

Interview with Linda Blades Connelly

DGB-V-D-2005-001

Interview: June 4, 2005

Interviewer: Ellyn Bartges

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Linda Blades Connelly: Some lady, she said she was a grandmother, sent me this letter.

[laughs] I don't know if it was just me or everybody that was there that said—it went something like, You and I both know if there had been some decent officiating the results would have been different and we shouldn't have had all these women officiating. What do they know? We should have had some men officiating [laughter] because they're just starting and they don't know what the heck they're doing and all this—which may be some truth to that, especially that first one. But, then she said, And I'm just a grandmother who likes children who was watching [laugh] or something. It was the oddest letter.

Ellyn Bartges: Just out of the blue?

Connelly: Yeah. I didn't know her, I don't know her. I have no clue.

Bartges: That is odd. It wasn't anyone from our school. [laughs]

Connelly: No, I don't think so. [laughs] Just some elderly woman that had been watching I guess. But there's no question that we got beaten so badly [laughs]—it wasn't like you're saying that you should have won.

Bartges: Well you guys were in the finals at least weren't you?

Connelly: No—

Bartges: (*unintelligible*) game?

Connelly: No, we lost our first game.

Bartges: Did you? Oh I thought you guys won one.

Connelly: No we did not.

Bartges: Who'd you lose to?

Connelly: Washington.

Bartges: Oh okay. Washington made it to—

Connelly: Yeah. They probably got third, fourth or something, I don't know.

Bartges: I decided it was nice enough I took the top down on the Jeep. I know as it heats up over the course of the day [laughs] I'm going to be in trouble. It's too nice not to—

Connelly: Right. Yeah it got pretty muggy. Did it take almost six hours?

Bartges: I actually have been here for about forty-five minutes. I was kind of driving around. It did not take that long.

Connelly: Good.

Bartges: I left the house at 7:30.

Connelly: Well good because it sounded like it could take forever on MapQuest. [laughs]

Bartges: Yeah it was really not too bad at all. And I like to drive so it was a nice day and I saw—I have never—I shouldn't say never—one time I came in to Kansas City from 70-East and that has been at least twenty-five years.

Connelly: Oh man.

Bartges: So it's been quite a while since I did that. And it's changed so much.

Connelly: Yeah [laughs] I'm sure.

Bartges: And there was—Columbia has grown a lot.

Connelly: Oh my gosh yes. Yes, it's—I don't know, it's over 100,000 now.

Bartges: Oh is it that big?

Connelly: I think it might be. It's really (*unintelligible*).

Bartges: Yeah I have not—I actually when I was coaching college ball I was recruiting—I coached softball and basketball—but I was recruiting a kid out of Columbia, a

pitcher, who ended up going to Missouri I think. And I can't think of her name. But I went to see her play down there in that area but I couldn't even begin to think of what it's like now.

Connelly: Right. Oh yeah. Our first six years from 1980 to 1986 of marriage we lived in Columbia. And when we go back—at least when I go back not so much maybe when Bob goes back, I don't even know—it doesn't even seem like the same place.

Bartges: No, I would imagine that it does. This is from Sue Strong. She had sent me an email with your address—The crack detectives of Sterling have solved the mystery we think. [laughter]

Connelly: Yeah they must have gone through the Sterling Schools Foundation or something (*unintelligible*). I mean there is our 35th class reunion this year which—we may be out of town and I won't be going but that could be—I mean they've had our address and all that. Sterling High School for some reason it's more like—their foundation it's more like a college alumni thing that—they have a great high school alumni network. They will send a paper like every—twice a year. And it's quite good for a high school alumni newspaper.

Bartges: Yeah.

Connelly: Amazing so—

Bartges: Well, and it seems that it's a pretty tightknit community. We used to go up there when I was still coaching in Macomb. There's a summer league kind of a tour. There's a stop there, AYBT. It's American Youth Basketball Tour. And they have a stop in Sterling. And they play at the rec center out there. And I guess some—I'm going to get her name wrong—Fran Harris?

Connelly: Yes. She was on the team.

Bartges: Now she works at the rec center.

Connelly: Uh-huh, yeah.

Bartges: —and Jolene Leseman coaches right around there.

Connelly: Sauk Valley College I think.

Bartges: Yeah.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: See now she went to Iowa State and that's where I first—well other than—

obviously '77 but she came and played basketball at Iowa State and I was a tennis player there.

Connelly: Oh—

Bartges: So that's how I found Sue Strong.

Connelly: Okay.

Bartges: I called Jolene and I said, You don't remember me. You have no reason to remember [laughs] We're both Iowa State'rs and I need some help.

Connelly: Well I didn't know who she was because she was seven years younger than I so I think she graduated in '77. Was she a senior then? I'm pretty sure—

Bartges: I don't think she was. I think she—

Connelly: '78?

Bartges: I think she was two years younger than me and I graduated in '78.

Connelly: Oh, maybe '79 then. I don't know. Anyway, she was way younger than I so I remember her but—

Bartges: And she had a good career at Iowa State.

Connelly: Yeah did she?

Bartges: Yeah she really did. She was—she played all four years and was a solid ballplayer.

Connelly: Yeah she—she was good in high school.

Bartges: Yeah. Well like I said questions that you don't know the answer to just say I don't know or if you have experience with it go ahead and relate your experience; don't worry about how you think it relates to what I might—I'm not really looking for anything.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: I don't have any—there's no agenda, there's no nothing there. There are questions that are designed and then follow-ups that will elicit something in your memory—

Connelly: Right—

Bartges: —that pertains to basketball in Illinois at this period of time.

Connelly: Right, okay.

Bartges: You're the last coach that I found.

Connelly: Are you kidding? You found all eight? You said one died though?

Bartges: No, not all eight. One died. Jan Smith from Washington died.

Connelly: Okay (*unintelligible*). I don't even remember her. [laughs] I can't remember anything what she—

Bartges: And I haven't interviewed Sue Franklin yet from Fenger but I have talked to her.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: And I guess she has some family illnesses going on and stuff but—

Connelly: Is she still there or—

Bartges: She is the athletic director at Whitney Young—

Connelly: Whoa okay—

Bartges: —and has been in the Chicago school system all those years.

Connelly: Wow. She ought to be ready to retire.

Bartges: She's got to be a warrior.

Connelly: [laughs] I guess so.

Bartges: And there's—I'm going to interview a woman from the *Tribune* who was a sports writer, a woman named Sue Sternberg who is actually in Texas. I tracked her down in Texas. She doesn't write anymore but she's coming back to Illinois in late June.

Connelly: Oh so you can catch her then.

Bartges: I can catch her then.

Connelly: Go to Texas. Maybe you want to go to Texas.

Bartges: No, I don't want to go to Texas. But it's really a pretty good deal for me because they're going to be at Springfield. She was the main writer for girls' basketball

for the *Tribune* and the Suburban Trib. So for a female to be a sportswriter back then was very unusual.

Connelly: Yeah, I'd say so.

Bartges: So I'm looking forward to that too. Then I think I can put this to rest.

Connelly: [laughs] You're probably right about that. How long have you been doing this?

Bartges: I started interviews just a little less than a year ago. I started in September. And I kind of go in fits and spurts. I might have—when I was in spring break in Florida I had three, boom, boom, boom in one day and then I might go a couple months before I could get up with people, because a lot of the people that were still active were still coaching.

Connelly: Oh yeah.

Bartges: So during the season it's hard.

Connelly: Oh my there's no time.

Bartges: No. And I didn't want to impose.

Connelly: Um-hm.

Bartges: So there's twenty—I think there's twenty-six interviews.

Connelly: Oh wow. That's a lot.

Bartges: And most of them are about an hour.

Connelly: You need more lighting or anything?

Bartges: No I think— You may want to close that left blind—

Connelly: Okay—

Bartges: —in terms of back light.

Connelly: This one?

Bartges: Yeah.

Connelly: Okay. Anything else?

Bartges: Yeah that'll help.

Connelly: That one?

Bartges: That's good.

Connelly: Okay. I don't know if this is worse or better.

Bartges: Try it again. Off. Yeah.

Connelly: Both of them off?

Bartges: Well let's see. Go ahead and sit down let's see what we have. Oh that's better.

Connelly: Okay.

Bartges: If I get up to—I'm just checking time.

Connelly: Okay.

Bartges: Don't let me throw you off. Make sure I get it started. It's June 4th. I'm in Lee's Summit, Missouri interviewing Linda Blades Connelly. Is it Blades or Blade?

Connelly: S.

Bartges: Blades?

Connelly: Um-hm.

Bartges: Thank you for agreeing to participate in my survey.

Connelly: Sure.

Bartges: Where did you go to high school?

Connelly: Sterling High School in Sterling, Illinois.

Bartges: Did you play sports in high school?

Connelly: Unfortunately no. Sports for girls hadn't begun there. And the only thing we had was GAA and so I did that. And we had something called Leaders within GAA which is if you wanted to help officiate basketball or aerial darts, volleyball, I think that's all we did, you could help officiate and learn the rules and I did do that.

Bartges: Two things here, GAA describe what that was for you.

Connelly: Okay. It was an intramural system in which all four levels of freshman though senior would be on different teams. You'd sign up for any kind of team that you wanted to be on or activity that you wanted to participate in. And then you were put on teams I believe by the advisor. I'm not even sure how they did it but we were all mixed in with all different classes. And then at the end of your six weeks or whatever you played (possibly 8 weeks) then there would be a class tournament in which if you wanted to be on a class team you would just sign up and then your classmates would vote and the highest number of kids with the votes would then play on their class team and we would have an inter-class tournament.

Bartges: So freshmen would play sophomores—

Connelly: Yes—

Bartges: —juniors would play seniors—

Connelly: Yes, right.

Bartges: So you had that kind of tournament.

Connelly: But we didn't get trophies or anything. It was just fun to participate. And you knew them a little better because you were all on the same team during those four to six weeks and then you got to play them and try to beat the seniors if you were a lowly freshman—

Bartges: Yeah. [laughs]

Connelly: —which didn't happen too often.

Bartges: How big was your school?

Connelly: About 1,600 students.

Bartges: And is that nine through twelve?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: Did you practice?

Connelly: No practicing. We did have these things called play days which I remember you had on your questions. If I remember correctly I went to a few of them but I can't remember what year I started doing it. If I remember correctly we had a GAA bulletin board and there would be news there about what was going on or maybe it would say a play day coming up at such-and-such a school. And you

could sign up. I can't remember how many it took but maybe four or six people went. And anyway you would sign up and if there were enough people who signed up then you would go to this play day at whatever high school was sponsoring it. And then I believe it was sort of the same thing, everybody would be thrown on a team together. I'm not sure how teams were assembled there, because when we went you were already on your team and you would just—I don't know if they called you or they posted it or—anyway, we were all playing different games together.

Bartges: So Sterling High School would be mixed in—and I'm just—I'm picking names from that neck of the woods—Sterling High School would be mixed in with Rochelle Students or with the Sterling Newman students or Princeton students?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: It wasn't Sterling versus Princeton?

Connelly: No. I can't remember a whole lot about it but I don't think that we were—I don't think that we were pitted against each school. I think we were intermixed. I could be wrong but that's what my memory seems to remember.

Bartges: That would probably be the case because that tends to be how everyone who has expressed that has done it.

Connelly: Okay, at least I remembered that. [laughter]

Bartges: One done. If you didn't practice—when you did GAA how many times a week did you do GAA?

Connelly: Well you would just have one night for your activity. And then if you were in this Leaders officiating thing you'd have one night where you'd practice that as a group. Like we would play basketball and we'd each take turns officiating and we'd have an advisor there helping us. And then you'd have one night where you officiated either a game or whatever. So if you were just doing GAA it was just one night a week, but if you were doing some of that other stuff it could be two to three nights a week.

Bartges: What kind of sports did you play or participate in GAA and/or your play days?

Connelly: Okay. I remember doing as—I think as a freshman I remember doing bicycling because I think when you might have signed up as a freshmen if the upperclassmen beat you to other sports all the—I don't know if there was an amount that had to be on each team and maybe you didn't—they started with seniors, I don't know. But anyway I remember doing bicycling because I didn't get signed up for or didn't get—whatever it was I wanted on my first choice say softball. I wanted to play softball but couldn't, so I did bicycling. I remember

doing roller skating one time. We had a roller skating rink fairly close to the high school and I remember walking there. Let's see, I remember playing tennis. I did finally get to play softball. We did basketball. We did aerial darts, volleyball.

Bartges: Oh like lawn darts?

Connelly: No, it was with a paddle, a wooden paddle and I think a feather bird but it was a pretty heavy bird.

Bartges: Oh okay.

Connelly: And I don't even know—I've never seen anyone else play [laughs] the game but it was really fun. We played at PE too. So you just hit it back and forth over a net and you had six players. And it's sort of similar to volleyball as far as scoring and rotation.

Bartges: Now you mentioned basketball—Did you play five-player or six-player?

Connelly: For my freshman through junior years it was six-player—three dribbles. There were only two players that got to go the whole court and that was the roving guard and the roving forward.

Bartges: And what position did you play?

Connelly: I wanted to be the one that was playing [laughs] the whole time so it didn't matter which one but I wanted to play the whole court. And you just had to take turns though, which is fine. Everybody got a chance that wanted to. But that was just the most boring—three little dribbles and get rid of it.

Bartges: In your senior year they went to five-player?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: Was that an adjustment for you?

Connelly: I liked it better that's for sure. I think most of us did, except if you didn't like to play obviously and you were in PE class. So it changed in PE and it changed for GAA. And I don't remember if that was just experimental or if that was—the final rule change.

Bartges: What year was that?

Connelly: Yeah, '69-'70.

Bartges: That would have been the year that they implemented the Experimental Rules.

Connelly: Okay. It was just for a year then?

Bartges: It was two years.

Connelly: Two years, okay.

Bartges: With your Leaders in the GAA for officiating what sports did you officiate or get trained in?

Connelly: Basketball, aerial darts, volleyball. I don't remember doing softball then. I never did do anything with it. I don't know if anyone else did, but those three primarily.

Bartges: That was my next question—Did you get any kind of a certification or did you ever go and officiate at the high school level once basketball—let's stick with basketball—became a sport?

Connelly: No I didn't.

Bartges: Okay. How about in college? Did you ever officiate in college?

Connelly: No I didn't, no. [laughs] I don't think I was all that good. It's so hard to officiate basketball. It's so quick.

Bartges: I would think—most people today are not very familiar—especially people younger than us—

Connelly: Yeah—

Bartges: —are not—have never been exposed to the six-player game so to—and I've seen it, I didn't play it. But to watch it I would have thought it was difficult to officiate but—[laughs] it just was so different.

Connelly: And to remember which player the ones that can be going back and forth and, Oh you're over the line and you're not supposed to be. I don't even remember how we did that. I just remember it was not much fun.

Bartges: When you went to play days or you competed in GAA at your own school did you have uniforms or how did you differentiate your teams?

Connelly: We wore those pinnies (*unintelligible*). We just wore our gym suits, those little things. They were one-piece things. [laughter]

Bartges: Were they blue and they snapped up? [laughter]

Connelly: Yes, lovely outfits.

Bartges: With your name ironed on (*unintelligible*).

Connelly: Yes, yes.

Bartges: You're of the same (*unintelligible*). [laughter] When did you graduate from high school?

Connelly: 1970.

Bartges: What's the highest level of education you have?

Connelly: I have a BS in education in PE.

Bartges: Where did you go to college?

Connelly: Northern Illinois University.

Bartges: Did you play any kind of ball in college?

Connelly: Well let's see, I played basketball for two years but it was so bad that (*unintelligible*). So long ago we had—my first and second team that would have been more like the varsity or whatever you want to call it, and third and fourth teams that were JV that's where I was. And I did that for two years and then—then I didn't play basketball. I played badminton one year and I played tennis one year. And I tried out for field hockey but I didn't make it.

Bartges: Okay. Was the basketball that you played for those two years at Northern it was five-payer?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: And how did you find out that there was a team? Were there tryouts? Was there something posted? Was it part of your PE curriculum?

Connelly: I don't remember. I was a PE major so I probably just heard it by word of mouth. I'm not really sure, I don't remember. [laughs]

Bartges: Do you remember if there were tryouts?

Connelly: Well there were for field hockey and there certainly were tryouts for softball and I think for tennis so there must have been but I don't remember that much about it.

Bartges: How many people were part of the program (*unintelligible*)?

Connelly: How many were on a team?

Bartges: Yeah.

Connelly: Let's see, maybe ten to fifteen on each team, on each—like the first and second team might be ten to fifteen players, third or fourth maybe that many. We all traveled together but of course the—I remember playing but of course the—I don't know if we played at the same time, two different gyms because we had two different coaches.

Bartges: That was one of my questions.

Connelly: The first and the second team when they practiced they played against each other then they had—I don't know if they had two different coaches or not but I know they certainly had a different coach than we did. And then the third and fourth team we practiced together. And when we'd go to a game we would travel together. And I don't remember—we watched them and they watched us I don't remember that.

Bartges: Do you remember the coaches' names?

Connelly: I do remember the varsity or first and second was Dr. Mary Bell. And I can't remember—she may have had an assistant but I can't remember. And one of our coaches I can't remember her name but the second year I played I remember it was Vicky McCormick. Do you know her?

Bartges: That name is familiar but—

Connelly: I saw her a few—I don't know when it was. It's been a few years or maybe it's been a lot more than I think but—we lived in Columbia and that's been a long time. We went to a men's Basketball game and I saw her there. And I didn't get a chance to say anything because she was lost in the crowd.

Bartges: Oh okay.

Connelly: And so I was going to say something to her and she got away in the crowd, but I'm just wondering if she wasn't maybe teaching there (*unintelligible*) and I was going to ask when she left Northern but I didn't get a chance. So that's the only ones I remember. I don't remember the first coach.

Bartges: Did you have uniforms?

Connelly: Yes. I do remember that. It was something like shorts and maybe a shirt with a number. No sweats or anything.

Bartges: Home and away? A light and a dark?

Connelly: I don't remember that. I'm not sure. It may have been the same thing.

Bartges: How did you guys travel when you did travel? Was it by bus or van or—

Connelly: Seems like it was bus. No I think it was bus because we—seems like it was bus. Tennis was by van and badminton I think was by van.

Bartges: You guys were a lot better off than we were. We traveled in a station wagon. [laughter] Was it a school bus or like a coach bus, like a Greyhound kind of bus?

Connelly: I think it was more like a coach bus.

Bartges: Did you—and again you may not know the answers. These are kind of out in left field but I'm trying to sort of document what the Illinois sport travel was like for people.

Connelly: Okay.

Bartges: Did you guys ever stay in a hotel?

Connelly: No. [laughs] I don't remember anyway.

Bartges: Did you have to buy your own meals or were your meals purchased or did you take a sack lunch from school?

Connelly: We didn't take a sack lunch. I can't remember. I think we might have gotten some tiny amount of money and we probably had to supplement it. I can't remember for sure. I might be mixing up when I was teaching high school too with this. I can't remember. I can't remember for sure if we got money for meals in college. I always remember eating but—

Bartges: Yeah. [laughter] Well and it's not normal stuff that you would think about but it shows a pattern.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: Where did you guys play?

Connelly: Um let's see, I remember playing like at the University of Northern Iowa. I think we maybe played Iowa State or something. But I don't—since we went to Iowa I know we played there. I can't even remember where else we played.

Bartges: Was it usually—when you went to places was it Northern and the team you

went to or was it sort of like a round robin tournament kind of a thing?

Connelly: Not it was just us. As I recall it was just our team and their team. I don't remember anyone else.

Bartges: Did you—and again this is—it may or may not have been relevant. You're the first person I've interviewed that played at Northern.

Connelly: Oh okay.

Bartges: So the different schools had different experiences.

Connelly: Um-hm.

Bartges: Were there ever any fans in the stands?

Connelly: [laughs] Not very many, no. No, not many at all.

Bartges: Mostly family kind of thing?

Connelly: Yeah probably. I think my family came a couple times to watch us but there weren't many fans, no. [laughs]

Bartges: Okay. Are you familiar with the postal tournament?

Connelly: No.

Bartges: Okay. Did you have any experience in industrial leagues or ball outside of the school setting?

Connelly: No I don't.

Bartges: ASA ball or AAU or summer ball on a team?

Connelly: No, I didn't ever do that. I do remember hearing some people may have played on AAU teams but I didn't. (*unintelligible*).

Bartges: So you didn't—no warehouse or appliances didn't sponsor a team that you played on or anything?

Connelly: No. They may have had stuff like that but I didn't and I don't know if they really—I don't know if I just didn't hear about it or I'm not sure what I was doing but—

Bartges: When you were in college and playing ball were your parents supportive of you playing ball?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: Do you have siblings?

Connelly: No.

Bartges: Did you ever serve in the military or national guard?

Connelly: No.

Bartges: Were you a Girl Scout?

Connelly: Maybe a year or two, fifth grade or sixth grade.

Bartges: But at some point you do remember being a Scout or a Brownie?

Connelly: Um-hm.

Bartges: Did you teach or coach in a secondary school system?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: For how many years?

Connelly: For five years.

Bartges: What school was that? What schools?

Connelly: I taught and coached at Mattoon High School from '74 to '77 and then at Rock Falls High School from '78 to '80.

Bartges: Went back home?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: (*unintelligible*) [laughter] And what—you taught PE?

Connelly: Taught PE yes at Mattoon. Taught PE and coached tennis and girls' basketball, girls' tennis.

Bartges: And you taught in high school?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: Okay.

Connelly: Which was a 10 to 12 school at that time.

Bartges: Was your principal—I'm going to stay with Mattoon.

Connelly: Okay.

Bartges: Is it Ma-toon'?

Connelly: Māt'toon.

Bartges: Mattoon'. I said that and Sue Strong kind of looked at me and she's like, Mat'toon.

Connelly: I'm surprised she would know that, when I first went there I said the same thing, Mattoon'. And everybody corrects you immediately, Mat'toon. I said, Okay.

Bartges: Must be that I-80 dividing line or something.

Connelly: It's very kind of a drawl (*unintelligible*).

Bartges: I'm going to stay with Mattoon. Was your principal when you were teaching and coaching there male or female?

Connelly: Male.

Bartges: Do you remember his name?

Connelly: The first one was Roy Shepherd, and then he went on to be superintendent I think my last year or my second year, whichever. I know he was the superintendent at some point while I was there. There was a new principal who had been assistant, Tom Buchanan then became principal.

Bartges: Was Mr. Shepherd supportive of girls' basketball?

Connelly: Yes, I think he was.

Bartges: How about Mr. Buchanan?

Connelly: I think they both were. When I started there in '74 they did not have girls' basketball yet. It was just beginning so—

Bartges: So you were the first coach?

Connelly: I was the first coach. And I remember having some little ceremony or something right before our first game and the newspaper and so forth being

there. I don't remember many fans. There were parents of course but I don't remember that many kids there, students, which was always a problem [laughs] until we got going in the state tournament then they showed up more.

Bartges: Yeah. Success will do that.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: So you were the first coach in girls' basketball at Mattoon?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: Did you get paid?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: From the get-go?

Connelly: Yes. Can't—see if I can remember how much.

Bartges: Well you don't need to tell me that.

Connelly: Don't need to know that? Okay, it wasn't much. [laughs]

Bartges: But you did get paid? Did you have an assistant coach?

Connelly: No. And I had two teams. In fact it was not like—it was more like an A and a B team and I had to coach both of them. And I think before I left there it was changed into more like a fresh-soph or JV-varsity because—I can't remember at all how long it was an A and a B team.

Bartges: Well what do you mean exactly by that?

Connelly: Well it wasn't—we always played two games wherever we went but it was—the A team were the best kids and it wouldn't matter if they were—since this is 10 through 12 it wouldn't matter if they were sophomores, more sophomores than seniors or whatever. I don't remember if the B team allowed seniors on it.

Bartges: That was going to be my question.

Connelly: Yeah, I can't remember that.

Bartges: Okay.

Connelly: But then whatever year, the second or third year it was changed so it was more like fresh-soph and then juniors and seniors.

Bartges: Did you have tryouts your first year?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: How did you go about announcing that?

Connelly: I remember announcing it in PE classes. I remember asking the other teachers to announce it. I'm pretty sure I had it announced when we did the announcements for the whole school.

Bartges: How big was Mattoon at this point?

Connelly: The high school?

Bartges: Yeah.

Connelly: Wow. Let's see it was ten through twelve so oh man—I know it was over 1,000 students but I don't remember exactly how many.

Bartges: So in three grades more than 1,000 students?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: Was there an air base there or something?

Connelly: There's one close in Rantoul.

Bartges: In Rantoul, okay.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: Did you make cuts the first year?

Connelly: I can't remember. I probably did but I can't remember how many.

Bartges: And I wondered approximately how many people came out?

Connelly: I just cannot remember that.

Bartges: That's okay. Did you have uniforms your first season?

Connelly: Yes we did. No sweats again—and I don't know if they've ever had sweats. Maybe they did but they just wore them at home. Maybe they never wore them. I think it was—we did have uniforms though and I think it was just again not away and home. They were the same ones I think.

Bartges: But they were traditional kind of uniforms that the school purchased and they were—

Connelly: Yes. Just like a shirt, maybe sleeveless or short sleeves with a number and then shorts.

Bartges: One of the things that I'm looking at is also the support of the district and the school system in terms of their girls' sports as they're adding.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: And I know from my own experience the first year at Hinsdale South they didn't have uniforms. They had T-shirts that had—you ironed on a number and maybe your name on the back.

Connelly: Oh okay.

Bartges: It wasn't until later that they actually put money out and bought uniforms because they wanted to see if it was going to take.

Connelly: Oh I see, yeah.

Bartges: So that's sort of an anomaly. It seems like a lot of the other schools weren't that way.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: When you started the program were you part of a conference or was girls' basketball sort of isolated in Mattoon and you had trouble getting games?

Connelly: No, we were part of the conference. I can't remember the name of our conference but we had Champaign Central, (*unintelligible*) Eisenhower Decatur, Danville, Bloomington, and Stephen Decatur and Lincoln and Springfield.

Bartges: So the big schools?

Connelly: Yeah. I can't remember if there were maybe a couple others. I can't remember. (*unintelligible*) in Decatur. I think there were two from Decatur, Champaign-Urbana, well Urbana (*unintelligible*) because Champaign Central was one that was in our conference I think. I guess Urbana was just (*unintelligible*). And so they all must have had it because we played them all that first year unless—I don't know if they added it then or if they already by the first year we played them. (I think Urbana was in our conference as well)

Bartges: How many games did you play about?

Connelly: I'm thinking ten or twelve, not very many.

Bartges: Not very many.

Connelly: Because even in '77 when I went to—when we got to state our total games—our record was 12 and 4. So we just played sixteen games.

Bartges: Sixteen games.

Connelly: And five or six of those were from the state playoffs so.

Bartges: Right.

Connelly: I think we were just 7 and 3 with ten games.

Bartges: When we come back to the tournament I'm going to ask you a little bit more specifics about that. When you had games at Mattoon—or let's go to practice. Where did you practice and when?

Connelly: We practiced after school and I believe it was like from four to six. It seems like we got out of school late, like 3:45 or something, started at eight or so. And we had to go to the armory. We were bussed to the armory which was at least a ten-minute ride.

Bartges: Why?

Connelly: Because the boys got the regular gym and we—the only time we got our own gym was when they were out of town with(*unintelligible*) Friday night game.

Bartges: Then you could practice in Mattoon High School?

Connelly: Yes. So it was that way—that was quite annoying because you always felt like you were in a visitor's gym even when you were at home because you didn't get to practice there.

Bartges: Did you keep your stuff there or did you have to drag it back and forth every day?

Connelly: Drag it back and forth.

Bartges: And you didn't have an assistant coach?

Connelly: No.

Bartges: Did you practice every day?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: For about two hours?

Connelly: Um-hm.

Bartges: How many gyms did Mattoon High School have?

Connelly: Just one.

Bartges: Just the one?

Connelly: So that's a problem. But they didn't try to say, Okay boys will practice this day then you, like every other day or something and let them have to go to the armory—which in one way I didn't mind the armory because there weren't as many distractions—people walking into the gym and you're trying to practice and everybody's looking at them instead of where they're supposed to be. There's all these—people just walking through when things are going on. So there weren't as many distractions but (*unintelligible*) we weren't used to playing in our own gym.

Bartges: Did you ever play games at the armory?

Connelly: No. All of our home games were in our gym.

Bartges: What time of day did your games occur?

Connelly: Um they were on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and always Saturdays—sometimes Saturday mornings, you had to get up early. And I'm not sure why Saturday mornings unless there was a conflict maybe somebody was playing Saturday evening.

Bartges: When you say evening did you mean you had a 7:30 start time or was it—

Connelly: Yeah. Usually it was earlier than that. They would play two games so maybe the first one was at six and then we'd play after that.

Bartges: But it wasn't right after school? You didn't have a game at four o'clock and one at five?

Connelly: No. We didn't play right after school. It was in the evening, at least six or after and every Saturday. Sometimes we'd have—if it was at home on Saturday it was in the evening but sometimes if it was away it would have to be like—I don't remember if were real early like ten or noon but I remember some of them in early afternoon.

Bartges: Did you ever practice in the mornings?

Connelly: No.

Bartges: Would you say in general that your school, not necessarily Sheppard or Buchanan, but the school was in favor of adding girls' basketball and sports in general for girls?

Connelly: I'd say they were in favor, yes. There were a lot of talented girls there and I think that most of their parents were quite proud of them and if they wanted to play they wanted them to be able to. And Mattoon was—I don't know if it still is but I remember this—the only—place or one of the few places in which girls played baseball.

Bartges: Oh.

Connelly: And the same girls that played basketball also played baseball, lots of sports.

Bartges: For the school?

Connelly: No, not for the school but it was like a summer thing.

Bartges: Little League kind of stuff?

Connelly: Yeah. And they had their own girls' team which they played baseball, not softball. And I can't remember how—seemed like they were pretty little. I don't remember if they played (*unintelligible*) or if they stopped when they got to like twelve. I remember having this sign somewhere in Mattoon talking about that. And I don't know if they still do that—not that that has anything to do with basketball except that it showed they did support girls playing sports.

Bartges: So your parents were supportive of you and your program?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: Did you have much interference from parents or was it pretty much you were the coach?

Connelly: I did not have much interference. No. My last year I had one parent that came in right after we lost at the Stae tournament game complaining—had me come in with the talking to—while she was there she had me and the principal there and she was raking me over the coals for an hour when I had study hall time or a free period or whatever it was. But that's about all—the only time maybe in those three years that I recall. If they had a problem they didn't say anything about it. You know that's changed. [laughs]

Bartges: Yeah, no more restraint.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: We talked briefly about fans. And when you guys played at home or on the road were there—did your team have fans that were loyal or followed you?

Connelly: We had parents who came—mostly it was parents who would follow us yes. I think most parents came to most games whether they were on the road or not.

Bartges: And did that fan base go up with time?

Connelly: Yes, I'd say it did. We still didn't have as many fans as the boys or whatever but it did improve.

Bartges: Do you know if they charged to get into the games at Mattoon?

Connelly: I'm not sure.

Bartges: Okay.

Connelly: I know they did, (*unintelligible*) tournament thing—

Bartges: Yeah.

Connelly: —would have to get tickets. But I don't know about regular games.

Bartges: When you traveled to games with the high school how did you travel?

Connelly: By school bus.

Bartges: Did you have to drive the bus?

Connelly: No.

Bartges: This set of questions pertains to some of your experience and how—what you—you graduated from high school in 1970. You must have graduated from college in '74?

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: And you went straight to Mattoon?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: Where did you do your student teaching?

Connelly: At Rock Falls.

Bartges: At Rock Falls?

Connelly: Rock Falls High School and their junior high.

Bartges: Okay. Going to a school away from your basic sphere of influence into a new sporting program and having only played two years in college, where did your knowledge base come from is kind of what I'm looking for? And one of the questions—and again you may not know anything about these—but did you ever participate in a National Sports Institute or a National Leadership Conference?

Connelly: No I didn't.

Bartges: Do you know what they were?

Connelly: Not really.

Bartges: Okay. Did you ever go to a conference where someone else was talking about basketball or disseminating information about how to coach basketball?

Connelly: No I didn't.

Bartges: How did you prepare yourself for coaching?

Connelly: I kind of wanted (*unintelligible*).

Bartges: We all have those days. [laughter]

Connelly: I remember—since I only played two years and I wasn't on like the top team—no I didn't have a whole lot of experience, I didn't play except a little GAA. I remember my PE majors class in basketball kind of—I'm sure that helped a lot because I picked up a lot of stuff there but it's not a whole lot of strategy kind of stuff that gets more and more complex. So I'll say when I started basketball there that I didn't know a heck of a lot. And I was studying my books that I had with me because if there was something I wasn't sure how to do—I knew I had a very quick team in '77, very quick but fairly short. So we worked on rebounding, outlet passes, getting down there on the fast break, and all that kind of stuff, but [laughs] not really sure how I knew what to do.

Bartges: Did you ever talk to the boys' coach at Mattoon or—

Connelly: Not much, once in a while. I mean I did sometimes ask him a few questions but

I didn't ever see him that much.

Bartges: Were they receptive to your questions?

Connelly: Yeah, they were always very good about answering/helping (*unintelligible*), yeah.

Bartges: When you were hired at Mattoon was it a situation where they had already determined they were going to be adding this sport and you were brought in and said, You're going to coach this, or was it a situation where you were hired because you had at least some experience at the college level which at that time in and of itself was unusual.

Connelly: Very. I'm not sure. The person who was there before me resigned and went somewhere out of state. And she had been also the tennis coach. And then they were—because I said I would be willing to coach tennis because I love tennis. I'm better at that probably than basketball. Then I don't know if it just happened to be that I just—because this was a hard time to find a job in '74. And I remember sending out all kinds of letters to places. I didn't know if they had jobs or not. And Mattoon was one of them and they probably just happened to—I don't know how many other people applied or how many other people they interviewed, but just happened their tennis coach had resigned and the PE person and I said I could do tennis and basketball. So I don't know, I'm not real sure.

Bartges: Did they still have GAA while you had—

Connelly: No—

Bartges: —your sports (*unintelligible*)?

Connelly: No.

Bartges: So that was totally gone?

Connelly: That was gone. They had had it but—I'm not sure when it stopped but they certainly didn't have it when I began.

Bartges: That's unusual. Do you think officials in Illinois were concerned with what version of the rules were used—and what I'm asking here it kind of relates back to your GAA experience—the version of whether it was six-player or five-player or whether it was the NAGWS rules versus the National Federation of High School rules. Do you think that officials were concerned about that?

Connelly: I have no clue. I just don't have any experience with that at all. I'm not even sure why—I'm not even sure why they decided to have the experiment and

change it to five. I mean was everyone else doing that? Because Iowa was still playing their six-player.

Bartges: Iowa was one of the few though.

Connelly: Um-hm. So thank goodness it was changed but I don't really have any idea of why or when or how—

Bartges: Well in 1971 the National Basketball Committee Experimental Rules became official. So in '68-'69, '69-'70 there were two experimental years. And then in '71 they said, Okay we're going to five-player.

Connelly: Okay.

Bartges: How do you think that impacted Illinois if at all?

Connelly: Gosh I don't know, don't have a clue.

Bartges: You mentioned earlier that you favored the rule changes?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: Why?

Connelly: It was just more fun to play [laughs]—more fun to play when you could go the whole court and you could actually dribble more than three times, although not-dribbling maybe helped passing when you couldn't dribble that much. And then everybody—especially when the girls or anybody's first learning, even little boys, they just want to stand there in one place and dribble (*unintelligible*). I suppose that three-dribble stuff could help your passing but it was just so boring. And I don't know if that was just because they thought girls couldn't run the whole length of the court or it wouldn't be good for them physically or whatever, I don't know but thank goodness that changed. It's just more fun. You don't want to stand—you get to a place where you're going full speed down the court and all of a sudden you've got to stop because there you are at the line and you've got to pass it and you can't move across the line.

Bartges: Yeah, that would be strange.

Connelly: It's no fun.

Bartges: Yeah. And that seems to be the unanimous tale of people. And you are one of the younger ones of the people that I've interviewed in terms of when you graduated from high school.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: There's you and then one of my coaches. Right about the same time I guess she graduated from U of I in 1970. But everyone else, they didn't have a five-player experience at all.

Connelly: Oh man.

Bartges: So it's definitely a different game.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: I'm going to use the word role and it may not be the right word for where you were at Mattoon, but did you have any kind of a role in getting interscholastic basketball added for girls in Illinois?

Connelly: No I didn't.

Bartges: When you were at—and we sort of touched on it. I go back to it because I want to make sure I understand. At Mattoon as the first coach you had a role as the person who was the head of that program?

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: Did you have any obstacles in that role?

Connelly: I don't remember any. The only obstacles that I remember was just having to do all the stuff that every other woman would have to do as far as coaching. But just—when you have two teams you don't have any help, you don't have anybody—like now they have trainers and they have assistants and that's great. I'm glad they do because they should have it. If the boys have it so should the girls and the women but that time you were coaching two teams. If somebody got hurt then I'd have to take care of them and not even be able to watch then game. How can I coach if somebody's hurt and I'm taping an ankle or putting ice on—sometimes you had a manager but still a kid and it's not like that person—the kid could know that much about an injury (*unintelligible*) as an adult of course. So that would be the only obstacle or problem I can think of. And then there'd be an obstacle that I thought was tough because you had to watch over two teams, you had nobody to help you, nobody to help if they got hurt.

Bartges: How much equipment did you have?

Connelly: Well I don't even remember how much our budget was. I remember having a bag of basketballs. I can't even remember how many. But I remember having to take either a bag or two of basketballs on the bus. And then we had a pretty big first-aid kit—not that I knew how to do anything [laughter] with it but at

least you had ice or whatever there was—not real ice but—something.

Bartges: The hot ice, yeah.

Connelly: Yeah and tape. About all I could do was figure-eight taping [laughs] so I needed some. I didn't—sometimes when they think you're in PE that you should know all kinds of medical questions and I'm not a doctor.

Bartges: Well that's true though.

Connelly: That was—Can't you tape this? This has happened; what should I do now? Well how would I know. I'm not a person that knows how to do that any more than you. So it was just—I don't know, [laughs] it's just a lot to do.

Bartges: Once you got into coaching and you saw where you were lacking things or there was a need for things did you push to try and get those things for your program?

Connelly: No, I was thinking about that after you called me and I was telling my mother that you had called. And I was saying, You know I'm not sure why I did it. I don't know if I was just—I don't know why I didn't go to the principal and say, Hey why am I coaching two teams here no help or da-da-da-da but I didn't. And I didn't really think about it. I mean, I did know—obviously I was coaching two teams (*unintelligible*) well the guys are coaching and they have assistants. But I guess I just thought, Well what other woman is going to be able to help me? [laughs] There weren't any other women that had played basketball or had any basketball experience. It wouldn't have to be a woman I guess. It could have been a man.

Bartges: But at that time it was more likely it would have been.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: Your natural thought would have been to a woman because men weren't really involved yet.

Connelly: Um-hm. And even the other PE teachers none of them had experience I didn't have much but they had even less, [laughs] so who's going to help me?

Bartges: Yeah.

Connelly: But I can't tell you why I did it. I don't think it even entered my mind even though I was kind of annoyed by the fact that I had a whole lot to do. I think men always had more help.

Bartges: And I can't remember if I asked you this—how many kids you had on your team?

Connelly: Um I'd say approximately twelve on each team. I'm not real sure.

Bartges: On each team, okay.

Connelly: Yeah, ten to twelve (*unintelligible*).

Bartges: And you never attended any coaching clinic?

Connelly: No.

Bartges: Would you characterize Mattoon High School as a leader or someone who followed in terms of girls' basketball in the state—getting the program up and running and—

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: The first year for girls' basketball—for IHSA basketball was '73-'74.

Connelly: So they were just a year behind?

Bartges: Yeah.

Connelly: Okay. Well no I don't—I really don't know anything about the other programs in say our conference but I thought they did a pretty good job.

Bartges: Okay.

Connelly: I think they were serious in wanting girls to take part, but I don't know how much the budget was either so that could be another problem with some of the things I was experiencing.

Bartges: Well and you mentioned parents being supportive there in town.

Connelly: Yeah I thought—they were.

Bartges: So that do you think that there was an impetus from the parents to say, Hey we want this for our daughters as well?

Connelly: I'm not sure, maybe. I'm not sure about that.

Bartges: Okay. Based on your own experience in high school in GAA and then in college with having played ball and then you moved immediately into coaching at a varsity level—

Connelly: Yeah—[laughs]

Bartges: —as a very young person—

Connelly: Yes—

Bartges: —was the structure that you moved into at Mattoon with the IHSA sanction and things like that, was that too organized for you in comparison to your own experience with the GAA and the play days and stuff?

Connelly: No, I don't think so. I don't think that even—I don't even remember thinking about that or having any thoughts about that.

Bartges: Well and I'll come back. There's a follow-up to that later.

Connelly: Okay.

Bartges: Did you belong to any group or groups that were active in the civil rights movement?

Connelly: No.

Bartges: Billie Jean King says that she hates labels and being labeled. However, for the purpose of this interview how did you or would you characterize yourself during this period of your life?

Connelly: That's a hard one. I think that (*unintelligible*) looking back I think about how little I seemed to know—I mean I don't know a whole lot more about it now but I know more about basketball now than I did then, and I do not know how I survived. (*unintelligible*) the practices and so forth. But I don't know. I'd say I was inexperienced, young, and pretty isolated. I felt isolated because I felt like I would go to school, teach, practice, come home it was late, didn't have that much time left in the evening, go to bed, get up and do it all over again.

Bartges: And that would be isolating.

Connelly: Um-hm. And then I was—every Saturday—I didn't even get the weekends because I had only Sunday off so I felt very isolated. I didn't really get to get out in the community or know about people that much.

Bartges: Well and especially being away from your home base.

Connelly: Um-hm.

Bartges: Yeah that's true, that's very true. I'm going to list a collection of states that surround or border Illinois and the years that they implemented a state tournament for girls' basketball—Iowa in 1926, Indiana '75, Michigan '73,

Wisconsin in '76 and they started with three classes, Minnesota '74, Ohio '76, Kentucky 1920 to 1932 and then they dropped it and they came back in '75 and added it again, Tennessee in '65, Missouri '73, and then Illinois in '77. As an educator, a coach, a former player how did you feel if you have any thoughts at all about when you saw states surrounding Illinois competing in a competitive state tournament and Illinois didn't have one? Were you aware of that?

Connelly: I was not.

Bartges: Okay. That's not unusual.

Connelly: No, I didn't know what anyone else was doing.

Bartges: That reminds me, do you have any idea your principals Sheppard and Buchanan—

Connelly: Um-hm—

Bartges: Were they from Illinois?

Connelly: I'm pretty sure that Mr. Sheppard was but I can't remember—probably from around that area too but I'm not sure about Buchanan.

Bartges: Okay. Were you aware at the time of the process of the IHSA adding girls' sports?

Connelly: Um-hm.

Bartges: What can you tell me about that or your experience or exposure, your thoughts?

Connelly: About them adding sports for girls?

Bartges: Um-hm.

Connelly: Well let's see, I think that when I was in college I think that's when at least Sterling started adding some girls' sports. And I don't know if it was '72-'73, not real sure, but I was just sorry that I missed it. [laughs] But I don't remember that much else going on. I'm just sorry that I was too late for it. (*unintelligible*) When I see now little girls doing everything from five on up if they want to do it that's great. I just wish there had been sports available when I was their age to do it.

Bartges: And that's a very—I mean I think it's a very common feeling and a lot of people—like we've talked about on the phone, feeling like we were born too soon—

Connelly: Right—

Bartges: —with that. Some of the questions I know are rhetorical. I'm going to give you this and I know you were here. See what your reaction to this is.

Connelly: This is the one I was just looking through the other day.

Bartges: That's the tournament program from the first state tournament. You were at the first state tournament at Horton Field House in Bloomington?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: Why were you there?

Connelly: Our team had made it through the Supersectional and we were going to play in our first game. I don't even know what day this was but—[laughs]

Bartges: April 1st.

Connelly: Okay. [laughs] It was fitting for the way we played [laughter] (*unintelligible*). We were playing Washington and—I can't remember that much about it. I remember obviously the gym was—the Field House is a lot bigger than our gym or any gym we played in and a lot more—I don't remember how many fans were there but boy our kids were wide-eyed and scared. [laughs]

Bartges: They were?

Connelly: They were very nervous. And I did not think they would be quite that nervous. I don't know why. They were in a large tournament young and inexperienced so (*unintelligible*).

Bartges: You would have had no way of knowing.

Connelly: Yeah, I guess not. [laughs]

Bartges: Where was your Supersectional?

Connelly: At Eastern, Eastern Illinois University.

Bartges: Who did you beat to get to state?

Connelly: Champaign Central. It was hotter than all get out at our Supersectional. And our team was one that—to use our quickness and speed we would try to press through most of the game, and it was so hot in there I was really worried about that because I wasn't sure they could do it. I don't know why it was that hot. I mean there were a lot of fans but it was not only that. It was hot when we went

in there.

Bartges: And the other thing is—and again people today don't really—wouldn't think about it or know that it was this way but the season was different.

Connelly: Um-hm, that's true.

Bartges: So if the state tournament was the first of April you were talking the last week of March.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: And if it warmed up soon you could have had a hot week there.

Connelly: Yeah. I sure don't remember what it was like outside but I know it was very hot in there.

Bartges: Did you beat them soundly?

Connelly: We beat them by one—

Bartges: Oh—

Connelly: —within the last five seconds or so. We were ahead by three and it was like maybe I don't remember five seconds or five to ten seconds left. And I think they must have called timeout because I think we lost the ball. And all I remember telling them is, Listen we're ahead by three. I'm sure they're going to try to drive the lane and get a foul so let them take their shot. Just stand there. [laughs] I don't care what you do just don't foul. So let them take it. If they make it we win by one and that's what happened.

Bartges: Because there was no three-point shot—

Connelly: Right—

Bartges: —other than a foul?

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: When you—the people who refereed your games—and I'm going to go back to the state tournament in a minute—but your regular season games, did you have mostly male refs or female refs?

Connelly: Seems like female but—it seems like it was female to me but I could be wrong. I do remember—I remember some males, but I think I wanted males [laughs] because I didn't think the females were that good and (*unintelligible*) they hadn't

had that much experience.

Bartges: Were you ever a party to or participated in a game that was out of control?

Connelly: Well I guess that depends on how you—define

Bartges: Well and that's a broad statement.

Connelly: —(*unintelligible*) control but I don't—

Bartges: Physically it was really, really rough?

Connelly: That brawl, yeah.

Bartges: Yeah. I ran across a news—I'm asking that for a reason.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: I ran across some news articles where teams actually left the floor because officiating was so poor and it was physically—people were getting hurt—

Connelly: Right—

Bartges: —and so a coach would not come out at halftime or would not go back out on the floor in the fourth quarter or something like that.

Connelly: I'm sure—I know I had—who doesn't complain about officiating but I don't—I sure didn't like to fall back on that as a reason we would lose—

Bartges: Right—

Connelly: —but certainly the officiating did need to tighten up, but I don't remember having anybody really hurt, so it must not have been as bad as some of those you're talking about.

Bartges: Well and I don't know if that's a function of area, locale or what. Do you remember what your thoughts or feelings were when you walked out on the floor for your first game?

Connelly: [laughs] I don't remember hardly anything. First game here or you mean first game—

Bartges: First game at state, yeah.

Connelly: No, I don't remember. I don't even remember much of anything. Again, I don't know why but I don't. I don't remember how many people were there, I don't

remember how—I know it seemed pretty big but I just don't remember much about it.

Bartges: And your team played Washington?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: Did you win that first game?

Connelly: No. We lost by 18. And I don't even remember at halftime what the score was. [laughs] I would have to look back at some articles in order to see. But I don't—I do know we weren't getting any shots and that could be due to their defense but also due to our anxiety about—

Bartges: Being in a different—a big gym like that. I remember that as a player.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: The depth difference in that. What did you think maybe about the caliber of play of the teams that you saw down there?

Connelly: I know we watched—I know we left—our game was in the evening like 7 p.m. and I know we left that day in the morning after assembly, but I don't remember then who we watched. Let's see—because when—we might have even watched your game. [laughs] (*unintelligible*) don't remember.

Bartges: We played the second game. I don't know what time of day it was.

Connelly: Let's see it says 1:45. I mean we could have watched that. I don't know. I remember watching something but I don't remember a whole lot about it again. It's like I can't—I remember it was very, very exciting. That's all I can remember is all the excitement of being there and just getting to go and—but I can't remember much specifically.

Bartges: Do you know when you first learned that there was going to be a state tournament? I mean, was it something that you put out there for your team as a motivating tool like, A year from now we're going to have a state tournament or two years from now we're going to have a statement tournament?

Connelly: No. I don't (*unintelligible*) I remember if I shared that with the team.

Bartges: Did you ever take a team back to the state tournament?

Connelly: No I did not. But I will say this—I left Mattoon after that, that year after '77. In fact, they were doing some changes and going from three-year high school going to go nine through twelve and instead of having seventh, eighth, and ninth

at the junior high they're just going to have seventh and eighth. And so I was a tenured teacher but I was RIF'd, reduction—but then because we went to state I think they were—they were saying they were going to find a place for me. And they probably would have but I decided to leave and then went back to Sterling. But Mattoon went back to the state tournament the next year and got fourth. And then they went back again in '79 and lost their first game like we did.

Bartges: So they went three years in a row?

Connelly: Yes. I don't know what they've done since then but I know they did go three years (*unintelligible*).

Bartges: Who took your coaching position?

Connelly: I think it was Dwight Perry.

Bartges: A fellow?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: Okay. Anything else about the state tournament that maybe you might remember or—

Connelly: No.

Bartges: You said your kids were kind of pie-eyed?

Connelly: Yes. [laughs] They walked in. And they knew it was going to be a bigger floor and I wasn't sure if that would help us or not.

Bartges: Did you try to practice on bigger floors?

Connelly: No. No. Maybe I should have tried to go to Eastern or something but—

Bartges: I only ask that because our coach drug us out to like George Williams College which is no more. And we—I remember going and practicing at their facility and thinking, How can it be so much bigger? [laughter] And it was a big area and it had maybe curtains and stuff but all the curtains were pulled back so it was a long building. And we were like, Wow. And we couldn't hit the broadside of a barn in there either. [laughter] Got down to Horton and it was like—it was just a basket hanging out of the ceiling it seemed like, just a black curtain. That's about all I can really remember.

Connelly: I just remember, boy—I don't know, they just seemed like they were very wide-eyed and nervous. And of course (*unintelligible*) so—[laughs] I don't remember a whole lot about it.

Bartges: That's okay. I'm going to stop this here and change tapes.

Connelly: Okay.

Bartges: We're almost done.

Connelly: All righty.

Bartges: I have no—my memories are—of course I have a pretty significant hearing loss so I don't have a lot of hearing kind of memories anyway.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: But what I can really remember when I see the state tournament or think of it I have—there's no auditory memory for me at all, no sound. I can see people and I can see the gym and I could see my teammates and my coaches and stuff but everything is quiet.

Connelly: Oh man. I know it got quiet (*unintelligible*). But I can't remember but I know we were—I'm not sure. I don't know how much time was left but we were already behind and couldn't do anything. So I think I got everybody in the game but two girls who were sophomores so—

Bartges: That's good.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: Well and everybody's experience is different. I mean you say you lost by 18 well we blew a 13-point lead so that's not good.

Connelly: No.

Bartges: There were a lot of teams that year too I think that—obviously we didn't play the kind of schedule that people play now.

Connelly: Oh yeah. Now I bet—I think these high school teams are better than [laughs] the team I was on in college.

Bartges: Yeah. Oh yeah. That wouldn't surprise me at all. And they play thirty games a season.

Connelly: Yes. Yes.

Bartges: So it's just so completely different.

Connelly: It sure is.

Bartges: This is tape number two with Linda Connelly in Lee's Summit, Missouri. When basketball was started in Illinois, the '73-'74 season and the question where I told you when other states around us added basketball, what do you think was a major or could have been a major reason that slowed basketball from being added as an interscholastic sport which was sanctioned by the IHSA?

Connelly: I'm not sure. I don't know if it was they didn't think girls should physically run up and down, I don't know, run up and down the whole court. But that doesn't make much sense when you see the other states have been doing it for a long time. So I'm really not sure why they didn't. I know they had some other—I think they had some other sports that had been sanctioned so I don't know why they would—

Bartges: Volleyball in particular.

Connelly: Yeah. So I can't—I really don't have a clue about that.

Bartges: Okay. What role if any do you think homophobia played in the development and growth of girls' sports at the high school level, particularly for team sports like basketball?

Connelly: Well I don't have any experience with that but it could have and I don't know about it. But I never—I certainly never heard any parents, administrators, or students saying anything about that so—

Bartges: So your kids didn't—your kids weren't given a hard time because they were athletes?

Connelly: They may or may not. Maybe I didn't know it. I don't remember. I do think I remember stuff like boys acting as if girls couldn't play. But I think they were surprised when they saw that they were—girls were better than they thought they would be and—

Bartges: And pretty quickly.

Connelly: Yeah, uh-huh, because I think they thought they were-it wasn't going to be anything at all that was very good. They were surprised—the boys were surprised that the girls did have some talent. But other than that I have no—knowledge.

Bartges: Okay. What factors can you think of or identify that would influence decisions against interscholastic competition for girls? And I think you sort of touched on one.

Connelly: I don't know unless it's medical or health. That's the only thing. That's been something that was—I would think would be a lot longer ago though. Because I thought by '73-'74 people would know that women can run and they were doing running, jogging, marathon that kind of thing, at last some, maybe not as many as now but—so I'm not real sure.

Bartges: You touched on having to go to the armory—

Connelly: Um-hm—

Bartges: —because of facility shortages?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: Do you think that could be a reason that some schools or the IHSA was reluctant to add basketball and maybe why girls' basketball was originally not scheduled during boys' basketball season, the bulk of it?

Connelly: That makes sense. That's something that I should have thought of I would think but—because most schools don't have two gyms and it's going to be hard to schedule all that. Scheduling is a nightmare [laughs] anyway so when you have girls playing as well then that would be a problem. We were lucky probably to have an armory that we could at least have another place to go.

Bartges: Yeah.

Connelly: But yeah I never thought about it but that's right. That's probably—sounds like a reason.

Bartges: What would you say is the major single factor that changed the IHSA's stand on adding basketball?

Connelly: Probably Title IX because I think they were pretty much forced to by then. You have to—I think that's probably what pushed most of the girls' sports to get as many teams as there were at the beginning and more and certainly now what we have.

Bartges: And you sort of touched on this too—Do you think the AMA, the American Medical Association's endorsement for vigorous exercise helped change public educational policy towards interscholastic sport?

Connelly: I think it certainly could have. At least when that came out then at least people would know that everybody needs exercise, not just boys. It's not going to hurt girls.

Bartges: So it made it more socially acceptable?

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: Schools were less—

Connelly: Yeah I would hope so.

Bartges: (*unintelligible*).

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: You touched on Title IX. How do you think—and when I say how do you I mean in what ways do you think Title IX affected girls' basketball in Illinois?

Connelly: Well at least—I think it at least got it more in the public eye in which there are girls that want to play. Maybe some people wouldn't even have thought that. There are girls that want to play and like to play and enjoy playing basketball. And once they were kind of forced to have to have a team even if they didn't—even starting out slowly which I'm sure when boys started they didn't start out with twenty-five games, they started slowly too. So at least the girls got a chance to have a team and to play and to finally get—after how many years getting more equal with the boys—equal playing facilities, equal kinds of money they hopefully spend on their budget. I don't know if it's still equal or is equal but it's a lot better than it was. And I don't know what I was going to say. I lost my train of thought.

Bartges: I do that too. [laughter] Well and—many of the people that I've interviewed have stayed in coaching—

Connelly: Um-hm—

Bartges: —so they have seen a different evolution.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: You got out of coaching in 1980?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: So that's been twenty-five years ago.

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: That's a quantum leap—

Connelly: It's [laughs] huge, yeah.

Bartges: —in this time period in terms of what's been added.

Connelly: Right. So I don't even know that much about what—I know it's a lot but I haven't kept up with it that much.

Bartges: Yeah.

Connelly: And I know women have assistants and so forth now and the girls—I've seen a few games but not that many actually. But I know the girls are a lot better.

Bartges: And your last season of coaching I mean if I was going to compare for you '74 to '80 did you—in your last season did you have an assistant yet?

Connelly: No.

Bartges: So you still didn't see those changes?

Connelly: No, and I still had two teams. And we had two gyms because we had the regular gym where everybody played their basketball game and the girls had a gym but it wasn't as good we used it for PE and so forth. So at least we had two gyms. But we had to practice in our girls' gym which wasn't as long or as wide as the regular gym and then we had to play again in [laughs] the gym where everybody played their games. So we weren't used to it so it was still same thing.

Bartges: And that was in Rock Falls?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: So even—when you left Mattoon and went to Rock Falls you were still sort of faced with that same situation?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: Was the administration at Rock Falls supportive of girls' sports?

Connelly: I'd say they were but I don't really remember if they were as supportive as I think Mattoon was. They didn't have very good girls' teams. The year before when I was not there the girls' team was like 1 and 11. And then the first year I was there we were 7 and 11, so we added a few more games to the—schedule we did somewhat better but we were still under 500. And I can't even remember the second year what we were. But I don't know, it—seemed like there weren't that many girls that played or were as good at that time in Rock Falls or didn't seem like that many people cared as much. Mattoon seemed like it had more fans but mainly it was only because they were good.

Bartges: And it's hard to say how much influence that has on something like that.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: It's definitely a factor.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: But if you still have the same thing six years later, you still have that same struggle then that's sort of what I wondered, how fast did you see changes? From your experience it doesn't sound like there was change.

Connelly: No, not in those five—it was only five or six years but no there wasn't any change from my second school.

Bartges: Did you get paid to coach at Rock Falls?

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: The late Marianna Trekell in her book, *A Century of Women's Basketball*, stated that she felt that Title IX forced the issue or a role model for girls' and women's sport toward the more competitive male model of sports. Do you agree or disagree?

Connelly: I have to agree.

Bartges: Why?

Connelly: It just seems like once that—once schools or states or whatever were forced to have teams that the girls were ready to play that it got more competitive and it was—you know how we had the GAA thing where you were just all playing together [laughs]—not that there's anything wrong with that but just seems like there's only one way—it's either going to be that way or it's going to be once you start having teams that are competitive it's going to get more that way, it's more like the boys—even though I think there are a lot of women that do want to see it get that competitive and maybe had an idea that it might and weren't sure how to change it or stop it. (*unintelligible*).

Bartges: What causes you to say that in your experience or your background?

Connelly: I don't know. There's something—some of the PE college professors (*unintelligible*) I can feel like—it seems like I remember them thinking that the change from DGWS to whatever the heck it changed to [laughs]—

Bartges: AIAW.

Connelly: Yeah, and all that, yeah to NCAA. I think they thought at least on the college level—and I think that's true that it has happened, that all the bad things about men, the (*unintelligible*) don't have the grades, should they be going to college and so forth. Now I don't know if that's happened that much with the women in college but some of the—I think they were afraid that would happen with the women and I just—I don't know why I think that but it just must be something I remember because I think that it had. I think they wanted that not to happen and I'm not so sure they wanted to go to the NCAA and all that. I think they wanted to have more control over it and once it did change to the NCAA they had the same problems.

Bartges: Do you think women lost control of the sport?

Connelly: I think maybe they did but I don't know if it would have become as big if they hadn't so I don't know. I don't know. I'm not really sure about that. But I think maybe they were afraid Men would come in and take over (*unintelligible*) have some—

Bartges: (*unintelligible*).

Connelly: Right. So I don't know if—I don't know if that happened or not. I mean, because I'm not familiar enough with college sports to know.

Bartges: It has in a lot of ways.

Connelly: Um-hm. But I think they were certainly afraid that it would. So I don't know. I don't know why there can't be a happy medium once the women's game became more competitive and they were— more skilled and so forth. I don't know. It just seems like that's the road that it goes.

Bartges: When you first started coaching at Mattoon did your kids play any kind of summer ball or go to camp or do anything like that?

Connelly: No.

Bartges: By the time you—your last year in coaching, six years later, did those kids ever do those things? Did they ever go to a basketball camp or—

Connelly: I think they did. Yeah because I remember somebody—I don't know if it was an administrator or who, AD maybe, asking me if I wanted to do a basketball camp in the summer. And I think I did a time or two. But yeah it was starting then to get them to try to make them play all year around their one sport (*unintelligible*). When I was in Mattoon kids played basketball, played volleyball, played tennis and also did track which I like that better because it's more balance.

Bartges: Well and that's something—and I asked Sue Strong this too—if you look at the picture of your team in that guide how many of those players were four-sport athletes or three-sport athletes?

Connelly: Let's see—I think all of them.

Bartges: Really?

Connelly: Um-hm.

Bartges: In a school of 1,000—

Connelly: Right—

Bartges: —or more in three grades your varsity team was all multisport?

Connelly: Yes. They played at least two and some of them played three and four.

Bartges: Did any of those kids play ball in college? Did they go on to play in college?

Connelly: I think at least two of them did.

Bartges: Which two?

Connelly: (*unintelligible*). Linda Nuxoll and Nancy Saegesser (*unintelligible*). I think they went to Eastern and I think they—I don't know how good their career was or whatever but I think they did play or at least made the team.

Bartges: Did you have any all-state'ers on your team?

Connelly: I can't remember. I think she was an all-state candidate, Linda Nuxoll. I don't remember if she ever actually made it.

Bartges: I can't remember either. I'd have to look on the IHSA web page. Have you ever been on the IHSA's web page?

Connelly: No. Maybe I should check that out.

Bartges: The IHSA has one of the best state web pages for their high school athletes that I've ever seen, and I look at that kind of stuff.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: It's ihsa.org.

Connelly: Okay.

Bartges: And they—initially to get into it it's kind of hard but if you go back into the history part of it or you can go to Records or Tournaments.

Connelly: Yeah?

Bartges: And you just kind of play around with it, very interesting and huge number of records—

Connelly: Oh wow—

Bartges: —for girls' sports. They go back into the early days of girls' basketball in the state. And when you read through the names of the people—if you stay current in the sport—

Connelly: Right—

Bartges: If you read the names of people who have a lot of different high school records they've gone on and had tremendous college careers—

Connelly: Oh wow—

Bartges: —over the years.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: Just a tremendous wealth of information. It's cool to read.

Connelly: Yeah it sounds like it would be.

Bartges: It's—I don't know. I have the oldest rebounding—single-game rebounding record. [laughs]

Connelly: Well that's cool. You're still holding a record. That's—

Bartges: From 1976.

Connelly: Wow, that's neat.

Bartges: But I mean that's how extensive it is. It goes back, it's—if you had kids that had records you could still submit stuff.

Connelly: Oh man.

Bartges: So—but check that out. It is fun to play around now. So they've done a good

job with that.

Connelly: Yeah, it sounds like it.

Bartges: It's fun to play with. And it's one of those things as a coach I would tell my kids, Go look at this stuff. Look and see what's out there so you could see what other people have done, set some goals, do some things.

Connelly: Yeah, did they do it?

Bartges: Yeah.

Connelly: That's good.

Bartges: Yeah, they enjoyed seeing that stuff.

Connelly: Good.

Bartges: Can you recall anything else that might help me understand a history, either yours or your teams', of girls' basketball in Illinois from the period of '68 to '77? Anything I haven't touched on or that you want to add?

Connelly: Well I don't remember a whole lot about the history. I do think that since Sterling was in the tournament they were in the upper bracket and we were in the lower bracket. There was no way we were going to meet them unless we were both in the finals which they were lucky enough to be, but probably glad that we weren't because we might have lost by even more than 18.

Bartges: That was something I didn't touch on. You were a student, a former student of Sue Strong who was the coach at Sterling High School?

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: So to have a teacher and a student both in the same state tournament is pretty amazing. I mean you see all this hullabaloo about when Mike Krzyzewski has to play Bobby Knight.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: And of course that's a little different level but—

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: But still you have that rivalry and the student-mentor kind of thing.

Connelly: Yeah. It was exciting. And the (*unintelligible*) thing would be we meet them in

the finals and we beat my former (*unintelligible*) team but that wasn't going to happen so since we couldn't do anything I was glad they were able to go all the way.

Bartges: Were your kids aware?

Connelly: Yes. Yes, I remember saying stuff about it and them joking with me about it but I can't remember specifically. Yes but they were aware. They all knew where I was from. So I don't know it was just kind of a local (*unintelligible*) thing I guess.

Bartges: Did you watch Sterling's games?

Connelly: I can't even remember. I just don't remember. I know they played Fenger first I think.

Bartges: I think they did. Yeah, they beat Fenger in overtime.

Connelly: And they were both undefeated. You know, I was looking—when I was looking through this—I think it was this, I saw that Sterling had beaten—like in their regional, in their sectional, in their Supersectional, they had practically no competition at all. They were killing everybody. So when they get here it's amazing that they were able to—because Fenger was undefeated. And so I'm kind of amazed they were able to do that.

Bartges: And Fenger had upset Marshall coming out of the City League Championship.

Connelly: Wow because they just killed everybody—64 to 44, 60 to 27, 68 to 24. I mean, they're killing them. So it's kind of hard to go from where it's so easy to something that seemed to be a whole lot harder.

Bartges: See and that's what happened to our team too. If you looked at our scores in there we were used to—we beat somebody 72 to 12. I mean, we just annihilated people. And then we got in a game where it started to go south and we had never been in a situation like that.

Connelly: Yeah, don't know what to do, get all nervous.

Bartges: We had a kid walk off the floor who only had four fouls.

Connelly: Oh my gosh—

Bartges: Our center thought she had five fouls. And she sat the whole fourth quarter and half of the third quarter. She never went back in the game because they thought she had five fouls.

Connelly: Oh my gosh.

Bartges: (*unintelligible*).

Connelly: Oh my goodness.

Bartges: Yeah.

Connelly: Oh that's awful. That is awful. [laughs]

Bartges: So the last-second shot wasn't really what killed us. [laughs]

Connelly: Oh man well yeah I see what you mean but still that's hard to take. You can see by instant replay that [laughs] that's—

Bartges: Well and that's what Ola Bundy says first thing. Like I told you I don't tell people really where I'm from beforehand. And Ola's like, Oh the first year. And Karen Roppa who was an official—I don't know if you know Karen or not.

Connelly: No.

Bartges: She was an official at the first state tournament. She referred to that tournament as the Tournament of the Shot.

Connelly: [laughs]

Bartges: And then the second tournament there was something else. It was the Tournament of Fouls—

Connelly: Yeah—

Bartges: —or something like that. And she said that first state tournament, that shot, just overshadowed everything and it changed people's perception of females at the bench and on the floor—

Connelly: Uh-huh—

Bartges: —and that that was detrimental.

Connelly: Yeah, sure.

Bartges: Ola was like, I spent all night watching that replay and every time I saw it they got it wrong. [laughter] I said, You were watching the same program we were. [laughter]

Connelly: Oh man, yeah that'd be tough, very tough.

- Bartges: But I think it would be cool to play against your former high school.
- Connelly: You know what, I did eventually end up playing against her. And she had an assistant coach, or co-coach or whatever they call them, Jim McKenzie, excellent coach. He—when I was in high school he coached the boys fresh-soph. He may have done varsity at some point but I wasn't there at that time. I'm not really sure if he did. I think he got out of it. I don't know if it's health problems or what. But he had two daughters who played basketball and one who played in Europe but I don't—her name was name was Pat I think, Pat McKenzie but I think she graduated before our tournament. And Karen McKenzie, her younger sister, was on the Sterling team. And so he got back into it then because of his daughters. And I'm not sure, either he—he got back in, if he actually was her assistant or co-coach or—
- Bartges: They were co-head coaches or associate coaches or something. She made a point of—
- Connelly: Yeah. So she did mention him.
- Bartges: Yeah.
- Connelly: Because he—not that she didn't know what she was doing but he definitely did, so no he could really—coach.
- Bartges: Well your experience is not uncommon in the sense that you may have played some in college but your high school experience was not competitive like that.
- Connelly: Yeah, not at all.
- Bartges: And your college situation was part of your background as a PE teacher.
- Connelly: Right.
- Bartges: Every one has been a PE major. Every person that I've interviewed—
- Connelly: Yeah—
- Bartges: —they have degrees in PE.
- Connelly: Wow, that's interesting.
- Bartges: So their experience and their knowledge base came from—
- Connelly: Right—

Bartges: —from that primarily. There were a few outliers, but as a result of that they either had to read a lot of books or they were very conversant with the boys' coach or they went to clinics.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: It's some combination of those factors because their own personal experiences didn't prepare them for that.

Connelly: Exactly. And when I left there and got out of teaching the more I watched just basketball, whether it would be college or women's or men's. There was so much I didn't know and how lucky—how lucky we were to go here because I had good, quick kids. And I guess I knew a little bit but I learned a whole lot more I didn't know.

Bartges: Well yeah. We always joked it's better to be lucky than good.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: [laughs] Speed kills.

Connelly: Exactly. When I was at Rock Falls we finally—we played Sterling. Rock Falls didn't have a good team. If I was going to play them I would like to play a team that's good. I didn't have a very good team.

Bartges: Ship your Mattoon team up.

Connelly: (*unintelligible*) a few good—a couple of good players but not enough to counteract Sterling who always had good players and good coaching. So our only hope was to hold onto the ball [laughs] and try to never let them get the ball. (*unintelligible*).

Bartges: I know exactly what you're saying.

Connelly: And so we—but I knew we couldn't do that because we didn't have good enough players to pass and be able to keep passing and not lose the ball. But that was the only thing we could do. Anyway, we tried to do that for a while and I can't remember how—we ended up losing like 70-something to 30-something. And I remember Mr. McKenzie saying, Well you know I'm kind of glad you tried that because that's the only thing we haven't seen. [laughs] But no, nothing—it just wasn't going to work anyway, but I know we couldn't play them going up and down [laughs] so—

Bartges: Well and as a coach I mean there's not a lot you can do in that situation. You do what you can think of to try and negate that or at least minimize it.

Connelly: Right. But it was fun but—yeah it would have been interesting so—real exciting time.

Bartges: Yeah. And everyone has had that same response.

Connelly: Um-hm. After our Supersectional which was that one-point win over Champaign Central we had fire trucks bringing us back into town and everybody's going crazy, buses loud and the whole town is going crazy. Not like a win around here when you're in a big city of course you were from a suburb but in the suburb you don't always get that much attention. A little town of 19,000 they are excited and in the stores, they have signs, and everybody's into it. And in the suburbs you've got so many schools. People don't always know what's going on.

Bartges: Well and even my suburban experience would be different today because I think suburbs are different than when I was growing up.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: They're so much bigger. There's two or three schools in one suburb—

Connelly: That's for sure yeah—

Bartges: —instead of one.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: Did you guys get a lot of media coverage in town?

Connelly: We got—I don't know if we got as much as the boys but we got articles quite a bit after every game. It seems like they did some radio a little bit.

Bartges: I was going to ask that—were your games ever on the radio?

Connelly: Yes. I have at least—I have one game from, I don't remember if it's Rock Falls but I paid for—or somebody paid for me but I don't remember what—even what it was. Maybe it was a regional or something, I don't know. But I think we were on once a little bit, not that much. But I do remember being interviewed or something that—sometimes a reporter might interview you or (*unintelligible*). So not too much but a little.

Bartges: Yeah. When you guys went downstate did you have the opportunity to meet or interact with the other coaches? Was there something before the tournament started that—

Connelly: I think there was but I don't even remember it. Because it talked about it in

here, something about something. I don't know if it was here or something else I was reading about how we went down for some publicity thing. But I don't remember that. And I think I remember something afterward. They happened to do something afterwards.

Bartges: My coach didn't attend that because our administration didn't tell her about it.

Connelly: Oh why wouldn't they do that? That's odd. [laughter] (*unintelligible*) did that. I don't remember it (*unintelligible*).

Bartges: They weren't really into girls' sports.

Connelly: It doesn't sound like it. (*unintelligible*).

Bartges: Yeah. It was a very different experience than some of these other coaches have talked about.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: It's interesting. It seems like the people who are from smaller towns and in smaller communities like you said had a different kind of experience (*unintelligible*) and there wasn't—you would have thought it would have been opposite, that financially and everything else we would have had more but—

Connelly: Yes, you'd definitely think that.

Bartges: Not really. We didn't have two uniforms until—home and away uniform until my senior year that matched.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: We had the old uniform that we used and then my junior year we got an away uniform because we had to have it for the state tournament.

Connelly: Yeah. That's what I'm wondering—I saw in here where it said no light—light and dark numbers and so forth so obviously—I don't know if we got that before this year or not either.

Bartges: See and we got the dark uniform that year but we still had the old real—the kind of nylon that doesn't absorb sweat.

Connelly: Yes.

Bartges: That was popular.

Connelly: Yeah.

- Bartges: We had—our home uniforms were that material. And then junior year we got the satin finish kind of stuff that you still see now.
- Connelly: Yeah.
- Bartges: But then senior year they got—they replaced those old home uniforms. But I know a lot of teams didn't have two uniforms in still that state tournament year.
- Connelly: Yeah I can't remember—I don't remember that we had them before. I don't know that we (*unintelligible*). And just like you said you had to have something so.
- Bartges: Well I really appreciate you taking the time to talk some of this stuff over with me.
- Connelly: Oh it was fun. Thanks for coming out. I'm glad you did this.
- Bartges: It's been a good project and I've been fortunate that everyone's willing to allow me into their homes and talk a bit.
- Connelly: Yeah. Oh that's good. So is Nancy still—Nancy Stiff is she still coaching?
- Bartges: She is retiring this year from her teaching position but she's going to continue to coach.
- Connelly: Oh my gosh.
- Bartges: Yeah, she's also the AD.
- Connelly: Oh that's—oh okay. And she's still at Arcola?
- Bartges: She's still at Arcola. I can't remember the name of the town she lives in. She doesn't live in Arcola. She says she lives about thirty miles away.
- Connelly: Thirty miles, wow.
- Bartges: But she's—it's really amazing to me all of these people have not aged.
- Connelly: [laughs]
- Bartges: I mean they're remarkably in remarkable shape. And they look healthy, everyone's obviously active and done stuff and have really for lack of a better phrase taken really good care of themselves. It's really sort of a tribute in a way to that generation that was coming into this and was active in sport and PE and health and all that stuff.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: And they've really lived that life.

Connelly: Uh-huh, well that's good—and especially maybe if they stayed in coaching they kind of had to stay in shape. I guess they didn't have to but it would help.
[laughs]

Bartges: Yeah. For some it's easier than others.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: It wasn't always as easy for me.

Connelly: Oh my gosh, [laughs] it goes on easy but it doesn't come off.

Bartges: No that's true. You said you got out of teaching. What do you do?

Connelly: I work at (*unintelligible*) there's an elementary school about 4/10 of a mile from here called Meadow Lane and I've worked there for the past eleven years. And I work with kids with behavior problems. And I work with their teacher and sometimes have to bring their parents in—not as much with their parents but certainly the teachers and the kids and try and oh—I want to say try to do some prevention for kids that we know are having trouble. And I have this room called a Recovery Room. If they can't be in class and if they're not safe and they—

Bartges: Like counseling?

Connelly: It's sort of but we have a counselor who really does the counseling but I do some of that too, trying to work on behavior with teachers, trying to help them learn how to—we have this program we've been doing for quite a while called BIST, Behavior Intervention Support Team which is trying to get them to understand that kids have a reason that they're having problems and not just doing that because they decide to be a jerk today or something.

Bartges: Yeah. A lot of them have home problems—

Connelly: Yeah. So that's kind of what I do.—Can I get you a drink? Water, Pepsi, root beer?

Bartges: Oh no thanks. I have stuff in the car.

Connelly: Okay.

Bartges: I drank a bunch of stuff on the way down.

Connelly: All right.

Bartges: I think the only person really that I've talked with that is not well is Ola.

Connelly: Oh really? Now how old is she?

Bartges: I don't ask people how old they are.

Connelly: I understand.

Bartges: I ask them when they graduated from high school.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: And Sue Strong is like, Do I have to tell you that?

Connelly: She's about twelve years older than I am I think.

Bartges: I said, Well it kind of helps put you in a group.

Connelly: Yeah, to tell the history of the story.

Bartges: Yeah, and so she did acquiesce. But Ola graduated from high school in 1953 so that makes her seventy. That's not that old.

Connelly: No, that's not that bad.

Bartges: I don't think that's old at all.

Connelly: It's getting a lot younger the closer I get to it.

Bartges: Exactly. She's younger than my dad and she looks about ten years older than my dad.

Connelly: Yeah, because even my parents—

Bartges: He's seventy-four.

Connelly: Interesting.

[interruption]

Connelly: Yeah, different experiences of those eight people. Because she said—I think you said everybody stayed in coaching and teaching a lot longer than I did.

Bartges: All but one. My coach—the second coach, the coach that took us to state, she got out that year. After '77 was the last year she coached and she never went back to it.

Connelly: Did she not like it? I mean that was a bad experience.

Bartges: That was a bad experience. [laughter] Maybe that's why. That was a very bad experience.

Connelly: Then blow a 13-point lead then some player doesn't play a game when she only had four fouls and (*unintelligible*).

Bartges: Yeah that last-second shot (*unintelligible*). But you know she was a very emotional woman and she was very invested in us.

Connelly: Yeah.

Bartges: And after that game her and her husband they moved to Washington State and she got out of teaching. And they had a girl, they had a daughter. And I guess since the girl started to get older the districts found out she had coached or something, they wanted her to coach and she said, I can never coach any other group of kids. That was my team. I'll never have another team like that and I don't want to even—

Connelly: Wow—

Bartges: It's not fair to the kids to put them in that situation.

Connelly: She didn't even—boy she was really committed. [laughs]

Bartges: Yeah she was. And it was—she was—she like yourself, had less experience actually than you. She didn't play—she had never played basketball.

Connelly: Oh my gosh.

Bartges: Her only exposure to basketball was through her PE educational background.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: And so then—and she was hired to fill the place of the woman who was our first coach who retired to start a family.

Connelly: Right.

Bartges: And she came into this situation of—the program had already been started. It

was the third year of the program and all of a sudden here she had all these kids that were extremely athletic—

Connelly: Right—

Bartges: —6'3", 5'10". I mean we had a big team, we had an athletic team, a strong team. And we just killed people.

Connelly: Yeah, 6'3". [laughs]

Bartges: And Deb, that girl went on. She played at Western Illinois University. And she's also a PE teacher now and a coach. But it was—I don't know, she said she could never coach any other kids after that.

Connelly: Wow, not even her daughter's team.

Bartges: No.

Connelly: [laughs]

[end]