

DELANO E. LEWIS

An International Perspective

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS IN RESIDENCE



In a fitting celebration of Kansas Day, **Ambassador Delano E. Lewis, '63**, returned to his home state on January 29, as the Spring 2009 Distinguished Alumnus in Residence at Washburn University School of Law. Delano's wife Gayle and son Del Jr. accompanied him.

Delano Lewis is the former Ambassador to South Africa, former President/CEO of National Public Radio, former CEO of Bell Atlantic (now Verizon), and currently the Senior Fellow at the International Relations Institute at New Mexico State University.

Lewis met with small groups of students to discuss his experiences. He also presented, "Why Our Training in the Law is More Critical Today than Ever Before." His visit was co-sponsored by the Business and Transactional Law Center and the Center for Law and Government.

Washburn Law Professor **David Pierce, '77**, director of the Business and Transactional Law Center, said, "Delano is in a unique position, considering his extensive experience in business as well as government service, to reflect on the lawyers that are needed for today's global society — particularly in light of the current global economic challenges and the events giving rise to those challenges."



Ambassador Lewis was recognized by the Native Sons and Daughters of Kansas as the 2008 Kansan of the Year at its annual banquet on January 30, 2009.

Dean Thomas Romig and Delano Lewis.

Government Lawyer, Administrator, Business Lawyer, CEO, and Ambassador LEGAL BACKGROUND AND NETWORKING SHAPE AMBASSADOR LEWIS' CAREER

Ambassador Delano Lewis graduated from Washburn Law in 1963, with aspirations to become a defense lawyer. He spent his first year after law school working in the justice department looking at espionage cases and then moved to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reviewing employment discrimination cases.

“The law gives you a good grounding in basics and fundamentals, and you can take that into other pursuits,” Lewis said.

Lewis moved his family – wife, Gayle, and three sons – to Nigeria, where he became associate director of the U.S. Peace Corps. The Lewis family then moved to Uganda, and Delano became country director of the U.S. Peace Corps in Uganda. It was there that their fourth son was born.

Delano and his family moved back to the United States to find a very different country than what they left just three years before. They had been overseas during Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination, Robert Kennedy’s assassination, and the black power movement. “We came back to America after big, big changes,” Delano said.

During the next few years, Delano served as legislative assistant to Senator Edward W. Brook of Massachusetts and chief of staff for Walter Fauntroy of the District of Columbia.

His career in the telecommunications industry began in 1973, when he left his government position to join C&P Telephone Company, a subsidiary of AT&T.

“The legal background was a big plus because I then started working with lawyers on regulatory issues. In

other words, we were regulating utility,” he said. “You had to go before public service commissions to set your rates, so you had to develop your cases.”

Lewis remained with C&P Telephone Company until 1984, when an antitrust case (divestment) split AT&T into seven operating companies (“Baby Bells”). The C&P Telephone companies were part of Bell Atlantic.

“Washington, D.C., is a town of lawyers. Everyone there is a lawyer,” Lewis said. “I was fortunate to work with the largest business in D.C. We were the largest employer in the region.”

Lewis stayed with Bell Atlantic until 1994, when he retired as President and CEO of the company’s District of Columbia operations. After he left, Bell Atlantic merged with NYNEX, and then GTE Corporation and became Verizon.

For the next five years, Lewis served as President and CEO of National Public Radio (NPR) in Washington, D.C. Lewis planned to retire in New Mexico.

His retirement was interrupted four months later by a phone call from the White House. Former Vice President Al Gore called, saying, “I’m calling on behalf of President Clinton, and the president would like to

nominate you as the next United States Ambassador to South Africa.” In June 1999, President Clinton nominated Lewis for the ambassadorship, and the Senate confirmed him that November. Lewis served as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa for a year and a half, before he and Gayle returned to retirement in their Las Cruces, N.M., home.



Members of the Washburn Law class of 1963 included Jim Wright, Delano Lewis, and Gene Olander. Wright and Olander attended the reception held for Lewis on January 29. There were 41 graduates in the class of 1963.