Interview with Marian Kneer

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Interviewer: Ellyn Bartges

A Note to the Reader

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Bartges: It's October twenty-fourth. We're interviewing Marian Kneer in Plainfield, Illinois. And to start off with, I'm going to ask Dr. Kneer, where did you go to high school?

Kneer: Peoria. Woodruff High School in Peoria, Illinois.

Bartges: Oh, you went to Woodruff?

Kneer: Uh-huh.

Bartges: Did you play high school sports?

Kneer: Yes, I did.

Bartges: What sports did you play?

Kneer: Just about every one you could play then—field hockey, basketball, volleyball, softball.

Bartges: Were these organized sports, GAA [Girls' Athletic Association] days, extramural, interscholastic?

Kneer: They were all intramural because we couldn't play interscholastics.

Bartges: When you played your intramural sports, you played other teams from your school? Did you play before school, after school, or during lunch?

Kneer: Our intramural?

Bartges: Yeah.

Kneer: We weren't playing other—intramurals is all students from the same high school.

Bartges: Right, so you had multiple teams from your school?

Kneer: We had multiple teams within the—yeah, like a hundred girls would go out and we'd be invited in teams, and then we would play each other in intramurals.

Bartges: Okay. Did you do that after school?

Kneer: We did it after school.

Bartges: About how many times a week?

Kneer: Oh, two or—about two.

Bartges: Okay.

Kneer: Now I played—I don't know whether you're going to ask me this later, but I also played outside of school, not school sponsored during that time.

Bartges: Okay, I'll come back to that.

Kneer: Okay.

Bartges: With your intramural program, do you remember approximately how many people were involved in that?

Kneer: Quite a few. When I think about it, the gym was a pretty busy place. I'd say a hundred or two.

Bartges: Really?

Kneer: Um-hmm.

Bartges: That's good. Did you have class teams at all?

Kneer: No.

Bartges: Okay.

Kneer: Oh, when we played in class, in PE [Physical Education] classes, did we have teams to play against each other?

Bartges: No. I think the meaning there is that, did you have teams that were only freshman, only sophomore—

Kneer: No, no, no, we didn't do that.

Bartges: Okay. When you played basketball in your intramural program, was that five-player or six-player?

Kneer: Six-player.

Bartges: When did you graduate from high school?

Kneer: 1942.

Bartges: What is the highest level of education you've attained?

Kneer: A Ph.D.

Bartges: And where did you go to college?

Kneer: I went to Illinois State University for my bachelor's degree and my master's degree, and the University of Michigan for an education specialist and a Ph.D. in education.

Bartges: What are your degrees in? You mentioned education, but what field?

Kneer: Physical education.

Bartges: Physical education? And that's what your Ph.D. is in as well?

Kneer: Yes, it is.

Bartges: Okay. You mentioned—well, I'll go back to that. Are you familiar with the Postal Tournament?

Kneer: Oh, yes.

Bartges: Did you participate in it?

Kneer: Absolutely not. I thought it was stupid.

Bartges: What was that?

Kneer: Well, it was like if you were—like for swimming—now maybe Helen could answer that for you later because I think she might have—but let's say if you had, like, a swimming class—swimming team, and you would run the events and then you would turn in your times and what have you. And then up in Chicago area at the IHSA [Illinois High School Association] office, GAA, Girls Athletic, they'd compare the scores and then they'd—whoever had the best scores would be the winners.

Bartges: So it was a paper tournament?

Kneer: A paper tournament, yeah. And they had that in—I was trying to think what other sports they had that in, but they had it in several sports. But mostly it was individual sports, as I remember it.

Bartges: Okay. Did you have any experience in Industrial Leagues?

Kneer: Lots, played a lot.

Bartges: What did you play?

Kneer: Well, I played basketball and I played softball.

Bartges: And what was that like? Describe the Industrial League, your situation with that.

Kneer: Well, I played in several. But it doesn't matter which team I played on or whether it was basketball or softball. It was sponsored by some company. I played for a brewery, I played for a gas station, I played for a coal company, and I played for Caterpillar Tractor Company. And they would sponsor the team. They would see that we had a place to play, they would see that we had a coach. In Caterpillar's case we saw that we had a woman who looked after us.

Bartges: So a chaperone sort of thing?

Kneer: Chaperone, she was—that's a good thing. She was our chaperone. She went with us out of town. She was around in the locker room when I played with

Caterpillar. This did not exist with the other teams. We would practice—in softball we would practice starting in about February and March at some community gym that the company could get a hold of, and we'd practice and then we'd start playing about April, and we'd go to the ends of the tournaments in August.

Bartges: How many games might you play in a typical season?

Kneer: Well, I would say in the summer months we would play, usually—I would say on the average of two or three games a week in the summer months, and just prior before school was out, maybe in May, we might play three or four. I guess, looking at the time, we probably played thirty or forty games.

Bartges: Okay.

Kneer: The thing that was most—when I played, though, in ASA softball, like regional tournaments—

Bartges: Um-hm.

Kneer: —the schedule was terrible. There was one tournament I was in, I caught four softball games in one day.

Bartges: That's a long day.

Kneer: You got it.

Bartges: And these are all fast-pitch games?

Kneer: All fast-pitch softball.

Bartges: Were your parents, peers, teachers supportive of this activity?

Kneer: Very supportive of it. I never, ever felt that it was wrong for me as a girl to be participating in any of these sports in school or out of school. I grew up in a very sports-minded family, not my mother so much as my father. Interesting enough, my father would have probably given anything to have one of his sons be an athlete, and he had to settle for his daughter. (laughs) But he never resented it. He went to my games, and when I would come home after a game, he'd be sitting there waiting for me to talk it over and help me. He gave me a lot of good advice too.

Bartges: You mentioned the supportiveness of your parents. What about your teachers? It sounds like, from the period you're talking, you may have been playing while you were in high school.

Kneer: I was. And it was interesting, my high schools were very supportive of it. I remember several—particularly male—teachers who knew my nickname, which is Gabby, and they'd like to call me that, and they would ask me about my games and stuff. And I sensed that it was something to be proud of. And I don't think my PE teacher, woman PE teacher, was resentful at all that I was playing on commercial or industrial teams outside of school.

Bartges: How did that affect your ability to play intramurals or GAA?

Kneer: Well, it wasn't as demanding. It wasn't quite as much fun, but it was alright. I enjoyed it. It was a chance to play.

Bartges: Did you play AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] ball?

Kneer: AAU basketball.

Bartges: Basketball? What years did you play there?

Kneer: Well, I played AAU basketball, I'm trying to think. I was in high school between 1938 and 1942, so I know I was playing then. I probably played from about 1939 to about 1945, until I went to college.

Bartges: And that was out of Peoria?

Kneer: That was out of Peoria. So I'd play basketball in the winter and softball in the summer.

Bartges: Obviously you had a coach for that. Was it a male coach?

Kneer: Always. All my coaches were male.

Bartges: Okay. Did you serve in the military or the National Guard at any time?

Kneer: No, I didn't.

Bartges: Okay. Did you teach or coach in the secondary school system?

Kneer: Well, that's an interesting question. Of course there was no opportunity at East Peoria High School in the early—I mean, all the time I was there from 1949 to 1969 it was not legal for us to have teams. However, in the early fifties, we kind of had a little illicit league going on in Peoria. We had the girls' teams representing all girls from East Peoria, from Peoria Woodruff, from Peoria Manual, and I think Peoria Central. It was at least four teams. They were all students from that—girls from those schools, and they were all coached by one of their PE teachers. I don't know how they practiced. I

know on Friday nights I would just have the girls come down to the gym after school and we'd practice for an hour-and-a-half or so. And then on Tuesday nights we went down to a gym that was owned by the Salvation Army, and it was called the Salvation Army league. And we would have our little games. And these games were reported in the paper and the (unintelligible) put in the paper. (laughs)

Bartges: And they were high school kids?

Kneer: They were high school kids. And to my knowledge, if I remember correctly, we were playing regular five-player basketball.

Bartges: How many people on your teams?

Kneer: Oh, I had about ten.

Bartges: Okay. Did you have tryouts?

Kneer: Not really.

Bartges: Just sort of word of mouth?

Kneer: Because what I did was I just kind of invited girls that I knew. But if I had more than that, I might have, but I don't think I ever got to that point of deselecting anybody.

Bartges: Okay. You mentioned East Peoria High School. How many years did you teach there?

Kneer: Nineteen.

Bartges: Was your principal male or female?

Kneer: Male.

Bartges: Your period of time is a little bit different than some of the other people that I've interviewed, so this may not have been a question, but were your administrators—your principal and your superintendent—in favor or against adding girls' basketball or sports in general?

Kneer: I think they were supportive. My principals were all former PE coaches, teachers and coaches, and I don't think they were opposed to it. I know when I went to my principal to ask him to support—in the early and mid-sixties to support a proposal to allow girls to compete, he supported it.

Bartges: What was his name?

Kneer: His name was Russell Moore.

Bartges: Russell Moore? Okay. And was he the last principal you served under?

Kneer: Yeah. Yeah, and his wife passed away shortly after I left there, and he ended up marrying a woman who was—and you might have interviewed her, I don't know, or you might want to interview her on basketball. He married this woman who was on my faculty as a PE teacher. Her name was Barbara Jones, now it's Barbara Jones Moore.

Bartges: (Unintelligible) has come up.

Kneer: And she ended up being the athletic director at East Peoria Community High School, both boys and girls.

Bartges: And they're still in the Peoria area?

Kneer: Yeah, I can give you their addresses, but you can probably look it up in the phone book too.

Bartges: Did you ever participate in National Sports Institute or a National Leadership Conference?

Kneer: Oh yes, I was on the first National—what do they call that—Sports Institute, which was in the middle of the sixties.

Bartges: Um-hm.

Kneer: I was on the steering committee that planned all those. The first one was held down at Oklahoma City.

Bartges: Yes.

Kneer: And it was in—it was kind of co-sponsored between DGWS [Division for Girls' and Women's Sports] and the Olympics. The Olympics were behind it. (unintelligible) was representing the Olympics. She was on the steering committee. And of course the real movement behind that, far as they were concerned, was that women weren't doing very well in track and field and gymnastics, so that's what we were promoting.

Bartges: At the Olympic level?

Kneer: Yeah, at the Olympic level. Well, we were promoting it at—if you know how that program went, we had this big—every state was invited to—if I can get this right now, every state was invited to send a gymnastics specialist, a track and field specialist, and a generalist. So there was a team of about three people for track and field and gymnastics. And they were trained at this meeting to come back and have a statewide conference promoting track and field and promoting gymnastics. And then later on after that, they began to proliferate that and run it to other activities. So I was on the original steering committee for that.

Bartges: The goal of the U.S. Olympic Committee, obviously, was to produce athletes that would do better in future Olympics. From the PE people's, NAGWS [National Association for Girls and Women in Sport] and from AAHPERD's [American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance] perspective, what was the steering committee's mindset?

Kneer: Well, I think we wanted to give girls more of an opportunity to participate in those sports because most schools really didn't have track and field and gymnastics for girls very much. I know at my high school we—shortly after that—we did not have track and field and gymnastics, I was not taught track and field or gymnastics in college, so consequently I didn't teach it in my curriculum. But when that program started, we put it in our curriculum and we began to teach girls those sports.

Bartges: So these institutes and leadership conferences were training sessions for educators?

Kneer: That's right.

Bartges: And when you came back from that institute or those conferences, you did disseminate that knowledge?

Kneer: Oh, yes. We had—Illinois had a big statewide conference inviting people to come and to learn how to promote and put in their programs—track and field, and another one we had in gymnastics.

Bartges: Do you remember where those were held?

Kneer: No, I don't.

Bartges: Were they well attended?

Kneer: Yes, they were.

Bartges: Did you get the feeling that after those conferences, that information was taken back to the individual school districts and was applied?

Kneer: I would say—I don't know the extent of it, but as somebody interested in those areas I'd say—I would say probably it made an increase of two or three times.

Bartges: So it was well received?

Kneer: Yes, very well received. See, there was a generalist and a specialist. And a generalist would try to integrate it into the educational aspects, and then the specialist would—(unintelligible) In Illinois we couldn't talk about competing in any sports because at that time you couldn't do that anyway.

Bartges: How did you apply it to Illinois, though? If you're coming back from—

Kneer: You applied it into the PE program.

Bartges: Into the PE program, okay.

Kneer: Um-hm.

Bartges: Were officials in Illinois concerned—and I'm going to go to basketball here—with what version of the rules were used in PE or in intramural or GAA?

Kneer: Concern? I don't think there was any controversy. I think we all conformed and used the six-player game.

Bartges: And did you use a standard sort of Iowa model or did you use full court rovers[1]?

Kneer: That's a good question. I think near the end we were beginning to use a rover, but up to that time we used that *can't cross the center line*. I hated it. Since I had played AAU five-person basketball, I thought it was stupid. And only two dribbles, you know. (laughs)

Bartges: In 1971 the National Basketball Committee made their Experimental Rules official, which was supposed to make basketball in Illinois five-player basketball. Do you think this had a big impact?

Kneer: I really don't know. At that point I was at the University of Illinois. I was in the college level at that point and really out of high school sports and really

[1] In the 1950s and 1960s women's basketball was often played with two stationary guards, two stationary forwards, and two "rovers" who were allowed to run the entire court. http://www.ncweb.com/biz/sherock/history.html

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wasn't—had very little to do with it, and I was involved in other things at that point.

Bartges: This is to sort of tailor it to you because you have a little different situations than the high school coaches. As you began to have students come in after this point in time, and maybe you didn't do basketball in some of your classes, but was their knowledge better about five-player basketball than it would have been?

Kneer: Oh, absolutely. I taught one basketball class at the university. It was kind of an experimental thing, believe it or not. I was co-author with Dr. Helen Heitmann, and we wrote a book on humanistic individualized instruction in physical education. And so we went, If you really believed in that, then could you put boys and girls together? So we offered a basketball class. And it was interesting because we didn't say for women or for men. Well, but there was a mistake in it, and at first it was only women. And so when I met with the class I said, "Well, this is open to men." Oh, I guess there were some—I don't know what the controversy was, but the bottom line was when they found out this was going to be a co-ed basketball class, I thought the men would leave. I actually got more men back in on the second meeting than I had in the beginning. And we were playing five-player basketball. Those girls knew—I mean they'd had some—some of them didn't because they were—this was college service—service class in college. And by the way, it worked out very well.

Bartges: Did it?

Kneer: Um-hm.

Bartges: And so you had co-ed teams?

Kneer: Yeah.

Bartges: When was that?

Kneer: Oh, I'd say about 1974, someplace in there.

Bartges: Oh, okay. This is just sort of a rote question because I know what your answer's going to be. After the basketball committee changed the rules, were you in favor of that, that everything should be five-player?

Kneer: Oh, absolutely. I was never opposed to it. How could I, who preferred five-player, be opposed to girls having it? (laughs)

Bartges: And having played five-player and seeing other people who hadn't played five-player, why were you so much in favor? What was it about the five-player game that drew your support?

Kneer: (laughs) I don't know how to answer that exactly. It just—there's so much more freedom and so many more people to be able to work the ball around and be able to get it into the basket to get a decent shot. I mean, when you've only got three people on one side of the court, and here you are feeling helpless at the center line, and you can't go over and be part of it, you know. I just thought it made a better game. It gave you more chances to screen and to pass and do different kinds of things.

Bartges: Okay. Did you have a role in getting interscholastic basketball added for girls in Illinois?

Kneer: No.

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

Kneer: No.

Bartges: You mentioned it and I want to formalize it—did you belong to groups within your profession that were active in the girls' sports movement or sports?

Kneer: Yeah, in the—yeah, of course. I was very active with NAGWS or DGWS, the Division of Girls and Women's Sports, and with some of their meetings and stuff. I was very supportive of their efforts to try and do something about it.

Bartges: Were you active in IAHPERD [Illinois Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance], or the national governing body, AAHPERD [American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance]?

Kneer: I've been very active in—you mean the Alliance for American—

Bartges: Yes.

Kneer: I've been very active—and a past president—of NASPE, the National Association for Sport in Physical Education. So I tell you I was president, and I was on the board of governors. I think that's active. (laughs)

Bartges: Okay. Billie Jean King[2] says that she hates labels and she hates being labeled; however, for the purpose of this interview, how would you characterize yourself during this period in your life, as it relates to sport?

Kneer: Well, I suppose I've always loved sports. I like to watch sports, I like to play sports. I just thought it was something that everybody ought to do and it would—it's a fun, enjoyable thing and everybody all had the opportunity to do it.

Bartges: The people that I've talked to so far, when they answer that question and they talk about other people that they know, and so you know this, is that they characterize you as a pioneer.

Kneer: Oh, really? (laughs) Well, I probably was. I never thought about myself as a pioneer at the time, but that's probably correct. There's no—I do outwardly say that Helen and I were the—I often tell people Helen and I were the pioneers in getting collective support for girls sports in Illinois. I think that's a true statement.

Bartges: Through your work trying to get the IHSA [Illinois High School Association] and principals to add things?

Kneer: That's right. Well, when we started that State Sports Day Committee, it was a statewide organization. We had regular steering committee meetings. We had workshops all over the state. We were—I mean we—once we started this committee, yes, we would—what we tried to do was organize women all over the state through workshops to work with their school districts and try to promote girls' interscholastics.

Bartges: And when you say you would have workshops, were they coaching workshops? Were they instruction workshops?

Kneer: No, no, they were not coaching workshops.

Bartges: Administrative, how to get—

Kneer: How to get yourself—how to work toward sports days, what this program was all about, what it would mean, how it could be operated, what we needed to do to get support for it.

Bartges: So it was organizational—

[2] Billie Jean King is a former American professional tennis player. A strong advocate for sexual equality, King participated in and won the Battle of the Sexes tennis match of 1973 against Bobby Riggs.

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Kneer: Exactly.

Bartges: Sort of like a grassroots political movement.

Kneer: Right, yeah, yeah. We had a lot of conferences up around the Chicago area. And by the way, Sylvia Massic was very—she was one of our committees that worked with the sports day movement.

Bartges: From (unintelligible)?

Kneer: Yeah, um-hm.

Bartges: See, I didn't know that. I'm going to list, and because of the time period, you may or may not have an answer for this, a collection of states that surround or border Illinois and the years that they implemented a state tournament for girls' basketball. Iowa's first state tournament was in 1926, Indiana 1975, Michigan 1973, Wisconsin in 1976 and they started with three separate classes. Minnesota 1974, Kentucky 1920 to 1932 and then they came back to it in 1975, Tennessee 1965, Missouri 1973, and Illinois in 1977. As an educator or coach, how did you feel when you saw states that surrounded Illinois competing in competitive state tournaments and Illinois didn't have one?

Kneer: I knew about the Iowa one because that's the earliest one. I used to point to Iowa all the time, say, "What's so bad that's happening in Iowa? Why do we want to deny girls in Illinois when Iowa's doing it and it's working fine, and all the bad things you say is going to happen isn't happening?" So I used to point to Iowa all the time as an example of why it was so unfair and we ought to be doing it.

Bartges: What kind of bad things did they say?

Kneer: Oh, you know, things like overemphasis and making the kids practice too much and—in some respects this wasn't in the best interest of socializing girls to be nice ladies, I guess. (laughs) I say—you asked me about—earlier about did I feel support for—as an athlete. Yeah, I did, but I guess I grew up occasionally being told I was a tomboy. (laughs)

Bartges: Do you feel that people in Illinois were afraid of the Iowa model, that they didn't want Illinois sports to be dominated by basketball the way Iowa was?

Kneer: Frankly, when you say people in Illinois, in my own mind the people that I think that felt that way were people like Geraldine Renard, Barbara Curge, and several of their colleagues who had power and influence that didn't support it, who came through an era much earlier in their indoctrination that

got the notion that sports were not good for girls, and so therefore they didn't want what Iowa had. But among my own colleagues and fellow teachers and so forth, I didn't feel they supported—I mean, I felt that they were supportive of what Iowa was doing.

Bartges: Okay. Again, this question may—you were out of high school by this time—about the process of getting a state tournament in Illinois added. It doesn't appear that you were involved in that process.

Kneer: No.

Bartges: Did you attend the first state tournament for girls' basketball?

Kneer: No, no.

Bartges: Did you watch it on TV?

Kneer: You bet.

Bartges: What were your thoughts or feelings when you watched that?

Kneer: Oh my goodness, absolute pride. I couldn't stop smiling the whole time. Even to this day when I drive my car by a school and I see girls carrying their little gym bag and see them out on the field after school playing softball or whatever, I just—I just keep—I'm just so happy I can't stop. I'll pick up the *Joliet Herald Tribune*, the local newspaper here in this area—does a wonderful job of covering high school sports and they have as many pictures of girl athletes playing in all kinds of sports as they do boys. And every morning when I pick up that paper I just—I just can't keep—stop smiling. I always want to say to Helen, "Look at this, look at this. God, doesn't that make you feel good?" (laughs)

Bartges: When you watched that first basketball tournament in 1977, do you remember having any thoughts on the caliber of play?

Kneer: No. No, that never bothered me. I guess I do know that in the early days, I didn't think the girls played terribly well, and I'm pleased to see that that level is much better today.

Bartges: You sort of touched on this, but I'm going to ask it in order anyway. In your opinion, given the previous conversation, what was the major reason that slowed basketball from being added as an interscholastic sport sanctioned by the IHSA?

Kneer: Well, I think a couple things. I think one, for sure, it's probably the most popular sport. They knew that that would have a lot of demand, it would take a lot more time, and—

Bartges: So it'd be more work for them?

Kneer: More work for the teachers, takes more gyms. I have to say in my own—I fought for more—all kinds of space at my high school, at East Peoria High School. It was really very upsetting to me—oh, I'm going to say maybe ten years ago I happened to go down to visit, and one of our gyms was changed so it could accommodate playing an after school event with bleachers and stuff on it, which took away playing space for PE. And that did disturb me a lot because I did not want that to have to happen. But the boys didn't want to give up their gym, and so they had to do something like that. So that kind of space problem and the encroachment on quality physical education—I am mostly interested at this stage in quality physical education than I am inter-scholastics. Not that I don't want inter-scholastics. I want both of them to thrive in their own right, but I don't want them to get in each other's way.

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

Kneer: I really wasn't aware of any of that.

Bartges: Do you think there is any one group—administrators, coaches, players, parents, who may have been more concerned or vocal about mannish behavior? And I use the word mannish because that's a phrase I've pulled out of older research, like from the twenties and thirties and forties.

Kneer: Yeah, I guess I didn't sense that really.

Bartges: Okay. What factors can you identify that influenced previous decisions against interscholastic competition? And you mentioned gym space, things like that—conflicts with PE?

Kneer: Well, gym space, teacher time. I think school districts themselves knew—They know what it costs them to run boys' interscholastics, so why do they want to—why do these principals want to put their heads in the oven and have to start paying out the same thing for girls? Go find women to coach and find men to coach or what have you.

Bartges: What was it that you think changed the IHSA's stand on adding girls' sports?

Kneer: Well, since it happened before Title IX,[3] I can't just say Title IX, but it—Title IX certainly accelerated its coming to be. I'd like to think that the sports day movement and the work we were doing around the state did it.

Bartges: When you were at East Peoria, did you have any groups of parents or kids that were pushing for increasing play?

Kneer: Not to my knowledge, no.

Bartges: Okay. Do you think the AMA's [American Medical Association] endorsement for vigorous exercise helped change public or educational policy towards interscholastic sports?

Kneer: Well, I think that helps a lot. I don't think there's question in the early turn of the 20th century that there was a feeling that movement for girls and activity was not good for being a woman or reproducing or what have you. And I think as time went along and we began to—even the Olympic movement with women participating in the Olympics, I think that helped. I think some of the research that was coming out that physical activity was good for you, and fitness and doctors supporting it, and so forth, I think that was all helpful, just as it is today in getting our PE back into our programs.

Bartges: Yeah, and the push against obesity and trying to—

Kneer: Oh, right now, exactly.

Bartges: Right.

Kneer: Exactly.

Bartges: How do you feel Title IX affected girls' basketball in Illinois, or sports?

Kneer: (laughs) Interscholastics?

Bartges: Yes.

Kneer: I just think it helped to support giving them their due, their fair share. I mean, you couldn't ignore it anymore. They had to do it whether they liked it or not.

Bartges: Do you think that, at least in the early period, that most of the administrators were anxious to comply with Title IX?

[3] Title IX is a portion of the Education Amendments of 1972. It states, in part, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

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Kneer: No, I don't think they were anxious. Why should they have to fight with trying to spend all that extra money from the board and get gyms and get teachers? Why do they want to put their head into that little oven? But they had to so they did. I don't think they did it willingly, I really don't. Even though I didn't feel my principal, for example, was opposed to it, I don't think he was excited about having to do it.

Bartges: And there's a difference.

Kneer: Um-hm.

Bartges: How quickly did you see changes after Title IX? We talk about funding for travel and schedules and publicity.

Kneer: Well—yeah. I wasn't really terribly intimately involved, but for looking at it, it looked to me like things just kept growing and within I'd say seven to ten years afterwards, I thought we were pretty much arrived to getting equal treatment.

Bartges: 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 sports towards a more competitive male sporting model. Do you agree or disagree, and why?

Kneer: No, I agree with her. I think it did. This may not be relevant to your question, but I told—earlier I said I really think at this point we're actually—I could see some of the problems with interscholastics for boys, even though I was fighting for it. Actually, I originally fighted for sports days, something that was not so intensive in what it was doing. And personally, I was very supportive of, at the national level, on interscholastics at the college level. Some of the—I can't remember the name of that organization right now, but they were against giving scholarships to girls at colleges.

Bartges: The AIAW [Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women]?

Kneer: Yeah, the AIAW had a rule that you could not give scholarships. And that was an attempt to try to keep things under control. And when it got challenged by somebody in Florida and went to court, they lost because they said girls have the right to have whatever boys have. So AIAW had to give up that rule. I think the mistake—in my opinion, the mistake we made is saying, "Equal to what?" Title IX—equal to what the boys have, or equal to some standard that is good? Had we said equal to some standard that's good, we might have gotten away with something like that.

Bartges: Would you say that that's more of the—what some people call the AIAW model in philosophy? When the NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] obviously tried to take over the AIAW, it was just such a divergent model. The women had really tried to control it after the AIAW, and the NCAA was a completely different beast.

Kneer: Absolutely. I was well aware of what was happening at the time, and I was very sorry that it happened.

Bartges: When you talk about sports days and that you were in favor of following the sports day model, explain that, that sports day model. Lay it out for me.

Kneer: Well, what would happen is a school—or in my case, when I participated in sports days, it was in college because they couldn't have it here in Illinois—but it doesn't matter whether it would be in the high school or in the college, the announcement would go up that basketball teams were going to be formed and anybody interested come out and try out, and we'd have tryouts and a team would be formed. And then we'd practice about no more than two nights a week for an hour-and-a-half to two hours. And then there would be competitive games against other schools. And usually we would invite one or more, usually no more than two, other schools to come to our campus. They would bring their teams and we'd have a little round robin play. And then afterwards we'd have a little social event and go home. We didn't have standings, we didn't keep win-loss records.

Bartges: Did you keep score?

Kneer: Oh yeah, we kept score.

Bartges: Were most of the coaches women?

Kneer: Yes, all of them were women.

Bartges: Your teams were intact so that UIC [Univeristy of Illinois at Chicago] would be one team and Illinois State would be one team and—

Kneer: Absolutely.

Bartges: —Western Illinois. You didn't mingle?

Kneer: We did not mingle. That's the play day model. Sports day model was you had intact teams that were coached, and you had a regular schedule of these games that you played.

Bartges: When you say you had tryouts, did you have cuts?

Kneer: Sure. We had too many kids out that we could handle, we had cuts.

Bartges: When you had play days at UIC, how many people would try out for something like that?

Kneer: We didn't have play days at UIC when I was at UIC. They didn't even exist at that point, and we couldn't do this. But Illinois State University—what was your question now exactly?

Bartges: Oh, if—how many people would try out?

Kneer: Oh, I don't know, at Illinois State I'd say maybe forty, fifty.

Bartges: So this was when you were a student at Illinois State?

Kneer: Yeah.

Bartges: And that's what you played? You played basketball and softball?

Kneer: Yeah. Now, I have to say this, that—I played field hockey, volleyball, basketball, and softball sports days. We also had a badminton team. I guess I went to play badminton. We also had tennis teams.

Bartges: Okay.

Kneer: Now, I have to say this, I am not an advocate of that model, per se, today, but I am an advocate of a little less demand on students' time in order to participate.

Bartges: Yeah, it's a big time commitment.

Kneer: I just don't think that we have a right to demand the kind of restrictions we put on kids today in order to play. And interesting enough, I might say when I—I remember one class I was teaching in motivation in sports. And I usually started the class out by saying—and I had a lot of coaches come to my—these are graduate classes. And I'd say, "Well what motivates you to take this course in motivation other than maybe you need four hours of credit?" or something like that. (laughs) And I was kind of surprised. And when I talk about this I'm talking about, oh, maybe the end of the seventies. So women's sports really weren't too far underway at that point. I had a few women coaches but most were men in my classes. And they'd say, "Well, we're trying to motivate some of the good athletes to come out." And I said, "What? Well, yeah, we know—" From our PE classes we know there are a lot of good athletes that don't come out for the sports that we coach. So I said, "Well, why do you think they don't come out?" And they'd say things like, "Well—"

I'll just make this short, tell you the bottom line. The bottom line that came out of this discussion was a lot of these guys—kids would not come out for a sport if they didn't think they could be a starter. They weren't about to invest all that time and sit on the bench, or they didn't want to come out if they didn't think their team was going to be a winner. Now, they might be willing to sit on the bench if they think their team was going to be a winner and they could be with a winner. But unless they thought that it was really worth their while that they could play all the time or they were going to be with a winner, they didn't—a lot of the kids didn't want to come out. Of course, I explored that with them and tried to get to the bottom of that, but—(laughs)

Bartges: I still saw that a little bit in the high schools. There were kids that were athletic, you could tell it. They had certain attributes that would be beneficial, and they had no interest in competing.

Kneer: Yeah. I could see why—they had other things they wanted to do, and sports are so encumbrance you can't do it.

Bartges: Yes, and that's what most of them had. They were active in band or choir or the play or any number of other things.

Kneer: And I know what coaches say. Coaches say, "Well, if you want to win and you want to get a scholarship to go to a college, you got to practice this much." From my point of view, I agree with that. I think that if you want to get a scholarship or you want to be a great athlete or a professional athlete, you probably got to practice that much. But I don't think that is a school's responsibility. We don't do that in band, we don't do that in debate, so why do we do it in athletics? My feeling is, Let's go back to practicing a couple nights a week, couple hours a night. Let's get our schedules in order, and then when you see a kid that's really good, let's get a community AAU team going and send that kid to that program and let them do all their extra practice there and play on a team there.

Bartges: Yeah, the time commitment is—these kids play thirty games a year.

Kneer: Of course.

Bartges: Thirty-two games. It's a huge schedule.

Kneer: I couldn't believe it. I was on the athletic board at UIC the last couple of years I was there before I retired in the mid-eighties, and I don't know, something came up, and I found out that our baseball team at UIC played seventy-two games. Now we were on a quarter system at the time. Well, a quarter system, that's ten weeks.

Bartges: Yeah.

Kneer: That's almost every day they're playing, and they're out of town—

Bartges: How many classes are they missing?

Kneer: Of course. And I finally checked back into women's softball. It wasn't quite as many as seventy-two, but it was about fifty-eight, sixty.

Bartges: Which is about the NCAA maximum.

Kneer: Yeah. And I just think it's wrong. It's just absolutely wrong.

Bartges: Yeah.

Kneer: As I said, I used to speak and talk a lot about it, but, of course, at this point I've pretty much—when I would (unintelligible) of NASPE I got a special committee formed to try to look into this and try to do something, but it didn't—we came up with some good ideas, but it never—it just couldn't take hold. The whole zest for sports and the money and stuff that's behind it is so powerful, it's very hard to change it.

Bartges: It is, and especially with the NCAA. They have such tight control over everything and nothing can break through that perimeter.

Kneer: Not much difference with the IHSA either.

Bartges: No.

Kneer: (laughs)

Bartges: And that's one of the things that I wonder about is why did the IHSA change? Was it the threat of lawsuits? Was it, like you said, the groundswell of organization? One of the things that I hear in interviewing people, I hear two different things. One is that the IHSA realized it was coming, and so they wanted to control it so they took it and disseminated the knowledge down. The other is the opposite, that the swell was from the bottom, and it bubbled up until the IHSA realized that they had to change.

Kneer: Oh, I think it came from the bottom up, I really do. I think they began to realize that more and more people were saying, "Girls have a right to have what the boys have."

Bartges: Yeah.

Kneer: And they saw that coming. And more and more talk was on it. And I do think there was—I think there was some pressure within the schools a bit. Some of the girls were beginning to make noises, We'd like to play. And with some of these teams that were outside of—the industrial or commercial teams like I played on—that had to add a little pressure to it too. I used to have male faculty members say to me when I was a high school student and these guys knew I was playing outside of school and they'd say, "How come you can't play on a Peoria Woodruff High School team?" And I said, "Don't you know the Illinois High School Association won't let us do that? Girls can't do that." And you can't believe the number of men that would tell me that was wrong. More so than the women because the women at that stage were a little older. They were older than me as a student, and they had not had an opportunity to play much, so they didn't have any real—any support for it. I found most of the support I could really get came from men.

Bartges: That seems to be what I'm hearing, that the people who felt supported got that support from men either as principals, primarily a lot of the principals, or athletic directors, who either had a daughter or who really saw the inequity in it and felt that it was wrong and that it needed to change.

Kneer: That's exactly right.

Bartges: But that that wasn't necessarily a unilateral opinion. It's just that in these pockets there were these people that existed, and that eventually those people got together.

Kneer: Um-hm.

Bartges: Can you recall anything else that might help me to understand the history of girls' basketball in Illinois or the addition of sports that we haven't touched on?

Kneer: Right now I can't. (laughs)

Bartges: It's a big topic. (laughs)

Kneer: Yeah. I do think the Olympics began to—and television had a lot to do with it too. I think seeing women participating in the Olympics on television helped give support to Illinois on it. I just think—I can't think of any other real landmark other than that. Might have missed it, but I can't—I think that movement about—what's that meeting we had down in Oklahoma, and we started those workshops around the state (unintelligible)?

Bartges: The—

Kneer: I think that helped too.

Bartges: The National Sports Institute and National Leadership Conference.

Kneer: Yeah, those institutes we had helped a lot. And I'm not so sure too that some of the sporting goods companies have had something to do with it. I think they could see it could increase their market if women got into sports, and I think they began to, behind the scenes, put a little pressure on things.

Bartges: That's very true. And it's interesting you mention that because the only place that you see a mention of that is when you get into the marketing aspect of it. In some of the textbooks on women in sport where there are sections, different sections, and one of the things has to do with marketing and promotions.

Kneer: Let me say one other thing that I felt helped women's sports, and it happened in my era as a young athlete in the forties. When I played we had big crowds. One of the reasons we had big crowds, the men were all off in the war and women began to do a lot of the work that men were doing in the factories and stuff. And I think that opened the way for women in general, that women can do things that we never thought women could do before. I think World War II had a profound influence on women's rights and opening the whole world up for women, and with that would come girls' sports.

Bartges: When you were in college—and you didn't go to college straightaway after you graduated from high school—but when you went to college at Illinois State and you played in the play days, did you have fans? Were there people in the stands?

Kneer: In the play days?

Bartges: Yeah.

Kneer: Oh no, there wasn't anybody around to watch on play days.

Bartges: So it wasn't like there were concessions or they charged admission?

Kneer: Oh, no. No. Even sports days in college, we seldom had very many—once in a while softball—we were outside, people would stand around and watch our games, but there wasn't many.

Bartges: How about in your illicit league that you had in Peoria in the forties?

Kneer: Well, I played on commercials, these sponsored teams.

Bartges: Right.

Kneer: Always we played before an audience, and I was accustomed to playing before large audiences. I'd say on the average—when I played with Caterpillar, I was used to playing before five to ten thousand people.

Bartges: And were your games at night?

Kneer: Yes.

Bartges: They charged admission?

Kneer: Oh no, at Caterpillar they were free. But when I played with the Feral Chicks, he did charge admission because he had a—he didn't have a big corporation besides his own little company (unintelligible) us. And he had his own stadium, his own field. We had bleachers and what have you and announcers and all that. And he would—the other team—we went all over the country playing other teams. We went by station wagon with him, but he'd have to have—that money was—he didn't—wasn't into it for the money. He had to pay for his lights and all that stuff. So people had to pay. And when I played for that team, we probably had, oh two, three thousand people on the average would come. That was strictly women's games there.

Bartges: Did they give you equipment? Like, did you have to buy your own mitt or own bat or anything?

Kneer: Oh, no. Oh, I bought my own mitt, yeah, because they paid the uniforms and stuff.

Bartges: Okay, I was just curious about that. You talked about having a team in Peoria in the late forties or early fifties when you were teaching, that you would play the Salvation Army or a league, that league. Did people come and watch you guys play then?

Kneer: Yeah, there were some people. Parents particularly would come down to watch those games, yeah. There was no admission for that. And we didn't even have uniforms. We couldn't—we didn't have money to pay for uniforms. We just kept pinnies on so we knew who we were. (laughs)

Bartges: All right, well, I appreciate your stories here.

Kneer: All right. (laughs) Can I get you a cup of—glass of iced tea or something? Anything? You thirsty?

Bartges: Water would be fine.

Kneer: Glass of water? All right.

Bartges: I had—

Kneer: Here you are.

(end of interview)