

Interview with Laurie Mabry

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Interviewer: Ellyn Bartges

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Bartges: It is August 20, 2006, and this is Ellyn Bartges. I'm in Vandalia, Illinois, interviewing Laurie Mabry. Good afternoon. Thank you for agreeing to an interview. Nice to meet you.

Mabry: You're welcome.

Bartges: Where did you go to high school?

Mabry: I went here, in Vandalia.

Bartges: You played sports in high school?

Mabry: Yes, um-hmm.

Bartges: What sports did you play?



Laurie Mabry

Mabry: Oh, I played about anything that the GAA [Girls' Athletic Association] offered, but that was basketball. Well, I played golf but not really through the high school. My parents joined the country club so I could play golf and softball primarily. Played softball in the summer when school was out and also through college when I came home for the summer.

Bartges: Did you play softball in GAA as well or not?

Mabry: I'm not sure we had softball in GAA. All I remember is basketball, and we, as sophomores, beat the seniors (laughs). We had no interscholastic. It was outlawed.

Bartges: Did you practice with GAA?

Mabry: We would have intramural games, and then we'd have practices, not really formally as such. But we had times that we could play as a team. Our team was really, primarily friends of mine (laughs).

Bartges: Were those class teams?

Mabry: Yes.

Bartges: So, the freshman all stayed together and...

Mabry: Right, in the tournaments.

Bartges: How many games might you play in a tournament?

Mabry: There were four classes. I assume that we played three games.

Bartges: Did you have uniforms?

Mabry: No, just our gym suits.

Bartges: What were those like?

Mabry: Blue shorts and white shirts.

Bartges: Did people come to watch you play?

Mabry: Not that I remember.

Bartges: Were your games refereed?

Mabry: Yes.

Bartges: Who ref'd?

Mabry: I think the physical education teacher.

Bartges: That would make sense.

Mabry: I believe so.

Bartges: Did you play five-player or six-player?

Mabry: We played six-player, I think.

Bartges: Did you play with a rover?¹

Mabry: No. That started when I was in college or teaching college.

Bartges: When did you graduate from high school?

Mabry: In '47. We went to a play day one time at Pana. After it was all over with, we stayed and played Pana as a team, and we won (laughs), which was very exciting. We had a good time playing as a team against another.

Bartges: Was that a mixed group of Vandalia girls, or was it just your junior team or your senior team?

Mabry: It was a mixture of classes.

Bartges: When you went to the play day at Pana, obviously that was unusual, to go to a play day at Pana?

Mabry: I don't know.

Bartges: Those were mixed that you...

Mabry: We played like blue against red, and it was a mixture of towns on each team.

1 The concept of rover was introduced to women's basketball in the 1967-'68 season. It allowed one player to take a rebound on the offensive and take the ball all the way to the basket on the offensive end, while being guarded by a rover from the other team.
(<https://www.columbiatribune.com/article/20160307/lifestyle/303079966>)

Bartges: So, one Vandalia girl, one Pana girl, one Vandalia girl, one Pana girl?

Mabry: And probably a couple other schools that were there.

Bartges: Oh, okay. What's the highest level of education you have?

Mabry: A PhD.

Bartges: Where did you go to college?

Mabry: I went to Northwestern for my bachelor's and Purdue for my master's, and University of Iowa for my PhD.

Bartges: What were your degrees in?

Mabry: Physical education [PE].

Bartges: So you have a B.S. in PE?

Mabry: Yes.

Bartges: And a M.S.?

Mabry: Um-hmm.

Bartges: Who was your dissertation advisor?

Mabry: His last name was [Joseph] Ismail. No, that was my master's from Purdue. My dissertation was... I think it was [William E.] Scott, head of the department. Yeah, I'm pretty sure that's who it was.

Bartges: What was your dissertation topic?

Mabry: That's a good question. Obviously it impacted on me. (both laugh)

Bartges: Well, you said it was a long time ago (Mabry laughs). It might come back to you later.

Mabry: Let's see, I was working on... I don't know; I can't remember right now.

Bartges: That's okay.

Mabry: I think it was... Oh, I know what it was. It was golf errors and recognition of them and correction.

- Bartges: Did you play sports in college?²
- Mabry: Well, we didn't have many, but I did play. We went to ISU [Illinois State University] for basketball one time in four years, I think. Volleyball might have been University of Chicago. Let's see, basketball and volleyball. That's about it.
- Bartges: Were these...
- Mabry: I believe I played in the golf sports day.
- Bartges: That was my next question. Were these sports days, or were these interscholastic teams at Northwestern?
- Mabry: They were sports days, not play days but sports days.
- Bartges: Describe the sports days experience at Northwestern that you had.
- Mabry: Well, it wasn't very extensive. In fact, I'm trying to think who coached us, if anyone (laughs). Let's see, basketball at ISU, who was that? I don't remember who our coach was.
- Bartges: Male or female?
- Mabry: It would have been female at Northwestern.
- Bartges: Somebody from the physical education department?
- Mabry: Um-hmm, right.
- Bartges: Do you remember if you had uniforms?
- Mabry: I don't think so, other than maybe shorts of a specific color.
- Bartges: Was it like your high school play day, where you went and you intermingled teams, or did you play as Northwestern?
- Mabry: Played as Northwestern. Now you say intermingled team. See, I don't call that a sports day. That's a play day.

2 Sports days, sometimes referred to as Field Days, are events staged by many schools and offices in which people take part in competitive sporting activities, (<https://www.definitions.net/definition/SPORTS+DAY>)

Bartges: So a sports day would have been where you went and you played different universities in sort of a round robin or a tournament?

Mabry: Right.

Bartges: And you went down to Illinois State for... [Do] you remember one time, going down there for that?

Mabry: For basketball, uh-huh.

Bartges: Do you remember how you traveled?

Mabry: By car.

Bartges: You remember how many people were on your team?

Mabry: When we went to basketball, one member of our team was Jean Groller [?] from Groller Furniture. They flew her down, her parents did.

Bartges: That was nice of them (both laugh).

Mabry: Yeah, right (laughs). Bonnie Pick, from Pick Hotels, was also on the team. We just drove in a car. I can't even remember who coached us or who drove, whether it was one of us or what.

Bartges: Did you take more than one car?

Mabry: If we did, it was only one other.

Bartges: Do you remember if you stayed overnight?

Mabry: No, we didn't.

Bartges: Did you get any kind of meal money, or did they pay for you to eat?

Mabry: I don't remember. I doubt it.

Bartges: Some people would talk about—and I know this from my own experience—getting a sack lunch, doing something like that. It's fine if you don't remember that.

Mabry: We didn't get a sack lunch, I know. I really don't know for sure.

Bartges: Do you know if people came and watched at the tournament? Do you remember people being in the stands?

Mabry: No.

Bartges: Do you remember what teams you played against or what other teams might have been there besides Illinois State?

Mabry: No, I really don't. This is probably (laughs) going to be the emptiest interview you've ever had.

Bartges: No (Mabry laughs). Some of the stuff comes back easily for people, and other stuff... It's not uncommon really. It's been a long time for some of that stuff, and they haven't thought about it in... There are things if you ask me now I wouldn't remember, (from) colleges. You don't think about those things. Are you familiar with the postal tournament?

Mabry: I never entered it. That's where you mail in scores, isn't it?

Bartges: Right.

Mabry: Yeah. Other than that, that's all I know.

Bartges: Do you have any experience with industrial leagues or AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] ball?

Mabry: No.

Bartges: You mentioned playing some softball in the summer.

Mabry: Softball.

Bartges: Was that like ASA [Amateur Softball Association] ball?

Mabry: It was just a local team. My dad was the manager. And every time it rained, he and I would go out with gunnysacks (both laugh), soak up the diamond.

Bartges: Was there a sponsor for the team?

Mabry: No, we didn't have one, other than my dad and another friend of his who helped coach.

Bartges: And was that a team out of Vandalia?

Mabry: Yes.

- Bartges: How old were you when you started playing that?
- Mabry: Softball? Well it was probably either senior year or when I came home the first year in college, in the summer.
- Bartges: What position did you play?
- Mabry: Shortstop, except when the pitcher was sick (laughs).
- Bartges: Was it fast pitch?
- Mabry: Yes, except I wasn't very fast (both laugh). I pitched against Decatur one time, and I did fairly well. So Dad had me pitching the next game. I couldn't do anything but throw the ball over the back stop (both laugh). I wasn't really a pitcher, but I did. I also caught sometimes, if the catcher was gone. I hated that. I didn't like it.
- Bartges: I never got the catching thing. Did you guys play, like a league here in town, or did you just travel to other towns and play other town teams?
- Mabry: We just played other town teams. There was no other team in town here. We were the only women's team.
- Bartges: Were most of the players your age, high...
- Mabry: Well, several of them were older than I.
- Bartges: Were there tryouts for that team?
- Mabry: Yeah, but not very big, usually just... primarily [the] ones who tried out made the team.
- Bartges: I'm going to backtrack a second to your Northwestern experience. Were there tryouts for the Northwestern team?
- Mabry: I don't know. It was probably similar to the situation here; if you came out, you got to play, because I doubt if there were very many that tried out.
- Bartges: Do you have any recollection of how many games you might have played in the summer, softball games?
- Mabry: Softball? Maybe ten.

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

Mabry: No.

Bartges: Were you a Girl Scout?

Mabry: Yes.

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

Mabry: Yes.

Bartges: For how long?

Mabry: I taught in a private girls' school the first three years in Louisville, Kentucky. We didn't have any interscholastic events, except maybe one game of field hockey. And then, after that, I taught three years, four years in high schools in Illinois, three years at Farmer City and three years at Ramsey Illinois, about six to seven years.

Bartges: Three years at Ramsey?

Mabry: Uh-huh.

Bartges: And then...

Mabry: Three years at Farmer City.

Bartges: Oh, I'm sorry.

Mabry: Then I decided I wanted to get my master's.

Bartges: Your Illinois experience, do you remember if your principals were male or female?

Mabry: Where I taught?

Bartges: Yes.

Mabry: Male at Ramsey and male at Farmer City, both of them.

Bartges: Do you remember their names?

Mabry: Yes. Walter Holliday at Ramsey and... What was the other one?

Bartges: Farmer City?

Mabry: Oh, Farmer City. I don't remember his name.

Bartges: Do you remember if they were from Illinois?

Mabry: No, I don't.

Bartges: Were there sports at those schools, for girls?

Mabry: Well, we didn't play as a team. Now, you're talking about when I taught?

Bartges: Correct.

Mabry: Let's see... I'm trying to think. I don't believe it was allowed when I was teaching high school, because I don't remember any events that I took the team to. And I know I would have, if it had been eligible or allowed.

Bartges: When you say you don't think it was allowed, who didn't allow it?

Mabry: IHSA [Illinois High School Association].

Bartges: Do you think that these principals would have been in favor of girls' sports, had it been... I know that that's...

Mabry: I think they would have.

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

Mabry: No. I first participated in a national golf school, which was sponsored by the LPGA [Ladies Professional Golf Association], and...

Bartges: When was that?

Mabry: Oh, my (laughs). At that time you could be a teaching pro, which is what I was. Then they changed their criteria to where you had to play in so many tournaments. I was earning a living teaching physical education (laughs) and not playing well enough really to compete in the tournaments anyway. What was your original question? I think I didn't answer it.

Bartges: If you had participated in a National Sports Institute or a National Leadership Conference [event], and when did you go to the national golf school?

Mabry: Well, I don't know for sure, but I have a plaque, I think, upstairs from the... No, I don't. It used to be upstairs, but I moved. I don't know what year. Let's see if I can remember [that]. I don't know for sure.

Bartges: You mentioned golf earlier. When did you start golfing?

Mabry: Early high school.

Bartges: You said your folks...

Mabry: Yeah, my uncle was a good golfer, and he taught me in the backyard. Then my parents joined the club, so that I could play. I used to play with the women who were older than me, and we traveled between towns, Pana and Hillsboro, that type of competition.

Bartges: Did your mom golf?

Mabry: No.

Bartges: Your parents were obviously supportive.

Mabry: My dad didn't either.

Bartges: Oh, really?

Mabry: Um-hmm.

Bartges: But they were supportive of you golfing?

Mabry: Right.

Bartges: And it was okay for women to golf at these clubs?

Mabry: Oh, yeah.

Bartges: Were there tournaments at these clubs?

Mabry: We usually took turns and rotated where we would go each year, like we might go to Pana and play against Pana, and then we might go to Hillsboro next time and play against them and rotated among the towns around Vandalia.

Bartges: Was there a high school golf team?

Mabry: No.

Bartges: Again, that was not permissible back then?

Mabry: Right. Well no. It was permissible in golf and swimming.

Bartges: But Vandalia didn't have...

Mabry: Ladies sports (both laugh), right.

Bartges: Because golf, swimming and tennis came...

Mabry: Right, I think all three of those were allowed.

Bartges: ... Those were early on.

Mabry: Uh-huh.

Bartges: And did you golf at Northwestern?

Mabry: Yes, uh-huh.

Bartges: Again, intercollegiately?

Mabry: Yes, but I only remember one, one time, and that was a home event at Purdue, my master's. [I] didn't have any in my doctoral program at Iowa.

Bartges: Did you golf on the university golf course at Purdue?

Mabry: Uh-huh.

Bartges: When did you go to Illinois State?

Mabry: I went to Illinois State... Let's see, I graduated from high school in '47 and taught three years and three more years and then got my master's. What was your question? When did I go where?

Bartges: When did you go to Illinois State?

Mabry: Well, it was after I taught at Ramsey. Let's see, I taught three years in private girls school, then I went to Farmer City for one year. Then, I think, I thought I didn't

want to teach anymore, and I worked for the AT&T, but I missed my summers off (both laugh).

Bartges: I know that feeling.

Mabry: So, I taught then four years at Ramsey. So that would be three, and one's four, and four is eight years, '47, '55. Let's see... I guess about '55.

Bartges: And what was your...

Mabry: No. Northwestern, I went right after high school, '48. You did say Northwestern?

Bartges: Illinois State.

Mabry: When did I go to Illinois State? Now, that's about right, '55.

Bartges: And what was your job at Illinois State?

Mabry: I was a physical education teacher and sponsored the WAA, Women's Athletic Association. Within about a year, I was made intercollegiate director and eventually women's athletic director and eventually full time with that position.

Bartges: And describe what WAA is.

Mabry: Well, where I was a sponsor, we met probably monthly and planned the sports days that we were going to have and, well, organized those and maybe prepared a float for the homecoming parade and things of that sort.

Bartges: Did you have to raise funds?

Mabry: No.

Bartges: So...

Mabry: They didn't spend much.

Bartges: But you actually did get money from the university?

Mabry: Yes, eventually quite a bit.

Bartges: How many women were in your program?

Mabry: We had about ten sports, and we had four teams in basketball and volleyball.

Bartges: Four levels?

Mabry: Yes. And only the top one traveled. But we had the events that we... If we held a sports day, then they all four played for us, and... You want to know the number of people in the program?

Bartges: Just a rough estimate.

Mabry: Let's see. Basketball, there were four teams. Four times twelve is forty-eight; make it fifty. Volleyball, same way, fifty is 100. Some of these are repeats. Softball, we had two teams, fifteen [members]; that's thirty; that's eighty. Field hockey, we had two teams, twenty-five or thirty. Is that 110? Is that where I am? One hundred and fifty probably.

Bartges: Did the field hockey team travel and the top volleyball team travel and the top basketball team travel?

Mabry: Um-hmm.

Bartges: How did they travel?

Mabry: Coach's car or a university car, driven by the coach. For a while, it was our cars. Then eventually, we had cars scheduled for us.

Bartges: Did they graduate to a bus eventually?

Mabry: While I was still teaching, I don't remember ever traveling in a bus. That may have come after us, after me.

Bartges: Who coached these teams?

Mabry: Physical education teachers. Like, I coached... Over the four year period, I coached basketball, volleyball, softball, badminton (laughs). Basketball, volleyball, badminton, softball, I guess that's it.

Bartges: When you coached basketball, it was six-player basketball?

Mabry: About halfway through—After about two years—it changed to rover.

Bartges: Rover?

Mabry: While I was coaching.

Bartges: The PE Majors Club at Illinois State, were you in charge of that as well?

Mabry: No.

Bartges: Who ran that?

Mabry: Another teacher. I was more competitive sports, whereas the majors, many of them were on many of the teams. Their program, as a majors club, was not related to sports competition.

Bartges: How did these teams get players? Were there tryouts?

Mabry: Um-hmm.

Bartges: Were there cuts?

Mabry: Yeah. Not a lot, because we had four teams. But they were cut from the first team, several of them, and placed on the second team or the third team, whatever.

Bartges: Right. Was it challenging, given that sports at the high school level were not permitted? How competitive were these teams?

Mabry: Our teams were very competitive because we had a strong physical education program. I think we attracted the athletic girls, and this was before scholarships. So it was quite competitive, in my opinion. Now I, as a coach, had very little background, compared to today where they themselves have gone through an active, full program, and I hadn't.

In my opinion, that's the best that came from Title IX, that is that it's okay for a girl to be athletic and be good, because it wasn't particularly a positive thing when I was growing up.

Bartges: Was that something you were acutely aware of as a coach, as a deficiency?

Mabry: Well no. When do you mean?

Bartges: When you were coaching at the college level, that you might have [a deficiency], because you didn't play, or you didn't play as much that...

How did you pursue information to try and make your kids better? Did you talk to the men's coaches, or did you go to clinics or anything like that to try and gain information?

- Mabry: No, not really, just the majors program.³
- Bartges: I didn't know what avenues there were available for you.
- Mabry: Nothing much.
- Bartges: [I'll skip] a bunch of high school questions that aren't relevant to you here. Were you part of the rules committee for basketball ever?
- Mabry: No. I was on the golf rules committee but not basketball.
- Bartges: This is a little bit of a rhetorical question. Were you part of the AIAW [Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women]?
- Mabry: Yes, I was president, started as Midwest... I was commissioner of championships and then was elected president.
- Bartges: Do you remember when that was?
- Mabry: Let's see, it was about 1970, I believe.
- Bartges: You were the commissioner, and then when were you elected to president?
- Mabry: A year or two after that.
- Bartges: How long did the AIAW exist?
- Mabry: About ten years, ten to twelve.
- Bartges: And were you active in the AIAW that whole time?
- Mabry: Um-hmm, yeah. You'd go in as a president-elect and then the president and then past president. Then I served on Midwest as well, after that, for a year before I moved back into physical education fully. That was back when NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] was threatening to start a program, and we were, as an organization, busy fighting that effort by them. But I thought we should explore the possibility of working together, because I thought some day they're going to take us over, because at that time they had no girls' program or women's program.
- Bartges: What time are you talking about?

3 A majors program provides students with experiences to understand, narrow or expand career choices beyond high school. (<http://www.conejousd.org/tohs/Academics/Career-Education/Majors-Program>)

- Mabry: Let's see, 1980 approximately. I just thought, If they started a program, it would be hard for schools to ignore them and not join them, which is what happened, I guess, after I left. I wasn't involved, once I was past president and then one year Midwest commissioner, I think it was. And then I really wasn't involved.
- Bartges: That was one of the questions I was going to ask you. When you got out, you got out completely?
- Mabry: Pretty much, um-hmm.
- Bartges: Did you really see that coming?
- Mabry: Um-hmm. In fact, I had it on the agenda for our meeting.
- Mabry: Any rate, at one point, I was to appear before a congressional committee on the implementation of Title IX, and it took them a year or two before they set up the policies that would affect Title IX.
- Bartges: So this was sort of the first football and basketball—particularly football—as third gender kind of a thing that they don't count?
- Mabry: In determining equal opportunity, you mean?
- Bartges: Right.
- Mabry: Right. In fact, I had a boss that was that way at that time. He was in the president's office. I was out of physical education after a while, and he wanted to count equal opportunity, disregarding football.
- Bartges: That's fairly common today.
- Mabry: Are they still doing it?
- Bartges: Yeah.
- Mabry: I'm sure there isn't a single school in the nation that has true equal opportunity, in terms of expenditures, but I didn't know it was that bad, that they're ignoring football still. Any rate, they didn't at my school, because I made them count them.
- Bartges: The AIAW, when you were president of the AIAW, what were some of the major issues and some of the major accomplishments that were going on at that time?

Mabry: Each year usually we added a new sport. This issue of Title IX and the implementing [of] policies in regard to it was the biggest issue. And at one time, I made the motion at our annual assembly that... Let's see, how did that go? I made the motion that we... We had no scholarships for a while. I made the motion that we accept scholarships and limit them to tuition and fees only, providing the men's organization would do the same.

Bartges: And the men's organization being?

Mabry: NCAA. We passed that, and we went to lunch. And this little group banded together and decided they wanted to reconsider that and knock it out, which they did. I and about five others composed a committee that worked on compromise there. We did accept room and board after that, went all the way then. Eventually—is that my dog? (laughs)—eventually, in my opinion, they've copied the men's program. But I'm not blaming them. I don't know what else they could do.

Bartges: Do you think the AIAW was a better model?

Mabry: Definitely.

Bartges: What was the genesis for the AIAW?

Mabry: What do you mean by genesis?

Bartges: What created that model?

Mabry: First of all, we began to think we had ignored the talented girl, talented athletic girl, in our programs where we disallowed it from high schools and limited it from the colleges. We thought they should have a program.

Additionally, we felt that tuition and fees was sufficient and was not unnecessarily costly, compared to room and board in addition. We just went on that basis, that women needed the experience and competition, but it didn't need to cost the school a small fortune.

Bartges: When you say “we,” who was we at that point in time?

Mabry: All the members of AIAW. Back to Charlotte West, [she] was another person in Illinois that worked on it. She and I, in fact, had been on the state commission at one time together. And [a] girl from Iowa, Peg Burke, and girl from England; what's her name?

Bartges: Christine Grant?

Mabry: Yeah, Chris. They were active. When I say, "we," I really mean the women in AIAW.

Bartges: I'm just trying to garner some names too. As I can say, this is sort of a documentation (unintelligible).

Mabry: Um-hmm.

Bartges: When I talked to Charlotte, Charlotte had coached longer than I thought, so I really need to talk more about the coaching aspect at the high school level and some other things and AIAW. I know that you were fairly active and involved in the AIAW, and I'm interested in that.

Mabry: Yeah, because Charlotte, I think, was raised in the South, and they had programs for girls down there.

Bartges: Yes, she's from Florida.

Mabry: Was that the state?

Bartges: Yeah.

Mabry: She's a good friend of mine and a good leader, I think, in AIAW.

Bartges: Nice lady.

Mabry: Um-hmm, right.

Bartges: She's been very, very nice to me. She's been very helpful and invaluable, helping me find people and get connected with them. What do you think was the ultimate undoing of the AIAW?

Mabry: As far as I could see, it was the NCAA, when they started the program. Didn't take schools very long to drop their AIAW and join NCAA. So I think the NCAA killed it.

Bartges: Think they had more leverage?

Mabry: Oh yeah. They had their football and basketball programs in there. And technically they couldn't defend the inequities that existed, by court actually. They were afraid of that.

Bartges: Do you think it was inevitable?

Mabry: Yeah. That's why I thought we, as an organization, should have studied more the possibility of equally managing a program for girls and boys or men and women together. I wasn't pushing to do that, but I thought we should be prepared.

Bartges: Would you have done anything differently, looking back, in retrospect?

Mabry: I might have pushed the agenda, I think it was the last year I was president—the year I was president, not past president—I had on the agenda that question and also the question of retaining our lawyer, whether we should retain her, as we had in the past, or deal with more than one lawyer. That came to a tie vote, and Peg Burke broke it and voted to keep her as is.

Bartges: That's an important question, a lot of people don't realize.

Mabry: It was.

Bartges: Just a pivotal question.

Mabry: Because she, in my opinion, pretty much attempted to rule the organization, under about three presidents, and Peg was one. The year that I had her under review, the one from California... trying to think of her name... Judy...

Bartges: Sweet?

Mabry: Yeah, I think that was it.

Bartges: I'm not positive.

Mabry: I think that was it.

Bartges: She's in that age group.

Mabry: Yeah. Any rate, she voted with me. I left the meeting and went upstairs. She followed, and we talked. And they retained her. The year I was president, I didn't invite her to the assembly. One girl from New York questioned why she wasn't there, and I said, "If we have a question that's a legal, of legal impact, then we'll call her." But I just thought she was trying to run the place, and she was.

Bartges: Yeah. Those are big decisions.

Mabry: I think she was good, but too good, too involved in terms of policy.

- Bartges: What year were you president of AIAW? (laughs) I'm asking the tough ones.
- Mabry: (laughs) Might have been '75. I don't know for sure. I've got books; probably I could figure it out from.
- Bartges: I can find out (laughs).
- Mabry: Okay (laughs).
- Bartges: Did you belong to any group or groups that were active in the civil rights movement?
- Mabry: No, not really. I don't think so. In fact, today I wonder... Pardon, I started to say, "What the hell." (laughs). Where the hell my mind was. Maybe it was too involved in athletics, in that I fought the fight there. But when I think of how the blacks were treated, it's just terrible. I remember Martin Luther King. I have a quiet religion basis, and to me he was a noisy minister (laughs), you know. Now I know the difference, what was happening then. But I paid little attention to those movements. When were they going on? (laughs) I'll ask you. [Do] you know?
- Bartges: Really, they were ongoing, I think, modern, from Brown v. Board of Education in '54, forward. And as the Vietnam War got more active, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, it moved forward.
- Mabry: See, that's when I was fighting the fight in AIAW. I guess I was too busy with my own fight. But I wonder why I didn't pay more attention to what was going on then. But, no, I wasn't involved in civil rights.
- Bartges: Billie Jean King says that she hates labels and being labeled.⁴ However, for the purpose of this interview, how did you or would you characterize yourself during this period of your life?
- Mabry: I don't know what you mean.
- Bartges: Well, you say you were fighting.
- Mabry: I was fighting to stay separate but thought we should consider discussions on together.

4 Billie Jean King is an American former World No. 1 professional tennis player. King won 39 Grand Slam titles: 12 in singles, 16 in women's doubles, and 11 in mixed doubles. She often represented the United States in the Federation Cup and the Wightman Cup. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billie_Jean_King)

Bartges: You say you were fighting for athletics or fighting for sports or the fight that you were fighting. You were active in organizations that were...

Mabry: Involved in athletics.

Bartges: Involved...

Mabry: I was an activist. That's what you want.

Bartges: I don't want to give you a word because those are my words.

Mabry: Yeah.

Bartges: Different people have had different labels that they have put on themselves.

Mabry: That's what I was, and I still am. For example, our grocery store here, in Wal-Mart, have eighteen magazines on women's hairstyles but not neither one has a *Ms. Magazine* in their magazine racks (Bartges laughs). So I told them we didn't need eighteen hairstyles. I consider that still activism on a low scale. But neither of them got them. They tried. I think they did try, but they had a provider, you know, that brought them the magazines, eighteen hairstyles.

Bartges: It just makes you wonder; doesn't it?

Mabry: Yeah. In addition, our courthouse here, for example, about five to ten years ago, they had an architect's drawing for an addition to the courthouse. The courthouse itself was an old home from way back. The whole area had old homes, big two-story houses and so forth, and the drawing they had for the addition was modern. I thought it should be just like the rest of the building[s], with white pillars and the front porch and all this and that.

I was talking to the director of the bank one day, and I said about I objected to that, and I wasn't the only one, that a lot of people did not like the design. He says, "Well, that's a done deal." In addition, I had a friend who says, "Well, you can't do anything with that; it's already settled."

That just made me mad. So I worked at it, and we got petitions out at Wal-Mart. In one day, we had, I don't know how many signatures, because really no one liked it. Nobody that we asked about it was supporting it. So we got it changed (Bartges laughs).

Bartges: Good for you.

Mabry: So, I'm still a activist, over different issues.

Bartges: 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. I'm going to go back to the high school train of thought here: Iowa 1926; Indiana 1977; Michigan '73; Wisconsin 1976, and they started with three classes; Minnesota '74; Ohio '76; Kentucky 1920 to 1932, and then they came back in 1977; Tennessee '65; Missouri '73; and then Illinois in 1977. As an educator, a coach, an administrator, how did you feel when you saw the states surrounding you competing in competitive state tournaments, and Illinois wasn't, for their players?

Mabry: I wasn't even aware of that. I started to say something in relation to that. Oh, I know. I probably supported what IHSA enforced. As I look around today, there's no intramural program here, just our interscholastic now, and that's it. There's a lot of girls that do not get activity as a result. We've gone from one extreme to the other, where we did not allow the competition. That encouraged intramural programs, which it did, to allowing it. And now the intramural program is gone [at] this school, and I imagine many.

Bartges: When you were coaching at Ramsey and at Farmer City, were there intramural programs for the girls?

Mabry: No. Intramural?

Bartges: Yes.

Mabry: Intramural would be at the same school.

Bartges: Yes.

Mabry: Is that what you mean?

Bartges: Yes.

Mabry: Yeah, we had intramural programs both places.

Bartges: And how extensive were those?

Mabry: They met two days a week, I think it was, and participated in whatever sport was seasonal.

Bartges: So, in the winter they played volleyball and basketball?

Mabry: Um-hmm.

Bartges: And in the spring maybe they ran track or...

Mabry: Right and softball.

Bartges: ... played tennis or softball?

Mabry: Right.

Bartges: What I'm hearing you say is that interscholastic competition wiped out the intramural program?

Mabry: Well, it has here locally. I'm not that aware of what's going on outside of Vandalia. But I imagine that's happened at a lot of schools, that they went to allow the interscholastic, and their coaches and people who wanted to work with sport and girls were limited, and they just dropped them, is my guess. But I don't know that for fact.

Bartges: Yeah. I know at Macomb, where I coached, there was still an intramural program, but it was not on the scale of the interscholastic program.

Mabry: Right.

Bartges: They might have what I would call... not what you would consider a play day, but they would have a play day for basketball and one for volleyball and maybe one for flag football in the fall. I don't know if they did one in the spring or not for intramurals. As a coach, I didn't want my kids playing in that, because I didn't want them getting hurt. I let them play in it, but I didn't like it.

Mabry: Yeah.

Bartges: I don't know what some other places did. I don't know what some of the other places, the bigger suburban schools, do with that.

Mabry: Were the coaches from high schools or from the college?

Bartges: The coaches would be kids. Most of the intramural coaches at... I can only speak for Macomb, the high school. Macomb would be kids, usually guys, but classmates. [That] was my experience with it. As a kid in my school, I don't remember intramurals at all. So you're probably right.

Mabry: I don't really know, as I say, but I know they dropped everything here, except interscholastic.

Bartges: So, for you is that a negative thing, in your opinion?

Mabry: The most positive thing out of Title IX to me has been the fact that it is now okay for a woman to be athletic and to be good. That's the most positive thing. In terms of program, I think there should be a happy medium.

We should have the interscholastic, but we also should retain the intramural, because all girls need activity, and they enjoy different sports. But nothing really is offered today here, so I think they should have retained the intramural as well.

Bartges: Did you go to the first Girls' State Basketball Tournament in Illinois that was hosted at Illinois State?

Mabry: You mean the college?

Bartges: The high school.

Mabry: Yeah, they held it there, and I was in charge, with Jill Hutchison.

Bartges: What was your responsibility?

Mabry: Just as the director of the program, that local program.

Bartges: What did you do with that?

Mabry: Nothing, I just supervised Jill (both laugh).

Bartges: So, she did a good job, huh?

Mabry: Yes, she did.

Bartges: What do you remember about that tournament? [providing a copy of the program to review].

Mabry: (laughs) Not much, except that we were excited to be hosting it. Put my glasses on. This is another thing; not all from Title IX is good, in that you don't find women officials anymore.

Bartges: No.

Mabry: You don't find them as director of the departments or chairman of the departments, very few. And see, I look at these pictures; they're all women.

Bartges: Yeah, you almost find no coaches anymore, very few.

Mabry: I know. In fact, I see the games on TV, and I'm automatically against the man coach (laughs). It's not his fault; it's much the women's fault, in my opinion. They don't want all the pressure that goes with it, I guess. I don't know. All I know is...

There's Ola. IHSA board of directors, all men. ISU (Redbirds) host all women, except the president of the university.

Bartges: Well, we need to stop. Hold that thought.

Mabry: Okay.

Bartges: See, you do have stuff to say.

Mabry: Oh, Jim Barnhardt. Well he had to get an article in this paper.

Bartges: Is that the *Pantagraph* [Bloomington-Normal] guy?

Mabry: Yes.

Bartges: Ola was funny about him.

Mabry: I bet.

Bartges: And I have to say I was not a big Ola Bundy fan.

Mabry: Yeah.

Bartges: She had some interesting comments though. She could talk.

Mabry: Um-hmm. Who won that tournament?

Bartges: Sterling.

Mabry: My gosh. Almost the whole team's black.

Bartges: Fran Harris.

Mabry: Who?

Bartges: Fran Harris. She could play. I think that's her name, one of those girls on Sterling's team.

Mabry: They are all black, every one of them.

Bartges: No...

Mabry: No, no that's Chicago.

Bartges: You're looking at Fenger [Academy High School, Chicago]. [Reviewing the program from 1977]

Mabry: Yeah, right. No, there are only a couple at Sterling. Nothing against blacks, but Jill kept saying, "Where are the blacks?" I said, "Just wait until the scholarships get (laughs) in there." And now you look at the girls' teams; they're just a little bit different than the boys.

(changes tape)

Bartges: This is tape number two on August 20, 2006, Ellyn Bartges interviewing Laurie Mabry in Vandalia, Illinois. We're talking about the first High School Girls' Tournament of Basketball in Illinois.

Yeah, Sterling won the first tournament. All of the coaches were women.

Mabry: Um-hmm.

Bartges: All the officials were women. Is there anything about that tournament that stands out in your mind?

Mabry: No, I really don't remember it much. I think we had one of the first college tournaments too.

Bartges: Nineteen seventy-two or '73?

Mabry: I don't remember.

Bartges: Do you have an opinion about what was a major reason that might have slowed the IHSA from sanctioning basketball as a sport?

Mabry: For girls?

Bartges: For girls.

Mabry: I don't know. The reason I always heard was that they were afraid of our lack of support then to the intramural programs that existed.

Bartges: Would that have been the GAA program?

Mabry: Yeah. GAA also probably worked with the varsity. There wasn't any when I taught, but with the better teams, as well. But they also provided programs for the average girl.

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

Mabry: I don't know for sure, but it probably was involved because... Can't even remember what I... my mind right now. Homophobia, was it involved? Read the question again.

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

Mabry: I think it probably had some impact, although I've never heard it discussed at any level. But I think that was... Read me that question again. There's an original thought (laughs). Oh, I know. That's why I think the best thing that came from Title IX was the fact that it's now okay for a woman to be talented athletically, and it didn't used to be.

Bartges: Do you think there was a perceived correlation between a talented female athlete and the homophobia question?

Mabry: I don't know. I would think that it was. As I say, I never experienced it, but I did feel... There weren't scads of girls in high school, trying out for these teams.

Bartges: Right.

Mabry: It was me and a few others (laughs).

Bartges: Was any one group of people, administrators, coaches, parents or players, more concerned or vocal about what I have read—the word that is used is “mannish” behavior—than another?

Mabry: I really have never heard much discussion of that, but I think the thoughts are with the team sports, basketball, softball maybe.

Bartges: You say it's not something that was discussed. Is that something a group like the AIAW... I know the NCAA... Like, when I would go... I'm a retired basketball coach. I coached at the division I level.

Mabry: Um-hmm.

Bartges: It's becoming more common now to have a session at the NCAA conference, that they might talk about homophobia or discrimination kind of thing. Is that something the AIAW would ever have discussed at a meeting, or was on an agenda?

Mabry: No, not really.

Bartges: What do you think happened to change the IHSA's stand on adding basketball as an interscholastic sport?

Mabry: I think it was just a growth in the interest of girls and high schools and coaches. I would say I was not an activist when I coached in the high schools, because I kind of supported the IHSA's concern about dropped intramural programs. But I became one [an activist] at the college level (laughs).

Bartges: Was that a dichotomy for you?

Mabry: No, not really. It just was where my interests were and efforts.

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

Mabry: I don't think so.

Bartges: You've said several times, a specific statement on how you think Title IX affected girls. This question says, "How do you think Title IX affected girls' basketball in Illinois?" You think your statement about... [Do] you think it made it okay to be athletic?

Mabry: Uh-huh.

Bartges: There any other...

- Mabry: But also the equity aspect was obviously missing. They had no program, compared to extensive program for the boys, so they began to feel they had to provide it.
- Bartges: How quickly did you see changes in funding, travel, schedules, publicity, uniforms, coaching, officiating, facility usage, once Title IX was passed?
- Mabry: Illinois State was a pretty good supporter of the girls program, prior to Title IX. Title IX did increase our funds and very quickly, but not as much as at some schools felt it where they had very little support to nothing. See, we had release time for coaching; we had university cars to drive; we had meals covered, lodging if we stayed all night. So we had the basics. It's just that it increased tremendously, including tuition and fees and room and board.
- Bartges: Why were you guys so far advanced?
- Mabry: I don't know, except that we had a strong majors program and a lot of student interest as a result.
- Bartges: Was it that way when you got there?
- Mabry: Yeah, just the period of time. I think it was, and I think it was because of the number of majors.
- Bartges: How many majors?
- Mabry: Gosh, I don't know, but a large program.
- Bartges: Who was the director of the program before you?
- Mabry: Helen Riley.⁵ She passed away. After she left ISU, she taught at Eastern.
- Bartges: Where was she from?
- Mabry: I don't know. She was a field hockey player.
- Bartges: But chances are she's not from Illinois?
- Mabry: No. I had never seen field hockey (laughs).

5 A 1949 ISU graduate, Helen Riley coached volleyball, softball, basketball, and field hockey at Illinois State from 1955-61. She coached field hockey at Illinois from 1961-65 and Eastern Illinois from 1965-77. At the time of her death in 1977, was noted as one of the foremost field hockey authorities in the nation. (<https://goredbirds.com/honors/illinois-state-athletics-percy-family-hall-of-fame/helen-riley/200>)

- Bartges: When you say she was a field hockey player, she's not from Illinois.
- Mabry: And I took a workshop from... oh, the woman who introduced field hockey to the United States. What's her name? Do you know?
- Bartges: I told you; I wasn't a PE person.
- Mabry: Oh, that's right.
- Bartges: I've seen a picture of her though. She's from Great Britain.
- Mabry: Right. I went to her camp [for three years] because I happened to take a job where the girls—it was a private girls school—they were crazy about field hockey.
- Bartges: Was that in Illinois?
- Mabry: No, it was Kentucky.
- Bartges: Louisville.
- Mabry: Louisville, um-hmm. So I went to camp to learn a little bit about field hockey (laughs).
- Bartges: Where was the camp?
- Mabry: Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania.
- Bartges: Tobyhanna?
- Mabry: Um-hmm. And the first day she yelled at me. She says, "Don't you know how to hold a hockey stick?" Well, I didn't know how to hold it (laughs). But she only picked on one person once, usually. She didn't pick on them over and over. I went because I had never had instruction in field hockey.
- Bartges: Sure (laughs). Was there much competition between the men's athletic and PE department and the women's athletic and PE department at Illinois State?
- Mabry: I usually had to fight for a lot of things. For example, I wanted, and our girls wanted, to play in the field house, where the men played basketball.
- Bartges: It's important.

Mabry: Right. I wanted a volleyball court painted on the floor. The year before, they'd had a fuss because the supporting group of alumni and so forth had gotten in trouble with... I don't know who, but they had a fuss going on about their influence and... I thought, I suppose I should talk to the men.

So, I called this one. I forget now what... He probably was the director at the time. I told him we wanted the volleyball court painted on the floor. He [asked] what did the men's basketball coach want? And I said, "He doesn't want it." He said, "I don't either then." (laughs) He's a man who had three daughters, but he didn't want one either.

We got it painted on there, but I had to fight for it. And my boss, as I say, he wanted to ignore football and then equalize the program.

Bartges: Who was your boss?

Mabry: Jim McBee [?] was his name.

Bartges: What was...

Mabry: He was an assistant to the president of the university. They moved me out of physical education eventually, when I became full time athletics. I went back, however, after I retired from those programs. I went back to physical education for a year or two before I retired.

Bartges: When did the programs become one?

Mabry: Soon as I left.

Bartges: (laughs) So you missed that opportunity, huh?

Mabry: Uh-uh. It was immediate.

Bartges: Do you think that would have had...

Mabry: Yeah, I do. We lost a woman's athletic director, and I think that's happened all across the United States. I was disappointed in my coaches, that they didn't fight it. But they didn't. So it happened immediately, when I left.

Bartges: Yeah, I think that was this period of time when that seemed to happen all over the country.

Mabry: Oh, yeah.

Bartges: Do you think that was a result of Title IX?

Mabry: Well, I think that helped, yeah, because they couldn't legally defend different programs and different policies, like we had limited practice time and things of those sorts and no room and board. They couldn't legally defend those differences, so it was a lot easier to have them alike, if you have one program. So I think that was a factor.

Bartges: I wonder, how do places like Texas and Tennessee keep certain programs?

Mabry: Texas and Tennessee? Well, Tennessee has had a tremendous... As soon as Pat whatever her name is leaves... If they're separate now, I have a feeling it will be one program as soon as she leaves; I'd bet you on it. I was shocked when you say they were separate because I didn't... I assumed they weren't.

Bartges: I'm pretty sure they're separate. I thought when Donna Lopiano left Texas—and that was a number of years ago—that they would be going, but I think they're still separate.

Mabry: Could be, I don't know.

Bartges: Conradt is still there, though.

Mabry: Who?

Bartges: Jody Conradt, so I don't know. Marianna Trekell, in her book, *A Century of Women's Basketball*, stated that she felt that Title IX forced the issue or role model for women's and girls sports towards a more competitive male model of sports. Do you agree or disagree and why?

Mabry: Title IX stands for equal opportunity, so legally you can't have different policies for different programs. They've got to be very closely aligned and alike. There's not a university or a college in the nation that's going to change their men's program to no room and board. They're not going to change toward the women's program. So the women's program is, in my opinion, very much like the men's today. Title IX was a factor.

Bartges: Is there anything else you'd like to add? Is there a favorite story or anything from your experience that would illustrate your experiences or things that happened that you'd like to share?

Mabry: I think I told you too, when the attorney said, in fact, football and basketball are exempt, also when I made the proposal for an amendment to limit—We would

accept women's scholarships, but we wanted to limit them to tuition and fees—those were big issues the association addressed and stories that relate to them. [I'm] trying to think. I can't think of any others.

Bartges: You will when I'm gone (laughs).

Mabry: Yeah, probably. If I do, I'll write you.

Bartges: Well, thank you very much.

(end of transcript)

(end of discussion)