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Oral History Interview Transcript
Cover Sheet

Narrator: Danit Tal

Interviewers: Addie Patrick, Randi Flaherty, Aspen Ono

Place of Interview: Zoom

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Project Abstract: The Virginia Law Women 50 oral history project is part of the VLW 50th anniversary. The oral history focus was on interviewing VLW leadership, and includes interviews with VLW past presidents from the 1970s through the 2010s.

Interview Abstract: Oral history interview via Zoom on January 27, 2022, of past President Danit Tal, class of 2015. Tal discussed experiences of her mother, a lawyer, raising Tal while practicing law, and the challenges associated with working, as a woman, for large law firms (Big Law). Tal reviewed programs implemented while VLW president to support women Law students, including a faculty dinner program and Women in Big Law. Also discussed were challenges of managing VLW generally, and VLW leadership transitions.

Beginning of interview

Addie Patrick: Recording

Randi Flaherty: I got recording going.

Addie Patrick: Okay. Hello everyone. Today is January 27, 2022. My name is Addie Patrick. I'm the library coordinator here at the UVA [University of Virginia Arthur J. Morris] Law Library. And I am Zooming into this oral history interview with Danit Tal for the fiftieth anniversary of Virginia Law Women. And I'm Zooming in from Charlottesville, Virginia, and I'm going to pass it off to Randi.

Randi Flaherty: And I'm Randi Flaherty. I'm head of Special Collections here at the UVA Law Library, and I'm joining via Zoom at the Library in Charlottesville.

Aspen Ono: And I'm Aspen Ono, and I am a 2L, to graduate in 2023 from UVA Law School, and I'm Zooming in from my small apartment in Charlottesville.

Danit Tal: I'm Danit Tal. I graduated from UVA Law School in 2015. I am Zooming in from Yorktown, Virginia, where I live now.

Addie Patrick: Excellent. Well, I'm going to get started with our first question. So Danit, can you talk a little bit more about why you decided to join Virginia Law Women?

Danit Tal: Yes. So I joined Virginia Law Women, I think, as a 1L. I think we had 1L reps or something like that. I'm sure my initial impulse came from just my desire to join organizations. I was your stereotypical, join a bunch of organizations, do a lot of things. I had taken four years off between undergrad and law school. So I was probably motivated to get back into the student side of things. I think at the time, I was motivated mostly by the fact that my mom was an attorney. She still is. She always loved her job. I grew up sleeping under her law firm desk in Manhattan, actually, in the World Trade Center. She had me while she was a 1L in law school, she went to [College of] William and Mary law school. And she actually told me that she took me to classes because I was very well behaved [laughs]. And so I kind of grew up seeing women in law firms and working in the legal profession. But I had, I think a fairly deep understanding that it could be a very difficult path for women. I have three younger brothers. And I was very, I think, mature and involved in my mom's career. And she just kind of bluntly told me, I remember, I think when my second brother was born, that she wasn't getting fired from her law firm, but she was asked to leave, because you just couldn't have that many children. And I remember kind of being quiet under her law firm desk, and I'd go there late at night, and take a town car, the town car back to our house in Brooklyn, really, really late in the morning, or at night, early morning. And that was sort of so my mom could have time with me. She was a really, really involved parent, but also working full time at a law firm before the days of blackberries and laptops. So, I saw firsthand that the law could be a great career for women. She ended up working in the Board of Education and doing constitutional law, and she just completely loved it. But I also saw the struggles that she faced. And I didn't fully appreciate when I was a 1L—What I

thought Virginia Law Women could do kind of gained more of an appreciation once I was there and involved in issues that women were having in law school, and then even a greater appreciation now that I'm outside of law school and have, you know, I spent five years at a law firm, and now I work in house, at Capital One [Financial Corporation]. But at the time, I thought, This is great. We'll have women who can support each other, and I'll meet people and have events and things like that. And this is probably something important. And you know, that later all really came to focus for me. But at the beginning, it was probably just a motivation to, you know, understand what my mom went through and have a support system for myself and other women.

Aspen Ono: So you mentioned that there were 1L reps, were you one of those 1L reps?

Danit Tal: Yes, I'm sure I showed up to the first VLW [Virginia Law Women] meeting, not really sure what to think or what would go on, and there were a couple 1L positions. And it's probably just in my nature to try out for things [laughs]. So I'm sure I was like, Oh, no, that's something I should do. I'll meet people and maybe I'll have an impact or something. I have like some vague recollection of standing up and making a case for myself. So I think that's how I got that position.

Aspen Ono: And did you hold any other positions other than 1L rep and president? What was your evolution into becoming more involved with VLW?

Danit Tal: I think I was vice president my 2L year.

Aspen Ono: Okay.

Danit Tal: [Laughs] I'm pretty sure that's what I did. And I was just very invested in what I thought VLW could do. We did a lot my 2L year but—and sorry, this is a little bit more than what you're asking for in the question—but I became involved in a study with a couple of professors about women's grades in law school. At the time that I was there, there were hardly any women on the [Virginia] Law Review. And even though women were coming in with the same SAT scores and GPAs [Grade Point Average], as the male students, they were underperforming. And so that's why we weren't seeing as many women on Law Review. And so we were studying that. And I thought that VLW could be, like a force for good. We had a couple theories on why this was happening. And one of them was a Socratic method, and women are too shy to speak up, they don't have the right mentors in law school, we have a lot of male professors, things like that. And I thought that we could do things through VLW to really create a support network for women. So I think I was thinking 3L year, I would do something, and I wasn't really sure what. But the current president that year, who was Marta Cook, pulled me aside and told me I should run for president. It's like, Are you sure? All right, I guess I'll do that. And of course in hindsight, I'm so glad that I did. Because I'm really proud of what we did my 3L year there.

Aspen Ono: Yes. So today, Virginia Law Women is just kind of huge, at least, because I'm the current secretary, and we just have so many different board positions. And so

can you tell me a little bit about how it was structured back when you were president or vice president? And what were your different committees or positions that you guys had on that board?

Danit Tal: I think it was pretty simplistic at the time. I think we had the usual positions on a board and our 1L reps. I can't promise you that we didn't have committees. But that just doesn't sound familiar. I think my 3L year, we created a new position because we started the Tables for Eight and the Women in Big Law my 3L year. So we created a new position for people to work on those things, since they ended up being such huge efforts. And I don't remember if we ended up creating committees, we probably had informal people volunteering to help with certain kinds of events or things like that. I'm really glad to hear that it's grown so much. And now you have committees. That's awesome.

Aspen Ono: Yes—speaking of Women in Big Law, we have that coming up. But we're just trying to move it to virtual right now with everything on Zoom. And so I guess I'm really interested in hearing a little bit more about why you decided to create that event. And the process of that, and I don't know, maybe it was in relation to your mom, but just tell me about that experience.

Danit Tal: Yes, those two initiatives were both really important for me and both driven by my own personal experience, and my mom, and also what I was witnessing in the Law School and studying with the professors. So Women in Big Law in particular—I felt like big law kind of had a bad reputation for women. And, you know, after doing it for five years, understandably so. And we just didn't have events where we were meeting women who worked at law firms, and asking them, "What is it like? How can we prepare for our interviews? What is your life like in a law firm? Is it possible to be successful as a woman in a law firm?" There were definitely a group of us who felt like we wanted to be mothers one day, and I mean, I was older when I was in law school, I think I was twenty-seven. And I knew that getting married and having children was somewhat close in my future. And I wasn't sure if those things were possible, working at a law firm especially, you know, given my firsthand experience with my mom, and I knew that things had changed in twenty-plus years since my mom was at a law firm, but I'd also heard horror stories. So we thought it would be really good to bring in these women role models from law firms to talk to us about their experiences and motivate and encourage women to pursue careers in big law, if that was something they were interested in. How we actually went about that: We had a lot of help from [Senior Assistant Dean, Career Development] Kevin Donovan. I mean he was always such a huge supporter of Virginia Law Women. He's just such an amazing person. And so many different people at the Law School were supportive and willing to help us and help us with a budget and things like that. So Kevin's office was really, really crucial in making the connections we needed to bring in women from big law firms to do that event.

Aspen Ono: I guess I'm a little—sorry not to parse this issue—but I'm interested because you keep talking about how it was really hard for your mom, and how you've heard horror stories about being in big law. So what made, first of all you potentially

want to pursue that path, and then also encourage other women to pursue that, if that was their choice?

Danit Tal: Yes. I think part of it was really that event. I did meet a lot of women through that event and through networking that spoke really highly of their jobs and felt like they had flexibility and had amazing maternity leave. Multiple women who came to the Women in Big Law event said, "I left big law and worked for the government for a few years and came back. Have all your children while you work at a law firm, it's amazing. You get so much time off, and your pay is great." I was like, What, really? It's something that hadn't really occurred to me. And now I mean, I would advise anyone to do that. I still advise some of my friends who are working at big law, "Have your kids now before you leave." The maternity leave is almost six months, paid. It's incredible. And, so I didn't want my mom's experience to color what I would do. I also felt really strongly at the time that if I worked at a law firm, I could do anything I wanted after that. You go to UVA Law School, you work at a great law firm, your resume is, that's it, you can go do anything you want from there. You can work for the government, you can work for PETA [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals]. I always thought I might be an animal rights lawyer, or an environmental lawyer, and now I'm a software lawyer. But, you know, that's the great thing about being a lawyer, you can do a hundred different things in your career. So I kind of just always saw it as a stepping stone, to be completely honest. I never really looked at it as something that I would do long term. And I think having done that for five years, that's still very true. And some-I'm glad to see that some women do do it long term, but it is a difficult environment for women, I think. If you especially want to have time for things like children or family or extracurricular activities in general. But I just, I wanted to remove this stigma at the time, that it was a hellish place to be. Because it absolutely wasn't. I mean, I, don't know if I would do those five years again, but I learned so much. And it really was a great experience for me as an attorney and made me—it made me a good lawyer. And my mom always told me that. She always said, "It's going be really hard, but you're going to come out of it, being incredibly smart and prepared for any job you take next." And I just didn't want any sort of bias against that, just because I knew maybe it would be a difficult environment for women. And I think it's really come a long way. And I wanted people to see that. So, that's kind of why I went into it. I knew it wasn't going to be forever. I just I thought it would be two years and it turned into five because it wasn't that bad. [laughs]

Aspen Ono: Yes, and you talked about WBL [Women in Big Law] as being a great source for mentors, and it sounds like the other program that you kind of, or at least VLW at your time spearheaded, was Table for Eight, and that also seems kind of mentor-driven, so can you tell us a little bit about what that program is? Because we don't actually have it anymore, so I'd like hear.

Danit Tal: Oh, really? Oh, man.

Aspen Ono: I think we have it in like a different form. We have faculty dinners, but not in that structure.

Danit Tal: Okay. That was really driven by the research I was doing at the Law School, dealing with the underperformance of women. We thought, There is a reason that women are potentially scared to speak up. Or not performing as well on exams, or not going to office hours as much as males, or things like that. And so we had heard about Tables for Eight, which is something, I think, VLW or one of the other organizations had done years and years before. And we thought, Well, that's a good way to get students in front of professors in a totally different environment. So, at the time, what we did was we'd have two professors, male or female, host a dinner at one of their homes, and we paid for it to be catered. And it created just such a relaxed and wonderful setting. I'm still friends with professors I met at those dinners, whose classes I ended up taking, because I just fell in love with them at these dinners and got to know them. And in my experience—and I found this to be true after having spoken to many people who attended the dinners—people felt really comfortable speaking up in a different setting. When you're at someone's house, and you're meeting their children, and you're sharing food with them, and it's a really small group of people, like six students and two professors, it's easier to just freely speak about lots of different topics. We came up with questions ahead of time to help drive conversation but found that people rarely needed them or wanted to use them. And what I was hoping it would do, and what I really think it did do, was break down some kind of barrier where the professors are these scary human beings who you don't want to talk to and who are otherworldly. They're just human beings. And they have faced some of the same issues that we faced in the legal career. And we just got to know each other as human beings. So I think it was great for the students to kind of feel supported together, but also to just feel like they could openly talk to their professors. And then, I mean, I personally felt like when I went to class, I've been in their houses, I talked to them, it just made me more comfortable to speak up and express myself and go to office hours or ask questions. Or take my exams back into them and review them, or things like that, things that maybe I would have been a little shy to do. And so it really, it mostly came out of that. It just came out of wanting to create a way for female students to feel some kind of support structure at the school and potentially get rid of some of the barriers that were, you know, theoretically contributing to the great disparity.

Aspen Ono: Yes. So you had a lot of initiatives aimed at mentorship. But what did you, I mean, was that—what did you see as VLW's main mission while you were there? What did you see the role that VLW played at the school as an organization?

Danit Tal: I think when I started, it seemed like a great way to make friends, meet people, have a support network of women students, which is great. And we continue to do those things. We went apple picking and wine tasting and things like that. There's so much to say for having friends at the Law School and having a support network, and having people you can ask for outlines or ask questions or say, "Did you take this professor?" Things like that. There's so much value in that. What I wanted to add to that was to open it up to the administration a little bit more. I wanted it to be an organization that worked closely with different parts of the administration in different offices to create a broader support network for women that included professors and staff, whether that was through Kevin and his group and helping us set up things like the Women in Big

Law, or through the professors themselves, and getting their buy-in and support to create the kind of environment where female students would succeed.

Aspen Ono: Yes. And what-can you tell me a little bit about what you felt like your successes and, not failures, but the challenges that you faced during your presidency, specifically, and, you know, kind of carrying out that mission?

Danit Tal: Yes. The successes were definitely those two big events, for me. I feel like those were big shifts, and kind of really kicked off what I wanted our mission to be, involving a broader audience. It always felt a little bit hard to organize events. I mean, it's just the nature of being in law school. I was the president of two other organizations and doing, doing, just having my own life. And everyone was doing that. Everyone was studying really hard, and making friends, and going to Bar Review. And it's hard to kind of create space for an organization to have events that are really well attended. I think our solution to that was create two or three big events and really publicize those and get people to attend those. I wish we had been able to do or to have more time to focus on smaller events where we could just have a small group of students having coffee together, or sharing a meal, or going wine tasting. We definitely did that. But I feel like I missed out on forming some friendships or meeting people through events like that, because we just didn't have the time or women power to set those up. One thing that was really difficult during my presidency was working with the feminist organization at the time, I don't remember what they were called. We had—I don't know why—but we had a lot of tension between our two groups at the time, that was really unfortunate, because I thought we should be working together, the two female organizations. I think from their perspective, the issue was that we were doing too many events that were focused on women having children. And they thought, you know, Women don't always want children or have children or whatever, that shouldn't be the focus. I think from our perspective, we thought, Well, it's a reality that women have children, at least, a lot of us will, so we should address that. And we should support that. But of course, we'll have lots of events that any—that can appeal to anybody. And for whatever reason, there was, there was a lot of tension over that. And I really wish that we had been better able to resolve that and work together.

Aspen Ono: Right.

Danit Tal: It just seems like those organizations shouldn't be at odds. So I hope that's changed since I was there.

Aspen Ono: Yes, so did you feel like there wasn't any resolution to the that conflict while you were still in VLW?

Danit Tal: Yes, and no. We-I think we did the Tables for Eight together. I think that was—tried to do an olive branch. And we tried to all do that together. And we made sure to—the list would get released to VLW at 8:00 AM on a Thursday or something, and everyone's waiting to sign up. So we made sure to involve their group and they get the list at the same time, and kind of work on it together. But overall, no there was a definite tension that kind of never, never got cleared up while I was there.

Aspen Ono: Yes. And, I guess, did that affect how you felt about VLW's work and representation of the women at the Law School? And maybe the answer is no. I just-having that tension I can imagine would be really challenging.

Danit Tal: Yes, I-it didn't affect my perception, because I felt like I always had a very clear view of being a woman in law. And to me, that was the reality of the fact that a lot of women in law will have families and have to confront the issue of, you know, leaning in or trying to have it all or you know, whatever the expression was at the time. I don't even know if "Lean In" [Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead," by Nell Scovell and Sheryl Sandberg. 2013.] had come out at the time. And so for me, it always felt like an issue we should be talking about, and we shouldn't exclude it. I felt like we should just be inclusive of any and all issues women should face. I think at the time there was just such a push from the other organization to be anti-that, and so I can understand their perspective. And if they wanted to have an organization that was not that, I get it. I just really was a proponent of we're all women in law, we should be supporting each other here. But yes, I didn't-I mean, it just kind of upset me more than anything. I don't think it actually changed my focus or perspective. Because I thought I was right, [laughs] so, I was like, Well, I'm just gonna keep doing this, because I think this is the right thing to do.

Aspen Ono: Yes. So other than that kind of unfortunate conflict, was there anything unexpected that you experienced or faced during your tenure as president?

Danit Tal: I don't think so. I was pleasantly surprised by how supportive the administration and professors were. I mean, I always thought the professors were awesome. And it's part of the reason I came to UVA. But just how willing they were to share their time, and their homes, and their families, and their experiences. It was just so nice to see that in action. It's something I saw. I mean, when you go to office hours, or you talk to them, or you see them in the hallway, but then, actually getting to know them on a personal level, and becoming friends with them, was surprising and in the best way. It was really a great experience for me.

Aspen Ono: Yes. Do you have any special relationships with professors that you maintain till this day?

Danit Tal: Yes, I still email them. And whenever I'm at the Law School, I show up and say hi. Remember, I was-I live two hours from Charlottesville, and I love Charlottesville, so sometimes I'll just drive up there and go to the farmers market or something. And I bumped into Dean [Risa] Goluboff and Professor [Deborah] Helman. Last time I was there. And I had my son with me, and I was like, "This is my son." Last time I saw them, I was pregnant. I came back to VLW for Women in Big Law when I was a fourth-year at Lantham [& Watkins, LLP]. And I walked in and they were shocked to see me because I actually had normal clothes on and my hair was done. I was just always in leggings and a sweatshirt in law school. And I was seven months pregnant. They were like, "Wow, this is a surprise!" So I've always kind of emailed and kept in touch with them. I was really close with Professor [Kerry] Abrams and babysat for her kids. But now she's dean at Duke [University]. And I've kept in touch with Kevin, he's great. I've always kind of

sent him emails, which reminds me, I'm due to email all of them some pictures of my son, and I'm actually four months pregnant now.

Aspen Ono: Congratulations.

Danit Tal: So there's another one on the way. Thanks. A girl this time. So another, a girl to teach the ways of the women in law.

Aspen Ono: Yes. So you've talked about the faculty and the administration being very, very supportive, which is fantastic. But aside from the feminist group at the Law School, did you guys—what was the kind of support that VLW received from other students? Or what was your interaction with other organizations? Because, I mean, at least I know, today, we co-sponsor most of our events. And that's been really great.

Danit Tal: I remember co-sponsoring a couple things. But I can't really remember which organizations we co-sponsored with. As a student, I was very much a proponent of getting to know other student groups, not just in the Law School. They started the tri-sector leader fellow thing [University of Virginia's Tri-Sector Leadership Fellows] when I was there, and I got elected to it, and it's with the Business School [University of Virginia Darden School of Business], and there's representatives from the Med School [University of Virginia School of Medicine], Business School, and Law School. And I loved that. I thought that was such a great way to kind of integrate law students into the other grad schools at UVA, and really broaden our networks. So I wish we had done more of that. I always found other student groups to be really supportive and interested in co-hosting events, but it was more of a, "Hey, do you have the budget to share the price of sandwiches when we bring in this speaker?" Or whatever. I wish we had done more substantive events, where we actually mingled with the other members of the organizations and talked about our shared missions or things like that. We really didn't do much of that at the time.

Aspen Ono: Yes. On a slightly different topic. So you had talked about the person that was president before you just pulling you aside and saying, "Hey, I think you should run for president." So can you tell me a bit about what your transition into the presidency looked like? And then what you passing the torch on to the next president looked like and how that went?

Danit Tal: It was pretty simplistic. I think it was generally the trend that the vice president, or someone from the board from the year before, would end up being the president. And I remember there being a handover of some budget spreadsheets. Maybe our handbook or something. [laughs] It was very, very informal of, "Here are a couple documents, and you kind of know which events we do." We tried to make it a little bit more organized my 3L year. Someone named Virginia Blanton, who kind of headed up our Women in Big Law, she became the Women in Big Law person her 3L year, and she was super, super organized. And I-she might have started as our secretary, I don't really remember. But she was really great at writing down or trying to keep a log: here are the events we do, here's why we do them, here's how much they cost. And so we could try to help transition to the next year. I personally knew the

woman who came after me. She was, like myself, had worked some years before law school, she actually had a kid while she was in law school. She was a really, a great spokesperson and president for VLW. So, I'm sure it was a similar kind of like, "You've been around, you know, what we do here are the big events, Virginia's got everything you need to know. And here, here are the documents." I'd love to hear if it's gotten a little bit more organized, but it definitely was not very organized back then.

Aspen Ono: Yes, I think we have—transition memos abound now. So it's, it's pretty—

Danit Tal: Wow. Very fancy.

Aspen Ono: It's a very tightly run ship these days for better or for worse.

Danit Tal: Wow, that's amazing.

Aspen Ono: Yes. So you mentioned earlier that you came back to be a speaker at Women in Big Law. Can you tell me a bit about what that experience was like and seeing how it's evolved over time since you guys created it?

Danit Tal: Yes, it was great. I loved coming back on the other side. I think I got to come back twice. And then there was a snowstorm and then COVID, so. It was great to be on the other side and just see how much it had grown. I think I came back two or three years in and it grew from just the reception after the event to actually going out to organized dinners at restaurants, which was great. It's even more time to sit down and talk to each other and ask each other questions and things like that. I was really happy to see that. And also just seeing it on the law firm side. There was a lot of competition over who would get to go. And I was like, Wow, this is amazing— people really want to go to this. And especially, I mean, Latham takes, I think, the most UVA people of any firm. So there's always competition to go back to Charlottesville, but I was like, "I am staking a claim over this because I used to be the president. So I'm sorry, but I am going to those." So I was fortunate in that respect. But I was just glad to see that, one, it was continuing to happen. Two, it was even bigger and more organized, and there was more to the event. And that it was just such an established thing. Anyone I talked to was like, "Oh, yes, that event. We know that event is coming. We rely on that event." Just how involved Career Services was with it. I was just so glad to see that it had become like an ingrained thing in the Law School.

Randi Flaherty: Can I interrupt for one second? As someone who's not as familiar with Women in Big Law programming. Can you tell us about what the program was when you first created it? How did it run, what was the structure?

Danit Tal: Yes. So it was sort of the brainchild of Virginia and I, and we thought, Let's pick twenty law firms or something. Let's go see if Kevin can help us first, otherwise, we can't do this. See if they have alumni or contacts at these law firms who would be willing to come back to UVA, and we will just have a panel and a reception. And we will have some of the woman sit on a panel, and then we'll have—we got really good at these wine and cheese receptions, I think, my 2L year and people loved them. Everyone loves

like the baked brie and whatever. So we thought we could probably get a lot of students to come to this, we could advertise it and we could do it through the Career Services. And I'm sure it would be a selling point for them too. And it's kind of a way for law firms to come recruit people. So I think we just started by talking to Kevin, getting his buy-in, and then surprisingly, got a lot of interest from law firms so that we were able to put on a couple different panels at the same time. So students were able to sit in on different panels, and each panel had a different topic. So one of them was having women in big law, one of them was how do you succeed in big law, and what does your career path look like? They all tried to address different kinds of topics that women would face. And then after the panels were over, we'd all meet in the Caplin [Pavilion] and have our wine and cheese and mingle. And say a couple words and thank everyone for being there. And of course, we had to get—we asked some faculty to come, and the dean, and some female professors and things like that. So we thankfully had support, and we always had someone to show up and say a couple of words or something like that, which was nice.

Aspen Ono: Yes. So you've talked a lot about, you know, some mentorships that you've, that you've retained over the years. And you've talked about Virginia, it sounds like she was a big part of your experience on the board. But do you have any other friendships that you kind of built at VLW, and how that has continued on or affected the rest of your career?

Danit Tal: Yes. I think probably my, my deepest friendships are those with my 1L section-mates that I'm still friends with, who of course came to VLW events to support me, but I didn't really meet them through VLW. I think probably what has been most important for me is just having that as a network. So when I was interviewing, I remember talking and sitting down with a couple different VLW members who were a year ahead of me and had already spent their summers at law firms. And their input was so helpful to me when I was deciding between firms, because they had good and bad things to say. And they told me their experiences. And it really helped me figure out where I wanted to spend my summer, what kind of law firm I wanted to work in, which city I wanted to work in. So I really relied heavily on that kind of mentor relationship. And then even since graduating, just having that network of women who were in VLW, either while I was there, or before or after me, I've had people contact me and say, "Hey, I remember when you were president of VLW." Or, "Someone told me like, you work a Capital One now, what's that like?" And it just ends up kind of being this network that continues on for many, many years. And I kind of always wanted it to be that. We didn't really create anything super formal. I think we had started to when I was there, like, Let's create a formal network of contacts. I remember starting something like that my 3L year, but I don't remember how far we made it with that. People you could actually email or call and ask for advice or ask you know, "Do you know the person interviewing? Here's my resume." Just creating that kind of network for women to reach out to each other and help each other.

Aspen Ono: I guess, unless you Addie or Randi, have any additional questions, is there anything else about VLW and your time there that you want to share?

Danit Tal: I guess I would just say I'm so glad that it existed. It-there isn't really anything like that as an undergrad. There aren't really organizations that are undergrads for women. And so I was a little surprised that that existed when I got to law school, but I also inherently understood why it was necessary. And now that I'm outside of that, I see the importance even more. Looking back now, I'm so glad that I had that. And I think those friendships and mentor relationships, and especially the professor relationships that I was able to create, and other people were able to create, really shaped my time at the Law School. And really set me up for success upon leaving the Law School. And, you know, I still feel comfortable to email Kevin and ask him for career advice, or some of my professor friends, I'm always happy to hear from them or tell them what's going on in my life. I would-I'm always a little worried that at some point, someone will say there's not a need for a women organization. And I hope that never happens. Because I think the kind of camaraderie you feel with other women going through a similar experience with you is just so valuable. And, you know, I never thought we should exclude men from anything. Men could come to the Tables with Eight, they could come to any of our event—they were always, always open. Very few came. But I think, you know, I mean, I was part of the Jewish student organization [Jewish Law Students Association]. There's something to be said, for having some kind of commonality with people and coming together over that, and bonding over that, and creating a support structure, especially when you're going through something really difficult. Law school is a really hard thing. A lot of people get a lot of anxiety and depression. It's a tough thing to go through alone. So it's really nice to have those organizations that exist, that can really help people and bring people together. So I'm just glad that they're still things happening. And this is happening. And that we're celebrating it. I think it's awesome.

Aspen Ono: Well, thank you for your time. Is there anyone else you think we should talk to?

Danit Tal: Have you talked to—so I think Marta Cook was the president before me. If you talk to Casey Jonas, she was the president after me.

Aspen Ono: I don't believe so.

Danit Tal: I can email you her name. She has a lot of opinions. And she's really outspoken, and she was awesome. So, let me see, I can find her email. Her last name—she hyphenated, Trombley-Shapiro Jonas. But I think she just went by Jonas. I can send you her name via email. And she probably still has her UVA email, or I'm happy to put her in touch with you or something. I think she would be a great person to talk to. But that's probably, I mean—you could talk to—if you really wanted to get more details on Women in Big Law, Virginia is probably your best resource. Virginia Blanton. She got married, but I don't think she changed her name.

Aspen Ono: Great. I'll give it back—the reins back to Addie and Randi.

Addie Patrick: Yes, thank you Aspen that was—I mean, this has just been a wonderful conversation between both of you guys. I feel like I've learned so much about how VLW works now and how it worked not so long ago. I'm looking at the interview guide, just

trying to see if there's anything that we haven't covered. But it's been a very thorough conversation. I had sort of a random question out of curiosity, whether Danit, you knew anything about the history of the organization at all? Or if there's any—of Virginia Law Women—if there was any knowledge of how old the organization was, when you were there?

Danit Tal: No, not at all. And I'm embarrassed to say I didn't ask. I don't know why it never occurred to me. I remember—I'm blanking on her name—who used to be the head of Student Affairs? Ballenger, Martha Ballenger [Assistant Dean for Student Affairs]. She was one of the first females at the Law School. When they started taking women. Her son, Scott, went to UVA Law and worked at Latham and was the roommate of the general counsel at Capital One where I work. UVA is a very, very connected network. It's shocking when you meet someone from UVA. Everybody knows each other. But I wish I had done something like interview her, or feature her in something. We always invited her to events because she was very sweet and very supportive. But I wish we had done something, like historical focused on the history of women at the Law School or the history of VLW. That's something that would have been really worthwhile. But it never occurred to me to do.

Addie Patrick: Well, I think it's not necessarily a necessity for student organizations. I can understand why wouldn't be a top priority. And here in the Law Library, we're a little bit biased and thinking that everybody should know and understand the history of the Law School, but of course, people are going through law school, they're not worried so much about what happened fifty or a hundred years ago, but just out of curiosity.

Danit Tal: Yes. But it's important. It's one of those things that you're—you don't really have to know it, but knowing the history always informs what you're doing. So, I kind of wish someone had asked me that question, and I could have acted on it back then.

Addie Patrick: Well, it comes full circle because you're continuing this project now. [laughing] Which again, we're very fortunate for. Randi, do you have any final questions? All right, I'm going to go ahead and stop the recording. But thank you guys again.

Danit Tal: Yes of course.

End of interview