

Compliance Today – August 2019 Meet Sheila Limmroth

An interview by Gerry Zack

This interview with **Sheila Limmroth** (Sheila.limmroth@dchsystem.com) was conducted in late May 2019 by SCCE & HCCA CEO **Gerry Zack** (Gerry.zack@corporatecompliance.org).

Sheila Limmroth, Privacy Officer and Legal Services Specialist, DCH Health System, Tuscaloosa, AL

GZ: Thanks for taking the time to be interviewed for Compliance Today. You started your career in public accounting with an accounting degree. Did you have any inkling as an accounting student that compliance would ever be in your future? What were your career aspirations upon graduating from the University of Alabama?

SL: My exposure to healthcare actually began in ninth grade. The University of Alabama College of Community Health Sciences received a grant from the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation at that time. The Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation has worked since 1930 to improve healthcare in the United States. The grant permitted development of a program named BioPrep. It was a joint effort of the College of Community Health Sciences and area high schools. The overarching purpose was to expose students in rural communities to the medical field with the hope that students would choose a healthcare career and return to practice in a rural community. At least four high schools participated in this opportunity, including my school.

As a BioPrep student, I committed summers to the BioPrep program and lived in a dorm at the University of Alabama each summer. University of Alabama professors and our high school teachers expanded our knowledge in math and science with an emphasis on the healthcare system. I remember one summer learning to solve problems utilizing Venn diagrams while some of my friends were at the movies, and being envious. The program, however, also focused on our community and involved activities such as camping and hiking trips into Alabama's Bankhead National Forest. The program fostered a love for our community and Alabama as a home. Our academics during the school year were tailored as well so, at a very young age, my life became about the healthcare delivery system in the United States. Students who remained in the program and met grade requirements graduated high school with a full academic scholarship to the University of Alabama. I continue to be grateful to the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation for the opportunity that was provided to me. Although I chose to use my scholarship to study accounting, I always knew I would end up in the medical field, even if it was on the periphery.

As an accounting student in the late 80s, my singular focus was on being hired by a national public accounting firm. This goal was influenced by my accounting professors and two brothers who were both CPAs at national firms. My first assignments at Ernst & Young involved a health system and a software development and services company that provide enterprise engineering and geospatially powered software to businesses, governments, and organizations around the world. I realized I thoroughly enjoyed healthcare and the feeling that, although I was not clinically trained, I was adding value to the industry and hence the patient's experience.

Looking back, I do not recall discussions in college related to internal audit or compliance. My desire to become an internal auditor developed from discussions with internal auditors at medical centers where I was assigned to perform cost report analysis and audit fieldwork. The family atmosphere at many of my assignments and the desire by the auditors to make a difference at their institutions inspired me to pursue internal audit as my

profession.

In the late 90s, I became aware of compliance as a career when I read a 4–6 page newsletter, which I now realize was the precursor to HCCA’s Compliance Today publication. This newsletter was on our general counsel’s desk, and I remember we started a dialogue about compliance that day that planted a seed in my mind.

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