

Judy Rosenblatt, Sept. 4, 2013

Mindy Greiling

LWV interview questions

1. What was your perception of League before you joined?

No perception, because I didn't know anything about it and am not even sure I'd ever heard about it until I was encouraged to join.

2. How did you get involved?

I was first involved in Columbia, MO where my husband, Paul, was a visiting professor. I was at a gathering of some kind where I was talking to the women and the men were talking to each other. The women said the faculty wives joined the League and explained it to me. They said it was a good place to be if you had children because there was babysitting and they met during the day. I didn't have children yet, but liked it that the women were doing some good for the world, so they took me in hand. I plunged right in and started doing things. We had general meetings at the Tiger Hotel, the fancy one in town, and unit meetings were in someone's home. It was a pleasure to be with smart women married to smart men – the professors. Later when I had a child there was the babysitting and I enjoyed the chance to talk about things other than formula and diapers. The second League I belonged to was in Riverside, CA, where Paul had his second visiting professorship and I had my second child, Ira. The older, Seth, was in kindergarten there. I enjoyed both Leagues as not just a thing to do, but rather a way to learn new things, how to organize and how to give a talk. I had been an elementary teacher, but learned more in the League about research and presenting than I did through teaching.

My first teaching job was in a very poor area of Chicago with largely black children in a non-finished, damp, stone-walled, basement school room so all the things I put on the classroom walls fell down each night and I had to start the day putting them back up again. The children had been deprived of a childhood that prepared them for life. Some couldn't even hold a pencil. It was pathetic. I rode a bus to school and lived in an apartment. I tried to teach, but I don't think I did a very good job. I gave the kids Christmas presents like socks and made a sleigh for each kid with candy in it.

3. What did you find most satisfying?

The people comes immediately to mind. League members are my friends. They are intelligent, interested people who think about important things, study the issues on all levels, and then act on them – maybe a little less lately. We came to Roseville in 1968, and I was very involved in the schools, including working on the local study highlighting the lack of representative books for girls versus boys. I served on the state board for five years and edited their newsletter and worked on international relations. I put together a booklet of questions and answers for the state League about arms treaties that was very complicated and included a lot of information about weapons all the way up to the nuclear option. I went to hear lots of speeches and read a ***great*** deal. I went over many things over and over to get it down. I was very proud of our booklet that resulted. It was widely distributed. Someone who read it from outside the League complimented me that it was an excellent clarifying of the issues. At this time, I was chosen to represent the Minnesota League in Washington, D.C. about the United Nations. We got to speak with and hear from high level administration staff people and had a class from a person on a United Nations committee. I was very proud. The class had to do with a survey we were going to do with our members. A certain number of cities in each state were chosen for the

survey. When I returned, I traveled the state administering this survey to several Leagues. I remember one of the cities was Red Wing. The surveys were returned to the national League, resulting in a publication called "Attitudes Towards the United Nations." I got to make the presentation of the survey results to US Senator Wendell Anderson, who we were lobbying on this issue. He put the information I handed him into the Congressional Record. My name is in the Congressional Record with that presentation. (She showed me that issue.) On that trip, we got to see the LWVUS office and went to a play at the Kennedy Center. It was quite a visit. When I came back, I spoke to the United Nations Association of Minnesota anniversary meeting and joined their branch and was active there for several years. All as a result of my League work and this trip. The repercussions of my trip were a very big thing. I also hadn't flown many times before that either.

Another satisfying thing was when I was asked to write the history of the Roseville League for Roseville's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary publication. I knew nothing about this, but went back and researched and looked at our early Voters and a brief early League history that had been written. The city provided pictures and I was listed as Judith Rosenblatt, Historian, of the Roseville league. I wasn't, they made that title up, she said with a laugh.

Writing and research is a commonality of my League work. I was the LWVMN Voter editor for five years and I don't know how many years I did it for the Roseville League.

I edited the publication "Indians in Minnesota," for the state League, an enormous task. I went to many, many meetings. The author, Liz Ebbott, left me a lot of work to do as well – editing and word processing. The League didn't have a word processor yet, so I spent many hours typing up this thing after hours at a business that had one. In the book, I was listed as "Judith Rosenblatt, editor." I insisted that my name be on it, too, after all the work I did. I helped edit the second edition of this book, but for the first version I was the sole editor.

4. How much has changed since you have been a member? In LWV? In the country/culture?

Everything. The way the organization functions, especially the state and local boards. I'm not clear about national, but am sure that is different, too. Membership is down, budgets are really tight, and less people are scrambling to do some of the same things, while other things have been dropped or changed to take less time. We are not as ambitious in subject matter. All this could make one weep if you've been around a long time. On the other hand, there are efforts to get younger women involved to some success, although those involved in LOTT are really cut off from the main League membership.

5. What was important to women about LWV at the time you joined? What is most important today?

It gave women something to do that wasn't just changing diapers. They were using their brains. Today it is still the same. Women may not be escaping from diapers, but they are still using their brains. The League is about learning about things in a civil way, not taking sides until after you've studied both – or all six – sides of an issue and then and only then you decide where you stand. Then – if you have enough agreement – you can take action. The League is rational. Leaguers look calmly at all the information that is available and don't put on blinders and listen to only one loud mouth. In today's society, there are so many people shouting their point of view that came from one "news" source, the complete opposite way of coming to a conclusion from the League.

6. Have you observed change in public attitudes to LWV?

I don't feel I'm out there enough to personally speak to people who don't have my attitudes, but at the same time, in general, there is a certain percentage of people who damn things and also damn the League as not their cup of tea. It isn't new but it's more virulent and strident than it

used to be since manners and decorum have gone downhill. But now also a growing percent of the population say of course to women voting and gay marriage, so people's ideas do evolve.

7. How was LWV important to the community through the years?

All of the chronology list is important.

8. Is there a particular episode or event that stands out in your memory?

When I was on the state board and editor of the state voter, the Voter was published by a union printing shop. The guy there taught me how to do layout. You cut your copy and made it fit onto a grid of boxes. Another thing I learned through the League, even though it's now totally obsolete. So one day in winter time I was toddling along on my way to the print shop and for some unknown reason I wasn't wearing my seatbelt, which I always did. It was not snowing at the time, but had recently, so the median was covered with snow. A car coming the other way slid over the median and hit my car head on. My head hit the front windshield and cracked it and my knees banged under the steering wheel. We drivers exchanged insurance information and then, since the car still worked, I continued on, because a deadline is a deadline, she said slowly and with great emphasis. You've got to get stuff to the press and don't think about anything bleeding. I continued on my way, gave the printer the stuff and then went to the Como Health Partners Clinic. They examined me at urgent care. My knees were bruised and they picked glass out of my hair I hadn't known was there and sent me home. The next morning, I woke up with my right wrist swollen and hurting like heck. I returned to Health Partners, where they x-rayed it, and said, "You broke your navicular bone." They cemented it and sent me home in a sling. I hadn't complained about the wrist the night before, because I was more concerned about the press. The deadline was the important thing.

Another thing that stands out in my mind is a note someone wrote on a card I received when my grandson died. The person said, "You are the best LWVMN Voter editor the state ever had."

There was meat and solid information in the state Voter when I did it. I knew I was doing a good job even if I hadn't received this card, but it still made me feel good. Aside from teaching, I believe the best thing I've ever done was my work in the League of Women Voters.

I frequently think: I got to travel, I saw things in Washington, D.C, like a State Department desk a famous person used, the national League office and a lot of people were working there at that time. They paid a lot of my way. It helped to make things more real. It was a pretty impressive thing the League did. I thought of the League as an impressive organization before I went and was even more impressed after I went there. All of us at the national meetings were treated with great respect as Leaguers. It was neat.

And receiving the Hope Washburn Award. (the highest and most revered state League award). I was totally surprised. It's always a big secret who is going to receive it. When they are presenting it they start with qualities most Leaguers would recognize about themselves. As they built to the actual announcement, I thought this is beginning to sound like me. The last clue convinced me it was me (she sounds surprised). I had no idea. My first thought was: I don't deserve this. People who do a lot of stuff get this. But it was me! I was surprised, somewhat embarrassed and didn't think I deserved it. It is a big deal award. I got used to the idea that I had actually received it, that people had recognized that I'd done a lot of work and things. It was neat!

My work at the Immigration History Research Center. A member of the St. Paul League who was helping with hiring there recommended me, because she knew about my League and United Nations work, so they called me to come in for an interview. I talked all about my League of

Women Voters work (publications, newsletter, research, etc.) so they hired me. I got two awards, 2008 and 2009, from them.

9. What is the lasting importance of this organization (if any)?

As I've already said, it's the League's approach to problems, the calmness and rationality. The desire to get all sides of a question before making decisions and do it in a calm and respectful way. It's neat to have that approach, especially in the world we live in now.

Carolyn's supplemental questions:

Surprising and not living up to my expectations: Not everybody is as involved as everybody else, as with other boards. I can't understand that some come, never open their mouths or volunteer, but yet they are interested enough to come to meetings.

Lately, I am surprised how easily people who have been in League a long time and know what it used to be have slid into a lesser version. I don't find it convincing that we have to change how the board functions or how we choose or don't choose subjects to study and publications to publish.

How the League influenced you:

I wouldn't have worked at the state league, become knowledgeable about newsletters and the like. The good friends. League gave me a chance to be proud of the things I've worked on. First I worked my behind off and then was proud of it, which I suppose figures into why I got the Hope Washburn Award.

Changes: Lack of money, women have many other opportunities in this world now. They don't need a baby sitter from League. They have jobs and a few can even reach the top in business.

There is still a glass ceiling, but it's higher than it used to be.

Voters Service: I don't believe I've ever been voters service chair, but might have been, because I was most everything but don't remember. It's difficult getting candidates and an audience to come. Some people boycott the meetings.

Studies: I don't recall changing my mind about an issue because of a League study, but do remember feeling much more informed. Most are interesting. I have a general interest in so many things and have always been that way so can't give League the credit there. In fact, I organize my financial giving into four categories reflecting my broad interests: non-tax deductible (candidates, political, even women in other states); tax deductible (health & social welfare, including diabetes); Jewish causes and organizations; and education and good government, cultural and human rights and the environment.