

Ingrid Wlotzka**LRC Oral History Project****16th July 2008**

Int This is an interview with Ingrid Wlotzka, and it's the 16th July (2008). Ingrid, on behalf of SALS Foundation in Washington DC, we would really like to thank you for agreeing to be part of the LRC Oral History Project.

IW It's a pleasure.

Int Thank you. I wonder whether we could start the interview by you talking about your personal background in terms of your early childhood memories, growing up in South Africa, what was that like...and also where your sense of social justice and injustice may have developed and then your particular trajectory thereafter?

IW Yes, my early childhood, I was born in Rustenburg in the Transvaal, my father was a civil engineer and my mother was a trained teacher but she never really practised that career.

Int Ok...

IW I think she was the main person, and especially my father as well, who instilled into us a sense of justice. My mother did it in a very radical way, and I'll explain to you. I have a twin brother, and when we grew up, my mother was extremely strict, coming from a German background, her father was from Germany, she was born there and they were...she came to South Africa when she was two years old, because her mother had TB and she wouldn't have survived in Germany for longer than a year; her father was a medical doctor. So he sent her, the mother and the youngest children to South Africa. At that time there was a different government and they were very, very much anti-Germany. He was actually...he practised for a while in South Africa, but he was deported back to Germany...

Int Gosh...

IW ...and was not allowed to send them money or clothes, or support them in any way. So they grew up extremely poor, living with people who helped them out, and my mother, of course, was very much aware of this poverty, being dependant on other people, the humiliation thereof, and so on. So, when we grew up, we were also not very rich, but she was extremely strict in this way. My brother once...he was about three years old, and he...I think she had scolded him or disciplined him in a way and he turned around, walked away, then turned back and said: 'you cow'. And she took him and she gave him such a hiding, because that was not acceptable. Then later on, he once...he must have been about five or six, I can't remember, but we had a domestic servant with us, Mabel, I remember so well, and he also swore at her once, and my mother took him and she gave him such a hiding. So in that way we were taught: you respect older people, you respect whoever it is, black or white. The other

thing that my mother taught us was a love for animals, because they cannot protect themselves against the cruelty of people.

Int Sure.

IW So we lived on the outskirts of the town, opposite the veld, and the little white boys came with their little guns, .22s or whatever they were called, went in the veld and shot the birds and my mother nearly had a fit, she went after them, she took away their guns, she gave them such a tongue-lashing – that is not done, you don't just shoot to kill for the fun of it. But she did exactly the same with the black people who came around in donkey carts selling vegetables, and they used to whip those poor donkeys so terribly, so my mother stopped them, took away their whips, gave them such a tongue-lashing, so in that way, she taught us, you treat everybody the same, you treat animals and people with respect, you don't just destroy. And I think that is where it already started, at a very young age. We were about nine years old when we left Rustenburg, my father was the city engineer at that time, and he felt he'd reached his top. He needed a change of career, so we moved to Florida in Johannesburg, where he worked for Iscor. And that was the time, I was about twelve years old, when they had those terrible problems in the Belgian Congo and the people had to flee. And there was a French family which he just took in to give them refuge, to help them, and I remember he still gave them a hundred pounds, in those years it was before the Rand, which was a lot of money, just for them to be able to start again and start a new life, because they were destitute, there was nothing, they had to flee. So they lived with us for I think a month or two. So those were the two sides. My father was also a person who never hunted, never killed; we were just brought up in that way. So I think that is where our social conscience started, because of the parents.

Int But in terms of living in South Africa...with such disparity between blacks and whites, how did you, as a young child, start to understand it, what were the discussions, was it accepted in the family home that that's the situation, or was it never discussed...?

IW You know it was...as far as I can remember, not really discussed. They were, the people who worked for us, were treated very fairly, they had good salaries, they had the time off, they had specific hours to work, it was never, expecting more of what you would expect of other people. They were given clean uniforms, clean bedding, they were taught to live in a decent way, because in those years they still had the rooms for servants, on the property. And they were expected to keep it clean and neat the way the house was to be.

Int Right...

IW And they had all their...normally they worked in the mornings and had the afternoons off. Weekends in any case. So there was...for me, it was just a way of how you would treat anybody else, there was never a discussion, I never knew about these things, which is very strange to say, but it just did not play a role. It was just a general attitude towards people that you treat them with respect and decently. So, those things

never...were never really discussed. My father died very young, when we were seventeen, and he was forty-three. So, that was a period...we were teenagers, you were interested in other things, you had this terrible thing to cope with. I started university at seventeen, which is very young; we were very much protected...so we were... and we never travelled much. We were just plain ordinary very, very middle class people who did not have much, and I think very little experience of life.

Int So...coming from that background and going to university, what was the trajectory, what happened after that...to you, in terms of going to university, etc?

IW Well, as I say, it was extremely difficult...the first three...within the first three weeks my father died. I was then in the hostel there, my mother and my two brothers still lived in the house, and after that year I had to go back to the house because there was no money for me still to pay for the hostel. I was very thankful that I could still ask my father, because other students said to me: are you crazy? You cannot study four languages; you'll never handle that, that's too much. Because I had four languages plus psychology, languages was my...that was my love...reading.

Int What did you study?

IW It was just a plain BA with languages and psychology.

Int What languages did you study?

IW It was English, Afrikaans, which included Dutch, German, French and then of course the psychology. But I think because of my German background, because we were familiar, it was easier for me, that was no problem, but I was then very uncertain, and in hospital I said to my father: what now? I didn't know what to study because they say I'm not going to pass. And he still said to me: if that's what you want to do, then do it. And I did, but I've been a very conscientious student all my life, very much unsure of myself and my talents and whatever, so I worked hard and of course, I always passed, but there wasn't much of a student life the...fun part was missing in my life. Yes, is that enough? What would you like to know more?

Int ...and then what happened thereafter?

IW When I had finished, I always wanted to go overseas. That was my one big dream, and I worked for four months at the Department of Transport, just to get some money together, I'd booked that time, a trip on a ship over to Germany, I already had arranged, had a job there, and for the first time in my life, I was twenty-one, twenty, I went to Cape Town to board the ship and when I got there they said: there was a double booking, unfortunately, we're going to give you back the money, but you can't go. So, my life was very much, I think, determined by the universe, what was supposed to happen. This whole holistic thing that worked together. So I stayed in

Cape Town, because it was the first time, and I thought: well, that's it, I don't want to come back to Pretoria.

Int And you'd finished your degree by then?

IW I'd just finished my degree. And I got a job, strangely enough at the State Attorney. Where I had to write all these letters of demand, very boring, I couldn't handle it, you know, I asked for all kinds of extra jobs, I made...I nearly drove the state attorney crazy. I had to open his post in the end, I had to work in the library updating the books, in those years you still did it by hand, and so on, you know, all kinds of...just to keep me busy, because the work was not...

Int Challenging?

IW ...stimulating enough. And after eighteen months, somewhere along the line I met somebody who told me about Namibia and what a beautiful...that was those years South West Africa, how wonderful it is, how friendly the people are. So I got on the train, and travelled three days...no, three nights and two days...it took so long. And I remember the dust was lying that thick on my...on my suitcase, I just had a few books and my suitcase. And I arrived there and I worked at the deeds office, which was unfortunately just as boring (*Laughter*). Because I had a degree, I had to check everybody else's spelling and whether everything was correct and all the names and the addresses, etc, etc. So after a year, I decided, no, this is not for me, and I wanted to go back to Cape Town. But I had by then met my husband and we got married, and that's where I lived for twenty-seven years.

Int Really in Namibia?

IW Yes, in Windhoek...

Int In Windhoek, right.

IW ...bringing up the children. But I still wasn't fulfilled, and then I decided I'm going to study again. And I studied through UNISA, Library and Information Science, because books are just my big love. I sat there for four years, and worked diligently every morning, because in the afternoons the children were back from school, and I did those subjects I needed to obtain the degree. And then, strangely enough, I got a job at the Legal Assistance Centre, which is the partner of the Legal Resources Centre...

Int That's interesting.

IW ... and I only worked there for eight months, gaining a little bit of experience, learning that typical, that database that they had at that stage, it was one that was not very user-friendly, but it was something that was given for free to African countries, but

completely incompatible with Microsoft Word and all the latest technology. And then I left Namibia, because I felt, that's it. As I say the universe just looked after me all the time, and led me into the...where it wanted me to be. During my studies I had to come here for a workshop, and then I met the librarian, the law librarian at UNISA. And he still said to me: if you ever come to Pretoria again, 'phone me and we'll have coffee. About a year later I had moved to Pretoria and I 'phoned him. And he said: are you looking for a job? I said: no, I'm still too nervous and I need to find my feet, it is, such a big change. He said: well, look, here are two telephone numbers, 'phone them, get an interview. And the one was the Legal Resources Centre...

Int Interesting...

IW ...and the other one was the Financial Services Board.

Int Right.

IW So, I went for both interviews, the Financial Services Board only wanted a person temporarily because they needed an affirmative action appointment

Int So this was 1997?

IW 1997.

Int So, apartheid had...ended...

IW Had already ended, yes.

Int Right and you were in Namibia during the 1980s?

IW I was in Namibia, all those years, very much, unaware of what was going on in South Africa. You know, our...first of all, we only had TV when...my son was eight years old before TV ever arrived there.

Int Right...

IW And it was very much just the Namibian news, not much about South Africa, nothing much about the politics and the upheavals and things and, I was so busy with small children that, to me, that was not...and trying to cope with the marriage, and a strange country, that to me, it was not really part of my life. So, yes, I worked for the Financial Services Board for four months, but two days there and three days at the Legal Resources Centre...

Int So you took...

IW Because I got both, yes (*Laughter*).

Int That's interesting.

IW And then finally I said: look, there's so much work at the LRC and because of this, that they were looking for an affirmative action librarian, I think it's only fair that they let me go and then they arranged for an interview and appointed somebody else, and then I started working full-time at the LRC.

Int And so you started full-time in 1998?

IW No, it was 1997.

Int '97, ok, right.

IW '97, but it was only half-day, which suited me very well, because my youngest son was then only eleven and I didn't want to leave him in a big city all on his own the whole day, going to school, coming home to an empty flat, that was not acceptable for me.

Int Right. Who was the Regional Director at that point?

IW It was a lady...I'm very sorry, but I can't remember the name. She was there perhaps two months after I'd started and then she left, she got another position, and I'm sorry, I can't remember her name. (now I remember that it was Benny Monama)

Int Right, ok, and then...

IW Very, very kind and charming person.

Int And then after that, after 1997, I'm talking about LRC Regional Director...you were there for...from '97 until it closed. Nic (de Villiers), was he regional director during the time you were there?

IW Yes, he was...he was...there was...

Int Hanif Vally might have been...I don't know whether he'd already...

IW I never had...I never met Hanif (Vally), I know they spoke about...

Int Charles Pillai?

IW Charles, yes he was the one. Nic, and sometimes there were assistant directors, like Louise du Plessis, Ellen (Nicol) and so on. So those were mainly the people that I worked with.

Int Ok, so, there are two issues...three issues that really come up with the Pretoria office that was different, in that, one, it did brilliant work, particularly on social welfare....

IW Yes.

Int ...and I wondered whether you could talk a bit about that, in terms of the types of cases that were coming through, what you had to do as a librarian to ensure resources, etc?

IW Ok, I mentioned to you that I worked very much in isolation.

Int Sure.

IW They never discussed their cases with me.

Int Right.

IW I worked hard in keeping the library organised, so it's easy to find information. That lady, the Director at that time when I was appointed, wasn't happy with the way the library was arranged, and she asked me to change it. So I went to various law firms, found out about the different classification systems, how they did it, etc, and then finally used the International Labour Organisation Thesaurus, because that had the... you can look up the words...and then it had the classification numbers so that you could keep them and the different topics, together. I had to keep updating, the statutes, and I used to do it very fast, within three weeks, to keep the people really up to date with the latest, So, in that way, I was very much engaged, but not specifically in doing much research. When they asked me, yes, I went to the National Library to get information, older acts, older proclamations and things that were not available in our library. I arranged these lever arch files with all the different...from the oldest act till the latest one. Say, for instance, the Social Welfare Act or the...

Int Land Act?

IW ...Land Act, or whatever, so all that information and the history were accessible.

Int Right.

- IW I...when they did ask, for some information, I went onto the website and got that, but research wasn't really that intensive. I did some translations, especially with the Land Claims because, what was interesting was that...the information that they needed was written in German, by the missionaries who came to South Africa those years, and because the attorneys did not understand German, I translated missionary diaries for them. In this way they got valuable information about where the tribe lived, who was the chief, how many cattle...
- Int Gosh, right...
- IW The rivers, where exactly it was. Because it was wonderful, those missionaries, they...if it hadn't been for them, and writing down everything...
- Int Absolutely...
- IW ...it would all have been lost, and they wouldn't have had...
- Int information...
- IW ...this, the information that they needed to base their claims on. I also translated once, an old Gold Mine Act or something that was still in Dutch, which I translated for **inaudible** Asmita (Thakor) into English, so that she could use that. So that was basically what I worked on.
- Int You also mentioned you worked in relative isolation.
- IW Yes.
- Int So in terms of the actual office...I understand that there were a lot of tensions, particularly around gender issues.
- IW You know what was interesting for me? Can I say first...
- Int Sure.
- IW First of all I found the LRC a wonderful place to learn.
- Int Right.
- IW They provided, for me, who had no experience at all, the opportunity to go to workshops, to attend meetings, to get together with all the law librarians in South Africa, to support us to go to a conference, that time a human rights conference in

Cape Town. All those things that could help me to do the work better...and I made a point of that, and they were never, ever stingy when it came to money or difficult or said it wasn't necessary, that I really appreciated. Also the fact that they brought in all these interns, everybody could learn, if they wanted to. And I think the people there were very skilled, very good at their work. The issues, I only realised, many, many years later that there were issues, because of my isolation, because I wasn't there in the office, and I'm not a type of person who gossips, or walks around in the passages, because I only had those many hours, and I had to do the work...

Int Right, you were busy.

IW So that was...yes...I didn't have time to go around. Unfortunately yes, there were problems which I became aware of mostly in the last year or so. You know, I...I think the fact that there...there were so many different nationalities, which was actually wonderful, because, I mean, I was a German, Beulah (Rollnick) was Jewish, , and there could be a lot of animosity there. There were Indians, there were black people, there were Afrikaans women, Afrikaans men, and they were all there and actually working for the same cause, which I found was remarkable.

Int Sure.

IW Yes, I really don't understand why there was such a big issue between some of the female lawyers and the male lawyers, because, I think, they all really did a wonderful job, and I must say, I'm specifically now speaking of Nic (de Villiers), he was a wonderful manager, he also studied psychology, as well as librarianship, as well as being a lawyer...

Int Right, gosh...

IW ...so he really had a very wide knowledge of things and knew how to organise an office. But there was a lot of...people didn't want to work together, and I don't know whether it was because he was a man, and because he was white and Afrikaans, I really don't know what the reason was for that, because it was unnecessary.

Int Were the tensions also racial?

IW Yes. In the end, one day, I walked in...into the tearoom, and somebody said something about discrimination and racism here, and I was still so surprised and I said: but, what racism? Because, here we all were and what I've experienced, everybody worked and did their job and were friendly and had no problem. And then they said: yes, the black people felt that they were being discriminated against.

Int Was this the admin staff or professionals?

IW Yes...

Int ...the admin staff?

IW The admin staff. Then they arranged a meeting, everybody had to write down all their grievances and...had to talk about it. So, we stayed, and I...it was over lunch time, and I was very dependant on the bus always because I didn't have a car to come in, so I stayed, and then suddenly nobody wanted to talk. Nobody had the courage to say this and this and this is what we experience as racism. And the one just passed the buck to the other and no, they're not going to talk and then...so eventually I...sorry, but my German mentality...or temperament...I got up, I said: I'm not interested in this circus, I'm going home. If they're not prepared to be open and discuss what the problem is then nobody can do anything about...I'm wasting my time, so I left. Then about a week later, there was another meeting convened on this, and again they..., but in a different way, asked people, who would like to talk, . And again, everybody sat there and didn't say anything. The one thing that came up was that somebody felt offended, or said it was racism, because one of the professionals swore at her and used abusive language, because she doesn't do the job properly,. And my comment was: I don't regard it as racism, I regard it as pure bad manners. Still nobody wanted to talk, and I felt quite offended because, as I say, I've always treated people with respect, I never swear at anybody, even if I get so cross, but that is not something I do, I talk straightforward and say: this and this and this is what bothers me. So I said: ok, if nobody wants to talk, I will tell you, because they asked: give us some information where do you come from, what was your background, etc. And nobody wanted to talk so I said: ok, I'll talk. And I told them exactly what I told you now, how I was brought up, so that they realised it's not all white people, who were acting in a very negative way towards black people, that we...we did it in a normal, decent way, we were subjected to the system here, but we did not take advantage of that, in a horrible way. So they listened to me, and I told them, , not all the white people were rich. We've had all these problems, the property that my grandfather had was all confiscated, he was never rewarded for that. If I had known better, more informed, I could have claimed, but I didn't, and the time passed and that was it. So, it wasn't just a one-sided thing, and I think people are unaware of that. And I think one of the main reasons is, because perhaps history is not taught at school any more, perhaps it was a one-sided thing, it's not regarded as important, and I think it's..., one should get back actually to the old days, in the sense that philosophy, Latin, all those roots, where things come from, why certain decisions were made, it's not just something that's plucked out of the air, Same with Germany, and what happened there in those years, you need to understand the whole social context, and I find that it was always just very much tunnel vision, this is what was wrong and that's it, but not a wider view of what was going on. So that meeting ended there. I said where I come from, nobody else wanted to talk, I wasn't aware that I was a racist in any way because I never did...in my mind, I didn't, and I just thought it is good to let them know that perhaps they are seeing things which are not really there. If somebody complains about their work and asks them to do it in this way, and all these systems that Nic put up and tried to make things more effective, and tried...if people would just keep to that, there would not have been any problems, because it just makes things easier. It's like...it's like giving...asking somebody to clean your floor but you don't give them a mop or a pail or anything. So, Nic put in all those systems, but they didn't adhere to them. And of

course, then, if a paper was too late or it wasn't delivered at court or whatever, professionals get uptight. But, it is wrong to use abusive language. And that's where it stopped, and right after that, they came and had the interviews with all the people, and made the decision to close down the LRC.

Int When you say they...who's they?

IW That was Janet Love...

Int the National Director.

IW ...the National Director. She came and spoke to everybody. But, you know, with all the tension in the last two or three years, for me, it was clear that it couldn't carry on this way. And they couldn't resolve the differences.

Int What do you think was the reason for that, that inability to really work together? What do you think was the reason for it?

IW It's....that's difficult to say. It might be...it might be that...now I'm going to talk about the admin staff.

Int Sure.

IW Who were not professional and not skilled, highly skilled, that their viewpoint, as I say, was...was very much a tunnel vision on racism. It doesn't matter what happens, its racism.

Int Right...

IW I can just say that the one man, he was a black man, he...I had a feeling he always came in to check on me, whether am I really working. And he would come in stealthily, because my back was to the door, and suddenly he would stand next to me, and look...and he was very, not aggressive, but when I started there, and they said I must start cataloguing...

Int Was he a paralegal?

IW Yes. That first...within that first week when I started there, and I had to get all the books together and start a new classification system and cataloguing them on the...

Int yes...

IW ...on the database, I had to go into the offices to get the books that were lying around, I could not go in while they were busy with clients, so, when an office was empty, I used to go in, fetch the books, and started working. And he came in one day, and accused me of spying...of searching around and what right have I got to go into the office and do this, and what am I doing? And I think that's where it started, and I was furious, because nobody must accuse me of things that I didn't do. Because I think I'm one of the most honest people. So, I wrote an email, to all the staff, I didn't mention the name, I said: look, this is what happened, this is why I came into the offices, I am professional, I don't prowl around and look at things that aren't...that have nothing to do with me. And I think from that day on, he was absolutely against me. And that was what happened all those years. Also..., that was one thing, I just...I never really spoke to him, I just ignored it. I never...I just left it at that.

Int Sure, sure.

IW The other thing perhaps...the professionals, why...they had, , the problems with the admin staff was because they did not do the work in a very exact manner, which is vital for your...the other...why they had a fight between them I don't know. What exactly went on between Nic (de Villiers) and the two female lawyers, nobody ever really told me, I didn't ask.

Int Was that Louise and Durkje?

IW No, it was Louise and Ellen.

Int Ellen?

IW Yes, Ellen Nicol who did the environmental law., I have to speak for all of them, because they did their work so well, and they were wonderful personalities, each in their own right. As I say, I really admired Nic (de Villiers) because he had the insight. When he sat down in a meeting, he had everything prepared, he was so well spoken. I loved the way he talked, he could express himself so beautifully, and I felt he was the right person, but, as I say, it could have been anything. It could have been being too white. It could have been envy. I'm sorry, I can't tell you anything more.

Int Ok...absolutely...that's been very helpful. I'm wondering...when the office actually closed, did you...you seemed to realise that it would close?

IW Yes. Mmm.

Int Right, ok, so what happened after that? Where did you move onto?

IW (*Laughs*). As I say the universe just seems to look after me. When...in 2005, and that was the other thing that the LRC allowed me. I decided I wanted to study once more.

Int Ok.

IW And I did publishing, a bridging course in publishing at the university and because of my previous degree, those subjects were credited so I only had to do publishing subjects, the first, second and third year, all in one year. But it's a very practical course so I had to be...attend classes, it's not something that you can do via post. And they were...because I had my library so much under control, and I had a lot of leave, they allowed me to attend, I could use those leave days, and I didn't have to be there, and come in on those days where I didn't have to go to university. So, I did that, and it was just a wonderful experience, so different from...when I sat alone in the room all those years studying through UNISA, and then that. And that opened another door, so, when the LRC closed in 2006, I still had contact with these young students that I studied with, and especially the one, she was also German, and she often phones me and she says: let's have coffee, and we talk. And she helped out at the university compiling a database, the student database for the graduate school of management. And she couldn't carry on, she did...went on to do her Honours, which I felt...it was a two-year course and I didn't still want to do that. So she said: go for an interview, perhaps you can do that job. So I got that, extremely boring (*laughter*), you know, checking and 'phoning: are you still at this address, have you got the new...a new email address, that type of thing, building up this whole database. And I did that for about fourteen months, I think I've got voodoo, because then that department closed down, because they've got the Gibbs Business School in Johannesburg and they felt, , it was unnecessary to have two business schools. So, there I was. But, the German old age home was looking for an administrative person to help there, and also the German school was looking for somebody to help in the nursery school.

Int Right.

IW So, I was granted an interview for the nursery school, but I didn't go because I thought: no, that...I can't see myself working...and I haven't got the qualifications and so on. And then I had the interview at the German old age home and got that job. So I was never...oh, and in the meantime I also got an...oh, I forgot about that...I was so fortunate to get a contract work with a company in Rivonia, they were scientists, geologists and so on, the GCS...whatever, I can't remember, to help them in obtaining the right library database, they wanted to start a library, because all the documents were just kept in a store room and they didn't know how to start. So, I did the whole project, worked out and showed them exactly what has to be done, but I didn't...they wanted me to come and work, but I said: no. Because travelling, the time, the petrol, it just wasn't worth it. And then after that I got the editing of the audit portfolio of the university, because all the universities had to have this audit. And they gave me this whole project to edit. I worked myself to a standstill (*Laughs*). And then I got this work at the German old age home, where I worked for a month, but...

Int ...didn't like it?

IW ...yes, um, for personal reasons. The people were wonderful and...but I was...I'm going through a very difficult time in my life and I couldn't handle all their personal problems and be supportive enough, and it was just bringing me down as well. And so I said: no. I resigned then, but in the meantime, by chance, I met one of the librarians that I'd met all those years ago at one of the meetings, , at the Decorex furniture show, and she said: what are you doing now? And I said: well, this is my history. And she said: send me your CV. And she is at the American Embassy, the CDC, the Centre for Diseases Control and Prevention, and she needed somebody to help in the library there. So I immediately walked into that job. So, I was extremely fortunate in that way.

Int And you're still there?

IW That's where I'm now, it was contract work, they extended the contract for another three months and now they want a permanent position, so I have to apply for that...

Int Good for you.

IW ...and see what happens.

Int I hope you get it.

IW *(Laughs)*.

Int You're obviously very talented and....maybe this is...might be a challenge for you.

IW I hope so. I don't know, we'll see. But as I say, if you want to work...and perhaps because I've always worked for very little, I think few people are prepared to do that, where I...I just do it and perhaps that is my...that's where I'm very fortunate, that I could...ya. So that's my history...

Int Very interesting one. I'm going to ask two questions, one is...people have told me that if you go to like different offices, for example, the Durban office, apparently there are all these posters of the different cases that appeared in the newspaper, the headlines...

IW Oh, yes.

Int I'm wondering in...did you get a sense, particularly in the period you worked from '97 to 2006, whether in fact there were...a lot of cases that the LRC took that made the newspapers and..?

- IW Yes, there were quite a few, and I've also compiled a file with all those...it wasn't a very thick file, and cut out those newspaper cuttings and filed them under...whether it was land or, social welfare, whatever, and that they used, for the annual reports, and so on. So that's what I did.
- Int ...I've asked you a range of questions, I'm wondering whether there's something I've neglected to ask you, which you think ought to be part of your Oral History?
- IW I can't really think of anything.
- Int Ok.
- IW You know I've really lost touch with the LRC. There was one wonderful person that I really enjoyed working with, and that was Bella Rangata. What a lovely person, she was always so helpful, never impatient, never arrogant, just being there and helping wherever she could. She was really one of the nicest people...
- Int What was her role?
- IW She did the accounting and the books and paying for all the expenses, and so on, that's what she did.
- Int You say you've lost touch with the LRC people...is that across the board, in terms of even the professional staff?
- IW Yes, Bella 'phoned me once or twice when I 'phoned her to get some information. I have visited Louise (du Plessis), because they started their own practice, and they wanted...oh yes, the books, you asked me about the books, she took over all the books, but as I say, the database was, I think lost...
- Int Ok.
- IW That was the one thing that bothered me, from the beginning when I started, I said: but shouldn't all these different branches work together in the library, that we don't duplicate, in that we all have the same serials and have the same books. We could rather exchange information, and help each other, and have one database that people can access, , merge that and save money in that way. I went to a lot of trouble, I 'phoned, I visited Catrin (Verloren van Themaat) a few times to go and see what was happening there, how can I...in what way they're working. And that was, that was typical of the LRC, nobody wanted to work together.
- Int Right.

IW It seems as though everybody was just in his little domain and that was that. So in the end I gave up, which I felt is a pity because it could have been so much more...

Int Sure.

IW ...especially with the resources...What I also suggested, , is that it should be accessible on the Internet, so that if people do searches, from anywhere in the world, they can see: oh, the LRC has this and this and this. And that wasn't done, and, I think, that was very sad, so the information was lost **inaudible** I think...I don't know what the other librarians say about this, that was my experience.

Int ...That's very useful. Thank you. I wondered whether we could end the interview with...maybe a memory, whether it's a client or a staff member or just an experience of working at the LRC that you actually treasure. Is there anything in particular?

IW I found Charles a very caring person...

Int Charles Pillai?

IW Yes.

Int I've interviewed him.

IW Yes. And when I, in the beginning, , because I can't handle the violence...what is going on...the...the cold heartedness of the people, and I remember...

Int You mean in this country?

IW In this country. I used to get so upset and even today. But that was once when a young boy, a white boy, was riding his bicycle just somewhere here, and there was...it was during a bitter cold winter and he was shot from behind, in his back, they stole his bicycle and just left him there, in the veld, and he was lying there for one and a half hours, they took off all his clothes. I think he was about sixteen.

Int Gosh...

IW And I was terribly upset, and I still cried so much and I, said to Charles (Pillai): what is going on? You know, Roxsana, what I found interesting is that I never regarded Charles (Pillai) or anybody there, as people who were discriminated against, it didn't come across to me like that, I just...they were normal people, they were working, they had studied, they were like all of us,. So, I never...and then when I unburdened myself and I said: I can't handle this and what are the people doing , I didn't think that I was perhaps offending him. And he was so very, very understanding, and I think that was

one of the things he... t that made a big impression on me, that he didn't see me as, , this racist who has no understanding of other things.

Int That's lovely, thank you. Ingrid, thank you ever so much for your time and it's been very useful speaking to you. Thank you.

IW You're welcome. I hope you can use that.

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