

Interview with Nancy Stiff

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Interview: May 21, 2005

Interviewer: Ellyn Bartges

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Ellyn Bartges: There are a wide variety of questions. I've broken them into three different types of questions: personal history, some basketball history, and some general sports kind of stuff, things that impacted basketball here.

Nancy Stiff: See Ola here. She's your baby right there. She can tell you everything.

Bartges: Ola is not well.

Stiff: I know. You told me her cancer had come back.

Bartges: Yeah.

Stiff: Gosh how old is Ola now?

Bartges: Well I'm not sure.

Stiff: Seventy-five?

Bartges: She's got to be in that ballpark.

Stiff: Do you think she'll be able to beat it or do you think it's...

Bartges: I don't know. When I talked to her she was very frank with me. She said, I am behind the cancer and I'm losing. So that makes me think that she won't if she has sort of that attitude.

Stiff: I'll tell you she's quite (*unintelligible*).

Bartges: Yeah she was very interesting. And again I apologize for being late. I was not prepared for...

- Stiff: So what did you and Ola talk about for all those hours? Of course, Ola's a talker.
- Bartges: Oh yeah. I had no idea.
- Stiff: But she has so much knowledge. I mean, talking about the process of getting the state tournament started. I mean, Ola can tell you all of it. Ola—you know. Us coaches we don't know that much about it. It was all done for us.
- Bartges: Yeah. Well a lot of it was that. I had almost seventy-two questions for her.
- Stiff: Wow.
- Bartges: So that's one of the reasons it was a lot longer and...
- Stiff: And don't forget, I was on the first (*unintelligible*) Advisory Committee.
- Bartges: [laughs] She said that was her baby.
- Stiff: It was. And we met in downtown Chicago. And it was in—I can tell you the name of the building. You walked in this [laughs] building and it was just real dim lit and you had to walk up this skinny staircase all the way to the—well I guess second floor. I don't know what floor it was. And I was by myself and I'm walking up there thinking, Am I going to die (*unintelligible*). And it was almost primitive type. You know what I mean?
- Bartges: Oh yeah, especially when you're not used to that sort of thing.
- Stiff: How's her memory? Does she remember?
- Bartges: It appears very sharp. I have nothing to compare.
- Stiff: There's been so much going on that I think, I can't remember. It's just been so long.
- Bartges: I think that she lived it to such an extent.
- Stiff: She did. It was her whole – it was her life.
- Bartges: It was her whole life and that's...
- Stiff: She didn't have to teach. She did that every day.
- Bartges: Yeah. She has. And she was very forthcoming to me. She said it was her baby. She had no children, she had no spouse, she had no partner, that IHSA was her entire life.

Stiff: That was it.

Bartges: And her memory from... I'm from Illinois so I have an idea about some of this stuff.

Stiff: Where did you play ball at, high school basketball?

Bartges: Hinsdale South and ...

Stiff: So you're from the Chicago area?

Bartges: Yeah, southwestern suburbs of Chicago. And I have a pretty good memory just because this was an, you know, an impressionable time for me. A lot of my contacts have been through people that I knew from when I was growing up.

Stiff: Absolutely.

Bartges: And I think I told you too I didn't want to skew this so heavily with the Northern influence. That's why I really wanted to get some southern influence. And I think it was Cindy Butkovich that gave me your name. Adams, Cindy Adams. Do you know her?

Stiff: Yes. She's at Warrensburg now. She worked for the IHSA for years.

Bartges: Yes.

Stiff: Gosh did she teach and coach? I don't know. I just knew her through the IHSA.

Bartges: She did but you know now she's the executive secretary for the men's basketball program at U of I.

Stiff: Is she really?

Bartges: Yeah, she's...

Stiff: She was at Warrensburg. Really?

Bartges: Yeah.

Stiff: Good for Cindy. That's great.

Bartges: She actually got me some tickets to go down to see the guys play when they played—I think it was Northwestern they played.

Stiff: See she was at Warrensburg. This must be a new job for her.

Bartges: I'm not sure how recent it was.

Stiff: Because I think I talked to her probably a year ago while she was still at Warrensburg as athletic director.

Bartges: Really?

Stiff: Gee that's what I ought to do in my retirement. I ought to try to get in with a college or something.

Bartges: Yeah. I love working, being back in college. I was out of the college atmosphere for about seven-and-a-half, eight years and I just hated it.

Stiff: Are you going to stay at Western?

Bartges: Yeah. I work in the Affirmative Action office. A lot of what I do has to do with hiring faculty and staff, recruiting. That's my background is recruiting from basketball and monitoring searches to make sure that EEOC guidelines are followed. I also do complaints, I do some training, I do some program work. I've done a lot of work with university standards like benefits to try and make sure that the benefits are in line with what our policy statements are, civil rights kind of stuff. So that's what I do. I'm going to start this. It's May 21, 2005 and I'm in Arcola, Illinois and I'm interviewing Nancy Stiff. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed in my project. I appreciate it.

Stiff: Absolutely.

Bartges: I know your time is short so we're going to jump right in. You coach at Arcola High School?

Stiff: Yes I do. High school girls' basketball.

Bartges: Okay.

Stiff: And I have coached for – I've had that position ever since we began the program so about thirty-one years.

Bartges: Do you know exactly when you started that program?

Stiff: Probably '73-'74

Bartges: First year?

Stiff: Yes. Well second year of my—I came on in '72-'73.

Bartges: But it was the first year that the IHSA sanctioned basketball?

- Stiff: No, we played it before it was even sanctioned I believe.
- Bartges: Okay.
- Stiff: Was that the first year it was sanctioned? We had tournaments?
- Bartges: Not with the tournaments, but it was the first year that they offered it as an interscholastic sport.
- Stiff: Then we'll jump back and I guess it was my first year of teaching, so it would be '71-'72.
- Bartges: Okay. I'm going to come back to that. Do you reside in Arcola currently or what town do you live in?
- Stiff: I live in the country south of Oakland which is about twenty-five miles east of here.
- Bartges: East of here, okay.
- Stiff: And that's where I went to high school and graduated from.
- Bartges: So you went to Oakland High School?
- Stiff: Yes.
- Bartges: Did you play sports in high school?
- Stiff: They didn't offer sports. I was in GAA.
- Bartges: Okay. Explain GAA as it was for you at Oakland.
- Stiff: It was a club solely for the girls and we would get together after school and play games among ourselves. We didn't have play days or anything like that. We would just, you know, if we had twelve or fourteen girls show up we might play a game of basketball against each other or we might divide up and play volleyball. It was right after school and we'd play for about an hour.
- Bartges: Was it essentially the intramural program?
- Stiff: Yes.
- Bartges: Who was in charge of that program?
- Stiff: The PE teacher.

Bartges: Was it a man or a woman?

Stiff: It was a woman.

Bartges: And how many different types of sports did GAA offer?

Stiff: Not very many. It was mainly in the winter. And it was volleyball, basketball, we might play some wiffleball or some other type of game inside but it was mainly in the winter.

Bartges: Did you get some kind of points towards anything?

Stiff: Yes. If we came to the GAA meetings and we participated we did and then we would get a pin.

Bartges: A pin?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: Was the basketball that you played five-player or six-player?

Stiff: Six-player.

Bartges: Was it with a rover?

Stiff: Yes it was.

Bartges: What position did you play?

Stiff: Wherever they needed me, and it would depend on how many kids showed up, how many girls showed up and what types of girls showed up.

Bartges: And you always played after school?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: Did you have uniforms?

Stiff: No. We had pinnies.

Bartges: Pinnies?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: Red ones?

Stiff: Red and there was another color I believe yellow.

Bartges: Okay. What did you wear besides pinnies? Did you just wear shorts and a t-shirt?

Stiff: Yeah, shorts and a T-shirt or whatever we wore.

Bartges: Okay. Since this was essentially intramurals you didn't have practice as a team or anything like that?

Stiff: Never.

Bartges: You got a group of people together and you picked sides and you played?

Stiff: Yes. Yes. Or they were already picked for us.

Bartges: Did you ever have class teams where it would be just the people from the class of '64, class of '65?

Stiff: Never. Never.

Bartges: Did you ever play on a Saturday?

Stiff: Never.

Bartges: Was the equipment basically PE equipment that you guys used for PE class?

Stiff: Yes. That's all we used is PE equipment.

Bartges: Was there ever any spectators?

Stiff: Never.

Bartges: Okay. The facility-how big was Oakland High School?

Stiff: Well the count is 1200 so your classes—my graduating class was I believe thirty-two.

Bartges: Was that nine through twelve?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: When did you graduate from high school?

Stiff: 1967.

Bartges: What is the highest level of education you have?

Stiff: A bachelor's degree.

Bartges: Is it a BA or BS?

Stiff: BS.

Bartges: From?

Stiff: Eastern Illinois.

Bartges: And what is your degree in or what was your major?

Stiff: Physical education with a minor in health, however, I did go to Lakeland my first two years, Lakeland Junior College.

Bartges: Did you get an AA from Lakeland?

Stiff: Yes I did.

Bartges: Okay. And where is Lakeland?

Stiff: Mattoon, down at Mattoon, [Illinois].

Bartges: Okay. I'm not as familiar with this part of the state. I've heard of it. The facility that you guys used for your GAA experience, was it the main gym?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: Did you have a girls' gym and a boys' gym?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: What kind of gym was it?

Stiff: It was an old gym with bleachers on one side but the bleachers were made out of concrete. It was just like concrete ledges.

Bartges: I've seen some of them (*unintelligible*).

Stiff: In fact, we have one here that we still use, sparingly but we can put it (*unintelligible*) if we need to.

Bartges: Right.

Stiff: Especially (*unintelligible*) basketball teams (*unintelligible*) for practice.

Bartges: Right.

Stiff: But it wasn't in very good shape. The upkeep was not (*unintelligible*) good. The main gym was strictly for the boys and mainly for high school boys' basketball games. And on occasion the boys would have their PE classes in there but sometimes we'd have to (*unintelligible*) gym, you know high ceilings and you could see the steel beams at the top and the acoustics were terrible, windows on both ends and very cold and just old.

Bartges: Was your physical education teacher supportive of GAA?

Stiff: Yes, very much.

Bartges: Was she young or old at the time when you were there, in your mind?

Stiff: Well I had two. The first one I had was probably right out of college and then the second one I had was probably in early thirties.

Bartges: So they were fairly young?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: I didn't ask this, you implied it by your answer. I'm going to go back a second. Are you a native of Illinois?

Stiff: Yes I am.

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

Stiff: No. I have never heard of that.

Bartges: Have you ever had any experience in industrial leagues?

Stiff: No

Bartges: How about AAU?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: Okay. Did you play any outside ball whatsoever for a town team?

Stiff: Yes. Softball for years down in Charleston, and for many years it was a fast pitch softball team. And then because of tired joints and years on the body I

began to play slow pitch. So I probably was involved in fast pitch and slow pitch softball for probably oh thirty years.

Bartges: Did your teams have sponsors?

Stiff: Yes we did.

Bartges: Did you travel around?

Stiff: Yes we did.

Bartges: When did you start playing for a town team? Was it when you went to college?

Stiff: Yes. Yes. It was in the summertime when I went to Eastern during the summers.

Bartges: When you went to Eastern did you play sports at Eastern?

Stiff: I played basketball.

Bartges: Was it six-player?

Stiff: No, it was five-player.

Bartges: And was it extramural, interscholastic? Did you play other...

Stiff: No, we played other schools. And we would have several schools come to McAfee Gym and it would be like a play date type atmosphere. You wouldn't play just one team, you would play maybe two or three teams that day. And you would—your own university team would be divided into two teams like an A team and a B team.

Bartges: But you weren't mixed up with people from other schools?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: Did people with Eastern stay with people from Eastern?

Stiff: Absolutely.

Bartges: And you played people from Illinois State, Southern, and Western?

Stiff: Western would come, yes. Yes, often or we would go to their school.

Bartges: You had a coach for this?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: Was there a head coach and assistant or just a head coach?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: Who was the head coach?

Stiff: Kay Metcalf and—there were a couple different ones. The name of the other lady I do not remember, (*unintelligible*). Helen Reilly, have you heard that name?

Bartges: No.

Stiff: She coached for one year and she was the head coach. She was at Eastern for years. She coached women's basketball; she coached the women's field hockey team. She was quite a lady.

Bartges: And she was in the physical education department?

Stiff: Absolutely, yes.

Bartges: Did you have uniforms?

Stiff: Yes we did.

Bartges: How many people would be on a team?

Stiff: Maybe twenty. Well you mean the entire team? Do you mean—

Bartges: If you had an A team how many people were on the team and then the B team how many?

Stiff: Ten or twelve. So twenty to twenty-four total.

Bartges: Did you practice?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: How often?

Stiff: Three or four days a week at night.

Bartges: For how long?

Stiff: Two hours.

Bartges: Were there tryouts for these teams?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: How did you find out about it?

Stiff: Through the PE department.

Bartges: Were all the people on the team PE majors?

Stiff: As far as I know yes. Yes, I believe they were.

Bartges: Your uniforms, did you have to do fundraising or did the college hand them out to you?

Stiff: They handed them out.

Bartges: How did you travel when you went to play days at other places?

Stiff: Usually the school would have vans or small buses and the coaches would drive.

Bartges: Did you stay overnight?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: Did you stop and eat?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: Did you get money for food?

Stiff: Sometimes if it was available.

Bartges: What position did you play in college?

Stiff: Guard.

Bartges: Do you have any idea about how many games you might play in any given season?

Stiff: That's hard to keep track of because you played several maybe on one day. Probably a good estimate might be fifteen.

Bartges: Um-hm. When you would go to places or when Eastern would host would there be fans in the stands?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: A lot of fans?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: Parents?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: Friends?

Stiff: Mainly parents, grandparents. A few of your friends on campus would come.

Bartges: Did they charge to get in?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: Were your parents supportive of you playing ball?

Stiff: Absolutely.

Bartges: So they came and they watched you?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: They encouraged you to continue that?

Stiff: Absolutely.

Bartges: Did you play all four years?

Stiff: No just two. At Lakeland I played tennis. They did not offer the basketball, the volleyball, that type of thing.

Bartges: Was it interscholastic? Did you play other schools?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: So you traveled?

Stiff: Very seldom. We did not play very many matches at all, and I'm not sure there were that many junior colleges that had the intercollegiate.

Bartges: That's why I'm interested in that. You're the first person I've encountered that

had an interscholastic experience while attending junior college. You had a coach obviously. Were there tryouts?

Stiff: We didn't have to have tryouts because there were only three or four of us that wanted to play.

Bartges: And was it there when you got there or was it something that started when you first got there?

Stiff: Lakeland's first year was my first year I believe.

Bartges: Okay.

Stiff: We did not have a campus. Our classrooms were in church basements, the armory, the national guard armory, that type of situation. They were just beginning to build the campus at Lakeland.

Bartges: Where did you play your matches?

Stiff: At one of the parks in Mattoon.

Bartges: A community park?

Stiff: Yes, community park. I believe it was Lawson Park but I'm not sure.

Bartges: I was a tennis player in college so I think I know the answer to this but did you have lines people or anything like that or you made your own calls?

Stiff: Made your own calls. [laughter]

Bartges: I think they still do that. Did you have uniforms?

Stiff: No, not issued by the school.

Bartges: Okay.

Stiff: We were told what to wear.

Bartges: Which would have been what?

Stiff: Skirts and a polo-type shirt.

Bartges: Any color allowed?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: White?

Stiff: Just white.

Bartges: I'm going to go back to Eastern, you talked about the uniforms that you had. Did you have two sets of uniforms or did you just have one set?

Stiff: We had two sets. So you had like your...

Stiff: We had home and then away, yeah.

Bartges: Do you remember any of the games? You said maybe Western, you played Western. Can you name some of the areas that maybe you traveled to for basketball when you got to Eastern?

Stiff: Illinois State, Southern. I do believe we made a trip to Western a couple of times. Northern I believe but I believe they came down maybe. Terre Haute, Illinois State um...

Bartges: So you played Indiana State?

Stiff: Indiana State yes. I believe Indiana State came over and we went over there, I think.

Bartges: That would make sense.

Stiff: It's been so long ago.

Bartges: I'm jogging your memory here. [laughs]

Stiff: That was probably – I can't remember if we played Illinois or not. I don't think we did but I can't remember. I don't think we traveled anywhere else. Now there may have been some other schools come to Eastern but I think that is probably the only places that we traveled.

Bartges: Since there were no cuts or tryouts at Eastern, in the two years you were there did the program grow at all? I mean, or was it a pretty static number?

Stiff: It was about the same number.

Bartges: Okay. Did you serve in the military or national guard at any time?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: Were you a Girl Scout?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: You teach or coach in the secondary school system and you said you have taught. Is Arcola the only place you've ever taught?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: And you said thirty-one years?

Stiff: I've taught for thirty-three.

Bartges: Thirty-three. You must be a saint.

Stiff: [laughs] I'm retiring this year. But I will come back still to coach and be athletic director, but yes, I'm retiring.

Bartges: Congratulations.

Stiff: Thank you.

Bartges: I'm going to skip to 1972-'73, '73-'74 when basketball was added. Now your first year of teaching here at Arcola was '72-73?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: And you said you had basketball then?

Stiff: Yes we did.

Bartges: Did you play other schools? Was it intramural?

Stiff: We played other schools.

Bartges: Where were the schools from that you would play?

Stiff: Close.

Bartges: Close?

Stiff: I got on the phone...what I did I...and we had GAA. I student taught here. And we did have GAA in place when I came to Arcola.

Bartges: Were you the GAA leader?

Stiff: I was the GAA sponsor.

Bartges: Sponsor?

Stiff: Yes. Needless to say though that quickly went by the wayside when we implemented the interscholastic sports. I mean, we would have a club of eighty girls here.

Bartges: Eighty?

Stiff: And we would go to play dates like to Pana and places like that for play dates.

Bartges: How big at that point in time was Arcola High School?

Stiff: Uh probably 240, 250, nine through twelve. And you had eighty girls that would...

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: When you did your GAA did you have class teams or did you mix them up?

Stiff: Mixed them up. And sometimes we might play class versus class. I really don't want to call it a unit but we would play basketball for X number of weeks and then we might finish the season or that time period with...

Bartges: Move into something else?

Stiff: Yeah but we might play class versus class just for something fun to do.

Bartges: Sure.

Stiff: But we would play basketball, we would play badminton, we would go bowling, we would play volleyball. We would do a lot of different kinds of things. But mainly what we did were things that we did inside. Like in the fall we didn't...no I'll take that back. We did play flag football in the fall. But in the spring we didn't have a track, a GAA track.

Bartges: (*unintelligible*)?

Stiff: No we did not.

Bartges: As a GAA leader, you at this point in your career were fairly young?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: And bringing a different experience to your place of employment. As a GAA leader at this point in time, '72-'73 did you try to make your teams really even or did you—were you looking competitively? Was that important in GAA?

Stiff: When we went to play days?

Bartges: Yeah.

Stiff: Well, see I student taught here and that's where I got my first taste of play days under my cooperating teacher. And yeah, it became competitive. I mean we would go to these play days and we'd want to beat these girls and we'd want (*unintelligible*) out there.

Bartges: And when you as a teacher here playing play days when you went you stayed as a unit, so Arcola would play Pana...

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: And Arcola would maybe play...

Stiff: Mt. Zion or, yes.

Bartges: Did your team stay together?

Stiff: Yes it did. But I can tell you this, when I got my taste of play days I immediately knew that I wanted to coach, and that's when I knew that our girls needed their own interscholastic program.

Bartges: In '72-'73—and I'm kind of dwelling on this a little bit because you're the first person I've talked to that had a team playing competitively like this before the IHSA added it—did you know that the IHSA would be adding interscholastic basketball the following year?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: Okay.

Stiff: But my first year of teaching here I went to my principal and I asked him if we could implement a girls' basketball team, not associated with GAA just have our own girls' basketball team. And he was very supportive. Mr. Goben, he was my principal—he said, I don't know why you couldn't. And so the next issue was, Well who will go out? Anybody that wants to go out, any girl that wants to go out. Then the next question was, Well where will we get the funds? And through donations and the school kicked in a little bit we—our uniforms were donated by Bill Lassiter who owned the Dairy Queen. And then the school paid for the officials and they paid for our transportation.

Bartges: How did you travel?

Stiff: School bus.

Bartges: Did you drive?

Stiff: No. I had a driver. So I picked the phone up. And it was early in the fall. And so I just started calling basically PE teachers that I knew. And the first year, and this is before the IHSA sanctioned it, I believe that the schools that got teams together and participated were Cerro Gordo which is forty minutes...

Bartges: I actually know someone from Cerro Gordo.

Stiff: Okay. Mt. Zion, Judy Woodlands at Mt. Zion, Atwood, Arthur. Those were mainly I think the four schools that really got on the bandwagon with me and really got the ball rolling. Monticello was one.

Bartges: Are those schools part of a conference that would have existed for your boys' program?

Stiff: Yes, with the exception of Mt. Zion, yes.

Bartges: You mentioned your principal Mr. ...

Stiff: Millard Goben, G-O-B-E-N.

Bartges: Was he from Illinois do you know?

Stiff: I don't know if he is or not. I don't know if he grew up in Illinois or where he grew up. But he's a very sport. He had a couple girls about that time that were athletic and they did play, but I'm not sure that really had that much to do with it because he was so supportive and he's just a great guy.

Bartges: One of the reasons I asked that is because there's a definite split between people who were native to Illinois and people who came in from out of state. And the people who came from out of state usually came from backgrounds that had interscholastic sports. They brought that with them, and they brought that desire with them.

Stiff: I don't know if he was from Illinois or not.

Bartges: But he had daughters?

Stiff: Um-hm.

Bartges: Did his daughters play for you?

Stiff: Uh-huh.

Bartges: Was basketball the first sport interscholastic that they added here?

Stiff: Well during that same year track and field was also implemented. So really we were one of the first schools to really get it rolling here in this part of the state. Now help me out here, didn't the IHSA have their first girls' state championship series in track and field and then came basketball, and then came volleyball, and then came softball.

Bartges: It wasn't quite that order. It was – funny you should ask.

Stiff: And I'm sure Ola told you.

Bartges: Volleyball was before basketball, I know that.

Stiff: No? Was it really?

Bartges: Yeah. And one of my questions was why.

Stiff: And they had a state championship series, a regional.

Bartges: Yeah, before. And she said that they did that because they didn't want what happened in Iowa to happen in Illinois, that basketball dominated everything. They wanted volleyball to have an opportunity to get established.

Stiff: Well, then I stand corrected then on my order of tournament series, but I would suspect then that Arcola probably did not participate in volleyball.

Bartges: That could be...

Stiff: ...the first opportunity was made available for the state tournament series.

Bartges: Of course, I can't find that now. It's probably in my other folder. My papers have gotten about this thick.

Stiff: But wasn't track and field the first one?

Bartges: I don't know that track and field was the first one. I think that track and field went back pretty far but tennis is also up there.

Stiff: We never had tennis down in this area.

Bartges: Tennis, archery?

Stiff: Okay archery I'd forgotten about.

- Bartges: Track and field, golf, and badminton I think.
- Stiff: Badminton...
- Bartges: ...were some of the ones that were offered early.
- Stiff: And we were slow down here to begin compared to the Chicago area and your larger schools.
- Bartges: Well and that was one of the things when you said you had donations from the community, was Arcola pretty supportive as a community of adding girls' sports?
- Stiff: Absolutely.
- Bartges: So there wasn't a feeling of animosity, Well you're going to be taking away from the boys?
- Stiff: No. The only problems we had were probably problems with the male coaches giving up their prime time use of facilities. It wasn't really that much of a problem but our boys' basketball coach saw no reason why he, and at the time we only had the one gym, he saw no reason why he should have to practice late. He saw no reason why the girls should be allowed to practice right after school when they wanted to or on a rotating basis, that the boys should have the gym right after school and we would take what's left over.
- Bartges: Right.
- Stiff: And Mr. Goben assured me and him that that would not be the case, that we would rotate and if he had the gym early on Monday we would have it early on Tuesday so that's why I say Mr. Goben was very supportive and very fair.
- Bartges: Did you just have a varsity those first couple years or did you have two teams?
- Stiff: Um we just had the one team because we did not have that many girls go out. The first couple of years our numbers were probably fourteen, fifteen, something like that.
- Bartges: I'm going to come back to that in a second, those first couple of teams. Did you ever participate in a national sports institute or a national leadership conference?
- Stiff: Never.
- Bartges: Did you ever run into anybody or go to any lectures or presentations from people that would have been on how to coach or how to officiate, anything like that as a younger PE instructor and coach?

Stiff: Probably not. I do and have for many years gone to coaching clinics, and when I did officiate, I went to officials' clinics. But those were not offered to women in the early seventies because it was a strictly male-dominated situation.

Bartges: Although you played in college you said you didn't really get a feel for wanting to coach until you became a student teacher. How did you get your information in terms of starting to coach? Did you have somebody you talked to about the X's and O's of the game? How did you learn some of that stuff?

Stiff: Books.

Bartges: Books?

Stiff: Lots of books written by usually good male college coaches, a Dean Smith and...

Bartges: John Wooden.

Stiff: Oh absolutely. They have a lot of books out on the X's and O's of coaching and that type of thing. So yeah books.

Bartges: You said you were an official. Were you a rated official?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: Did you have a national rating?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: A state rating?

Stiff: Yes. It was through the IHSA. When you first began you were certified.

Bartges: How long did you officiate?

Stiff: Well, as long as I could until it became – it conflicted with my coaching. Probably volleyball for four or five years and then basketball for just a couple of years.

Bartges: And you officiated in five-player basketball?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: Did you do any six [player games].

Stiff: Never.

Bartges: What did you wear when you went to games as an official?

Stiff: Black pants and a black-and-white pinstriped shirt.

Bartges: You never wore a skirt?

Stiff: Never.

Bartges: Were officials in Illinois concerned with what version of the rules were [being] used. At the point in time I'm talking about with you this is probably not an issue because you had already switched over to five-player basketball. But as you went through college were you aware of any tug-of-war if you will between the IHSA and the National High School Federation?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: In 1971 when the National Basketball Committee Experimental Rules became official how do you think that impacted Illinois at all? And that's when they officially went from six-player to five-player across the country. How do you think that impacted Illinois?

Stiff: I think it was something that was welcomed I think by just about everyone, especially the young athletes that were beginning to play the game, whether it be at the college level or the high school level. It was a more exciting type of a game. It was more like the boys. I mean it was like the game you would see on television. It was more, I hate to use this term, but it was more normal. It was like everybody else. Why should we have to play a special way or a slower game because of the girls? Why should our game be any different? So I think it had a huge impact.

Bartges: And you felt that way personally as well?

Stiff: Absolutely.

Bartges: I don't know if you had an actual role in getting interscholastic basketball added for girls at the state level. You indicated that you didn't?

Stiff: No. But I was on some advisory committees and that type of thing.

Bartges: What kind of advisory committee?

Stiff: Basketball Advisory Committee, Track and Field Advisory Committee.

Bartges: When were you on the Basketball Advisory Committee?

Stiff: Oh gosh I can't remember. It was back in the late seventies.

Bartges: Okay.

Stiff: I served a couple terms on there, and then again in the eighties at some point. Track and field it was right from the start.

Bartges: When you were on the Basketball Advisory Committee in the late seventies were you on the committee that decided to split to A and AA?

Stiff: No. I was on there before that.

Bartges: I'm going to deal with Arcola because of your experience here. You've indicated that when you got the job here and you went to your principal and you wanted to add basketball that you didn't really face any obstacles, that he was supportive, that the male coach there was some fur ruffled there in terms of gym time.

Stiff: Um-hm.

Bartges: You worked that out through the support of your principal obviously and you alternated. Did you always alternate and was it pretty fair?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: Did you practice on weekends?

Stiff: Usually we played on weekends so no we didn't practice on weekends. We always played on Saturdays often.

Bartges: Did you ever practice in the morning before school?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: How many contests did you play in those first couple of years?

Stiff: First year, seven.

Bartges: Seven?

Stiff: The next year I believe we played fourteen, fourteen, fifteen the second year. And then after that we had a full schedule, complete schedule.

Bartges: Fourteen, fifteen was pretty good for that second year. Your uniforms were donated. You had home and away?

Stiff: Yes we did.

Bartges: You traveled by bus. You said you didn't have to drive. Did you have an assistant coach?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: Did you have tryouts?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: In '73-'74, the second year, did you have tryouts then?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: When did you start making cuts or do you now?

Stiff: We have never made cuts at Arcola until a year ago. And now we have started to implement cuts because we, due to financial reasons we have cut down on our coaching staff, the number of coaches we have on the staff. So we we are implementing cuts so that we have numbers that the coaches can work with.

Bartges: Player/coach ratios—

Stiff: *(unintelligible)*.

Bartges: Did you have an assistant coach?

Stiff: Those first two years, no.

Bartges: Did you get paid?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: When did you start getting paid?

Stiff: Probably the third year I think.

Bartges: So those first couple of years it was considered part of your normal duties?

Stiff: Only because I wanted to do it.

Bartges: Okay.

Stiff: I was not expected to do it, I was not asked to do it. It was something I

volunteered to do.

Bartges: Okay.

Stiff: And I knew going into it that I wouldn't be paid for it.

Bartges: That wasn't your motivation?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: What was your motivation to lead or to push for the addition of this, of basketball in particular?

Stiff: Just to give these kids an experience, the experience to play, you know, to put that uniform on, to get out there and represent their school and their community. And I wanted to coach. That may sound selfish but I wanted to coach and try to teach these kids the game and teach these kids life lessons and it's just—it's just so many good things that happen when you play sports.

Bartges: Do you think your school was a leader?

Stiff: Yes—down here yes. I cannot compare our school with the schools in Chicago.

Bartges: No.

Stiff: Because the Chicago schools have so much more than what we did. But yes definitely in this area.

Bartges: But in some ways we were behind too. We didn't start until '73-'74 was the first year. We didn't have uniforms. We wore pinnies or T-shirts with your name ironed on the back. And it was—in a lot of ways—don't sell yourself short with that because in some ways those bigger schools had so many things going on that you could get lost in the shuffle.

Stiff: Right. But you know, you look at the big schools especially back then and they offered so much more than what we could whether it be badminton, field hockey, swimming, archery. We just offered usually the big three, volleyball, basketball, and track. Then we added the softball. So we offered four sports (*unintelligible*) that's it. When I first came to Arcola I do believe we had wrestling here for the boys but within a year or two we no longer had that.

Bartges: You dropped that?

Stiff: Yeah.

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

movement?

Stiff: No.

Bartges: You hesitate. [laughs]

Stiff: I'm trying to think. What words would you include as being active in the civil rights? But no, I was a member of the, it's been so long I can't even remember, NAGWS [National Association for Girls and Women in Sports], Illinois Women's Coaches Association. I was a member of some organizations that were mainly for women.

Bartges: (*unintelligible*) or athletic progressiveness. You say you attended coaching clinics. When did you start attending coaching clinics?

Stiff: Probably the late seventies. I think that's probably when they started opening them up to the women. But there were some collegiate women coaches that started having their own clinics for strictly women.

Bartges: Did you send your kids to camp during — and I'm going to say from the period of when you added basketball to 1977?

Stiff: There were no camps. There were no camps to my knowledge.

Bartges: The only one that I know of was Cathy Rush, Pat Kennedy camps.

Stiff: Okay and I remember that and no I didn't.

Bartges: Okay. Billie Jean King says that she hates being labeled and labels in general, however, for the purpose of this interview, how did or would you characterize yourself during this period of your life as it relates to sport and things here at school?

Stiff: Probably a pioneer type person experimenting with attitudes of nearby school districts and especially attitudes of their administration and that type of thing. And you could pretty much—some schools, the schools I mentioned early, really embraced the idea of basketball and that type of thing. And then there were others that did not have a team for several years thereafter which I later found out it was probably more of an attitude of the administration and male coaching staff, that type of thing.

Bartges: Were resistant to giving up their privilege?

Stiff: Absolutely, and the limelight and what they'd done for all these years. I think there was the attitude that, you know, the basketball floor or the volleyball court is no place for a girl, that type of thing. That's something that our boys do. We

don't need our girls doing that. Give them the cheerleader uniforms and that's— and I do believe that there were a lot of schools in this area that had that opinion.

Bartges: How long was it before you had a conference affiliation for girls' basketball, that umbrella structure?

Stiff: Probably '77-'78. It was the late seventies.

Bartges: Were you aware in '76 that the IHSA was going to bring on a state tournament series for girls' basketball?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: How did you find out about that?

Stiff: The newspaper and through mailings here at school.

Bartges: How did you feel about that?

Stiff: It was great. It was exciting. It was great. It was kind of like, Finally. All the groundwork before that and getting on the telephone and generating interest in developing a program at your school. It was like it finally paid off. People were starting to take notice of the fact that, Hey the girls, the girls need to be playing and they are playing already and they're playing a pretty good game of basketball. And it was just exciting. It was great.

Bartges: That first year in '77, how far did your team go? Did you play in a regional or a sectional?

Stiff: Yes we did. We won the regional I believe. I wish I had my notes here. And then we went on and played in the sectional down at Mattoon.

Bartges: At Mattoon. So you ended up playing Mattoon?

Stiff: Uh-huh, (*unintelligible*) uh-huh.

Bartges: I finally contacted Linda Blades. It took a long time to track her down.

Stiff: Where is she?

Bartges: She's in Lee's Summit, Missouri. She's married and they live down there. And Sue Strong from Sterling finally tracked her down for [laughs] me.

Stiff: Wow. Did she stay in coaching or did she get out to raise a family?

Bartges: I don't know.

Stiff: Are you going to meet with her?

Bartges: Yes.

Stiff: Good deal.

Bartges: Yeah.

Stiff: Good deal.

Bartges: So I'm going down there June 4th to (*unintelligible*).

Stiff: That's great.

Bartges: She was the last one I couldn't find. I still have Sue Franklin from Fenger to get, but I at least know where she is. I'm going to list a collection of states that surround or border Illinois and the years they implemented a state tournament for girls—and this kind of goes with what you just said, the question—Iowa started their state tournament in 1926, Indiana '75, Michigan '73, Wisconsin in 1976 and they started with three classes, Minnesota '74, Ohio '76, Kentucky had it from 1920 to 1932 and then brought it back in 1975, Tennessee '65, Missouri '73, and then Illinois in '77. As an educator, a player, a coach how did you feel when you saw states surrounding you competing in competitive state tournaments and Illinois didn't have one? Were you aware of that?

Stiff: No. I never knew they were.

Bartges: Okay. Did you attend the first state tournament in Horton Field House in Bloomington?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: What were your—I'm going to show you something I brought. Do you remember that?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: What are your thoughts when looking at that? [laughs]

Stiff: I think I have this. Oh it was just awesome. Just wow, this is great. This is just — this is awesome.

Bartges: When you walked in the building at Horton Field House the first day and you watched the games do you have any memories or recollections of those games

besides the feeling that you just articulated?

Stiff: Well, it was just a great atmosphere. We were there. So many of us were there to finally watch the girls get out and play in the state tournament. And I can remember the teams, the players being pretty darned good.

Bartges: That was another question I had is what did you think of the caliber of play?

Stiff: Very good. Very good. Most everybody played zone.

Bartges: Did you take your team?

Stiff: Never. I've never been to the state tournament. Twice I've gotten to the Supersectional but never to the state tournament.

Bartges: I meant like to watch.

Stiff: No. I do now but back then no. The funds were not available. But I thought the brand of basketball was outstanding. Probably the biggest thing that really stood out was the caliber post players we had, you know the big kids. I thought they were very good. And most of the teams that were there were the bigger schools. And it was just—it was exciting, it was just—it was like a dream come true. You never thought—when I was going to college and when I was a player in high school wishing that I could play the game you really never thought it would ever—it would ever happen. And then when it finally did I'm so glad I was there because it was just—it was just awesome.

Bartges: In your opinion, and we touched on this briefly given the previous information, what was the major reason that slowed basketball from being added as an interscholastic sport that the IHSA sanctioned?

Stiff: I think probably attitude. I hate to say that, but I think truthfully the attitude.

Bartges: From the state or from the IHSA?

Stiff: I think the attitude from the administration of our public schools. I think that there were a lot of principals and/or superintendents, ... and I'll even say attitudes of male coaching staffs that tried to suppress the development, the enthusiasm, thought that adding this might take away from the boys' programs. I just think there were a lot of attitudes out there that had to change.

Bartges: What changed them?

Stiff: The pressure from, not so much from parents but from maybe the kids themselves, the players themselves, the pressures from the surrounding schools who did play. And you've got fifteen, sixteen-year-olds seeing that other schools

have it why can't we? So I think it was as much of that as anything. Maybe some parents, pressures from parents, but it was a different kind of pressure. The pressure that parents put on coaches nowadays is just crazy. It's not right. [laughter] You know where I'm coming from.

Bartges: I know exactly where you're coming from. I was lucky. I've always had good parents, but I've seen it.

Stiff: The pressures though from parents back then were, it's more subtle, kinder, gentler, that kind of thing.

Bartges: Not as invasive?

Stiff: Absolutely.

Bartges: Your parents were very supportive—

Stiff: Oh absolutely...

Bartges: ...to help you get the program started and...

Stiff: Oh absolutely.

Bartges: With the schedules and work and obviously...

Stiff: Absolutely...

Bartges: ...in a rural community, the time constraints of people who live on a farm and have jobs?

Stiff: Absolutely. And a lot of my kids were farm kids.

Bartges: I needed a few more farm kids. [laughter]

Stiff: But the parents, the community [was] very supportive. They just embraced it with open arms.

Bartges: What role do you think homophobia played in the development or lack of development, lack of growth in girls' sports at the high school level, particularly for team sports?

Stiff: I don't think it had a factor at all in this area or in any of our programs here. I don't think it was even a factor whatsoever.

Bartges: Were your kids or parents ever concerned or would articulate — and I'm using a phrase from old PE history, that being involved in sports would lead to mannish

behavior, that they would be not just tomboys but — were your kids ribbed or given a hard time because they were athletes?

Stiff: To my knowledge no, never.

Bartges: What factors can you identify that influenced previous decisions against interscholastic competition? And this is a little bit redundant to 26. We've sort of touched on it. For you, you didn't have financial and spatial concerns here because your district was supportive?

Stiff: Um-hm.

Bartges: This is probably a non-question for you. What happened to change the IHSA's stand on basketball as an interscholastic sport in your opinion?

Stiff: I don't understand your question. What do you mean by that?

Bartges: You talked about pressure on communities and administrators and other places. Do you think the IHSA had pressure on it to add sports?

Stiff: I don't know.

Bartges: Or do you think there was some external national pressure?

Stiff: Nationally there might have been some pressure. With Title IX and that type of thing yes there may have been. With track and field and that meeting we had to set up the state tournament the men were there. And I remember Ola saying, "We've invited the men to help us because they've done it for years and they know how to do it and we don't." I'll never forget that, the fact that she asked them to come and they did come because they knew how to run the state tournament and we didn't.

Bartges: Were there women that were offended by that?

Stiff: Not to my knowledge, no. We kind of more or less agreed with her yeah, yeah we need help.

Bartges: Yeah. Did the AMA's, the American Medical Association's, endorsement for vigorous exercise help change public educational policy towards interscholastic sport in your mind...where they went from saying that vigorous exercise was bad for girls and in young women it might damage their reproductive organs and their ability to have children. The AMA changed that stand in 1969 I believe and said that that was not true, that they supported rigorous exercise. Do you think that that change by the AMA helped move athletics along for women?

Stiff: I don't know.

Bartges: Okay.

Stiff: I don't know. You look back at your GAAs and things like this and—like when I participated in GAA we never were concerned about anything like that. And I'm not even sure that I was aware of the American Medical Association making that statement and then changing it.

Bartges: How do you think Title IX affected girls' basketball in Illinois?

Stiff: Um, it probably had a positive effect on it. I mean, you know, Title IX I don't feel was an issue as far as whether or not we played basketball here or didn't play basketball here. I do think that the schools that were dragging their feet and weren't that quick to jump on the bandwagon I think it probably had more of an effect on those schools to the point where they probably knew that, Hey, this is something we're going to have to face up to and we need to realize that it's a program we're going to have to implement. So I guess it probably did have an impact on interscholastic sports as a whole in Illinois.

Bartges: Because of when you started your programs you didn't have something and then have Title IX come along and then see changes because of the time period that you were here, so you didn't see changes in funding, travel, schedules, publicity, uniforms, coaching, officiating?

Stiff: I've never had trouble with any of that.

Bartges: Okay.

Stiff: I wasn't paid the first couple of years to coach. But then I met with my administration and the board of education and they said, Absolutely. You need to be paid. You're the girls' basketball coach. We pay our boys' basketball coach. Why wouldn't we pay you?

Bartges: Did they pay you on a scale equal to the boys to your knowledge?

Stiff: Yes, they did depending on the number of games that we did play. And then once we picked up the full schedule yes absolutely. I've never had a problem with that. None of us have. I just feel like I've been very fortunate here and all of our coaches here. Because what we pay for our head coaches here at Arcola for our major interscholastic sports, and major would mean football, volleyball, basketball, they all get paid the same.

Bartges: Yeah. That's how it is in Macomb too.

Stiff: And it should be that way.

Bartges: Yeah.

Stiff: And then all of our spring sports, coaches, track coaches (*unintelligible*) all the same. Softball, baseball, all the same so...

Bartges: Okay.

Stiff: That's never been an issue here.

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 the role model for girls' and women's sports towards a more competitive male model of sports. Do you agree or disagree?

Stiff: What do you mean by male model? You have to be like the boys and play like the boys?

Bartges: Well, that you win at all costs, we're going to do anything to do this, that's it's not a girl for every sport and a sport for every girl mentality. It's much more of a competitive situation and set up where survival of the fittest kind of thing, not like a GAA program where that was an intramural program or even plays days, early play days that you would go and you'd mix your teams up and it was a social event.

Stiff: Um-hm.

Bartges: Marianna Trekell said that she felt that Title IX really forced women's sports into that more competitive male model as opposed to what the women had had before.

Stiff: It did force it into a competitive situation or a competitive atmosphere, but I disagree with her when she said win at all costs and that type of thing. I don't believe that happened. But I do believe that it was very competitive and you did want to win and you were at every practice because you did want to win. But I look back to GAA and as a player myself in high school I didn't show up after school not to win. You know what I mean. And every team I was on I wanted to win. I wanted to be the championship of that unit or that activity.

Bartges: That was important to you?

Stiff: Absolutely. I wanted to win. And the girls that were there we wanted to win. We all wanted to win.

Bartges: Was your leader supportive of that or did they try and squelch that, that you're getting other things from sporting, competing as opposed to just wining?

Stiff: A little bit of both but frankly. I don't mean this to sound bad but we didn't want somebody on our team that didn't give two hoops. If you showed up after school to play you showed up because you wanted your team to win.

Bartges: Right.

Stiff: So for the statement to be made that girls were not competitive and were forced to become competitive because of Title IX I think is not an accurate statement because we were competitive before then. And I don't believe we had the mindset that we win at all costs. I would hope that it's just the opposite. I would—sure as a varsity coach you want your team to be the best it could be but not just in the win-loss column.

Bartges: Sure.

Stiff: You want your teams to give it their best shot whether it be on the practice floor or the night of the game. You want your girls to be good students of the game. You want your girls to be good teammates. You want your girls to be — Ellyn, there's just so much more to it than that. You want them to be good sports out on the floor, at least I do, all the time. And we would never do anything shady or illegal to win a ballgame.

Bartges: Right.

Stiff: And if we do it'll only be done one time and it will not happen again. You know, we play by the rules. We're young ladies out on the floor and we don't question calls by the officials. We don't show attitudes out on the court. We don't celebrate until the game's over and until we have shook hands with our opponents.

Bartges: Right.

Stiff: We don't show disappointment and disgust maybe with the way we've played until we get down in the locker room. We listen to our coaches not our parents. We do what the coaches tell us, not what we think we should do. Somebody falls down you help them up. I don't care if it's one of your teammates or somebody else from the other school.

Bartges: Right.

Stiff: My kids foul, they still raise their hand.

Bartges: [laughs] I tell my kids that too because I want to know who fouled.

Stiff: I do too. But we don't wait for kids when they're late for the team bus. If you're not there you get left. And the worst thing you want to do is come on over

because you won't play. You're not late to practice. There's so many other things that are taught. We don't win at all costs. We don't play ineligible players. And when I'm talking — I'm the athletic director — I'm talking about every sport here at Arcola not just necessarily basketball. And you know if you're a coach you better conduct yourself respectful out on the floor. We don't use profanity. It's just — you won't be a class act whether you're the player, the coach. We'd like for the parent to be the class act too but that's not always the case.

Bartges: No, unfortunately. Is there anything that I haven't touched on that you think would be important in terms of basketball and your experience and what you brought to it that you would want to mention or...

Stiff: It was just an exciting time. There has been such a change in attitudes within the last ten years. I am very glad that I was in it from the start because I can remember how thankful the girls were to be able to play, to have a team to play on. Now the girls look at it as their right, I have the right to play. Back then they looked at it as a privilege and something very, very special.

Bartges: They don't know what it is to be without.

Stiff: No they don't. And the girls back then, let's face it, their mothers would have liked to have played. And I have so many parents of children today who were not able to play because we didn't have interscholastic sports. And they were the GA kids. And they have told me over and over again how they would have loved to have played the game. And you know, I look back at some of the GAA teams we had and I think to myself, we would have had tremendous teams because we had tremendous athletes. And yes, your best athletes were your cheerleaders back then.

Bartges: Back then yes. That's very true.

Stiff: But I wish our girls and guys at times — I would not ever want them to do without but the girls don't realize how lucky they are to have the game to play. They don't know what it was like to do without.

Bartges: And they want more.

Stiff: And I'm not sure the game is appreciated today the way it should be appreciated. We've built a monster. And at times I regret that. At times, not very often but I wish I could take it back when I see the way some of our players and parents act. And it's all about them. It's become — even your team sports it's all about them. You need to do this with my daughter or my son or daughter need to go here to play, or we'll change schools and play here because I think it could help my son or daughter get a college scholarship. It's all about their daughter or their daughters. And fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, thirty years ago it was about the team. And I'm seeing it become all about players.

Bartges: Do you have many four-sport athletes?

Stiff: Not many. This year as far as girls we had four I believe, maybe five. We had a girl play golf. No, she's a three-sporter, golf, basketball, and softball. We had three girls play volleyball, basketball, softball, and run track so probably three.

Bartges: Do you have a lot of three-sport athletes?

Stiff: Yes we do. And you have to in a school our size to field teams would be competitive.

Bartges: This is over a history of the school but I think from my own experience as a player that the teams that were really good had a very tight group of people that moved from sport to sport to sport to sport...

Stiff: Yes—

Bartges: ...who were athletes.

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: And they were friends but they competed.

Stiff: We still have that here.

Bartges: You do?

Stiff: Yes we do. Yeah, they all hang together. I don't want to say it's a social thing, but I think they, they like each other. They want to be around each other. And they like sports in general.

Bartges: Are they able to compete against each other?

Stiff: Yes.

Bartges: That's good.

Stiff: Yes, they're very competitive against each other, uh-huh.

Bartges: I don't know, it's different. I find a lot of—almost all the people that I've spoken with have that same sort of an attitude. And maybe I didn't articulate what Marianna Trekell was trying to say. In some ways when you say you've created a monster I think that that's sort of what she was alluding to.

Stiff: Right.

Bartges: That because of money and opportunity things that were created snowballed into something else.

Stiff: When I touched upon win at all costs I think it's — in a lot of ways it's starting to become that. But when we developed the programs back in the seventies and the programs were new. I don't think there was ever an attitude where we win at all costs.

Bartges: Right.

Stiff: But now, it's sad to admit this but I do think in some areas there are coaches that are allowed to have the mentality that we win at all costs. And I've coached against those coaches. There's been some times where my teams have won and there have been times where my teams have been defeated. And it gives me a bad feeling when those teams beat me. It does not give me the, “Yeah I beat them” type feeling when we win but when we lose to them I feel cheated. Does that make sense?

Bartges: Oh I know exactly. You feel dirty almost.

Stiff: I feel cheated. It wasn't right.

Bartges: One of the things I forgot to ask you when you started coaching here the first couple years, the teams you played against in this area were the coaches women or were they men?

Stiff: They were women.

Bartges: All of them?

Stiff: They were all women.

Bartges: PE teachers?

Stiff: Yes, PE teachers. And I think—I wish we could get more women involved in the game.

Bartges: We're the dinosaurs. [laughs]

Stiff: Yeah we are. We are. And that's sad.

Bartges: Yeah.

Stiff: But I understand too that women marry, they have families, they stay at home or they just—they're different than guys. They realize that, Hey I'm the mom and

I'm going to stay home. I'm going to take care of my kids or be there for my kids after school when they get home or be there as soon as I can after I get done with my job. Whereas men it's always been okay for them to be out of the house. I think that attitude has changed though more and more. In this area there are a lot of young men especially that have gotten out of coaching because they want to go to their son's or daughter's games.

Bartges: I've seen more of that too.

Stiff: And they want to be at home at night for their kids. They want to raise their families.

Bartges: They're much more involved in their children's lives than our parents.

Stiff: And that's the way it should be.

Bartges: Yeah.

Stiff: It should be that way. But it really should be a team thing with mom and dad.

Bartges: Yeah.

Stiff: And it wasn't that much of a team thing when you and I were growing up.

Bartges: No not for coaches. We had three coaches in four years so that was kind of hard.

Stiff: But a lot of times it depends on the sport too. Look at volleyball. A lot of women coaching volleyball.

Bartges: Yeah.

Stiff: Look at basketball. It's been taken over by the men.

Bartges: Fewer men have played volleyball so I think they're not as inclined to want to coach it.

Stiff: That's right.

Bartges: That is changing as well. You start — when you really watch the collegiate men's volleyball championships and you see the club teams that are scattered all across the state, you're starting to see more men. I don't know. But it's just completely changed in basketball. You know when they first got started up in probably the early eighties it was almost all women coaches.

Stiff: In our conference, and we had a conference of twelve schools, let me think — I am the only woman, only female basketball coach, head coach, in our

conference.

Bartges: And I was one of two in our conference and the oldest.

Stiff: Um-hm. Now we have some older gentlemen in our conference coaching (*unintelligible*). When I say older forty-five, fifty, fifty-five.

Bartges: As a coach we try to get, I would always try to get young girls, former players when they were in college there at Western something like that, to come and coach the lower levels whether it was junior high or a freshman team to try and get them involved but it's hard. And a lot of people don't want to deal with the parents.

Stiff: That's right.

Bartges: And a lot of that is mentoring and having a head coach that is going to stand behind you and...

Stiff: Absolutely...

Bartges: ...absolutely knows how to handle adults.

Stiff: Right.

Bartges: But you just don't see that.

Stiff: Right.

Bartges: I've seen parents rip into a young coach and I — now listen don't do that.

Stiff: No. I encourage my young coaches to never meet with a parent the night after a game.

Bartges: Oh no.

Stiff: And don't make yourself approachable. When the game's over go to your office or go to the locker room. Don't stay out on the floor and be approachable.

Bartges: I had rules. I had a rule sheet that I had and parents had to sign it and it says, You will not come up to me after a game. If you want to talk to me, you will make an appointment.

Stiff: Right, and that's the way it should be.

Bartges: Because I saw a lot of that and I thought, I don't want any part of that.

- Stiff: Right.
- Bartges: You don't see them walking up to the math teacher after a test saying, Grade this. I want to see the grade right now.
- Stiff: No.
- Bartges: That's crazy.
- Stiff: Well let's face it, we have built a monster with sports in that we have so many people out there that think they can coach the game, they know the game as well as the coach.
- Bartges: Oh sure.
- Stiff: Well you know, when you've got a parent watching the game, they're watching one thing, their child, their son or their daughter. They're not watching the entire game and they're not watching the team and...
- Bartges: They're not at practice every day.
- Stiff: They're not at practice every day. I don't allow parents to come to practice. My practices are closed.
- Bartges: I had open [practices], usually they would come at the end, maybe the last twenty minutes or something like that when we were doing free-throws or running or doing stuff like that but I could see the benefit of that.
- Stiff: They're a distraction. And I'm not sure my players want their parents there.
- Bartges: Oh, I know they don't. But that was one of the tools that I'd use. I'd say, "If you don't like what your daughter's doing come watch her at practice. Then I could make make a bet saying that that kid would not perform in practice if their parents were there. So then what's the parent going to say?"
- Stiff: Right.
- Bartges: Those were the kids that weren't going to perform anyway, and they're the ones that don't want their parents at practice for that reason.
- Stiff: That's right.
- Bartges: So—[laughs]
- Stiff: That's right.

Bartges: Well I really appreciate your time. I know you're tight on time.

Stiff: And good luck with your project. I hope that (*unintelligible*).

Bartges: I'm actually pretty much done. I graduated last weekend. That's one of the reasons I'm behind this week.

Stiff: Congratulations.

Bartges: Thank you.

Stiff: That had to have been a great feeling.

Bartges: It was. It was something that's been twenty years in the making. I had started my master's at Penn State and my mom got sick and I went home to take care of her and I didn't go back to State College. I had finished everything but my thesis. I had got a coaching job and I didn't finish. I had to redo everything. But the project came about last summer after my surgery. I was kind of looking at some things and trying to decide what I wanted to do. And I thought, there was no published materials on this period of time in the State of Illinois. And I thought, That's crazy. This is a hugely significant period of time. And I have personal interest as well. But I was fortunate to...

Stiff: So what do you think you'll do with this?

Bartges: That's a good question. I've had — more than a few people are really encouraging me to go on and get a Ph.D.

Stiff: That'd be great. Well how did you feel?

[end]