for the lunch. He was Judge Charles Lawson, who was a Judge at the Central Criminal Court. He and Eldred's mother-in-law joined the party and it was a very happy occasion.

HI You've said you knew Lord Irvine by reputation. Do you recall your first impression on meeting him?

PM Yes, I do. he opened the door to me at Priory Road when I went for the interview, though actually I had seen him in court. On one occasion when I was in court on a case that had been listed in the Master of the Rolls' Court with Lord Denning and an urgent application had cropped up where Lord Irvine was instructed, a separate case from the one in which I was involved, he came into court and such was the rush to get him into court that he appeared in civvies and explained to Lord Denning that he'd only just been instructed, he hadn't had time to robe but he wished to make an application. So I saw him there and then I met him a couple of years later at Priory Road when I went for the first interview.

1.14.07

He came across as being absolutely straight and clear as to everything he said. There was never any misunderstanding with him. I thought, Well, this is terrific. I enjoyed his manner very much indeed.

HI Where within the Inn was chambers at that time?

PM It was at 1 Crown Office Row on the 1st floor. We had one room for the staff, which was three people at that stage: Norman, a young Junior Clerk whom we'd employed, to start with us and myself. Then within a few months we got a typist who also would answer the telephone and then we got a more senior Junior Clerk to assist with the running of chambers, so I think there were five people in that one room at the outset. There were something like five rooms for members of chambers, and we stayed like that for 18 months, until we got an annexe in the basement of 10 King's Bench Walk North.

1.16.05

That annexe had four rooms, so members of chambers moved from 1 Harcourt Buildings into the annexe and that released one extra room which would house the staff so we were able to spread out a bit. Getting the annexe of 10 King's Bench Walk enabled us to get a foothold in King's Bench Walk and that stood us in good stead 18, probably 15 months later, when we heard of some quite substantial premises becoming available at 11 King's Bench Walk. We applied for those and were granted the rooms and we moved completely to 11 King's Bench Walk, still retaining the annexe at 10 in July of 1985. That was a start of our life at 11 King's Bench Walk.

HI When I applied to the chambers I know it was known as 11 King's Bench Walk Chambers and now we're 11 K.B.W. When do you think it got that name or brand?

PM It got that brand in the late '90s. It was after Lord Irvine left in May 1997 to become Lord Chancellor in the newly formed government of Tony Blair and we became started calling ourselves 11 K.B.W. in about '98, 1999, something like that. Then I think we formally adopted 11 K.B.W. in about the year 2000 or 2001.

1.18.02

That eventually became the logo on our letter-heading and compliment slips.

HI Going back to the beginning, do you recall the names of all the members of chambers?

PM In 11 King's Bench Walk?

HI in December '81?

PM In December '81 I do: There were Lord Irvine, Eldred Tabachnik, James Goudie, Brian Keith, Michael Supperstone, Alan Wilkie, Alistair McGregor, Richard Field, Tony Blair and Elizabeth Slade.

HI So you've known some very eminent practitioners! I'm not sure about whom I should ask you first. In order of seniority, I've asked you a little bit about Lord Irvine. Would you like to say any more?

PM Throughout the whole of his time as head of chambers, I found him very good to deal with. He was always very straight, you knew exactly where you stood with him, he was always extremely approachable, whenever I needed anything. I always felt completely comfortable in speaking to him plainly and directly and in fact he would always say "Get to the point," if ever I was not going to the point! Very approachable and always very helpful in respect of any of the queries I had.

1.20.00

If ever I had a problem with something, he always seemed to be able to provide an answer so quickly and yet it would be in a very simple form. I would then go away and think, That's so simple. Why didn't I think of that? [laughs] He was a terrific Head of Chambers and we owe, certainly I owe, a huge debt to him for appointing me as Senior Clerk in his set.

HI As Senior Clerk, did you look after his practice?

PM I did, yes and we'd always talk about every case that he had, every case that he might have been offered, so he always knew exactly what was going on and I always knew his thoughts about how he would like to deal with things. We had a very close relationship in respect of practice and chambers generally. I also found that virtually every morning we'd both be in early and he would always find the time just to have a bit of a chat about life outside chambers, personal life or events that were going on, so very much a human side to him.

HI You touched on the fact that he was subsequently appointed Lord Chancellor. From your point of view as his Clerk, how did that happen?

1.22.00

PM He was drafted in by Tony Blair to help with the election manifesto in the run up to the May election of 1997. He was at that time Shadow Lord Chancellor and it seemed to me that it would be the most natural thing that, if Labour were to win the Election, he would be appointed Lord Chancellor and indeed it happened. He was certainly heavily engaged in drafting the manifesto and dealing with the run up to the General Election for probably over a month before the election took place. He was combining that with practice as well, so he was extremely busy, with lots of balls in the air. Attention to detail was even more important. Certainly there was a great kudos, I felt, not only for myself but also for chambers that somebody with whom I'd

been associated for so long and with whom I had a close relationship was appointed to what was then the oldest office in the country. So very exciting times.

HI How did you manage his transition out of practice?

PM Yes, well he had a number of cases going on and we had to pass them over to some other members of chambers. I think there was one case where the solicitors felt maybe they ought to go outside of chambers to find a replacement but otherwise it was very much a question of informing the solicitors straight away that he was no longer available to deal with matters.

1.24.22

And trying to put forward the best alternative from chambers. That was a hands-on job that had to be dealt with straight away as soon as his appointment was announced.

HI And then Eldred Tabachnik.

PM He had very much an employment tribunal and employment [?] practice. He was a specialist in employment law and my job when I first started, like all of the other members, was to get to know their practices and so forth and I would spend time looking through their ledgers, finding out the sort of work they had done and also talking to Eldred Tabachnik about the work he did and finding out the various likes and dislikes, which was important and getting to know his solicitors as well. It was important I came to know the solicitors for all the other members. Straight away from day one, I can recall the day, it was extremely busy, dealing with a few things going on in chambers generally and answering the 'phone to many 'phone calls that came in from solicitors, finding that they would introduce themselves and I'd introduce myself to them and so forth.

1.26.06

I think dealing with Eldred Tabachnik and getting to know his practice, as weeks went by keeping my fingers crossed that his application for silk would be successful, were exciting times.

HI Were you involved with his application process?

PM No. That had taken place before I joined. That had started the previous summer when I first had an interview but I wasn't part of that at all.

HI Did you go along with him to Court on the first day?

PM I did – I can recall it very well: Having to hire a morning suit and hiring the car, and then going down in this chauffeur-driven limousine to the House of Lords and sitting with the other clerks on the morning that he was sworn in before the Lord Chancellor, who I think was Viscount [recte Lord] Hailsham. I think in earlier years he'd been known as Quentin Hogg. I think he'd been Attorney-General in one of the previous Conservative Governments. He eventually rose to become Lord Chancellor. Eldred Tabachnik was sworn in before him. I recall the occasion very well because we were kept waiting for him to arrive for about 20 minutes because he'd been called in to an urgent top level cabinet meeting, which Margaret Thatcher had summoned that morning to do with events in the Falklands, because at that time the Falklands War had just started. Viscount Hailsham was summoned to join that meeting.

1.28.22

He did explain, when he walked in and opened with apologies, that he'd been late for that reason but I recall him walking into the room and it was a very slow march he had and he had these fancy buttoned shoes, which were part of the dress of the day for that occasion. The shoes made a huge noise as he walked across the stone floor. [laughs] But that was a great day. Every new Silk had to swear an oath and then it was back to chambers for the traditional lunch, then quickly about turn and over to the High Court to be called within the bar by the Lord Chief Justice, sitting with other judges. After being sworn in there, it was up to each individual Silk to go round to other courts to be sworn in there. They would go to judges whom they knew, maybe judges who supported their application or judges for whom they'd appeared on a number of occasions and had come to know. It was a long day. I think it eventually finished round about five o'clock, then it was back to chambers and dealing with a few events that had taken place in chambers that day, then one of Eldred's solicitors – a very good client by the name of David Coburn from Pattinson & Brewer, who used to instruct him on behalf of one of the union clients – came down for a drink, so we had a drink together. I think I eventually left at about 7.30 that night, after what seemed a very happy and long day.

1.30.31

HI In order of seniority, to James Goudie, who's still our Head of Chambers.

PM James Goudie was always extremely supportive of me, and I always felt that, having seen him as Mark Littman's junior on a couple of occasions when I was in that previous set, plus dealing with him on a number of occasions after I was appointed but in the run up before we started, I came to know him very well from an early stage. Again he was always somebody with whom I could discuss any particular issue, any problem, I would turn to him for advice on certain things. Extremely helpful to me at an early stage and again throughout the whole of the time that I've been in chambers. That was particularly so after Lord Irvine left in 1997 and James Goudie became Joint-Head of Chambers with Eldred Tabachnik. I remember they called me into the room, we had a very nice long chat about life in chambers in general and the sort of direction in which we thought we ought to be going.

1.32.13

Extremely supportive, very good ideas, perhaps introducing one or two things and that's been the case throughout. Very helpful, supportive and good to deal with.

HI Sir Brian Keith.

PM He was somebody with who again I developed a very good relationship, as indeed I did with all of them. It was a very important I think for a clerk to develop good relationships with members of chambers. I got to know him. I think I met him a week or two before we officially opened. He was somebody who had a knack of being able to identify a problem just at the time I was about to speak to him. I'd knock on his door and say "Can we talk about so and so." He'd say "Is it about this?" I'd say "Yes, how did you know?" [laughs] He was again helpful. The thing that strikes me about those early years was that we'd come from different places: Myself from Gray's Inn and Lord Irvine and the other members from another set and they'd broken away because they wanted to start a new life, as indeed I did and there was a tremendous spirit of willingness and cooperation. A good family spirit.

1.34.08

It was a really close-knit community that grew up over those early years. Brian Keith was somebody who I thought was always very clear in everything that he said. He

was appointed silk in, I think, '89 and had a couple of years in silk, maybe even 18 months and then applied for and got a job as a judge in the High Court in Hong Kong, so he left chambers in 1990 and went off to Hong Kong and I was always sorry he went, because he was the first of the founding members to leave. I just thought it was such a shame to break up the family.

HI Did he talk to you about his application?

PM He did indeed. He talked to me about his application for silk. We went through it and I gave such information as I could and he filled in everything else. Then we discussed referees to whom he'd apply and we were together on the day that he heard. The response came by post to chambers on the Saturday morning. We knew that it was about to happen and we were about to hear and I remember ringing him at home and saying the letter's arrived in the post in reply to your application.

1.36.10

He came in with his wife and his daughter Joanne and opened the envelope and just was over the moon that he'd been appointed. That was a very happy Saturday morning. [laughs] He then went off to Hong Kong. I kept in touch with him. It wasn't frequent but on a regular basis, maybe three or four times a year, something would crop up which would cause me to ring him or he would ring chambers. Then I think about 10 or 11 years later in 2000, 2001, he was appointed a High Court Judge in England, so he rang to let me know. He said would I be his clerk for the occasion? So I jumped at that and went with him initially to Ede and Ravenscroft to be kitted out with the new uniform and similarly I had to hire a morning suit from them. We went in the big car down to the House of Lords. We were sworn in by Lord Mackay, who was the Lord Chancellor then. Then it was off to a very large lunch at Rules in Covent Garden, joined by his family. His father was probably just turned 80 at that stage and he kept us entertained pretty much throughout the whole of the time there, telling stories of his life as a disc jockey.

1.38.13

He together with David Jacobs, who just recently passed away, were the longest serving D.J.s on BBC radio. Brian Keith's father was Alan Keith and he used to host a programme on Sunday night, I think it was Radio 4 but his name was Alan Keith and I think his programme was called '100 of your favourite tunes'. He had some wonderful stories about his life as a disc jockey. I also got to hear about his sister who was there for the day, who was a former girlfriend of Keith Richard of the Rolling Stones. So all family life was there and it was a very enjoyable day. Brian Keith is somebody with whom I've since kept in touch and he's been to a number of chambers dinners and events and so forth and I spoke to him recently and saw him and he's going to retire I think beginning of next year. Apparently he has to retire because he's reached a certain age, certain statutory age, so he's up for retirement but he is looking forward to continuing judicial life by sitting as a deputy in the future.

1.40.01

HI So on my list the next one is Sir Michael Supperstone.

PM He'd been in Singapore just about the time I was being interviewed and appointed and I met him a week before chambers opened when there was a site meeting at 1 Harcourt Buildings and he was there then. He was always somebody with whom, like all of them, I got on extremely well. We had a very good relationship. He was always very clear in what he thought about certain things. I like to think with all of them I worked very closely. We certainly developed a very good working

relationship and a very good personal relationship. Again I was there when he heard he'd been successful in silk. I helped him with the application form and then again the letter arrived from the Lord Chancellor's Department on the Saturday and again we knew it was about the time, so I rang him and he gave me permission to open it and he was successful, so again another exciting Saturday morning! We always worked very closely on everything he did. Everything he did in practice was discussed and planned and I've kept in touch with him since his appointment to the High Court Bench and seen him on occasions since. I know he enjoyed chambers life very much and he's enjoying life on the bench.

1.42.16

HI So Alan Wilkie is the next one.

PM Alan Wilkie, he had a career to begin with combining both the practice and the time as a lecturer at one of the universities – I think it might have been Southampton and his practice was a little varied. It wasn't entirely employment; it was some common law and commercial. Again we developed a very good working relationship and he was also a very keen Tottenham Hotspur supporter, as indeed was Michael Supperstone. I can remember on occasions he had spare tickets and he'd take me along. I went to Tottenham with him on one occasion and went down to Charlton Athletic whom I supported and Tottenham were playing them and we got some tickets. So conversation would frequently stray off to how Tottenham were doing or something like that. Again with his application for silk, I was a part of that and I think when he heard it was during the week, so I think he opened the letter and gave us the good news but again we went down with him as indeed I did with Michael Supperstone – went down with him in the big car to be sworn in. Then to other judges.

1.43.59

I recall he was keen to go before the president of the E.A.T., who at that time was Gordon Slim, I think, so we went before him for our traditional vow. He is again somebody with whom I've kept in touch in the years since his appointment as a High Court Judge. He went off initially just before Lord Irvine was appointed to the post of Lord Chancellor. He went off about a month beforehand and became a Circuit Judge and I went to the House of Lords with him then when he was sworn in and he had a very large afternoon tea at the Savoy.

HI The next one is Alistair McGregor.

PM Yes, Alistair McGregor – he used to share a room with Alan Wilkie and Richard Field. I think just like all of the others, I got on extremely well with him, we never had any particular problems. I'd be able to talk to him about things. He always gave a straight answer. Likewise if he had any issues, I always found I could talk plainly to him. With his application for silk I participated in that a lot and went down on the big day when he was sworn in. That particular day is always such a big day in a clerk's life, where you see a particular member of chambers succeeding in being elevated to a more senior position in his career.

1.46.09

Because of that it's such fun, the families are there, everyone's excited; a very good day from the point of view of a clerk.

HI Now you have the unique experience of being Senior Clerk to a Prime Minister, so please tell us about clerking Tony Blair.

PM Yes, indeed, Tony Blair: He was only with chambers full time for 18 months after he started but extremely able and personable, charming and very popular with solicitors. Even though he was quite junior when we started – I think he was about five years call – he developed quite a large practice for somebody of that call. He had, I recall, a very big arbitration case in New Orleans being led by Lord Irvine and that took place within the first year of chambers starting and there was great excitement about their going out to New Orleans for about a fortnight. The best hotels we could find; the flights were checked and double-checked and everything. They had an opponent in the form of a solicitor who instructed counsel. The opponent was a solicitor by the name of Sarosh Zaiwaller, who was a well-known solicitor. I think, even though they were doing battle against his client, there was a good relationship between the opposing parties.

1.48.06

I recall Tony Blair being very helpful in terms of telling me, explaining to me what the arbitration was about – some dispute involving energy. I forget the real details now but he spoke to me at some length about that and his other cases as well. He'd tell me all about them. He had, as he made clear, parliamentary intentions and within the first year he'd been selected to fight a by-election, I think it was Beaconsfield and some of his solicitors went up to support him, when he was going around speaking to the constituents up there. He didn't get in there but some months later he was selected for what was then the second safest Labour seat in the country in Sedgefield in County Durham. He ended up winning that with a huge majority. The majority was second only to that of Michael Foot, the leader of the Labour Party. Those two enjoyed big majorities but most of the other Labour candidates suffered quite severe losses, because it was at the time of the Falklands War when Thatcher seemed to enjoy a rise in popularity. The Conservatives swept in with quite a large majority. Tony Blair bucked the trend a bit and was appointed to Sedgefield. For the next five years his time in practice was rather limited because of his duties as an M.P.

1.50.05

Within a few years of being an M.P. he got a job or was appointed as a Shadow front bench spokesman – I think Home Affairs – so his parliamentary duties increased a lot, so the time he had for practice diminished. I think in 1987 he gave up practice completely. It was a shame. I mentioned Brian Keith was the first member to leave. I'd forgotten Tony Blair was actually the first. He left in '87. We didn't see much of him after that.

HE Did you meet Cherie Booth?

PM I did, right in the early days. She had been a pupil to Lord Irvine at the previous set and she was not taken on as a tenant there. She moved and joined a set headed by George Carmen, a practice in New Court, Inner Temple. I met her in the early days. She was very friendly, good fun. I can remember hearing that she'd moved from there to a set where I'd been Junior Clerk in my early days. It was the second set I joined up at Gray's Inn. She joined that set at that time when Charles Schofield had long since retired but the chambers had altered in character and complexion and they did a lot of public law work, commercial and so forth.

1.52.00

She used to be in chambers quite frequently in the early days, before moving to Gray's Inn. So I met her and followed her career and so forth and when she became

the Prime Minister's wife, reading about her in the press and so forth and cases. They were quite often against her on public law. We found we were against her, so that was all good.

HI And Dame Elizabeth Slade was the first female member?

PM Indeed she was. She had a very strong employment law practice. It was one that took her across all the courts in terms of employment tribunal, E.A.T., High Court and the fellow courts. I can remember she used to do a lot of work for the E.E.F., one of her very big clients.

HE I'd better ask you for the record to say what that was?

PM Indeed. It was a number of cases.

HE For what do the initials E.E.F. stand?

PM Engineering Employers' Federation. She was always being instructed by that federation. She was always for the employer. I can remember they had some very large case that involved payment on overtime. I can't remember the details – it caught the headlines. I can't remember the name now, I'm ashamed to say! It might come back.

HI She's another of your barristers who took silk.

1.54.03

PM Indeed, she took silk and I helped with the application process. It was terrific that she took silk, because we only had a couple of female barristers in chambers at that time. I think we had Elizabeth Lane who joined in '82 and Siobhan Ward who joined in '84. I think those were the only ones, so it was good that there should be a senior female to reach that position. Again, she was somebody with whom I got on extremely well. I used to be able to talk to her and, when she was sworn in as silk, we had the big day and went down in the car and it was a happy occasion. She was actually sworn in the same year as Alan Wilkie, so it was the same judges and so forth but certainly I was sorry to see her, like all of them, go but always wished them well for their future careers but she went onto the bench about five years ago now. Always kept in touch since then.

HE In addition to those founding members of chambers, we've subsequently had Sir Philip Sales go to the bench and very recently Sir Clive Lewis. More silks than I have time to list.

PM A huge number of silks, getting on for about 18 or 19 silks. Certainly Philip Sales was somebody who joined as a pupil in 1985 at the same time as John Kavanagh. It was very good to see his career start as a pupil, become a tenant and then develop until the time he became First Treasury Junior in 1997 or '98 and watching his career from there.

1.56.20

Then eventually become a silk and so forth. Again very sorry when he left, but interesting looking back to see the whole of somebody's career during my time here. Clive Lewis I first got to know in 2000, when he together with about five other members joined from 45 Gray's Inn Square and certainly built up a good relationship with him. Although I didn't clerk him on a regular basis, I got to know him very well. I was delighted when he took silk and then delighted on his appointment to the bench.

I attended on the day he was sworn in by the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Judge and he made very complimentary remarks about Clive, saying how he was going to follow in his footsteps and start to learn golf.

HI So as the Senior Clerk with such a successful team of barristers, what do you think the clerk's role is in that career development?

PM Keeping in close contact with the members of chambers to find out any faults and wishes they may have and at the same time really doing all that's possible within one's powers to try to promote and build up their practice by looking at every opportunity to secure work for them. Talking to them also, not only about the work that they might wish to do but talking about other areas where they might feel that they have a certain interest in broadening their practice.

1.58.23

I think the key thing is developing a good, friendly relationship with each individual.

HI Now, I know that you are the soul of discretion, so I'll ask you a cheeky question. Are there any stories about these eminent barristers or less well-known barristers you'd like to narrate?

PM [laughs] Gosh, I can probably think of some stories but maybe I ought to pass on that! I think the thing that does also strike me is the occasions where we have a welcoming party for new members of chambers, perhaps new pupils. I think they are great occasions. They usually come in the largest chambers on a Friday evening. They are great occasions, because you generally find pretty much everyone attends, even if for a short while, so you see all members there at any one time. You can just see what a happy collective bunch we are.

HI I want to ask you a bit about solicitors because I know as a barrister that my clerk has a different relationship with those solicitors.

2.00.00

Has that changed over the years?

PM I think so. Primarily in the early days we used to deal with what were known as managing clerks then. Very rarely would you see or speak to the partner. It was only I think in the mid-80s, not long after I started in chambers, you came to deal more with the partners. I suppose just going back, it was the managing clerks or the trainees or article clerks, that sort of thing. The partners wouldn't become too involved in cases in the early days, in my experience. The managing clerk was a very powerful person within a firm who'd have a huge number of files on the go at any one time. They would report back to a partner but rarely got to see or speak to a partner. They would turn up at court and they would come to parties, for example the party I mentioned in my third set, when we moved chambers from 1 Harcourt Buildings to 1 Crown Office Row. Partners turned up then for events but by and large just dealing with the everyday work, it would be the managing clerk. Now managing clerks seem to have disappeared and it's usually with the partners or their trainees that you deal.

2.02.00

HI And you've managed many clerks, do you want to say anything about that relationship?

PM Yes, indeed. All of them have been different, rather like members of chambers – all different. The same principle applies. It's so important to get to know the individual and what makes him tick and his likes and dislikes and knowing perhaps what special features he has about the way he does a job. Each one is a little bit different, so everyone needs a different approach, I find.

HI Do you think the atmosphere in the clerks' room has changed over the years?

PM I think it probably has, because in the early days it would just be one or two or three people, maybe four or five, that smaller number. As chambers has grown larger, so we've had more members of staff and it's become a much bigger room. I think possibly a little bit of the closeness with everyone has gone. I've still found I'll be close to a number of people but it's not easy to have the same close relationship with everyone. Some of the clerks deal with different teams and I wouldn't perhaps have so much to do with them as those who were on my team.

2.04.00

It has changed, as it's become larger.

HI Do you think recruitment of clerks has changed?

PM I think so, yes. in the early days it used to be looking at clerks who were 16, 17 that sort of age but nowadays we tended to look at people who'd done A-levels and looking more closely at their academic qualifications. It's changed in that respect.

HI Has the training changed?

PM Training has changed as well. There is much more training now than there used to be. When I first started there was no training outside of what I was given by the Senior Clerks, whereas nowadays the Institute of Barristers' Clerks has a formal training programme and it's very structured and it goes in varying degrees, starting with the basic training and then going on. There are examinations, courses to attend and examinations to be taken at the end of the course. That wasn't available in my day but I think it's a valuable addition to the world of the clerk.

HI If you were 18 now, do you think you'd still be attracted to becoming a clerk?

PM I think I would, assuming that I'd have that interest that I had in the early days in the law, I'm sure I would. Knowing what I do now, I think that I've been extremely fortunate to have spent my career in a very happy environment, from one chambers to another,

2.06.01

working so closely with so many people, members of chambers and staff.

HI Towards the end of your time as our Senior Clerk you became a Joint Senior Clerk. How did that change your job?

PM I certainly found that it gave support to the role and it was useful being able to bounce things off Lucy, if there were any queries or particular difficulties. I found that very useful and also knowing that she would look after certain aspects of running of chambers was again extremely useful. Chambers got larger, so it becomes harder and harder just to keep on top of everything, so it was good to have that additional support.

HI I think I'm coming to the end of what I wanted to ask. Coming back to the start, the Inn, the environment: Are there any places in the Inn that have special memories for you?

PM I think Temple Church has got a particular memory. It stands out in my mind. I can remember the first time I saw it, being awe-struck by the building itself. I find architecture and old buildings very interesting.

2.08.00

Certainly from a historical point of view and from a design point of view, the Temple Church, particularly the round part, the original Norman part, it's just absolutely beautiful and yet it's so simple. That has a special memory. I think also the courtyard in which it's situated – that strikes me, even though it's busy with people walking to and fro, it strikes me as being a nice peaceful area. Many a time I've walked through it hurrying to and from court and seen tourists wandering around looking at the Church and looking at that, what I think is a memorable statue in the middle of the square – I think it's two crusaders on one horse, so obviously the first crusader, the one in front has picked up and given a life to the one behind him. He may have lost his horse in battle. I think that's very special as well. I think the Temple Church and that area stands out in my mind but walking through the rest of the Temple there are other areas, up and down King's Bench Walk, particularly this lower part where we are away from the traffic – that has a special meaning as well and chambers being here and having come here every day since 1985, that's very special. I think the gardens as well, having the room that overlooks the garden has been very good. I am very lucky to have worked in such a beautiful environment.

2.10.08

HI Are there any aspects of your job or your time in the Temple that I've missed out?

PM No, I think we've comprehensively covered them all, gone through all the chambers in which I've worked, trying to remember all the various relevant points. I don't think anything has been missed out. I think that's a comprehensive run down. [laughs]

HI So the final question, which we've already talked about, is would you like to come and have lunch with me in Inner Temple Hall?

PM I'd really appreciate that, thank you very much indeed, I'd love to. And thank you very much for the interview.

HI Thank you for agreeing, thank you.

PM Not at all, great pleasure, thank you very much Harini.