

## Interview with Dick Biery

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Interview: December 9, 2004

Interviewer: Ellyn Bartges

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### **A Note to the Reader**

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Bartges: It is December ninth, and I'm in Carthage [Illinois] talking with Dick Biery, who is the retired coach of the Carthage Bluegirls. Thank you, Mr. Biery, for agreeing to be interviewed by me and participate in my project.

Biery: Well, I appreciate that. I'm sorry I was a little late getting back to you, but it was one of those things.

Bartges: I understand perfectly. I won't waste too much of your time. I'll jump right in. There's a group of personal questions to kind of get at your background, and then there's a group of questions that pertain to the addition of girls' basketball as an interscholastic sport, some questions about rules and administration and those kinds of things. If you don't know the answer to the questions just say so and we'll move on. You can't make up something you don't know, and if you don't have any experience with it, that's fine. It's not right or wrong.

Biery: Okay.

Bartges: Where did you go to high school?

Biery: I went to Carthage High School, and I graduated from Carthage High School in 1950, and then moved to Carthage College, which was located in Carthage, and spent four years there. Graduated in 1954.<sup>1</sup>

Bartges: And that's Carthage, Illinois?

Biery: Carthage, Illinois.

Bartges: Did you play sports in high school?

Biery: Yes, I did.

Bartges: You're the first male coach that I've interviewed and obviously guys didn't have GAA [Girls Athletic Association], but were these extramural or interscholastic sports? Did you compete against other towns?

Biery: Oh yes, we competed in football, basketball, and track.

Bartges: Did you play those three sports?

Biery: All three.

Bartges: You practiced after school?

Biery: Yes.

Bartges: Were the teams you had selected through a process of tryouts?

Biery: Well, we were a smaller school and it didn't involve trying out necessarily. I mean, nobody, I don't think, was ever cut from the squad at that time, and that's probably one of the advantages of a smaller school.

Bartges: Did you ever have class teams, teams that were picked by the grade or the year kids were, or were they all mixed up?

Biery: They were all mixed up basically.

Bartges: Some of these questions may seem kind of silly, but for—I'm trying to accentuate the difference a little bit between the experience you may have had as a male athlete versus the GAA experience—

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<sup>1</sup> Carthage College, a school affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, moved from Carthage, Illinois to Kenosha, Wisconsin in 1962. The new campus is located on the shores of Lake Michigan.

Biery: I understand that. I went through the GAA period. I know what you're talking about.

Bartges: So you witnessed the GAA phase?

Biery: I certainly did—coffees and punch and— (laughter)

Bartges: Yeah, okay. Well, what was your experience with the GAA?

Biery: Well, it was in the high school, actually, after I started teaching at Carthage. I had taught one year at Warsaw [Illinois] when I got out of the Marine Corps. And I was athletic director at the time and a male coach, and we took lightly, I guess, the GAA program as such. It was like one or two days a week that they took away from that gym period that the male thought—

Bartges: So during the school year?

Biery: —they should have, you know.

Bartges: When you say gym period, you don't mean physical education? Do you mean access to the facilities?

Biery: No, I mean at the school, at the school.

Bartges: And to your recollection, did they practice one or two days a week?

Biery: I think it was like two days a week, but it would be like from after school until probably hour-and-a-half, two hours.

Bartges: Do you remember what the participation at Carthage for the students might have been in GAA? Was it pretty large?

Biery: Well, it was a large participation because it was quite social...if you know what I mean by that.

Bartges: Yes. I assume you mean there was a lot of socializing going on. It wasn't like a hardcore practice kind of thing.

Biery: Right, it was not.

Bartges: Who coached for the GAA?

Biery: The girls' PE [physical education] teacher.

Bartges: Do you remember her name?

Biery: No, I don't.

Bartges: Did they ever practice on Saturdays?

Biery: No.

Bartges: Did they ever compete against other schools that you remember?

Biery: No.

Bartges: Just each other?

Biery: It was just kind of an intramural type of activity.

Bartges: Okay. Did they have any kind of uniforms or they just—

Biery: No, they did not—

Bartges: —wore shirts and shorts and pinnies or something?

Biery: What they normally wore for PE [physical education generally is what they wore during that period.

Bartges: When you played basketball yourself, did you play five-player or six-player basketball?

Biery: Five.

Bartges: You said you graduated from high school in 1954?

Biery: Yes.

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

Biery: I have a master's degree from Western Illinois University.

Bartges: And your bachelor's degree from Carthage College was in what field?

Biery: PE.

Bartges: In PE? And your master's degree is in—

Biery: Was in education.

Bartges: Okay. Are you familiar with the Postal Tournament?

Biery: The which?

Bartges: Postal?

Biery: No.

Bartges: Okay. Have you ever had any experience, either yourself or as a coach, with women in industrial leagues?

Biery: With women?

Bartges: Yeah

Biery: No.

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

Biery: No.

Bartges: Do you know if AAU ball was available around here for—

Biery: I don't think it was available when I went through school. Now, it became available later, but when I first started coaching it wasn't available in this area.

Bartges: Did you have kids that participated in that once it became available?

Biery: Not really. I had some—I also coached girls track and I had—I think I had one that participated on a AAU team out of Peoria.

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

Biery: Yes, I did, in the United States Marine Corps.

Bartges: How long were you in the Corps?

Biery: Two-and-a-half years.

Bartges: Right out of high school or after college?

Biery: Right out of college.

Bartges: Undergrad?

Biery: What—

Bartges: Undergraduate, as in bachelor's—

Biery: Yes.

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

Biery: Yes, I did.

Bartges: How many years?

Biery: Thirty-eight years.

Bartges: Starting—

Biery: I started in 1957 in Warsaw as a PE teacher and a football coach. Like everything back then, you were a little bit of everything. I was the head football coach, assistant basketball coach, and coached baseball at that time.

Bartges: Assistant boys' basketball coach?

Biery: Yes.

Bartges: Okay. After the first year at Warsaw, you came then to Carthage?

Biery: I was recruited to Carthage—

Bartges: (laugh)

Biery: —back to Carthage. My forte was football. I was Honorable Mention Little All-American in football, so I came back and had football in Carthage. There again—normally there was only two coaches in the system, one was a football coach and the other one was a basketball coach, and we helped each other.

Bartges: So from 1958 until you retired, you were at Carthage?

Biery: Yes, I was.

Bartges: What year did you retire?

Biery: I retired in 1993.

Bartges: Was your principal male or female at Carthage? Let's stay with Carthage now.

Biery: I've had both.

Bartges: From 1968?

Biery: Male.

Bartges: What about—and I'm going to throw a couple dates at you—1972?

Biery: Male.

Bartges: Same person?

Biery: No.

Bartges: Okay, 1977?

Biery: Male, was the same person. The person I'm talking about was principal—I think he became principal about 1973.

Bartges: Okay.

Biery: And it happened to be that—his name was Bill Jones. He was a basketball coach at Warsaw when I went there, and he later coached (unintelligible), Iowa, was very successful, and he got the principal's job at Carthage. So I worked under Bill.

Bartges: Do you know if Bill was from Illinois?

Biery: Bill was originally from Iowa—

Bartges: Okay.

Biery: —and—just across the water.

Bartges: But a big difference?

Biery: Well—

Bartges: For girls' basketball?

Biery: Well, now you're saying this and actually, if I may?

Bartges: Sure.

Biery: Bill came to me, and I was athletic director. I wasn't coaching football at the time, and he came to me and he said, "We're going to have to start—we're going to have to get this thing going. It's going to be on us." And he

apparently had been to a principals' meeting of some type. And this was—it would have been 1973, because we started the program in the 1974 and 1975 school year. And he said, "You're going to be the one to start it." We had nobody else in the program and the women's PE teacher didn't—wasn't inclined along that line at that particular time. And so he said, "You're going to do it." (laugh) So actually, I got kind of pushed into it a little bit. And I started it very reluctantly. You kind of set it on the QT as a men's coach, coaching girls. You didn't really—It really wasn't something that was very highly thought of, quite frankly. And we got the program off the ground.

Bartges: Did you start it actually in 1973-1974 or was it 1974-1975?

Biery: Well, we started actually the same year we started playing, in 1974-1975.

Bartges: I'm going to backtrack a second.

Biery: Okay.

Bartges: You said the PE teacher for girls was—did not necessarily favor it. Do you have any recollection, was she against interscholastic competition?

Biery: She wasn't against it, she just didn't feel that she was qualified to handle the job. She did not have background in basketball.

Bartges: Did you feel that your principal—Bill was it?

Biery: Bill Jones.

Bartges: Bill Jones, Mr. Jones, was in favor or against adding girls' basketball or girls' sports in general, or—did he embrace it or was he forced into it?

Biery: No, I think he embraced it. I don't think he was—we weren't forced to it because we started it probably a little bit before some of the other schools, because I got busy, and we only had a—we had a schedule of eleven—about fourteen games.

Bartges: That was one of the things I was going to ask you about that.

Biery: We had a schedule of fourteen games because there wasn't many schools in this area at that time that was playing girls' basketball. In Iowa they were three-on-three or six-on-six, and so we couldn't go to Iowa and play. Now eventually I took them into Missouri because I wanted the girls to see how to play basketball and you could only do that, witness, because the girls—being—such as we were, we weren't very aggressive, I didn't think. They

didn't know how to be aggressive. Now there was a few that instinctively was born into it, I'd guess. But I was very fortunate. I had a young man that came into the system and was coaching boys PE. And he was a new, one-year teacher the second year I was there. He was from (unintelligible). He's now the head Girls' Basketball Coach at Pittsburg, stayed in Pittsburg, Kansas. Steve High.

Bartges: Go ahead and just talk. I'm just going to check the camera.

Biery: And I—Steve had just been married and he was fortunate, he married (laugh) a beautiful lady who fortunately had played girls' basketball in Iowa and then college at Northern Iowa, so—and they were both from Northern Iowa. So I had talked them into—because we didn't have any money to get assistant coaches—I had talked them into helping in the program. My intentions, and all of our intentions, were to turn it over to Steve at that time, the next—the following year, because for the first time we had a woman, or a girl, that the girls could actually see how to play basketball. I mean, yeah, men can demonstrate it, but that doesn't mean the same as seeing actually a woman or a girl do the things that men can do. So it was a blessing. And we worked hard. And as fate sometimes have it, ended up that he got pink-slipped because of money shortage and wasn't rehired. He wasn't on tenure, so we lost Steve and he moved on. But it was a great experience for the girls. And then we started moving out. And they could see, I think, that a girl could be an athlete and still be a lady.

Bartges: Um-hm. I'm going to ask you some questions about sort of that first year.

Biery: Okay.

Bartges: With facilities and practice and stuff like that. Did you practice after school?

Biery: Yes.

Bartges: How long of a period and what time did you start practice?

Biery: I'll tell you. You're not going to like this, but—

Bartges: I have no (laugh) opinion.

Biery: We did practice after school. And you got to understand, in 1974-1975, the atmosphere for girls' athletics was not really thought of very highly by a lot of people. So, I was athletic director at the same time and it put a burden, I thought, on me to demand that we get into the gym at a certain time. We bussed six miles to a gym. We had a satellite school outside of town, a nice

gym. And I would load the girls up after school and we would go out to that gym and do our practice, hour-and-a-half, two hours most of the time, and come back. It sounds like a burden, but it was—for me, it was a very good experience because we had an opportunity to talk to the girls when we'd come back on that bus. They just didn't walk out, you still had them as captive. You could move around the bus and talk to them and talk about the things that you thought they needed improving on or something like that. We done this for—until I thought we were looked at a little better than what we were perceived before. When we'd play games that first year I could pull out two sections of bleachers and that would more than be ample for anybody that was at the game.

Bartges: And you played at the high school, at Carthage High School?

Biery: We played at our main gym, yes. And as we improved, people got more interested. We could keep pulling out bleachers, first one side, and as we went on we couldn't get enough of them.

Bartges: Do you remember if they charged admission?

Biery: Yes, they did.

Bartges: Was it the same that they charged for guys contests?

Biery: Yes, it was.

Bartges: You mentioned an assistant coach and the money. Did you get paid your first year for coaching?

Biery: Yes, I did. It wasn't much and then as we got better I got paid the same amount as the boys'.

Bartges: When did that happen?

Biery: Well, it happened in about three years.

Bartges: That soon?

Biery: In about three years we were ready to move back into the facility and share practice with the boys.

Bartges: You mentioned maybe twelve games scheduled your first year?

Biery: We had—maybe it was more than that. I think the first year that it started we were eleven and four.

Bartges: How did you travel when you went to games, on a bus?

Biery: We traveled bus.

Bartges: Did you drive or did you have a driver?

Biery: Oh, we had a driver.

Bartges: It's unusual that you had a separate practice facility during that time period. It's probably a big advantage actually.

Biery: Well, I thought it was and it got us away from—sometimes in a high school atmosphere, when you've got girls, and the boys are coming into the gym—And in our situation they had to walk though the gym to get to the dressing room before practice, and we're practicing after school, and they're coming in late, late practice, it's not always a good situation.

Bartges: Yeah.

Biery: Later those same boys would come sit on the stage and they knew how to mind themselves. But they would come in and—they'd come in and work with the girls.

Bartges: Later on?

Biery: Yeah.

Bartges: Yeah? You mentioned that from your coaching perspective at that time period that it was maybe not the apple of everybody's eye to be the coach of the girls' team. Did you get some flak from your friends or peers for that?

Biery: Yeah.

Bartges: How long did that last?

Biery: It lasted—well, basically it only lasted a year or so because they could see what we were trying to do. We had made the—we had decided, and I had been around Kiwanis Clubs and other clubs in town when we started the programs—and I just told them that if we perceive that athletics is good for men, young boys, it's got to be good for girls. If all these things that we perceive to be true can help them, it can help the girls.

- Bartges: Did you have tryouts, an official set of tryouts, that first year?
- Biery: No.
- Bartges: How did you get kids in the gym? Did you say, "Basketball starts on October"—well, it wouldn't have been then. Would have been January 15—
- Biery: Yeah. Basically we just put out a call for them. And we knew who the kids were because—out of PE classes and so forth. We could tell. And we had a lot of girls come out. We had no uniforms—
- Bartges: That was my next question, how many kids?
- Biery: Well, we had about—well, we had thirty-some kids the first year.
- Bartges: Did you just have a varsity team or did you have a varsity and a junior—
- Biery: We had both. We had a fresh-soph [freshman-sophomore] team and a varsity team, and I ended up—I was doing both, so of those eleven games we'd get those—I'd have to coach the first game and second game both.
- Bartges: And then for the first year, in 1974-1975, what did your kids wear for uniforms?
- Biery: This all happened so late that I called in a person because we had to have thirty sets, and they didn't have time to make them up. So they were not real pretty (laugh) at that time. They weren't even our school color. They were— They had the blue but they had gold, trimmed in gold, rather than white. It was a stock uniform so we didn't have to pay a lot for it. And we got enough uniforms that every girl had a uniform. We didn't have any girls without uniforms. And we used that uniform—well, we used it for basically about everything.
- Bartges: It rotated seasons?
- Biery: Yes.
- Bartges: Even still, that's pretty good. Some places didn't even have uniforms that first year, they used their physical education—
- Biery: I know that, I've been involved in the—
- Bartges: In this region of people that you competed against in Illinois, were there other male coaches during this period for girls' basketball?

Biery: I really can't think of any.

Bartges: The IHSA [Illinois High School Association] had a rule about female physical education teachers being required to coach female athletes for interscholastic sports. How did you guys get around that?

Biery: I don't know. (laugh)

Bartges: Were you, to your knowledge—and you may not know—an IHSA member school for girls' sports?

Biery: Yes, oh yeah. We competed in the first state tournament.

Bartges: That was in 1976-1977.

Biery: Right.

Bartges: I was just curious if that ever came up—

Biery: No, it—

Bartges: —if anybody ever said to Carthage—Okay.

Biery: Money wasn't well available at that time. And I realize the Title IX<sup>2</sup> situation was coming in pretty hard at that time—but I don't know how it happened. It just happened and nobody ever said anything.

Bartges: Did you ever participate in a National Sports Institute or a National Leadership Conference? These are specific titles for things, and you may or may not have.

Biery: No, not—never nationally.

Bartges: Okay. Were—to your knowledge, were officials in Illinois concerned with what version of the rules were used for girls' basketball? Do you recall any discussions or debates about whether girls should play five-player or girls should play six-player?

Biery: No. I wasn't in on that debate and it was—I don't even know if they were discussing that, the six and the five. I know the six was very popular in Iowa.

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<sup>2</sup> Title IX is a portion of the Education Amendments of 1972. It states, "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."

Bartges: I'll expand on that. In 1971 the National Basketball Committee from the National Federation had a set of experimental rules that became official which mandated five-on-five. There were places throughout the state that played six-on-six.

Biery: Right.

Bartges: But in 1971 this rules committee said, "No more. We are only going to sanction five-on-five." What kind of impact, if any, did you think that had in this area?

Biery: Well, I don't know if it had an impact. Now this was nineteen what?

Bartges: 1971.

Biery: 1971. See, I don't know if that had an impact on our thinking because we really wasn't even thinking about it at that time. But I don't know that that would have an impact.

Bartges: It seems that some of the larger schools in bigger cities, where they may have played some pickup ball and had industrial leagues or play day AAU that was six-on-six, that that's where you started to see an impact and I just wondered what your opinion on it was.

Biery: Well, I've seen the six-on-six. At the time they were running camps out here at—well, it was Robert Morris, and it was a big-time high school coach from Iowa, and it was a six-on-six deal. But basically the fundamentals are all the same.

Bartges: Dribble, catch, pass, shoot. (laugh)

Biery: Yeah. So—

Bartges: Some of the things you've touched on—and I'm going to ask it sort of as a refresher or if you think of anything else, and you may again not have faced some of these obstacles in your program. Did you face any obstacles in getting this basketball team and the program up and running other than say getting on the bus and going to the other gym? Did you have resistance from the community or from other people at school or anything like that?

Biery: No. No, it was—it was pushed by the principal. And we decided, after Steve didn't get the job, when they let him go and it looked like I was going to be the one, that we were going to go full boat. We were going—we were going to put a lot of pressure on ourselves and we were going to win.

Bartges: When you added basketball, did your school participate in a conference like you're in now that—

Biery: Yes, we did.

Bartges: Was that straightaway or did that take a year or two to get into—

Biery: Well, they just had a little small conference tournament, but we didn't have—well not all the schools had girls' basketball.

Bartges: Right.

Biery: So—

Bartges: But when they saw that some of the schools in the conference had it, then maybe that was an incentive to them to add it.

Biery: They did. They started coming in, and I think it's—that was one of the things that helped.

Bartges: Do you think that your school, your administration, yourself and how this program got—like you say, encouraged to go, do you think that was a leadership role for Carthage High School, or were they just following the trend of the time?

Biery: No, I think it was more of a leadership. I don't think we was in a trend. I mean, we knew we was going to have to do this, at least the principal did, and we got maybe a foot up on some of it. And once we started, we were going to do something with the program that the girls could be proud of and the community could be proud of, and that was our goal.

Bartges: What other sports did Carthage have for girls at this time?

Biery: They had softball, track, volleyball. I guess that was it.

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

Biery: No.

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

Biery: Now we're not talking—what are we talking about here?

Bartges: (laugh) For some—I've had a variety of different responses. Some people say they were a facilitator, some people said they were a pioneer.

Biery: Well—

Bartges: They're talking about their involvement in—

Biery: Okay—

Bartges: —in girls' basketball.

Biery: Well, I don't see myself as a facilitator after the first year. (laugh) First year or two, yes, it was more of a facilitating thing. It was to fill the need. But once I got into it and found out what girls could do, what they were capable of doing, it really kind of stuck with me. Because I got more rewards from the girls and seeing things from girls that—and I'd coached boys' basketball quite a while—and they were capable of doing an awful lot of things.

Bartges: And they were very successful.

Biery: Very successful, hardworking.

Bartges: This question probably isn't going to apply to you because of what you've already said, but I'm going to say it anyway. It's just to kind of get an impression from you. I'm going to list a collection of states that surround or border Illinois and the years that they implemented a state tournament for girls' basketball: Iowa 1926, Indiana 1975, Michigan 1973, Wisconsin 1976 and they started their state tournament with three classes, Minnesota 1974, Ohio 1976, Kentucky 1920 to 1932 and then it was dropped and came back in 1975, Tennessee 1965, Missouri 1973, and Illinois 1977. As a coach and an administrator, as an AD [athletic director], how did you feel when you saw the states surrounding you competing in competitive state tournaments and Illinois hadn't added one yet?

Biery: Well, Illinois has somewhat been behind. I mean, boy's basketball has been kind of on a pedestal in Illinois for quite a number of years. When it was the one-class system, it was thought of very highly—compared with Indiana. So, I don't know that—I knew we were going to do something with it because we could see it around us, although the Iowa schools around us, the close ones, had not gotten into it yet. The smaller schools in Iowa were into the basketball being the three-on-three. They were held back on going five-on-five. And Iowa give them the option years later whether they could go five-

on-five or three, and they held two state tournaments. But I recognized it when I started coaching, and I seen the need and I seen that we were going to have to get into Missouri if we were going to be able to ever compete in Illinois, because those girls were so far ahead of us in just a few years. And we still compete with Missouri's girls.

Bartges: Yeah, you go over there a couple times a year, don't you, and do a tournament over there?

Biery: Uh-huh.

Bartges: How far—just for recordkeeping purposes, how far is it to the Iowa line here from here in Carthage?

Biery: From here, it's thirteen miles.

Bartges: How far is it to Missouri?

Biery: About sixteen miles.

Bartges: Can you tell me about the process of getting a state tournament added in Illinois? Do you remember the process that they went through?

Biery: No, I don't—I wasn't really, that I can remember, in on that. I know it was lobbied pretty hard, but I don't know if it was lobbied downstate as much as it was in the northern part of the state around Sterling and that area because they were very strong in basketball at that time.

Bartges: They had good reason to lobby.

Biery: Oh yeah.

Bartges: (laugh) They won the first one.

Biery: They certainly did. And so I think they were lobbying more for it at that time than they were in this area.

Bartges: Did you have anything to do with any lobbying or meetings or anything like that, that you recall, that maybe you went to for the state tournament?

Biery: Not that I can recall unless it was a town meeting or something.

Bartges: Did you attend the first state tournament in Bloomington?

Biery: In Bloomington, no I didn't.

Bartges: At Horton Field House?

Biery: No, I didn't.

Bartges: I'm going to show you a program. And you've been to a lot of state tournaments.

Biery: Um-hm.

Bartges: This is the program from the first girls' state tournament.

Biery: Well, I see it only cost a dollar.

Bartges: (laugh)

Biery: It costs a lot more than that now. (laughter)

Bartges: I don't know. What are your thoughts when you see something like that compared to what you see now? And—

Biery: Well—

Bartges: It's just—it's a different—

Biery: It's a different format obviously. They're not showing many schools...but it's not a bad attempt for the first time, I don't think. I mean, I haven't read it obviously.

Bartges: Right.

Biery: But in looking, it looks like—it's not like we have now, but (*laugh*) these are pioneer years. Now, I don't know how this compares to the boys' program at the same time.

Bartges: I don't know the answer to that either.

Biery: So, I don't know, but I really don't think it's terrible. It looks like a good attempt to promote it.

Bartges: Do you remember having any kind of an impression about the caliber of play for the girls, say from 1974 to 1977, the period of years from when we first added basketball to the first state tournament? What are your thoughts on the caliber of play, both of your own team and teams that you competed against in the state?

- Biery: Well, I think it improved a lot, the caliber of play that I saw. We didn't have an opportunity to play a lot of AA—what we now call AA schools, but we had to go to Galesburg to play in the first sectional, I think it was. I'm trying to think of the team that beat us. I think it was Morton. And it was still a small game, but they had—the caliber of play was good. In fact, I had told somebody—Morton or—I'm sure it was Morton, but had a freshman girl playing and I didn't think that there could be any freshman girl that could be that good, (laughter) but I was wrong. She was good. And I don't remember her name, but she was very good. So the caliber of play really, I think, moved up a lot. It sometimes depended on the individual because a lot of those girls, some of the real talented girls at that time, had brothers that played, had fathers that may have been coaching at the time, and they had done a lot of outside work with them.
- Bartges: Did you have sisters?
- Biery: Did I have a sister?
- Bartges: Yeah.
- Biery: No.
- Bartges: By 1974—you mentioned earlier in our conversation that you had a daughter. Had she been born by 1974?
- Biery: Yeah.
- Bartges: Okay. I was just curious.
- Biery: But she didn't play. I mean, she—we didn't have it. She graduated before. She graduated in 1972.
- Bartges: Oh, okay. So she had already gone through the system?
- Biery: Right.
- Bartges: A lot of the female coaches, like you mentioned, had brothers and their brothers were involved in that or their dads. And as a father I wondered what your perspective would be with a daughter. Of course—but like you said, she was a little bit older already.
- Biery: Yeah. She was a cheerleader. (laugh)

Bartges: Okay. In your opinion, given the previous conversation that we've had, what was the major reason that slowed basketball from being added as an interscholastic sport sanctioned by the IHSA?

Biery: Well, men were kind of chauvinist, if you want to—I think they held it back. Most of the superintendents and principals were all men. A lot of those people hadn't been involved in coaching probably before that, so—sometimes you almost got the feeling like it was another burden to be placed on.

Bartges: A time or—

Biery: Well—

Bartges: Resources or feelings, all—

Biery: Right. Resources, you're going to have to find places to do all this, you got all this practice time, you only got one gym, and it's going to mean another night out for the principal, who's going to have to be there at the games. I don't know that to be true, but it well could be. And girls wasn't looked on as being athletic, I guess, is what I want to say.

Bartges: Why do you think it changed?

Biery: Well, it changed, I guess, because somebody had the forethought and looked at the situation and seen that—well, Title IX changed it. I mean, if you want to know what changed it, Title IX changed it.

Bartges: Yeah.

Biery: Because that demanded that you do some of these things equally. And I don't know that everything's equal yet, I would hope so if schools have the resources. A lot of schools don't have the resources.

Bartges: Still they don't have them.

Biery: No.

Bartges: I mean, there are still teams that practice in the morning or late at night, or your junior varsity or freshman teams are practicing at nine o'clock at night.

Biery: Well, I refused to do it early in the morning.

Bartges: (laugh)

- Biery: Only as a disciplinary—but, no I—
- Bartges: When they were bad they had morning practice? (laugh)
- Biery: Well, they had—no, I had that for two girls that kind of got sidetracked a little bit, so we had morning practice at five o'clock for two girls.
- Bartges: (laugh) I'm sure those were fun practices.
- Biery: Well, they had a choice—they either practice or they can turn in their uniforms.
- Bartges: Life's about choices.
- Biery: Well, and I would hate it because they were two of my best players. (laughter)
- Bartges: It's always that way, isn't it?
- Biery: Well, they kind of pulled my leg. They were going to college days we had. They were both seniors. And they went to visit—they were supposed to visit two schools in the Quad Cities. They visited one, but they didn't visit the other one. So I didn't demand that they be back to practice that night because I thought—but they ended up going shopping. I happened to call—well no, one of the coaches called me and said, "Where are they at?" So they got caught.
- Bartges: (laugh) We've talked about the IHSA being slow to add basketball, and basketball's a team sport, and some of the team sports were added later.
- Biery: Um-hm.
- Bartges: Volleyball was added before basketball. Softball came right around that time.
- Biery: About the same time.
- Bartges: Do you think—and you may not—what role do you think homophobia played in the development and growth of girls' sports at the high school level, particularly for team sports like basketball, in your experience?
- Biery: I don't think that was a factor in our situation.
- Bartges: Okay.
- Biery: I never perceived it to be and I don't think anybody else could either.

Bartges: Can you identify any other factors that influenced previous decisions against interscholastic competition in the State of Illinois for basketball?

Biery: Not really.

Bartges: You sort of answered that. Do you think the AMA, the American Medical Association's endorsement for vigorous exercise helped change public educational policy towards interscholastic sport for girls as far as you know?

Biery: No.

Bartges: And you've mentioned Title IX. I have sort of an umbrella question for Title IX.

Biery: Okay.

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

Biery: Well, I think it put—it put a lot of pressure on the administration at that time to make—they're going to have to make a move so you may be able to delay it a while, but you might as well get going on it. So I think there was some pressure, a lot of pressure, bought to bear on—I don't know that we lost any programs. I think we had about the same situation. There might have been one year we had wrestling in there that the girls didn't have.

Bartges: Right.

Biery: But I think in golf and everything was—we didn't really have that many girls playing golf so they were on the same team as the boys at one time.

Bartges: Oh, so they competed that way?

Biery: Right.

Bartges: Until the IHSA prohibited that?

Biery: Yeah.

Bartges: In 1974-1975, first year for basketball, although Title IX had been passed, the teeth, so to speak, hadn't been put in Title IX yet, which came about in 1975-1976.

Biery: Um-hm.

Bartges: How quickly did you see changes in funding, travel, schedules, publicity, coaching, officiating when Title IX came in? And you've alluded to it. Pretty much it was, It's here, it's going to stay.

Biery: Yeah. The only problem that I had—it came in pretty strong on the use of women.

Bartges: For—

Biery: Well, officiating and coaching.

Bartges: And coaching.

Biery: As you mentioned. And they done this, but they didn't have—most of them didn't have the background to do a lot of it. They didn't have the experience, they didn't have any background in it. Some of them had never even got involved in it, and yet they're in the PE program, obviously, but not in the coaching aspect of it. And officiating—we had very few women officials. And you still don't.

Bartges: In your first season, you didn't have female officials that called your games?

Biery: No. No. They wasn't available.

Bartges: Okay.

Biery: They just weren't there.

Bartges: Were—do you remember—and as the AD you may remember—did the people that you paid for officiating the girls' games at Carthage High School get the same amount that—

Biery: Yes, they did.

Bartges: From the get-go?

Biery: Yes.

Bartges: Okay. That's why they all want to ref [referee] over here isn't it? (laugh)

Biery: Well—no, they get paid the same.

Bartges: I know.

- Biery: I mean, they do the same job so—sometimes they may not do it as well, but they do the same job, they should get paid the same amount of money. Same way coaching.
- Bartges: That would not have been the norm at the time.
- Biery: It wasn't at the time but—(laugh) of course, I was athletic director and we finally got that where we could do that.
- Bartges: Right.
- Biery: But it wasn't at the time.
- Bartges: So from the start, at the very beginning, you didn't—
- Biery: It was not from the start, yes.
- Bartges: Okay, that's—I didn't understand that.
- Biery: Yeah, yeah.
- Bartges: Okay. So they were paid differently?
- Biery: Yes.
- Bartges: The guys who ref'd [refereed] girls' games got paid less than—
- Biery: Oh no, the referees from the get-go got paid the same.
- Bartges: Oh, okay. Okay, that's what I wanted to make sure.
- Biery: We always paid them the same amount.
- Bartges: And then coaches got to be paid the same amount (unintelligible)?
- Biery: Right, right.
- Bartges: Okay. 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 as opposed to the GAA or the play day, that Title IX made it a more competitive model like the guys had. Do you—would you agree or disagree with that statement?

Biery: Well, I don't know. You can put Title IX as something that done that, but I don't think that Title IX alone made them more aggressive or a better player or anything. I think once you got into it and you started improving the quality of coaching that the girls had—and they've got some damned good coaches now, both women and men. And once you get those people involved in it—because it wasn't something for the male at the time that I went in it. It wasn't looked on very highly. But once you got things going, and Title IX probably done that, but I don't know if they improved the play or—I think the coaches done that. I think it became, It's here, we're going to get better coaches involved. Colleges finally starting producing coaches. A lot of the colleges at that time didn't have athletic programs for women. So I think it's more in the coaching than in the Title IX, per se. The Title IX may have been an implement to get that, but I don't perceive that to be the main factor.

Bartges: So you don't think that Title IX changed the old GAA model that we talked earlier about being social?

Biery: Oh yeah. It changed—well, it—well I don't know that Title IX—it forced them to do something other than that. I think that—no, I don't think so.

Bartges: Okay. There's not a right or wrong answer. I'm—

Biery: No, I just don't perceive that. I mean, they got more aggressive because of coaching and the type of play that we're doing.

Bartges: Okay.

Biery: But I don't know—Title IX brought that about obviously, I mean, as far as having it. But I think coaching is the one thing that they have now. And they've got some excellent coaches out there.

Bartges: Yeah, there's a lot of people that have a lot of different experiences.

Biery: Sure.

Bartges: Is there anything that I haven't asked you about—and again, I'm dealing with a period from approximately 1968 to 1977. Is there anything you can think of that I haven't touched on or you think might be important as far as the girls' high school basketball history goes during this period?

Biery: I really can't think of anything that we haven't really touched on. Obviously it was a little slow coming about, but we finally got it— I'm sure you've gone to state tournaments and so forth. We don't do the same type of thing in Illinois that they do in Iowa.

Bartges: No.

Biery: Iowa highlights their girls, I think, better than we do in Illinois in a sense. Their programs, I mean, highlight the whole women's athletic program at the state tournament, and I think that's nice.

Bartges: They have a very different system with the Iowa Girls Athletic Association versus what would be our IHSA. It would just be guys and then there would be a separate organization for the girls. How big was Carthage High School enrollment-wise during this period? I forgot to ask you that earlier.

Biery: We were probably 350.

Bartges: For nine through twelve?

Biery: Yeah. I think our high at any one time was four hundred, but I don't know if it was during that period or not.

Bartges: Okay. Were you a Boy Scout?

Biery: Yes.

Bartges: Okay. I ask the women if they were Girl Scouts so I want to be even and—I know you weren't a Girl Scout.

Biery: No, I wasn't a Girl Scout. (laughter)

Bartges: So I wondered if you were a Boy Scout. How many teams did you take to the state tournament?

Biery: I took four teams.

Bartges: And how many have you won?

Biery: Two.

Bartges: Two? What years were those?

Biery: Nineteen ninety-two and 1993, back to back.

Bartges: And the other two teams that you didn't outright win it, what years were those?

Biery: Nineteen eighty-seven was our first trip to Champaign and we ended up second. In 1990 we were fourth in Champaign.

Bartges: By that period of time, and obviously that's beyond the period of time that I'm looking at, but they had gone to a two-class system.

Biery: Yes.

Bartges: Do you think that helped smaller schools?

Biery: Oh yes, it helps. It helps. Now I don't know—they're talking about possibly watering down more. I don't know if that's good or bad. I kind of like the two-class.

Bartges: It seems hard to imagine three.

Biery: Well, they have them in our neighboring states and a lot of them have even more, I think four in some of them. I think that waters it down a little bit. It's—but yeah, it had to be—I think it's good. It gets more girls involved, gets more guys involved.

Bartges: Then you have the old facilities and everything else issues.

Biery: Right. You have your own facilities, and that was great. They took it out of the university [University of Illinois] and put it in Illinois State. They do a great job.

Bartges: You were happy when it went back to Illinois State?

Biery: Oh, loved it, absolutely, because we—first time we went back we won it there.

Bartges: (laugh) So yeah, you never wanted to leave that—

Biery: Right. Well, that was one of our goals when we went over there.

Bartges: Be the first?

Biery: To be the first, and—

Bartges: Because by then they had the new arena. Or was it still in—

Biery: Yes, they did have Redbird Arena.

Bartges: Redbird, yes.

Biery: Uh-huh. And assembly hall was nice. It was a nice facility, but it was too big for girls' basketball. You don't get obviously the same type of following and it was too spacious—

Bartges: It's like playing in a cave.

Biery: You were too much removed—yeah.

Bartges: (laugh)

Biery: Very nice facility, but it—this is so much better. It brings it in closer.

Bartges: Do you still go over to the girls' tournament?

Biery: Yes, I do.

Bartges: Do you enjoy seeing—

Biery: I do.

Bartges: Do you think it's—has it aged the way that it should, or should it be something more, or has it gone as far as it can go? There's a lot of different questions there.

Biery: Oh, I don't know that it's gone as far as it can go. I think they need to do a lot of things in promoting it more to the public maybe. But they do a nice job. I'm not complaining about that. They—while we were back last year or the year before we had—they had our state championship team, and they had us out on the floor at half and give us an award.

Bartges: Oh, like a twenty-year reunion or something?

Biery: Yeah, and that was great. So they're trying to do some things, and that helps get people in there I think.

Bartges: Sure. And helps build history. I mean, you need to have the history.

Biery: Sure. But I think they do a good job in Bloomington. I've always been happy over there. I wasn't that happy at Illinois [University of Illinois]. I guess because you were kind of on your own at the university. And they should have learned that earlier. You had to make your own arrangements facility wise and housing.

Bartges: Oh really?

Biery: Oh yeah, at Illinois.

Bartges: See, I was out of the state during that period.

Biery: Here they have the facility if you want it and it worked nice.

Bartges: Well, I want to thank you for taking the time to talk to me today, I really appreciate it.

Biery: I just hope I helped you in some small way.

Bartges: Oh, you have.

Biery: I hope you end up getting an "A" on your paper or whatever. (laugh)

Bartges: Oh, yeah, I'm actually—I'm done with all my coursework and everything. I—I wanted to do this because it's something that's close to my heart.

Biery: Okay.

Bartges: The—I don't know, the history—the people that I've known and the ones that got me involved in basketball over the years really have changed my life, because I spend my life doing this and I have a feel for this part of it. See if I can find it here.

Biery: Oh. (laughter) Aha. Okay, well no wonder.

Bartges: I played in the first state tournament.

Biery: You played in the first state tournament. No wonder.

Bartges: So when I—I was doing some work. I hadn't intended on doing a project to finish my degree. And I was trying to find something. And I was actually at the tournament where they honored you guys for the twenty years, I think it was.

Biery: Oh yeah, okay.

Bartges: And it made me—got me thinking. I did some Google search, some Internet searches, on history of girls' basketball in Illinois and in other states. And Illinois is one of the only states that doesn't have any reference materials, no sources of information on their girls' basketball high school history. And to me—I'm a historian intellectually. I'm not a PE teacher. I'm a historian. And I thought, you know, the people that did this, some of them are already dead

and some of the other ones are in their late sixties and some of them are all in their late seventies. Their stories need to be gathered, because once they're gone, their stories are gone, and it's—that's what I'm doing now. I'm trying to collect information. I'm not going to assimilate it into a book or anything like that, but if somebody wants the information from the people I've interviewed, it's going to be there for them because—

Biery: Oh, we had some interesting stories about that era. (laugh)

Bartges: Yeah, there's some—

Biery: I had some—it was a little bit hard. (laugh)

Bartges: What about it though?

Biery: Well, I mean you never knew. Of course this is, I suppose, because I was a male coach. You never knew exactly what was going to happen.

Bartges: Yeah.

Biery: And I've had a girl on the floor, in the first year or two, and she got hit in the bra and it come loose and—

Bartges: Oh—(laugh)

Biery: —and she's running up and down the floor and she just runs right off the floor, goes to the dressing area. Now here I am. I've got four girls on the floor and the other one just run off the floor. What's going on? Of course, me I didn't know what the heck was going on. Out she comes. I get somebody else to the bench and (laugh). But she just ran off.

Bartges: Well, and you know—do you know Jim Scott?

Biery: Yeah. I was at school with Jim.

Bartges: Oh were you? I know Jim real well.

Biery: Do you?

Bartges: Yeah. And—

Biery: How'd you meet him? He's in Bloomington.

Bartges: Jim Scott from Macomb?

Biery: Oh, okay.

Bartges: Wyatt—do you know Wyatt Green?

Biery: Yeah.

Bartges: Wyatt's uncle, Jim Scott from Macomb.

Biery: Okay, okay, yeah.

Bartges: Claudia Scott?

Biery: Claudia's husband?

Bartges: Claudia's husband, Red's daughter.

Biery: Right.

Bartges: I can't think of Red's last name.

Biery: Lawson.

Bartges: Lawson, yes. Okay, so Jim Scott's married to Claudia Lawson.

Biery: Yeah, right. I've met him. I'm not—I know her. I had Claudia in school.

Bartges: Oh yeah. (laugh)

Biery: Well she—let's see. I can't remember what year she graduated.

Bartges: Claudia's funny.

Biery: Yeah, she's a—

Bartges: She's a go-getter (unintelligible). When I got out of college coaching and I came back to Illinois, I coached high school—

Biery: They had a daughter played.

Bartges: Addie.

Biery: Okay.

Bartges: And Addie was in that first group of kids that I coached over there and that's how I met Jim. And then I just— I just retired from coaching at Macomb this past year.

Biery: Oh really?

Bartges: I was on that bus that was hit two years ago. Our bus was—well outside it, coming back from a ballgame.

Biery: Oh. See I guess I'm out of the loop a little.

Bartges: Well, it was around Christmastime and it was—it was not—but I had two fractures and four herniated disks, and I just—

Biery: Oh my.

Bartges: The last two years I hadn't been able to do what I need to do to coach, so I retired. And now Jeff Thorman got the job.

Biery: Yeah, Jeff will do a good job.

Bartges: Jeff will do a good job.

Biery: He's doing a good job. I see they got beat last night by one point.

Bartges: Yeah, they shouldn't have lost to them. I know he's kicking something today. But you know, that (unintelligible) from the bottom up.

Biery: Well, they've jumped around coaches so much.

Bartges: Well, I was the twelfth coach in twenty-four years.

Biery: I know.

Bartges: That's crazy.

Biery: I mean, it hasn't been that they didn't have the talent there at times. They have had some great talent.

Bartges: They have had some talent.

Biery: You bet.

Bartges: Addie Scott, Amber Curtis, those kids were talented. But the well had dried up, you know, from when I took over. I had a class—

Biery: Well, because there wasn't any sequence.

Bartges: Yeah.

Biery: Nobody was taking hold. Everybody was just kind of—

Bartges: I had one—I had a class that had seven seniors in it my first year. After that there was no juniors, one sophomore, and three freshmen in your entire high school program.

Biery: Yeah.

Bartges: How can you run a program like that?

Biery: You can't.

Bartges: So the numbers are good now. I'm happy with what we managed to get done. I hate that I had to retire, but physically I just couldn't do it.

Biery: Well, he'll do a good job.

Bartges: Yeah.

Biery: We hate to see him go because he was doing a good job down at the junior high.

Bartges: Oh yeah, yeah, the junior high kids have done well.

Biery: Great, great program he had going down there.

Bartges: Well, and that's what you need, you need that consistency.

**(end of interview)**