

## Interview with Sue Strong

# DGB-V-D-2005-008

Interview: May 2, 2005

Interviewer: Ellyn Bartges

### **COPYRIGHT**

**The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of either Ellyn Bartges (Interviewer) or the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955**

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

**This transcript is based on an interview recorded by Ellyn Bartges. Readers are reminded that the interview of record is the original video or audio file, and are encouraged to listen to portions of the original recording to get a better sense of the interviewee's personality and state of mind. The interview has been transcribed in near-verbatim format, then edited for clarity and readability, and reviewed by the interviewee. For many interviews, the ALPL Oral History Program retains substantial files with further information about the interviewee and the interview itself. Please contact us for information about accessing these materials.**

Bartges: It's May second and we are at Sauk Valley Community College outside of Sterling [Illinois]. I'm interviewing Sue Strong, and Sharon Douthit is also in attendance today and will also be interjecting where needed. Good afternoon, Sue. Good afternoon, Sharon.

Strong: Good afternoon.

Bartges: Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed. I've looked forward to this.

Strong: Thank you.

Bartges: Where did you go to high school?

Strong: Maine Township. I believe it was—it's now Maine Township East. That was before they had East, West, South, and North.

Bartges: So what town was that?

Strong: It was located in Des Plaines, I believe, Illinois.

Bartges: Is that what town you lived in?

Strong: No, I lived in Park Ridge [Illinois].

Bartges: In Park Ridge?

Strong: Yes.

Bartges: Did you play sports in high school?

Strong: Well, there was no sports per se. Participated in the GAA [Girls Athletic Association] level was the extent of my sports activities.

Bartges: Describe what GAA was for you. Was it like intramurals, was it extracurricular, was it interscholastic?

Strong: When I was going to high school, it was merely a matter of intramural sports activities. There wasn't the competitive edge that the kids can get now with all that sports activity that they have, but not in the year I was there.

Bartges: What sports did you play in GAA?

Strong: Would you believe badminton?

Bartges: Sure, I would.

Strong: Okay. (laughter) And would you believe not really any basketball to speak of at that time?

Bartges: Was badminton the only sport you played?

Strong: Basically, yes.

Bartges: What other sports did they offer?

Strong: Oh, yeah, they offered other sports. It was a big high school, and all the major sports were offered—volleyball and basketball and stuff like that.

Bartges: And who was in charge of your GAA when you were playing?

Strong: Well, I can't even tell you. I don't even remember the name.

Bartges: Was it a PE [physical education] teacher?

Strong: Probably, yes.

Bartges: Male or female?

Strong: Female.

Bartges: How big was your high school when you attended?

Douthit: Three thousand?

Strong: Probably, yeah, right around there.

Bartges: Was it nine through twelve?

Strong: Yes.

Bartges: Did you have any kind of uniforms? What did you wear to participate in GAA?

Strong: I would assume your PE uniform, but I don't remember for sure.

Bartges: Well, did you guys have set PE uniforms, or did you have like white shirts and white shorts?

Strong: Probably, yeah.

Bartges: Okay. I remember we had those blue one-piece uni-suits that you'd get in and they snapped up.

Douthit: With the bloomers.

Bartges: With the bloomers, that's right. And you had your name on the back. (laughs)

Strong: See you're reaching a little here, Ellyn.

- Bartges: Well, I told you I was going to push you a little bit.
- Strong: Trying to remember. You get that confused with what you wore in college, and then what you were using when you were teaching, and oh my goodness.
- Bartges: Were there ever any spectators or anything like that with GAA?
- Strong: I can't imagine there was.
- Bartges: When did you play—after school, on the weekends?
- Strong: Yes, yes, after school.
- Bartges: And was it every day after school or once a week after school?
- Strong: I don't recall.
- Bartges: Did you play in the gym?
- Strong: Yes, but not where the boys were practicing or things like that.
- Bartges: So you had—
- Strong: It was big enough we had more than one gym there.
- Bartges: And was there a girls' gym and a boys' gym?
- Strong: Probably, yes.
- Bartges: Okay. Did you ever have class teams? That probably doesn't affect you because you were playing an individual sport. Okay, I answered my own question here.
- Strong: Okay.
- Bartges: Did you ever play basketball?
- Strong: In college, but not competitive.
- Bartges: Okay, I'll come back to that. When did you graduate from high school?
- Strong: Do we need that?

Bartges: Notice I didn't ask you when you were born.

Strong: Well, that helps.

Bartges: (laughs) I'm trying to get a feel for a particular group of people who had an influence. Did they come through at a certain time, are they from this state, where were they educated.

Strong: Oh, okay. 1957.

Bartges: Well, you're a youngster.

Strong: Right.

Bartges: You are.

Strong: Right.

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

Strong: I'm a college graduate and into grad [graduate] school.

Bartges: So a B.A. [bachelor of arts], B.S. [bachelor of science]?

Strong: B.A.

Bartges: Where did you go to college?

Strong: Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa.

Bartges: And you said some graduate school?

Strong: Right.

Bartges: Where'd you go to grad school?

Strong: Northern [Northern Illinois University] and the University of Iowa.

Bartges: What is your degree in?

Strong: Physical education.

Bartges: And is that nine through twelve, or K [Kindergarten] through twelve, or what's your certification?

Strong: K [Kindergarten] through college, thirteen.

Douthit: K through junior college.

Strong: Junior college, junior college.

Bartges: Okay. How did you end up at Simpson College?

Strong: I wanted a smaller school, and I wanted a school that was a little farther away from home. And when I found the information about it, it just looked to fill my needs, and when I got out there and saw it, I was impressed.

Bartges: It's a nice little school.

Strong: Yeah, very small, but yeah. And it's grown over the years and seems to have been a school that's become a little more competitive as well, so—and there seems to be more opportunities for women there than there was when I was even there so—

Bartges: Your family wasn't from Iowa? There were no contacts or anything like that?

Strong: No, no.

Bartges: You said you played some ball in college? What kind of ball did you play?

Strong: Basketball.

Bartges: And did you play—

Strong: Half court stuff, three-on-three.

Bartges: So it was six-on-six?

Strong: Yeah, correct. Sorry.

Bartges: That's okay. I say three-on-three sometimes. Was that with a rover<sup>1</sup>?

Strong: Yes, we did that too. (laughter)

Bartges: What position did you play?

Strong: Defensive position.

Bartges: You were a guard?

Strong: Yes.

Bartges: And how many years did you play in college?

Strong: Only one.

Bartges: And that was intramural, right?

Strong: Right.

Bartges: Did you have uniforms, or was it part of a PE program that you did intramurals? How did you get hooked up with that?

Strong: I'm trying to think exactly what that was. There must have been some kind of a uniform other than your white uniform that you wear because you were a phys ed [physical education] major, but I'm a blank.

Bartges: Did you ever referee at college?

Strong: No.

Bartges: Did you ever referee out of college?

Strong: Well, in my classes is all. (laughter)

Bartges: Sometimes that's the hardest place to referee.

Strong: Well, yeah, they always don't agree with you, but anyway—

---

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

Bartges: Did Simpson have an interscholastic basketball team when you were there, or a girls' team?

Strong: I would assume. I don't—

Bartges: But you don't recall going and watching games or anything like that?

Strong: No, no, no.

Bartges: Okay.

Strong: As I said, the program really grew, I think, in the last fifteen years or so. It's really started off and doing something, so—

Bartges: Are you familiar with the Postal Tournament?

Strong: Seems to me—didn't we do that, Sharon, when we were—

Douthit: Yeah, we did that. I don't remember—

Strong: —a GAA thing.

Douthit: Yeah, we did them in—I don't remember—I did them when I was in GAA in high school, and then we did it—

Bartges: You participated in them?

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: Yeah.

Bartges: And what did you participate in with those? What were they offering?

Douthit: I remember bowling and—

Strong: See, that's what I'm trying to remember—what we had.

Douthit: And we set stuff up...seems to me we did, like, archery.

Strong: Yeah, that could be. That could be.

Bartges: They did do archery. They did do bowling.



Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: Yeah.

Bartges: Individual sports where you could keep score.

Strong: Right.

Douthit: Right, where there was a score to send in.

Bartges: Right.

Douthit: Yeah, that's what I remember doing both as a student in high school and as—  
here.

Bartges: As a GAA person?

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: Yeah.

Strong: See, I remember it here, but I don't remember participating in one. I could  
have, but—

Bartges: Yeah. It seemed to be more of a downstate thing or a non-suburban  
thing—

Strong: Could have been. Could have been, yeah.

Bartges: —from the gist that I've gotten from other people. The people that I  
interviewed that were in suburban Chicago area, they knew of it but they  
didn't participate in it. More people from outside of those collar  
counties participated.

Strong: Um-hmm.

Douthit: Yeah, because, see, I was from Central Illinois.

Bartges: Um-hmm. Did you ever have any experience with Industrial Leagues?

Strong: No.

Bartges: AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] ball?

Strong: I coached AAU ball.

Bartges: You did?

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: When did you coach AAU ball?

Strong: She wants me to remember all these things. Okay, it was shortly after we did something—so it had to be 1978, 1979.

Douthit: Yeah, because Jolene participated—

Strong: Jolene participated.

Douthit: And her mother helped.

Strong: And her mother was one of the founding mothers, and the gal from Dixon was on the team, and another gal in the junior high was a coach there, so I assisted her with that. So it was a coaching level type of deal. It was fun, and it was neat because you could have different kids from all over.

Bartges: Right, the cream of the crop.

Strong: Yeah. We got to meet some really nice gals. And I'm trying to remember—Pam Gant.

Bartges: Oh, yeah.

Strong: Pam Gant played for us and—

Bartges: Really? Clear out here?

Douthit: Yeah.

Strong: Yes. And Mola—Myra—Moira somewhere from—where we go to class, Sharon—Warrenville, Wheaton Warrenville. We had some top kids. We had some kids from Beloit. We had a couple kids from Rockford. We had a real strong team, and we went on one—once or twice—I can't remember, but the

kids rallied and mixed real well, considering every one of them was a star on their own team.

Bartges: Right.

Strong: We had a good time, and we learned about each other and how well they could follow directions. And we based it out of Sterling, and we had people that would take these gals in during the week so they'd have someplace to stay without costing them any money and that sort of thing, but we earned money as well.

Bartges: Right. So you had a sponsor, or you did things to raise money?

Strong: Yes.

Bartges: The latter?

Strong: Yes.

Douthit: There was no sponsors.

Bartges: Did—

Strong: Everybody cooperated, and we had attendance at the games. We had them at Sterling Fieldhouse, and I mean we had good attendance for a hot summer afternoon.

Bartges: Did you charge admission?

Strong: I was trying to remember if we did. We might have because we were trying to pay for uniforms and stuff like that.

Bartges: Right. That was my next question, uniforms.

Strong: We had uniforms.

Bartges: What did you do? You did?

Strong: Yeah. We had enough money raised to buy uniforms, and that went over a period of three or four years. Some girls would play for two years and then they'd bow out. Some would play for one and bow out. And it was—we had a real good core from our school too.

Bartges: How did you find out about AAU?

Strong: Somebody must have said something to somebody because this gal that had taught PE at the junior high asked me to do it, so somebody must have contacted her, so—

Bartges: Were you the only coach, or did you have an assistant coach, or—

Strong: She was the assistant coach.

Bartges: Oh, okay, this other woman?

Strong: And then I was an assistant to her too.

Bartges: Okay.

Strong: We kind of—you know.

Bartges: Where did you play? You said you played—

Strong: St. Louis, the—(unintelligible) St. Louis? New Orleans. New Orleans was the first—hotter than Hades there.

Douthit: It went really well.

Strong: But we did our state tournament at Sterling. And there wasn't a whole lot of teams around at that time. Then we went to New Orleans the first year, and then the second year, I think it was Kansas City or St. Louis we went to.

Douthit: Kansas City, I think.

Bartges: Do you have any recollection about how many teams—or a guess on how many teams were in New Orleans?

Strong: I'd say there was at least ten.

Douthit: Yeah, I was going to say it was—it wasn't huge, but it was a fair amount.

Strong: Yeah, but it was something you had to work for. I mean, it wasn't something they just gave you on a platter.

Douthit: Right. Oh no, AAU was usually very competitive.

Strong: Yeah, and it was fun to do after you're coming off winning a state tournament. The kids were still kind of enthusiastic about it.

Bartges: And to keep your kids together like that—

Strong: Yeah, yeah, even though they competed in different sports activities.

Bartges: This is sort of a rhetorical question, but I don't want to make an assumption: this was five-player ball?

Strong: Yes.

Bartges: Okay. (laugh)

Strong: Yes.

Douthit: Regular basketball.

Bartges: Regular basketball.

Strong: Basketball as you know and love it.

Bartges: Yeah. Well, and one of the things—because of the people that I'm talking to, a lot of the people who were involved in the success of five-player basketball, their only experience had been with six-player basketball—

Strong: That's right—

Bartges: —as a coach and as a player until later, so I kind of want to make that clear. Nowadays, if you talk to kids they would say, Six-player basketball?

Strong: I know, What are you talking about?

Bartges: What is that?

Strong: Except our kids were able to see the six-player in Iowa on the TV.

Douthit: Yeah.

Strong: They'd watch that.

Bartges: Oh, you'd get them on the TV?

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: Oh, yeah.

Strong: They'd watch that, come back and say, What's that? And then finally Iowa woke up.

Bartges: Yeah, but not for twenty years later.

Strong: Well, no. No, it takes them a while. (laughs)

Douthit: Well, why would they want to? It was successful.

Bartges: Oh, yeah.

Strong: And they were making money.

Douthit: I mean, it was making money.

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: They were successful. Why did they need to change it?

Bartges: Yeah.

Strong: Right.

Bartges: I mean, from basketball they funded all their other girls' sports.

Douthit: Oh, yeah.

Strong: Sure.

Bartges: It was a huge success.

Douthit: Yes, well, and we're only thirty miles from Clinton, Iowa, so—and you pick up Quad City TV, see, so you've picked up—I mean we've picked up their basketball tournament.

Strong: For years.

Douthit: For years here, long before we had one.

Bartges: Yeah. (laughs)

Douthit: Long before we had one, you could watch—

Strong: They were doing at that time—

Douthit: —their three-on-three ball.

Bartges: Our coach took us to Des Moines to see the Iowa State Tournament—

Strong: Really?

Bartges: —this one year and you walk into Veteran's Auditorium, and it was like going to the Olympics—

Strong: Sure.

Douthit: Yeah.

Bartges: —at that time. You'd see these girls in the letter jackets, and all the medals and the Chevrons on their sleeves, and all the—Our school wouldn't award varsity letters to girls.

Strong: Really?

Bartges: No. So there was no opportunity to have all those things. And so going to Vets [Veterans' Auditorium] and see that, and to listen to, I want to say—the announcer—I want to say Jim Enright, but that's not the right—

Strong: No, I know who you mean.

Bartges: And the history section for the finals where they have them inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Strong: Right.

Douthit: Right.

Strong: That's big time.

Bartges: In 1939—(unintelligible) scored eighty points.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: It was just—

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: Well, you know, and they announce their awards for all their sports.

Strong: And that's good.

Douthit: And they're all there. Yeah, you don't miss it.

Bartges: It's a big event.

Douthit: It is a big event. Because, see, we've been watching it here for years before Illinois ever got into it.

Bartges: Yeah, and that was an amazing thing to see.

Strong: Sure.

Bartges: But I had never seen it on the TV. And I went to college in Iowa also and so—

Strong: Where'd you go?

Bartges: I went to Iowa State.

Strong: Did you?

Bartges: Yeah.

Strong: Oh, that's right; that's where you met Jolene.

Bartges: Yeah, many moons ago. I was a tennis player at Iowa State.

Strong: Okay.



Bartges: So—but I remember when she came there because I thought, Oh, that's that kid from Sterling, you know, from ball.

Strong: Sure.

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

Strong: No.

Bartges: Were you a Girl Scout?

Strong: Sure was.

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

Strong: Yes.

Bartges: For how many years?

Strong: Oh my...thirteen. I coached for thirteen years, (unintelligible) that is thirteen years. And I taught for—

Douthit: Well, how long were you in Iowa? Five?

Strong: I was in Iowa five years, K through 12, and then I came to Sterling in 1966, so that was I think—

Douthit: Is that twenty-nine years?

Strong: Twenty-nine years.

Bartges: At Sterling? Okay. Did you coach in Iowa?

Strong: No. I did. I had to sponsor the GAA, the cheerleaders, the pep club—I was it.

Bartges: You were it? Where did you teach in Iowa?

Strong: Northeast Community in Clinton, Iowa.

Bartges: What did you teach here in Sterling?

Strong: Phys ed [physical education].

Bartges: What age group?

Strong: Nine through twelve. And we had an occasional year of health classes we taught.

Bartges: (laughs)

Douthit: Or study hall.

Strong: Or study hall or whatever else they gave you.

Bartges: Lunch duty—

Strong: Well, yeah, that too, I think. Didn't we?

Douthit: Study hall.

Strong: We had the detention center.

Douthit: Detention center. We were just—could do anything.

Bartges: I'm going to stick with your years in Sterling here in the rest of these questions.

Strong: Okay.

Bartges: Was your principal at Sterling High School male or female?

Strong: Male.

Bartges: And from the period of 1968 to 1977 was it still a male?

Douthit: Oh, yeah.

Strong: Yes.

Bartges: Was it one person?

Strong: Yes.

Bartges: Who was that person?

Strong: William Yemm, Y-e-m-m

Bartges: There's a Yemm Motors somewhere.

Strong: Yeah, in Geneseo.

Bartges: Oh, okay. (laughs)

Strong: His son's a dentist.

Douthit: No, Galesburg.

Bartges: Galesburg, yes.

Strong: Galesburg, that's—

Bartges: That's where I've seen it.

Douthit: That's his brother.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: Oh, okay. Was he in favor or against adding girls' sports in general?

Strong: I think he was in favor.

Douthit: Oh, yeah, he was—

Strong: Very much backed the program, and he was on the board down at Bloomington, IHSA [Illinois High School Association] Board and—

Douthit: Yeah, he and I were on there at the same time.

Strong: Yeah, Sharon was on it as well.

Bartges: When was that?

Douthit: (laughter)

Strong: I'm trying to remember.

Bartges: Remember, I'm a historian.

Strong: I know, I just can't—

Douthit: It was early.

Bartges: Was it before basketball was—

Strong: No. You and I—

Douthit: I was on there when they kicked off hockey, whatever year that was. Remember when they stopped doing girls' field hockey competition?

Bartges: I don't ever remember them playing field hockey.

Douthit: So that was the year—I mean, I was on it that year, but I don't remember when it was but—but Mr. Yemm was—

Strong: He was there for a long time.

Douthit: We only had two principals at Sterling High while we were there so—

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: And—

Strong: He was just outstanding and—

Douthit: Very supportive.

Strong: Supported a lot of activities, doesn't necessarily be sports, but it would be— anything across the board he would support.

Bartges: Was he from Illinois?

Strong: I would assume so.

Douthit: I would assume so. His brother's from Galesburg—

Strong: I would assume so—

Douthit: —I would assume he was Illinois, yeah. But he and Robert Henard—Henard was the—

Strong: Athletic director.

Bartges: Huntered?

Strong: Henard, H-e-n-a-r-d. Both were some very strong backers of the program.

Douthit: Yeah.

Bartges: And I'm going to ask you again if you know, was Henard from Illinois? Sometimes people know, sometimes they don't.

Douthit: I would guess he was.

Strong: I would assume.

Douthit: He was married and had kids and lived in town for years, so I would assume he was from around here somewhere.

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

Strong: No.

Bartges: Did you ever have any interaction with somebody that had attended one of those and was back sort of disseminating that knowledge? Usually it would have been maybe coaching specifics or how to teach basketball, particularly five-player basketball. It would have been probably in the late sixties.

Strong: Not that I recall.

Bartges: Do you think officials in Illinois were concerned with what version of the rules were used—and when I talk about what version, I mean the difference between the National Federation and DGWS [Division for Girls' and Women's Sports]?

Strong: I can't think that they—we were very fortunate. We had some excellent officials in the area who were very helpful, and so I—but I don't ever recall—

Bartges: It wasn't on your radar?

Strong: No.

Bartges: Do you think in 1971 when the National Basketball Committee Experimental Rules became official that that impacted Illinois? And that would have been when five-player basketball was added. The National Basketball Committee officially said, We're playing five-player basketball. There had been a two-year trial basis. And maybe you weren't coaching then.

Strong: I started through the GAA program; that's how I got into it because nobody else wanted to, per se, and I liked it, and I enjoyed it, and I enjoyed working with the kids so—

Bartges: But if that was the case, these wouldn't have really been on your radar.

Strong: No.

Bartges: Was it in 1966 when you came—

Strong: Yes.

Bartges: —to Sterling? Did you do GAA from the start then?

Strong: Yes.

Douthit: Yeah. And I hired her for that.

Bartges: And how many people were in Sterling High School at that time?

Douthit: Two thousand.

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: That was probably about peak, about in there.

Bartges: And that was nine through twelve, obviously?

Douthit: Yeah, 1966. Yeah.

Bartges: How many different types of things were offered for GAA? Was it a pretty big offering?

- Strong: It was very big. I mean, we offered archery, we offered softball, we offered basketball, volleyball, aerial tennis—which the kids loved—badminton. We had a very diverse—
- Douthit: It was an all-year program. It was a big deal.
- Strong: Yeah.
- Douthit: We went to GAA play days and—
- Strong: Yeah, we went to all kinds of things like that.
- Bartges: So this is where I kind of get confused, and this is an age group thing, I think, because I never participated in GAA. To me, GAA and play days are different.
- Strong: Right.
- Douthit: They were.
- Bartges: Okay, so you say you went to GAA play days?
- Douthit: We had, like, conference play days.
- Strong: Yeah.
- Douthit: And so ten girls would go from each school, and we'd go down the street or (unintelligible).
- Strong: And you'd just play.
- Douthit: And you just—you got mixed up all on the teams and you just played.
- Strong: Played.
- Bartges: Okay.
- Strong: Yeah.
- Douthit: Whatever the sport was at that season.
- Bartges: So yellows played reds, and apples played oranges—

Strong: Sure.

Douthit: Yeah.

Bartges: —and you mixed it up?

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: Yeah.

Bartges: Your Sterling didn't get to play—

Douthit: Nope.

Strong: No.

Bartges: As a coach, when you had those, did you have uniforms for the team sports?

Douthit: For GAA? No, I don't think we did.

Strong: No, kids just wore their PE clothes.

Bartges: Their PE stuff?

Douthit: Yeah.

Bartges: Were there ever any fans that came and watched?

Strong: Not the play days.

Douthit: No, I don't think so.

Strong: (unintelligible) activities.

Douthit: It was always on Saturday.

Bartges: And did you practice?

Strong: Not really.



Douthit: No.

Strong: Because they were playing in their GAA program.

Douthit: We didn't—yeah.

Strong: So you'd sign up if you wanted to go or—

Douthit: If anybody wanted to go to Iowa on Saturday and—

Strong: Play.

Douthit: Play badminton.

Bartges: Okay. So the GAA stuff in school was where they got their practice, because it was like an intramural program—

Strong: Sure—

Bartges: And then when you went to a play day, you got to mix it up with other people.

Douthit: Right.

Strong: Sure.

Bartges: Okay.

Douthit: Yeah, that's what it was. Yeah.

Bartges: When did Sterling add basketball for girls?

Douthit: 1973, 1974.

Strong: Three or four, I was trying to think—seventy—

Bartges: That would have been the first two.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: That the IHSA [Illinois High School Association]—

Strong: Yeah, it was three or four. Yeah.

Douthit: Yeah.

Strong: I'm trying to go through (unintelligible). I'm trying to remember.

Bartges: I have to backtrack a second with the rules. When we talked about the National Basketball Committee going from the experimental rules of five-player and then making it official, did you favor the change from six-player to five-player?

Strong: Oh, sure.

Bartges: Why?

Douthit: Well, it was a much better game.

Strong: You weren't bored just standing around looking and waiting for the ball, and this way the kids were more actively involved. I think they got more out of the game that way.

Bartges: I haven't found anybody that was against it, (laughter) which doesn't surprise me, I mean—

Strong: Okay.

Bartges: In 1973-1974 you were the first coach of the Sterling Basketball Program, the girls' program. And you said earlier that you got into the coaching because nobody else wanted it. With the change in the rules from six-player to five-player and with the addition of interscholastic sports, was there any avenue for you to get exposed to the sport or pick up any coaching experience or any—I mean, how did you learn what you wanted—

Strong: Read a lot. And I picked the brains of some of the men in our department and went to as many games as I could get a hold of. And at that time there were, like, clinics around that you could attend and—you know, on certain phases of the game that could be helpful. I didn't always get to all the ones I wanted to.

Bartges: Who would have been offering the clinics?

Strong: Just, I think, different people through the—

Douthit: One of the northern district IAHPERD [Illinois Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance] and—

Strong: Yeah, there's some phys ed people that did that sort of thing—

Douthit: —stuff like that.

Strong: Because it was new to everybody. And it was women that were doing it because the men were involved with all the men's sports more times than not. I had an interest in it. I was single at that—you know, and I had the time, and my body was still together at that point, so you go out and you do that because this looks like fun, and the kids are neat, and you get to meet other nice people and go from there.

Bartges: Did you coach other sports other than basketball?

Strong: No.

Bartges: Did you have any obstacles that you faced getting this program started?

Strong: You know, and it may sound strange, but if you asked for something—Bob and Bill were just considerable help in trying to get—Well, we can't get it now, but we can let you borrow this to get you to where you need to be until the money starts being available for you to buy stuff for your program. And as I said, we had a few hand-me-down basketballs; we had a few hand-me-down jump ropes and things like that.

Bartges: Did you have uniforms that first year?

Douthit: Oh, we did—

Strong: Oh, they were humdingers, let me tell you.

Douthit: (unintelligible).

Strong: And they were not only for our team; they were for the track team, the softball team, the tennis team. I mean, I don't know how many years we went through using those. They were beautiful, black with gold. I don't know, maybe it was navy—

Douthit: Navy.

Strong: I don't know, but they were just terrible. (laughter) And I mean—

Bartges: They were probably that really icky polyester that if you sweat it wouldn't absorb—

Strong: The kids complained, but they thought it was neat to have a uniform so—

Bartges: But you did have a specific uniform, you said, at Sterling?

Strong: Oh, yeah.

Douthit: Wore it for everything.

Strong: For everybody.

Bartges: (laughs).

Douthit: (unintelligible).

Strong: Yeah, (unintelligible) that was it, wash and wear. (laughter)

Bartges: Did you have warm-ups?

Strong: No.

Bartges: Did you have a varsity and a JV [junior varsity] or just one?

Strong: Eventually.

Bartges: I'm talking about the first year.

Strong: No.

Bartges: Just one team?

Strong: Um-hmm.

Bartges: Did you have tryouts?

Strong: Yes.

Bartges: Did you advertise for tryouts?

Douthit: Oh, yes.

Strong: I think it was word of mouth—

Bartges: Or did you recruit?

Strong: —and I did a little recruiting and somebody— (unintelligible) said, "This gal looks like she can play pretty decently. Why don't you go check her out?"

Douthit: You know, everybody in class is watching (unintelligible) trying to find somebody.

Strong: It was just—yeah, word of mouth basically. It wasn't a big, you know.

Bartges: Did you have cuts that first year? I mean, do you remember how many people tried out?

Strong: Boy, I'm trying to remember. I don't think we—

Douthit: I don't remember cuts.

Strong: I don't think we had cuts. We didn't have cuts until later.

Bartges: Did you have an assistant coach that first year?

Strong: No, not at that time.

Bartges: Okay, I'll deal with later.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: How many games did you play that first season?

Strong: Oh, not very many.

Bartges: It's not like it is now?

Strong: No. (laughs) No.

Douthit: No.

Strong: But not very many.

Douthit: Well, you probably played the whole conference.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: So you had a conference?

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: Oh, yeah.

Strong: But not every school in the conference had a girls' basketball team.

Douthit: Max [maximum] would have been eleven teams.

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: And some of those schools were slow coming in—

Strong: Right.

Douthit: —because they were small. Spring Valley and—

Strong: Kewanee—

Douthit: Kewanee and some of those very small—

Strong: But see, at that point, you know, we were lucky to have four, five, six and like that.

Bartges: What conference were you in?

Strong: North Central (unintelligible).

Douthit: North Central Illinois Conference.

Bartges: And was that the same conference as the boys were in?

Strong: Yes.

Douthit: Yes.

Bartges: How many people officiated your games? One, two, three?

Strong: Two.

Bartges: Two?

Strong: Two. We didn't have three until later.

Douthit: No, never had three.

Bartges: No, that would have been much later.

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: Yeah.

Bartges: Do you remember what the refs [referees] wore?

Strong: Striped shirt and black pants. Tennis shoes.

Bartges: They wore pants?

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: Okay.

Strong: Sometimes the women wore those little skorty things.

Bartges: Okay.

Douthit: But not very often.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: So you had male officials?

Strong: Not always. We had both.

Bartges: But you did have some male officials?

Strong: Yes.

- Bartges: Were the other coaches in your conference male or female?
- Strong: Both.
- Bartges: How many males were there, and I'm talking about that first year, that—
- Strong: Frank in Kewanee—probably still coaches.
- Bartges: (laughs)
- Douthit: No, he retired.
- Strong: Oh, did he? Okay.
- Strong: Well, the one from Rock Falls was a woman, so I—
- Douthit: (unintelligible) other than Frank.
- Bartges: Do you remember Frank's last name?
- Douthit: Toka.
- Bartges: Toka, okay.
- Douthit: He was there forever. He just recently retired.
- Bartges: Oh, okay. How did you get to games?
- Strong: Bus.
- Bartges: Did you drive the bus?
- Strong: No.
- Bartges: Okay. At some small schools—I have friends that teach and coach in Iowa, and they're still driving the bus. (laughs)
- Strong: No, I don't drive the bus.
- Bartges: Did you have fans?



Strong: Outstanding.

Bartges: A lot of fans?

Strong: Outstanding.

Douthit: Oh, it was a big deal.

Strong: We rocked this town, and the place was full—always more than the boys got.

Bartges: From the get-go?

Strong: Basically, yeah.

Douthit: Yeah.

Bartges: Did you play in the Fieldhouse, or did you play—

Strong: Oh, no, we had to work our way up there. We had to play at the junior high for a while.

Bartges: So when you were at the junior high that first year, you had big crowds, so obviously it was crowded?

Strong: Yes.

Bartges: Did people pay to get in?

Strong: Probably.

Douthit: Yes, I think so.

Bartges: The GAA program then evolved into interscholastics. How long did GAA go on after you guys started adding interscholastic sports?

Douthit: Not much.

Strong: I think it died.

Bartges: Okay.

Strong: Within a year, I would say.

Bartges: That quickly?

Strong: Wouldn't you say, Sharon?

Douthit: Maybe not quite, but—

Strong: Well, then at that point they were having kids working too.

Douthit: Yeah, because—

Strong: And we didn't have enough to—

Douthit: It was the same people doing the sports that were doing GAA, you know.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: Right.

Douthit: We can only be (laughs) so thin, you know.

Bartges: Right. Oh, sure.

Douthit: Yeah, see, because it was the same people, and yeah, so it died.

Bartges: Did you have a lot of three-sport athletes back then?

Douthit: Sure.

Bartges: This picture you showed me earlier, this is the picture from your original state tournament team?

Strong: Yes.

Bartges: How many kids—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve—twelve kids.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: How many of those kids would have been three-sport athletes?

Strong: Jolene, Karen would have been, Marche—three, four—

Douthit: Dawn would have been. Frannie.

Strong: Six, seven, eight. Maybe eight or nine.

Bartges: Eight or nine, okay.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: Do you think that Sterling was a leader in terms of girls' athletics and girls' interscholastic sports, or do you think that they followed the trend set elsewhere in the state, based on the support that you got?

Strong: I'd say a little of both.

Douthit: We probably were a leader, but I don't know that we realized it at the time.

Strong: Because in this part of the state everybody knew us as, you know—we were pretty good at getting things off the ground and getting them going.

Bartges: The district was?

Strong: Yes.

Bartges: So the district had a good, solid reputation, that sort of thing?

Strong: Right. Right.

Bartges: Who was the superintendent during that time?

Strong: Was it Boggs?

Douthit: I don't know, probably.

Strong: Robert I. Boggs maybe.

Bartges: Okay, I was just curious. Based on what you said, you wouldn't view that your school was instrumental in getting basketball added as an interscholastic sport, or would you?

Strong: I don't think so.

Bartges: In terms of influence with the IHSA?

Douthit: I don't think so.

Strong: I don't think so.

Bartges: And it sounds like they adopted it quickly if they added it in 1973-1974; that would have been the first year that it was available.

Strong: Right.

Bartges: Was interscholastic competition too organized for you in comparison to GAA or what you had known before?

Strong: I don't know how to answer that.

Douthit: It was an evolving thing, you know.

Strong: Yeah. It was just going on.

Douthit: Things changed and we just went with it, you know. You rolled with it.

Strong: They added basketball and then they'd add volleyball the next year, track, softball, et cetera, but we seemed to move with what they were doing so that we were keeping up with—

Douthit: The rest of the world.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: Well, one of the things that's become clear to me as I've interviewed people is that some of the older school, more traditional PE backgrounds were not necessarily in favor of this level of organizational competitive sport.

Douthit: Yeah, they weren't.

Bartges: And that's really what I wonder about, the organizational aspect for you as a physical educator. All of these people I've interviewed have degrees in PE. There is not one person that is not a PE person.

Strong: (laughs)

Bartges: So it's pretty obvious that—those are the kinds of trends that I'm kind of looking at.

Strong: Sure. Sure.

Bartges: And if it wasn't a factor for you, it wasn't. Again, there's no right or wrong.

Strong: Right. Okay.

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

Strong: No.

Bartges: Billie Jean King<sup>2</sup> says that she hates labels or being labeled; however, for the purpose of this interview, how did you or would you characterize yourself during this period of your life?

Strong: Very lucky. I was there at the right time with the right amount of people. And it wasn't just me. It takes a lot of people to make a program run, so I wouldn't say I was labeled as, Oh, you're the number one coach here. I don't like that label. I was a coach amongst a lot of people with a lot of helpful information that made this program run. And I think that was partly why we had so much success, because we could run on a lot of different people's information and stuff, so—

Douthit: And a lot of the women on the staff helped, not just PE.

Strong: Yeah, it was—

Douthit: The biology teacher was right there.

Strong: The scorekeeper.

Douthit: She ran the (unintelligible), and I ran the clock, and the home ec [home economics] teacher helped with—

Strong: Scouting—

Douthit: Scouting.

---

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

Strong: Doing laundry and stuff. I mean, it was a combined effort.

Douthit: Family affair.

Bartges: Sounds like a very good, supportive, active community.

Strong: Yes. Are we out of tape?

Bartges: No. (laughs)

Douthit: I mean, we could fill the Fieldhouse.

Strong: It was filled.

Bartges: When did you move to the Fieldhouse?

Strong: I think we had to move there for one of the sectional games maybe?

Douthit: Or something, and then we kind of—

Strong: And then we got—

Douthit: Got the door open—

Strong: Got the door open so we could get in there. We even got to practice in there sometimes.

Bartges: That was going to be a question.

Strong: Yeah, I mean, we had to share with the boys.

Bartges: What kind of schedule? Was it always you guys at six in the morning or at ten o'clock at night or (unintelligible).

Strong: Oh, no, no, no, we never had morning. We never had morning. Sometimes we had right after school until five o'clock and then the boys came in at five, and then we flip-flopped, might do that for two weeks and then flip-flop, et cetera. And then if you wanted to do extra, shoot-arounds or stuff like that, maybe had to come in the morning.

Bartges: Okay.

- Strong: Sometimes we shot around with the boys, but that doesn't much matter.
- Bartges: No. Sounds like the boys' basketball coach was supportive.
- Strong: Very. And we went through quite a few, didn't we?
- Douthit: Went through several.
- Strong: Yeah, but they were.
- Douthit: Yeah.
- Strong: And as I said, Jim helped out a lot. And not only was he a phys ed teacher, but he was a coach as well.
- Bartges: So he taught at Sterling?
- Strong: Yes, he did.
- Bartges: When did you get to the point that you started having tryouts and making cuts?
- Strong: Probably after that 1977 team went through.
- Bartges: I'm going to deal up to—or through 1977. Did you have a varsity and a JV?
- Strong: Yes.
- Bartges: When did you get another team added?
- Strong: Probably before that, so it had to be 1976 we might have gotten one. 1975 was the (unintelligible).
- Douthit: Whoever the conference was, you know.
- Strong: Yeah. If they wanted to set up a JV, then we'd find some kids to play type of thing.
- Bartges: I see. Some schools still do it that way—
- Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: —with freshman teams. They'll split them so they can have (unintelligible).

Strong: And there is a freshman team out at Sterling now, so they have three teams running.

Douthit: I think the whole conference pretty much does that.

Bartges: Yeah, it seems to be more common.

Douthit: The conference is pretty—was pretty—

Strong: Active and involved—

Douthit: Active and interested in the girls. And I would say most of the principals were pretty much on our side.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: When did you get an assistant coach?

Strong: I never had an assistant coach.

Bartges: Or a co-head coach?

Strong: I got that in 1977 first, when we were starting to play—Jim was always at the games because his daughter played, and—

Bartges: His daughter was on this team?

Strong: Yes.

Bartges: Yeah.

Strong: And so you know, and I worked with Jim for a lot of years, and I'd talk to him about the games and strategies. And he had coached boys' basketball, and football, and track, and stuff like that. And his father was an outstanding coach at Eureka College.

Douthit: Coached Ronald Reagan.



Strong: He coached Ronald Reagan. And so a lot of times if I had something—I never could figure out what A, B, C, D, et cetera—I'd run it by Jim and I'd say, "What do you think?" And he said, "Well, this would work, and that would work, and why don't you try that?" So finally I said, "Well, would you be interested in just coming to the practices and working as a co-coach with me?" And he said, "Well, I don't want to do any of that paperwork stuff, and I don't want to do stuff scheduling and things like that. If it has to do with the girls and with playing, I'd be happy to help you out as much as I can." And that's what he did. We worked it so that everything got accomplished and we both knew our places in there. And the kids would listen to both of us, which was good. There was no, Oh, well, Mr. McKinzie said we had to do it this way and you're telling us we have to do it this way. We both were in it together. It was a marvelous relationship, and it still is to this day. We just seemed to hit it off well. The kids respected both of us, and we respected the kids. He could get in there and do some things with them and have the kids bang off of him, and I could look from a distance and say, Oh yeah, now I see how that works, type of thing so—

Bartges: Did he come at the start of the year? He started the season with you in 1976-1977?

Strong: I believe so. Yeah, I think so.

Bartges: And that was his first season?

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: When you started coaching in 1974, 1973-1974, did you get paid for coaching?

Strong: I don't think there was much of a pay. I think it was strictly a GAA thing.

Bartges: So was that part of your duties as assigned?

Strong: Mine, I think.

Bartges: And when did you start getting paid for coaching?

Strong: It must have been that year, the 1976-1977 year.

Bartges: Before you—

Strong: Got big bucks.

Bartges: (laughs) Before you were so successful, or at the end of the year when they said, Maybe we should pay her?

Strong: Yes, well, a little of both. But you know, you don't do it for dollars.

Bartges: No, you don't.

Strong: You just can't do it for dollars.

Bartges: No, it's about thirty cents an hour.

Strong: Yeah, and then when they said, "Well, we can't write you down as a co-coach. We will write you down as the head coach and Jim will be your assistant," and it was listed that way, but we shared everything.

Bartges: And the reason I'm curious about that is one of the—the only other coach that I've spoken with that had a male assistant coach at the state tournament at that time was Lynne Slouber from Hinsdale South, and that coach was the boys' head basketball coach—

Strong: Oh, really?

Bartges: —who was dropped on her bench going into the state tournament. I mean, he had never been to practice, he had never done anything—I don't know why he was there. She didn't know why he was there.

Strong: Okay.

Douthit: She didn't have any say in it?

Bartges: No.

Strong: Oh, wow.

Douthit: Oh, so somebody thought she couldn't handle that?

Bartges: Evidently. (laughs) So when I looked through things and I saw that you had a male assistant coach, or co-coach, I wanted to clarify that—that it wasn't a similar kind of situation.

Strong: No, no, not at all. And Jim loved the game too. And I was going to say, my gosh, this guy's been coaching a lot of years.

Bartges: Well, I knew he had a daughter on the team.

Strong: Yeah, and he got information from dad too. So, I mean, he was just a wealth of information that you just can't hardly pass up when he said that. And I said, "Well, would you come along"—because he should get paid. It wasn't big bucks, but he should get paid. And he did, and he stayed with me until—what, 1983, Sharon? And Cathy Coastler come in for a couple years there, so that was—he retired. He didn't stay for all the tournaments that we went to, but to this day he still bounces around in and out of the gym to see what they're doing. (laughter)

Bartges: And I'm sure everybody knows him.

Strong: Oh sure, sure.

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: Iowa in 1926, Indiana 1975, Michigan 1973, Wisconsin 1976—they started with three different classes—Minnesota 1974, Ohio 1976, Kentucky 1920-1932 and then again in 1975, Tennessee 1965, Missouri 1973, and then Illinois in 1977. As an educator, a player, a coach, administrator, how did you feel when you saw states surrounding you competing in competitive state tournaments and Illinois didn't have one?

Strong: I think it was time for Illinois to get into it and get started. A lot of other states were doing that.

Bartges: And you were aware of that?

Strong: Yes, and we weren't, and then all of a sudden—I think you sort of come back to dollars. It's going to cost you some money to put this program into the works, and so I just—it was time.

Bartges: You may or may not know the answer to this—when did you first hear that there was definitely going to be a state tournament for girls?

Strong: That fall of 1976 when we went to school.

- Bartges: Okay. In your opinion, given the previous information, what was the major reason that slowed basketball from being added as an interscholastic sport sanctioned by the IHSA? And you mentioned money. Is there anything else?
- Douthit: Sharing facilities was probably a problem, I would assume.
- Strong: Yeah. I can't imagine many schools that have two gymnasiums, but—
- Douthit: Not two where you could do spectator sports. And we played in some pretty dumpy girls' gyms.
- Strong: Oh, jeez.
- Bartges: You could still do that. (laughter)
- Douthit: You could still do that, okay.
- Bartges: Take my word for it. We had regionals in a gym two years ago. I was just incensed. It was an open-ended stage and the locker rooms—like, the lockers were bent and twisted on the walls. There was no doors on the bathrooms. There was only a boys' locker room and a girls' locker room. And with four teams, there was no—the court was not regulation size. It was horrible. Oh, don't get me started.
- Strong: Okay.
- Bartges: (laughs) What if anything—
- Douthit: We didn't play regionals in any of those kinds of places that I recall.
- Strong: Yeah, seems to me they went to the bigger schools.
- Douthit: Yeah.
- Strong: Rock Falls [Illinois] had them. We had to go to Kewanee [Illinois] once, and that was awful small. I mean, you were like this against the wall.
- Douthit: I mean, the girls' gym in Dixon—have you ever been there? Well, it has a balcony that hangs out over—
- Strong: Oh, yeah.

- Douthit: So when you sit in the—there's only about six rows of bleachers, and when you sit in them you've got the balcony—(laughs)
- Strong: Over here.
- Bartges: (laughs) Feel closed in, huh?
- Douthit: The other three walls have no—like the line runs to the wall and those kind of things on the other three walls.
- Bartges: No room for error. That's how Joliet West's small gym was.
- Douthit: The old gym at Princeton [Illinois] was bad.
- Strong: I think you find them in any conference that you're in.
- Bartges: Sure.
- Douthit: Right.
- Strong: There are just some that really made an impression.
- Douthit: We had the junior high to use, which helped.
- Strong: That was like a regular gymnasium.
- Douthit: Yeah, it was a regular gym.
- Strong: Regulation floor.
- Bartges: What, if anything, can you tell me about the process of getting a state tournament added in Illinois?
- Strong: I don't know anything about that sort of stuff.
- Bartges: So you weren't involved in that?
- Strong: No.

- Bartges: Did you attend the first state tournament at Horton Fieldhouse<sup>3</sup> in Bloomington?
- Strong: Sure.
- Bartges: In what capacity?
- Strong: I think I was there with my team.
- Bartges: (laughs) I told you some of these would be very simple questions. How did your team do that first year?
- Strong: We won the state tournament.
- Bartges: You won it all?
- Strong: Yes. (unintelligible) archival book out.
- Bartges: Yeah, I'm going to show you something, and I want your response. When you see that, (laughter) what do you think?
- Strong: It was a great time in my life. It really was—the best time in my life. As I said, I was very blessed to have outstanding players, outstanding people to work around me, and I was just kind of there. How that ever happened, I don't know, but it was a terrific time. I think back, and you think, They're never going to take that away from us. And I don't care, thousands of years from today if somebody's looking back at your report, and they'll say, Sterling Illinois—who in the world is that?
- Bartges: Always number one.
- Strong: Yeah, and then they find out we were number one. But I'm just going to interject here, I still think I have the two greatest guards who ever played that game at that time, so—
- Bartges: There were some good—
- Strong: There were some excellent players.
- Bartges: There were some good guards.

---

<sup>3</sup> Horton Field House is a large sports complex located on the Illinois State University campus in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois.

Strong: Excellent players.

Bartges: And I assume you're talking Leseman and Smith, or—

Strong: Harris.

Bartges: Harris.

Strong: Yeah. This is—wow.

Bartges: What supersectional did you guys come out of?

Strong: Oh, now come on, you're picking my brain here. Can't we look it up?

Bartges: Probably.

Douthit: We always went to the Quad Cities [Illinois].

Strong: Didn't we go to Moline [Illinois] or something like that?

Douthit: Quad Cities or Rockford [Illinois], but we usually had to go to the Quad Cities and beat them to get (unintelligible) there.

Strong: That was—look at this thing.

Douthit: And they had bigger schools than we did.

Strong: These are worth big money now, you know that?

Bartges: (laughs) I don't think so.

Strong: Somebody'll think so. Look at this, isn't that wonderful?

Bartges: Yeah, there's your kids.

Strong: Yeah. Yeah. See, there's Mr. Yemm. Oh, it was Robert I. Boggs. Okay, good.

Douthit: Yeah, I thought it was.

Strong: All right. See, and there's Sharon as the—

Douthit: You don't want to know Robert I. Boggs (unintelligible).

Bartges: He was your superintendent?

Douthit: Yes.

Strong: We didn't see much of him.

Douthit: No.

Strong: I haven't looked at one of these for a long time. This gal was a super gal, this Washington team.

Bartges: Yeah, Jan Smith.

Strong: Jan Smith, yeah.

Bartges: She's dead.

Douthit: Oh, really?

Bartges: She died a few years ago; she had cancer.

Douthit: Oh, wow.

Strong: Oh, wow.

Bartges: Pretty young.

Strong: I was going to say, she wasn't very old.

Bartges: No.

Strong: Oh, what a shame.

Bartges: Yeah.

Strong: Sorry to hear that.

Bartges: And you said in our phone conversation that the coach from Mattoon, Linda Blades, you coached her or—



Strong: She played GAA ball with us.

Bartges: She's from Sterling?

Strong: Yeah, Sterling, yeah.

Bartges: So she's a Sterling High grad [graduate]?

Douthit: Right.

Strong: She's a Sterling High grad.

Douthit: That's why I said I thought maybe her folks were still in town.

Strong: Now I remember that she was there then, yes.

Bartges: Not only were you there, but one of your former students was one of eight also?

Strong: What does that tell you? Somebody's doing something right.

Bartges: Somebody must be doing something right. (laughs) (unintelligible).

Strong: That's right. And that (unintelligible) yeah.

Bartges: So that's pretty impressive. And Jo's from Amboy [Illinois].

Strong: You're kidding?

Bartges: No.

Douthit: The little Town of Amboy?

Strong: Oh my gosh, how about that.

Bartges: I couldn't believe it when she told me that.

Douthit: Well, it's like (unintelligible).

Bartges: Not even. I bet they didn't have a stoplight then.

Strong: I don't even know if they got one now.

Douthit: I don't know if they got one now.

Bartges: That's true.

Douthit: Well, they probably do because the highway crosses, like, downtown, so they probably—

Strong: Are we getting off track? I'm getting—losing my voice.

Bartges: No, that's okay. That's why I brought it. In terms of—

Strong: The next year. Did you see the next year one?

Bartges: No, I didn't.

Strong: Jolene was on the cover.

Bartges: Oh, was she?

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: Somebody told me who this is. I think this is a girl from Buffalo Grove. Arlene Mulder from Main West—

Strong: Oh, okay.

Bartges: —told me. I'm pretty sure—she told me the name. I'd have to go back in and find it, but she told me the name of this kid.

Douthit: Yeah, but Jolene was on the next year.

Strong: Yeah, that was cool. Wow.

Bartges: You guys played three games to win the championship. Who'd you beat?

Strong: Oh, now come on. Who did we—

Bartges: This is the best time of your life.

Strong: Fenger.

Douthit: Fenger.

Bartges: Fenger?

Strong: Fenger.

Douthit: That was the fist game.

Strong: That was a nail biter. And I'll tell you something interesting, my mother was downtown Chicago buying clothes for a women's apparel shop, and they were in the Merchandise Mart, and somehow they had the TV on. And she told the gentlemen she was dealing with that she had to watch this game because her daughter was coaching this team. And so she sat down—they had sofa-like deals and things like that—and she sat there and watched the game (unintelligible).

Bartges: That's pretty good.

Strong: Yeah, we beat Fenger.

Bartges: That was in the first game of the tournament?

Strong: That was the first game, and I tell you, that place was packed with Sterling people.

Bartges: That game was an unusual game. I mean, it was the first game of the tournament. It also went overtime, didn't it?

Strong: Right.

Bartges: Were there problems with officiating at this tournament?

Strong: I don't want to question the officials. You know, you don't have that right. You can make statements later but (unintelligible). Well, there was a few, yeah, that one would question and—

Douthit: You do that with any game, so you can't—

Strong: Yeah, it's just one of those things. Then we had a chance to win it, and I can remember Karen didn't make the free throw or something, and so then (unintelligible). She was our best free-throw shooter. And so we all sat down

right on the bench there because we were going into overtime. And we exchanged back and forth and back and forth, and got down the line again in a matter of seconds. And Karen got fouled again. And this time she was shooting for the same situation, and we thought, Oh no, we're going to do this again, but this time she was relaxed and calm. She put the sucker in, and we won that game. This was an excellent Fenger team, by the way. We had never played anybody of this caliber before.

Bartges: They were an excellent team, and they had upset Marshall coming out of the city tournament.

Strong: Right.

Douthit: Right.

Strong: And when you upset a Dorothy Gaters team, then you know it's going to be a good team that did that.

Douthit: We didn't know that at the time.

Strong: Yeah, but, I mean, still—

Bartges: But as it turns out—

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: Right.

Strong: And we were both undefeated, so that made (unintelligible). Let's get them out of there, and we can move on type of thing, so—

Bartges: Who did you play in the second game?

Strong: Palatine Fremd. That was a little easier because I remember my second string got in, and they had the darnedest time getting the ball across the center line. And they knew they could do it, but I'm sure it was a lot of case of nerves and a lot of people watching them. We had enough of a lead, but all of a sudden it was beginning to get a little bit close, and I'm thinking to myself (laugh), Do I have to put these starters back in or not?

Bartges: Well, Fremd was a big team. They had some big girls.

- Strong: They had big kids, and as I said, these little gals were trying to—but they traveled every time they tried to (unintelligible).
- Douthit: We called them the Fremd Travelers afterwards.
- Strong: Afterwards we did that. But we ended up winning that game, and then we came down and we played Washington, and then—
- Bartges: In the finals?
- Strong: In the finals, and that was an excellent game as well. And it was nice because a lot of the kids got recognized for their abilities out there too.
- Bartges: Did you have All-Tournament kids the first year?
- Strong: Yeah, I think we had—I'm sure Frannie and Marche made it, and I think Jolene made it as well. In fact, I think Karen made it too but second team maybe.
- Bartges: Did you have any All-State kids that first year? That was the first year for an All-State team as well, and I can't remember if you had one. I think that you had one probably.
- Strong: I would say it was probably Marche. She'd just go like a rabbit—
- Bartges: Yeah.
- Strong: —just quicker than (unintelligible) all the time.
- Douthit: If you think you're too short to play guard now, Marche isn't as tall as you are.
- Strong: No, she's short. I think she's 5'6" or something like that.
- Douthit: Yeah, little gal.
- Strong: But, wow. Yeah, that was a neat year, and a lot of good memories and stuff. And a lot of people that we had at that game were there watching, but yet, the gal at the score table, and Sharon was doing something, and a lot of people just, you know— As soon as we finished a game they threw out the uniforms, and off they went to the Laundromat and washed the uniforms—because we only had these uniforms. And so they came back clean, and the kids had clean uniforms to put on. A couple gals decorated their rooms at the hotels so when

they got there, there was some flowers and junk and stuff that made it kind of homey and stuff. So it was just an all-around positive experience, I think, for all of them.

Bartges: You've sort of touched on it but I'm going to ask this question: do you remember what your thoughts or feelings were when you walked on the floor for your first game?

Strong: I was scared, but I was confident. I was amazed that we had gotten that far because, as I said, we played a lot of different teams, a lot of tough teams. A lot of people thought we—when we played Moline—maybe it's the wrong year, I don't know. I thought it was Moline, but that day (unintelligible) felt like that was the state tournament game because we knew nothing about Fenger. And I had a good scout that went to an awful lot of games for me, and that gives you a little edge too.

Bartges: Sure.

Strong: So—

Douthit: Early on we didn't do much scouting.

Bartges: Right.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: It was unusual.

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: In fact, some schools, like, never did. They never got into it. And you never think of a boy's team not scouting.

Strong: Right.

Douthit: But some of the girls' teams didn't even scout. When we retired, they still weren't scouting. (laughs)

Bartges: What did you think of the overall caliber of play in that first state tournament?

Strong: I knew how good our kids were, and I had seen some kids that weren't at the same level as our kids. And then when you go to a state tournament and you

look at the players that you see there, and I think it was pretty consistent up and down that there were several good players within the team, and several players that played their roles on the team, and several—maybe one that really held the glue, the cohesiveness of this the whole team together. And I thought we were kind of fortunate in having a team like that too. I also got a couple kids that could come off the bench and not lose too much.

Bartges: Right.

Strong: But I thought the caliber down there was really very good for our first year.

Bartges: Were you surprised at how much there was?

Strong: I was surprised, and I thought we were kind of fortunate in that we had some real talent too, so anyways—

Bartges: I have to change tapes.

**(End of Tape One, Tape Two Begins)**

Bartges: This is tape number two on May second. Where am I? Sauk Valley Community College with Sue Strong. We're almost done. There's about eight more questions, and they go pretty quickly. I'm going to pick up with question number twenty-seven: 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?

Strong: I don't think it was really an issue around here, do you?

Douthit: I don't think so

Strong: I don't think it was, to speak of.

Bartges: So there wasn't any particular group that may have been more concerned or vocal about—and I use a phrase *mannish behavior*. That's from sports sociology literature.

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: Right.

Strong: I don't think so.

Bartges: Okay. What factors can you identify that influenced previous decisions against interscholastic competition in the State of Illinois for basketball?

Strong: I can't think of anything that would—

Bartges: Did you ever have the feeling as a GAA leader that, Well, you guys shouldn't be doing this because you're girls? In your experience, you didn't have that sort of an influence or—

Strong: No.

Douthit: There was that discussion.

Strong: But it wasn't a big factor.

Douthit: There was a lot of literature written on it too, you know.

Bartges: Sometimes that doesn't all trickle down to—

Strong: Right.

Douthit: Girls shouldn't do this amount of running, or they shouldn't work that hard or—you know.

Bartges: This kind of goes hand and hand with that—did you think the AMA, the American Medical Association's endorsement for vigorous exercise helped change public educational policy towards interscholastic sport?

Strong: Probably, yeah.

Bartges: Where they said it was no longer detrimental to—

Strong: Right.

Douthit: Right.

Bartges: —reproductive organs and all that stuff?

Strong: Absolutely.



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

Strong: Probably Title IX<sup>4</sup>.

Douthit: Everybody else around you is doing it, you have to stop and think, Are we missing something here? (laughter)

Bartges: Now we don't want to do anything rash.

Strong: Yeah, don't rush, but—

Douthit: Make sure everybody else has done it first.

Strong: But I'd say Title IX (unintelligible).

Bartges: In conjunction with that, how do you think Title IX affected girls' basketball in Illinois?

Douthit: Probably forced—

Bartges: In your experience?

Strong: Yeah, I'm just trying to think—probably equal opportunity for girls because they see guys doing it, and oftentimes you'll find girls and guys playing one-on-one, three-on-three, that sort of thing, so I would think that just equal opportunity about covers it. Let's give the girls what the guys have had for forty years or so.

Bartges: And you said earlier that when you went to your principal or your athletic director and you asked for things that they seemed receptive to your request?

Strong: Yes.

Bartges: They may not have always been able to grant them because of monetary constraints, but they didn't turn a deaf ear?

Strong: No, not at all. I was very fortunate to have two gentleman that backed the program a hundred percent.

---

<sup>4</sup> Title IX is a portion of the Education Amendments of 1972. It states, in part, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

Bartges: Because you were here in 1966 you saw this, and this is part of the reason that my time period goes from 1968 to 1977—because it incorporates basketball being changed over to five-player, it incorporates Title IX, and it incorporates the addition of basketball by the IHSA, and then the state tournament. How quickly did you as a coach see changes in funding, travel, schedules, publicity, uniforms, coaching, officiating, facility usage?

Strong: You know, it took a while to get it so that we had some equality in there. I can remember riding a really rotten bus while the boys were taking coaches.

Bartges: You mean like a charter bus?

Strong: Yes, a charter bus. And I can remember even riding the yellow school buses when the boys were off doing that. So you had to kind of wait your turn type of thing, but I think once you saw that—or the school saw that you were reaping some rewards for them, then suddenly you got to move into a position where, Okay, now these girls are bringing in more people than the boys are bringing in, so we'd better do A and B and get them to have equal. And I was going to say, it wasn't a real struggle to do that because I had such good backing. And a lot of times we got to go to that junior high, and it was like a full gymnasium with the wooden floor—which oftentimes you don't get to practice on or at least we didn't—and then to get to move to the high school and actually practice there. And you start out with three basketballs; well, then I'd borrow ten basketballs. I never had anything to say about funding. I didn't have anything to say about travel—if we went in a yellow bus or (unintelligible) bus. When we had a charter, the kids couldn't believe it.

Bartges: When did that happen?

Strong: We had a couple, I think, in 1977 that we were riding in. If it was a really long ways, they felt sorry for us and—

Douthit: The booster club paid the difference between the school bus cost and—

Strong: And the coach, charter. We had a pretty good booster club at that time.

Douthit: Very active booster club.

Strong: And they would fund different things too.

Douthit: And of course it had to help that the girls' team was successful.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: That was another question. Do you think that because you were successful—

Douthit: Oh, I'm sure.

Strong: Yes. Yes.

Bartges: It was not necessarily altruism on the administration's part but, Hey, we've got (unintelligible).

Strong: They're doing something. We'd better do something about that. But I think that it was just a matter—we got some say-so in some officials, in some sense we didn't get any say-so.

Bartges: In 1977 you talk about these uniforms being sort of all-sport uniforms, and that was fairly common in that time period. Did you have two uniforms, light and dark, or did you just have the one?

Strong: No, we had blue with different tops.

Bartges: Okay, the same bottoms. Okay.

Strong: But the one that we used for all sports was early 1974 (unintelligible).

Douthit: Yeah, that was early. That wasn't the (unintelligible).

Strong: We were the ones that—No, and I think softball used these too.

Douthit: They might have.

Strong: Yeah. When we got two tops, we thought we were flying high. That was good to do that. But we never had our names on them or anything like that.

Bartges: Did you have warm-ups?

Douthit: Never did.

Strong: No.

Bartges: That's one of the things the Main West coach talked about, about how snazzy their team was; they had warm-ups. This was about when satin material came out (unintelligible).

Strong: I'll tell you something funny, seeing these girls here. I was an avid supporter of the knee-high socks in those days. The kids couldn't stand them.

Bartges: Really?

Strong: Yeah. And they'd pull them up or roll them down or something, so we used to go round and round. And I says, You've got to wear them. But now, you know, as you go through—but they did. They complained, but they did. And I can remember them complaining about that. And another thing I'll say about not this team but my other teams, when they were waiting to play after the JV game or the sophomore game, whatever it was, my girls always went to away games and home games and they had kind of a travel or non-travel uniform that they were to wear, which was a pair of navy pants and it had a gold V-neck sweater, which was hot and (unintelligible), and it said Sterling Golden Girls on it. So that when I saw them, they were representing the school and the team, and they weren't dressed in jeans, and they weren't dressed in T-shirts, and all this other stuff. You could find them in the crowd usually sitting together. And then when they left, a lot of times they put them back on, or they had something a little more comfortable to ride home on the bus. As long as they looked neat and tidy, I didn't care.

Bartges: Yeah, we always had to dress up.

Strong: Yeah, and you'd see a lot of teams come in and you'd think, What is this? But they were proud of that fact. And they wore them to school the day of the game. That was a proud thing to do too.

Bartges: You say you worked up in the Fieldhouse, so that does—did you have much publicity?

Strong: Yeah, our local paper was outstanding. We had a lot of coverage. We had a local radio station that did a lot of publicity, usually did the games' play-by-play.

Bartges: Was that before 1977 or—

Douthit: No.

Strong: No. No, after. And so that was good. We had fine support from the news media, as it were.

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

Strong: I think I'd probably agree. It kind of forced the issue and you had maybe some role models that were available for other people—or younger kids to see and look up to. My voice is going quick.

Bartges: I know. You're probably not used to talking this much anymore.

Strong: Not anymore.

Bartges: I know. That first month of basketball season, I'd be hoarse, and then you kind of get used to it. Can you recall anything else that might help me understand the history of girls' basketball in Illinois from the period of 1968 to 1977, anything I haven't touched on that you think is important or that affected you guys? I mean, as we said earlier, you're the coach from the first state championship team in the State of Illinois, so your experience is unique. And you're one of eight coaches that got to participate in that first state tournament, and I didn't know if there was anything that I hadn't covered or that you want to add?

Strong: I was going to say, by winning that tournament in 1977, it made the town and the school a lot more cohesive in their support of athletic program. And I'm not saying that if we ended up not even going to state—people were very interested in what was going on. And maybe I didn't mention before, but when we first started in 1974 or 1975, somewhere in there, we had parents, grandparents, kids, and people that would stop by and stuff like that. It just mushroomed. And I'm glad I was here when I was here. I'm glad I had the opportunity to do this. Whether I've added anything to the improvement of basketball, I don't know, but I certainly had wonderful girls to work with, wonderful people to work with, and a school that supported, and even I guess you could go far as say a school board that would support the team, et cetera. I mean, this town just lit up when we came home. And it started over in Rock Falls, because we had been through Rock Falls to get here. I mean, the cheering, and the sirens, and the thing. When we got back to the Fieldhouse for a "we're here" type thing, the place was packed. It was a real neat time, and if I did anything good—if I did, then I got a wonderful ride so—

Bartges: How many, not just these kids, but your kids have gone on to coach?

Strong: Jolene, Dawn, Marge, Frannie, and I bet there's some other kids on that 1983 team that—because we went down in 1979 again, we went down in 1980, we went down in 1983, and that's a lot of girls that have gone through the program, and still—but I'd say there's maybe ten on the outside.

Bartges: But four from this group of twelve?

Strong: Yes. I just can't tell you how outstanding these girls were, just the bond that they had. You hear a lot of this too because you've coached, and you think—these girls were friends on the court, and they were friends off the court.

Bartges: Yeah.

Strong: And even though I had a freshmen here that played for us, and she was even a member of that even though she was running around with seniors and juniors at that time, but it—I think if you find a team that is that cohesive and gets well along with your coaching staff, you're going to find some winning going on. And they were receptive. And not only that, they were smart. You have to have a brain to play basketball.

Bartges: I told my kids that.

Strong: Yeah, you cannot play if you, Oh what-do-I-do-I-caught-it-now, type of thing. So you have to be smart to know how to play.

Bartges: How did your other teams do when they went to state? Was 1977—

Strong: 1977 was first, 1979 was third, 1980 we just made it to the Elite Eight, and 1983 we got fourth.

Douthit: So we never got a second.

Strong: We never got a second.

Bartges: No, but that's a ton of going in a short period of time.

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: There's a big flag hanging in the Fieldhouse.

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: It's probably as big as that window.

Strong: You've seen them in the professional (unintelligible).

Bartges: Well, and then they went to classes too.

Douthit: Yes.

Bartges: And that affects—I don't know, is Sterling double A?

Strong: Yes.

Douthit: Oh, yeah.

Bartges: Yeah?

Strong: Yes. Yeah, but it was quite an experience.

Douthit: Well, and the town had—the school had never had a tournament win like that ever.

Bartges: Yeah, and that makes a difference too.

Douthit: See, and so that helped too, because they never had a team do that in any sport.

Bartges: Well, they won a football championship somewhere in the past? No?

Douthit: No.

Bartges: Sterling Newman?

Strong: Yes.

Douthit: Yes.

Bartges: Yeah.

Strong: That's Catholic.

Douthit: That's a Catholic School.

Bartges: I actually had friends from Walnut. We used to hunt out in Walnut, and we had friends that went to Sterling Newman.

Strong: Okay. Who's that? (laughs) My gosh, congratulations.

Bartges: Oh, it's not—(laughs) It's not a congratulations thing. I understand what you're saying about a cohesive group.

Strong: I'll be darned. Isn't that something?

Bartges: And I think every coach that I've spoken with, they talk about their team like that, about it being an unusual group of kids that were very close. They went from sport to sport to sport, and they were friends off the court. They had disagreements and stuff like that, but when it came to playing ball, that was all they cared about.

Strong: That was it, yeah.

Bartges: Just very competitive.

Strong: Yeah. It was right down to the wire, and it didn't matter who, what, where. As they say, your second string, they didn't get to play very much but they played a vital role. Did you start?

Bartges: Yeah.

Strong: Okay. How was coach Slouber?

Bartges: Slouber.

Strong: Slouber?

Bartges: She—we had three coaches in four years.

Strong: Oh.

Bartges: And it just went—our first coach retired to start a family, and then she came and she was there for two years. And then we had a fellow come in my senior



year. I mean, we had an unusually—we had a big group too, you know. She played at Western. She played at Illinois State.

Strong: Okay.

Bartges: Valparaiso. Southern.

Strong: Okay. So it was a good bunch.

Bartges: It was a very good bunch. She played ju-co [junior college] and then went college. I played at Iowa State. It was a very good group of kids, but we were in the game after you guys. We were in the second game. We played Fremd.

Douthit: Okay. Okay. And you found out—

Bartges: We botched that game. We had a 13-point lead and blew it.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: And I really think she kind of froze.

Strong: That happens too.

Bartges: And I don't know if—I think it was just a combination—like I said, they dropped the boys' varsity coach on the bench, and it's like that upset her.

Douthit: Well, I would think so; it was a slap.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: It was a huge slap.

Douthit: It was, yeah.

Bartges: And we didn't understand. Nobody bothered to tell us.

Douthit: No.

Bartges: It's like, Here's this guy sitting on our bench. We have no—I mean we know who he is, but—

Strong: Right.

Douthit: (unintelligible).

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: And he hasn't sat there any other game.

Bartges: No.

Douthit: No.

Strong: Yeah.

Douthit: She's done fine all season without him.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: Yeah. We were all very upset by that.

Douthit: Well, yeah, because you have this little family—

Bartges: Yeah.

Douthit: —and then he didn't belong.

Bartges: No. He wasn't part of that family at all. This girl who was our starting center, she's first team All-State, Deb Leuken, she walked off the floor with four fouls and sat for half the third quarter and all of the fourth quarter thinking she had five fouls, and she didn't know it.

Strong: Oh, you're kidding me.

Bartges: No. 6'2". No.

Strong: Where was your scorekeeper?

Bartges: I don't know. That I don't know—who our scorekeeper was. I don't know what the deal was.

Strong: See, because that's another thing—because my scorekeeper always told me, or if he didn't get my attention, told Jim or (unintelligible) then our manager would say, How many fouls is that? (unintelligible) remind you of something.

Bartges: Yeah.

Strong: There was a continuous—

Bartges: Exchange of information.

Strong: Yeah, yes.

Bartges: I don't recall a scorekeeper. It's kind of like when I ask you a question—

Strong: Oh, I know. I know. Things go out of your mind.

Bartges: I don't remember having a scorekeeper. My dad was our cheerleader, and when we went down to state—

Strong: That was cool—

Bartges: —they wanted to bring in the varsity boys' cheerleaders, and we're all like, No, we want—we don't want—

Douthit: Well, we had that problem too.

Bartges: We don't want them. They've never been to one of our games.

Douthit: I know. We had that same problem.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: And they ended up backing off of that, but—

Douthit: Well, no, I think we got them.

Strong: Somebody made a decision, you will have the cheerleaders.

Bartges: Yeah. Well, and there were all kinds of decisions to make, you know, as you know as a coach. As a player you're like, Well, okay, I'm doing what you tell me to do.

Strong: Sure.

Douthit: Right.

Bartges: But we ended up not coming down the night before because our coach thought it was better that we stay in our own beds that night, and we drove down that morning. It's about a two-and-a-half-hour drive.

Strong: Yeah, it would be. Yeah.

Strong: I bet we went down the night before.

Douthit: Oh, I'm sure we did.

Strong: And my scorekeeper, she also had the job of keeping the kids alert and making sure they were still students, so she used to take them on nature walks.

Douthit: She was a biology teacher.

Strong: And took them, and they all had to go. And they'd walk wherever we were around the university or in the motel. She gave them a quiz on what is this plant. And they'd all say, What do we need to know this for? Because we're trying to keep your brain active, and you're not thinking about basketball all the time, you're thinking about something else. And I remember one night, she gave them a written quiz, and they had to come with pencil and paper, and they had to write down what she had told them on their walk. And if it rained, it didn't matter; they had to go anyway. It was a shorter walk, but they had to go.

Bartges: Yeah.

Strong: But, I mean, little things like that, that you made it—and then their rooms were decorated a little bit, so they felt kind of at home. And I would come by and check on them to make sure they weren't up late, that sort of thing.

Bartges: What I remember, I didn't remember until when I interviewed Coach Slouber.

Strong: How did that go with you playing for her?

Bartges: Oh, it went all right. I mean, I'm doing something specific. It's not—this is the first time I had seen her in twenty-five years. I hadn't seen her since 1977.

Strong: Is she still teaching?

Bartges: She is a counselor in Washington State. Her and her husband and her family moved out there shortly—1977 was her last year, and they moved out West, and I hadn't seen her since. That game was a bad experience. You know, there was a last-second shot that was disallowed. And when I talk to Ola and Karen Roppa, I don't know if you know that name—

Douthit: I know the name, yeah.

Bartges: She was an official also, but Ola—before she even—she didn't know. I have not indicated what my connection is before I interview people because I don't want to color their responses.

Strong: Okay.

Bartges: Unless somebody asks me a direct question. But Ola started talking about the state tournament before I even had the camera on. She's like, Oh, the first year was just so terrible. It was the year of the shot. (laughter) She said, "It was just terrible. The first game went into overtime, and then the second game there was controversy about a basket—one ref [referee] said it was good, one ref said it wasn't good. They went to the table, there was some college kid at the table and—"

Strong: Who didn't know what was going on.

Bartges: And she said, "You know, I went home that night and I watched the videotape. I watched the replay, and I watched it and I watched it and I watched it, and every time I watched it, it was the same result, and every time it was the wrong call." And she said, "And I couldn't do anything to change it."

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: And I said, "Well, yeah." (laugh)

Douthit: There you are.

Bartges: Live that for thirty years.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: But you can't change those things.

Douthit: No. Well, and it goes on today.

Bartges: Sure, it does.

Douthit: Pro [professional] basketball.

Strong: I was going to say, it doesn't much matter what level you're playing—

Douthit: They play their little replays and stuff, but—

Strong: Did you go all the way out to Washington to talk to her?

Bartges: No, she actually—her mother lives up in Westchester, Illinois, and so she was in Wisconsin over Christmas and then was flying out of Chicago to go back to Washington, and so I went up there New Year's Day and interviewed her.

Strong: Oh, that was neat.

Bartges: So—and I'm still in contact with—well, her, her, her, her, her—

Douthit: Several of them?

Bartges: Yeah, there's still a group of people that I'm in touch with, but mostly Deb. And so I got together—it was a chance to just kind of socialize. But it was a little bit odd. She's a goodhearted woman, and she's a nice lady, but she was in way over her head.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: Way over her head.

Douthit: Well, and I'm sure that first year there were a lot of—

Strong: Women that way.

Douthit: Women coaches that were in over their head.

Bartges: Yeah.

Douthit: Yeah, and so most of those probably were, you know.

Strong: That's why I was glad Jim was willing to come aboard. And he wasn't—he just wanted the best for the team too. And the knowledge and the background he had, why would you say no?

Bartges: Well, and everyone that I've interviewed—I don't get that feeling from them, but then I also have additional information about her, so that—

Douthit: Yes.

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: —skewed my perception, but I think everybody was at a place, like you're saying, you're at a certain place at a certain time at a certain point in your life, and all the things align and—

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: (unintelligible) happen—

Strong: Yeah, everything moves forward.

Douthit: Well, then last April when the team got inducted into the Hall of Fame—

Strong: IBCA [Illinois Basketball Coaches Association].

Douthit: Yeah, everybody was there with family.

Strong: Yeah, they came like they'd be going to the game.

Douthit: They all came. And we were in a separate room because they had more people than would fit into that main room.

Bartges: Oh.

Strong: Have you ever been down there?

Bartges: Is that in Bloomington?

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: In the Holiday Inn or—

Strong: It's—

Douthit: Right there on campus.

Strong: It's at—

Douthit: Some big hall, I don't remember now.

Bartges: Oh, okay. No, I haven't been to that.

Douthit: But the main room was here, and this is where they were doing the inducting and the speakers, et cetera. And most of the people were eating in there, but we were in a separate room because they had overflow.

Strong: We had so many people there.

Douthit: And we had so many people, they didn't have room for us.

Strong: Yes.

Douthit: They couldn't seat us in there, so they put all of us in this other room.

Strong: Which worked out great.

Douthit: Yeah, because—

Bartges: Yeah, because you had—

Strong: So the kids were up and down and talking and—

Douthit: We could hear their announcing, but our conversation wasn't bothering their program—

Strong: Yeah.

Bartges: Yeah.

Douthit: —okay, so we just visited.

Strong: Yeah, it was good.



Sue Strong

Interview # DGB-V-D-2005-008

Douthit: It was just like old home week, you know, because everybody was there with all the team and their parents and sisters and brothers and—(laughs)

Bartges: Yeah.

Strong: It was (unintelligible).

Douthit: We had, what, sixty people there, I think.

Strong: Yeah.

**(End of Interview)**