RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARGE HOWES

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

FANTASTIC TRANSCRIPTS

Paul Clemens: This begins an interview with Marge Howes on the 16th of November, 2012. Paul Clemens is conducting the interview. I wonder if you could start by telling me when you were born and where.

Marge Howes: I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, July 30th, 1936.

PC: Could you tell me a little bit about your parents?

MH: My father and my mother were both born in Cincinnati. My dad was a florist, and my mom took care of my brothers and I.

PC: How many siblings did you have?

MH: Two brothers. I was in the middle of both boys.

PC: 1936. So you were born during the Great Depression.

MH: Yes.

PC: Any memories, at least a little later in life, of what that had meant for your family?

MH: I guess how hardworking they were. My father had his own florist business; it was his father's. We lived in the rural part of Cincinnati, Delhi. All my grandparents were very German. I guess it was the hard work and the fact that two of my neighbor's children were in the war and how we celebrated when it was over. I guess just the stories and the work ethic and the pride in our country.

PC: Your father did not serve in World War II.

MH: No.

PC: It doesn't sound like the age would be quite right for that. How did the war affect your mother and father?

MH: They didn't talk about it much, other than their one relative who was killed in the war. It wasn't talked about a lot, even though my mother's father was the sheriff of our area and knew so many people who were in the war. It was just a big celebration when it was over, because I was pretty young then.

PC: Do you remember the celebrations?

MH: Oh, yes. I remember where I was when the horns and everything went off!

PC: Where were you?

MH: I was on a teeter-totter with my brother, my older brother. It was a teeter-totter in our backyard. As I said, because of the neighbors--there were florists on both sides of us--and because the two Kramer boys I knew would be getting home safe. That was really exciting.

PC: This was the celebration for victory in Europe or victory in Japan?

MH: Japan, World War II.

PC: Okay. So the actual true end of the war?

MH: Yes.

PC: Did you remember things like rationing at all during the war?

MH: No. I was too young then.

PC: Too young?

MH: Well, I remember S&H [Green] Stamps. [Editor's Note: Sperry and Hutchinson sold green stamps to retailers as part of an incentive program. Retailers would then give stamps to customers after shopping at their business. The stamps could then be redeemed through the S&H catalog for products and rewards.] So I do remember that and how frugal my parents were. How we had to take care of our things. Heavens to Betsy, if we left our glove outside overnight, that it got wet, that we had to take care of our things.

PC: Were your parents immigrants?

MH: No.

PC: Were they second-generation? How far back?

MH: I think my father's parents were born in Germany. One set of my grandparents were born in Germany. I was talking about that just the other day, and nobody seems to remember. I think it was my father's parents who were born in Germany.

PC: Did either of your parents speak German?

MH: My dad spoke a little, but as I got older he remembered less and less.

PC: Can you tell us a little bit about your schooling, where you went to school as you were growing up?

MH: Well, I was very lucky. I went to the local school, Delhi. Because my mother was very involved, helping at the school as a volunteer nurse, even though she didn't have a degree, we knew the principal well. I was in the sixth grade when we got our first

physical education teacher. I remember that so well. He just met me a couple of years ago, and didn't even recognize me. He said, "I only had one good athlete, and her name was Margie Meyer." I said, "Mr. Kramer, you're looking at me." So I had a sports background. Back then we didn't have those games and TV. We went outside and played sports. My older brother taught me everything I knew. His "dumb sister" had to learn a hook shot, and so that's how I learned my sports. They played baseball on our backfield. We had a little basketball net. So, the school was rural, but believe it or not, back then, had a big emphasis on sports, even as an elementary school.

PC: You say you met a teacher who shockingly remembered you as a good athlete. Did you have a chance to play competitive sports in any of the secondary schools you attended?

MH: No, because girls weren't allowed. Girls weren't allowed. I usually was the scorekeeper for my brother's teams. My dad started the early knothole. Back then it was called knothole. Now it's called Little League.

[TAPE PAUSED]

PC: We were talking about your experiences in school and you'd mentioned that you did not have an opportunity to play on a school team. Your older brother was playing though, and what sports did he play?

MH: My older brother played basketball and baseball. He's very good. In fact, not that this means anything, but my dad started Pete Rose in baseball. I know Pete well because he was from the area. Pete's first coach was my dad and Glen Carter, which is history in its own. But my brother, as I said, that's all we did when we went outside, played sports. To get people to come to our house, they had to ride their bikes. It's not like we had neighbors. So, in order to give my brother some competition to play with him, he taught me everything I knew. He was only a year and ten days older. I guess that's why I became the athlete I was, because he taught me everything he knew. So I can give him credit. But I was the freakshow, literally. I hate to say that. Both of my brothers were good in sports when they played. I just kept the score. When they played baseball, I'd go out and warm up the pitcher, threw to second from a squat, and then when the game started I'd go back, sit on the bench and keep score. But I was very lucky. I went to a big high school in Cincinnati, and once again, very lucky, had an outstanding physical education teacher who coached basketball and softball. So I played those two sports in high school, and then I went on and played three varsity sports in college.

PC: Let me ask you a little bit about both. You played softball in high school. Was it played the way it is today? Were there any differences in the rules?

MH: Well, it's funny because in high school, I played slow-pitch softball. There were no softball teams in my town, but in Sedamsville, where Pete Rose was born, these girls were very rough, and they played on touring teams, traveling teams I should say. I guess they heard about me, and the coach came up, and asked my dad if I could play with them.

My parents said no because they were too rough. Some of their values weren't the same as my parents' values. I hate to say it, I did learn to swear from that team. But finally, I begged my parents enough and said, "You know I'm good. You know I love it." So they did allow me to play on that team, and we played all summer long. My mother never missed a game. So I did play, but when I got to college, it was then fastpitch. Softball is the same with more skilled players. You have different, minor rule changes, but it's the same as you see in our Olympics.

PC: How about basketball? When you were playing basketball, was that six on six?

MH: Oh my goodness.

PC: What sort of high school basketball did you play?

MH: You're good, Paul. Yes. It was six on six, divided court. Only three people could shoot, and the other three could only guard. Basketball has really changed.

PC: Could you dribble? Was that allowed?

MH: In the beginning it wasn't allowed, and as the years progressed, dribbling was allowed.

PC: When you played in high school, could you dribble?

MH: When I started playing in high school, you couldn't dribble.

PC: Could not dribble.

MH: Okay. But heaven forbid you cross [the center line]. You couldn't cross the center line. When people hear that, they just go--

PC: So, there wasn't a rover even back then?

MH: No.

PC: Nobody could cross the center line. Wow.

MH: I'm impressed you know about the roving player.

PC: Well, you read the interviews that I did with your first set of players. We talked about those things and the changes that they lived through too. It was the same all over the country for people.

MH: But even in high school there was pressure that women didn't play sports. So every time we played other teams, we'd call them "play days" in high school. We would go to

other schools, but it was always a play day. But yet, my high school coach would coach us like we were, [in] my terminology, a varsity team.

PC: So when you went to play another high school, on a play day, it was your school's players against their school's players?

MH: Yes.

PC: Because many times, play days, especially at the college level, the kids would go to another school and then they choose up sides.

MH: No.

PC: So it really was a way to take the competition out of it. But you were competitive?

MH: Yes. We were supposed to be nice. [laughter] On the play days, we were supposed to be nice, and we always socialized afterwards, with little snacks. That was part of it. My high school coach, coached me the right way to play, but, it was not win, do or die. It was have fun.

PC: What positions did you play in high school?

MH: Basketball, I was a shooting forward. Softball, I played everything. I was very lucky. My brother taught me well. In the summers in baseball, I was an infielder, mainly a second baseman because I played with a shortstop, who was able to get the ball off faster than most guys can now. We set a record for double plays one season, in the hundreds or something. When she got pregnant and had to leave, the new shortstop, we only got some sixty double plays a year. So there were girls back then who could play and keep up with the boys.

PC: This was when you were in high school?

MH: Yes.

PC: You were playing baseball.

MH: I was playing softball.

PC: But in the summer, I thought you said you were playing baseball.

MH: No, in the summer it was always softball.

PC: Softball.

MH: Girls still weren't allowed to play. I was not allowed to play with my brothers on the knothole or the Little League teams. It had to be softball.

PC: Those were the only two sports you played in.

MH: In college I did everything, but in high school I only did those two. When I got to college, being a physical education major, I had to learn to play field hockey, and I got very good at that.

PC: But at the high school level, were there any other sports that were available?

MH: Yes. In high school they had synchronized swimming that was available, and swimming, things like badminton. I bowled in high school; I was a bowler, too. So, they had a lot of sports in high school. I came from one of the bigger high schools in Cincinnati.

PC: Did you have any particular academic interests when you were in high school? Was there anything that got you really excited in your studies?

MH: Biology and math. I had a severe learning disability growing up, had to memorize my way through school. I was cum laude in high school, Dean's List [in] college, but my only academic interest was, basically, to be good at what I did, and that was to learn about all the sports and how to perform and how I could help other people do the same.
PC: So, by the time you left high school, you already knew that you wanted to do something--probably at that period of American history, it would have been to teach or something that was involved with athletics.

MH: Right.

PC: Where'd you go to college?

MH: I went to the University of Cincinnati. I didn't want to go there. I wanted to go away to school, but my parents wouldn't allow it. So, I went to the University of Cincinnati. As it turned out, it was probably the best thing that ever happened to me.

PC: How far away was that from your home?

MH: Twenty minutes.

PC: Twenty minutes.

MH: I was a commuter, so my mother drove me home from school for three years.

PC: Wow. [laughter]

MH: Yes.

PC: That's extraordinary.

MH: My brother is only a year older, he was in engineering, so I would ride to school with him. Because I played sports and it was after classes were over, if the bus came back at one in the morning, my mother would drive to UC [University of Cincinnati] five days a week to bring me home.

PC: Right there, though, there's something a little unusual. Your mother was driving, and that was not true of many American women in that period of time. More true, I guess, than it had been before, but still, it's a little bit unusual. Tell me about your life at the University of Cincinnati.

MH: Like what?

PC: Other than athletics, your major was physical education? Is that what they had as a major?

MH: My major was physical education. I actually lacked a lot of confidence in my ability--to perform as an athlete. I was very confident in sports in high school, not so much in college. But I lacked a lot of confidence in myself. I hate to say it, but as a product of German people, I was a kid to be seen and not heard. I can remember being kicked under the table for making comments when I was with relatives, playing cards. My parents really didn't want me to go to school. They didn't tell me, but it was really because they didn't have the money. It was because they were paying for my brother to go to school, and since we lived outside of the city limits, it costs as much to go to UC as if you had lived in New Jersey. It was actually money, but I finally wore them down. Yet, once I got there, they supported me totally. I lacked a lot of confidence, so I decided I wanted to become a member of a sorority. It was my Chi Omega sorority that gave me the confidence I needed to be a leader on campus. I'm not bragging, but I ended up getting the highest award that the campus gave. It's called the C-Ring for [Women's Leadership Award, scholarship, service and leadership], and I was in all sorts of honoraries.

PC: What sort of course work did you do other than physical education?

MH: My minor was health and biology. I would have been able to teach either one of those.

PC: When you took physical education, this was a program that was designed to prepare you for teaching?

MH: Yes, sir.

PC: Unlike today, where it can do that, but it can also lead you off into many other different careers today. So back then, I assume most of the people then were going to be teachers.

MH: Yes, definitely. Good question. As I think back on it, we did have to take a course on coaching, one course. I can still remember it was a Penn State--Peter Lawler, another who wrote the book on professional ethics. It was physical education to be a good teacher on all levels, from kindergarten to high school.

PC: What was the balance of men to women in the physical education program? Were most of the people who were preparing to be teachers men, or was it pretty even with men and women?

MH: Well, when I started out, there were only eight of us. No, I'm sorry. When I graduated, there were only eight women in my class. Back then, there were probably anywhere from twelve to maybe twenty men, but most of them were jocks. I can remember some of the football players not doing their work, they'd sit behind me and cheat, look over my shoulder. Most of them were some of the football players and athletes.

PC: They wanted what they thought would be an easy curriculum or they wanted to go on to be teachers.

MH: Or coaches.

PC: Coaches of one form or another.

MH: My field wasn't that easy because I took some of the same sciences the premed students did.

PC: Well, I can tell you that's what your players told me as well about their curriculum. The ones who were in physical education at Rutgers told me they studied a really rigorous curriculum with some very top people in the field, and that they were among the first to take courses over at Rutgers because of that.

MH: That's right.

PC: Pretty impressive academic lives that some of them had. One of their professors, Neil Dougherty is still at Rutgers.

MH: I remember Neil.

PC: We did an oral history with Neil too. The early days when he was at Rutgers was fascinating. Did you complete the University of Cincinnati in four years?

MH: Yes, sir.

PC: What teams did you play on at Cincinnati, if any?

MH: The varsity sports were--this is the neat part. Before Title IX, you could play as many sports as you wanted. [Editor's Note: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 requires gender equity in any educational program or activity that receives federal funding.] So I went from season to season. Fall was field hockey. Winter was basketball. Spring was softball. But because I was very involved in what they called the Women's Athletic Association--I was president of that my senior year, I was involved in that all four years--I played a lot of sports. I was the only lady, I think at that time in school history, to shoot a perfect score in prone position on the rifle range. So I did lots of sports. I wasn't a dance major by any means. Social dance, yes. But modern dance, no. I played everything. Coed volleyball. You did that if you wanted to be a good teacher.

PC: You said you were in a sorority. Obviously, you didn't live there if you were staying at home, but what was sorority life like at Cincinnati?

MH: I actually got to live there free my last year because I was president of the sorority. So that made my mom only have to pick me up for three years. The sorority, because of the value system and their purposes, gave me the confidence to be the leader that I became, really insisted on high personnel, good grades, community service. We did tons with community service. So even though I was brought up in a Christian home, it gave me a value system that really helped me with coaching, and more than anything, gave me the confidence that I needed and certainly gave me a group of sisters that I could relate to for friendship. You can cut this out if you want, but one story I'll tell you, if it weren't for my older sorority sister, I probably--yes, I'm getting emotional--probably would not have graduated because my parents only had one car, which was needed on the farm, and a truck. So my senior year, we had to do student teaching; one was in an elementary school and one was in high school, and both of them were way out of the city limits. There were no bus lines back then to get to the schools. So I had no transportation for my student teaching. Without student teaching, you couldn't graduate. So my sorority sister, and one of my best friends, happened to teach at a high school near the university. She made me a separate set of car keys, and I'd walk up the hill and get in her car, and used her car for the whole year. After student teaching, I'd drive back, and put her car back in her spot so it was there when she got out of school. That's what sorority life was all about!!

PC: That's neat. You did student teaching at a high school.

MH: And an elementary school.

PC: When you went there, were you teaching exclusively physical education and coaching?

MH: Yes. Not Coaching, just teaching.

PC: Just physical education.

MH: Just teaching.

PC: So they didn't expect you to have a second academic major other than physical education when you went to teach in a high school at that time?

MH: No, the physical education program at the University of Cincinnati, when I was there, was a dual program, and it had a minor in health. I chose to also have a double minor of biological sciences because I was interested in sciences. But because the student teaching part was strictly physical education, one only taught your major physical education in your student teaching. Physical education was my major, so that's all I taught in student teaching.

PC: In terms of employment, when you came out, it was possible to get a job strictly as a physical education teacher at that time.

MH: Yes, but because of my minor, I could have also taught biology and any kind of health in high schools also.

PC: What year did you graduate from college?

MH: 1958.

PC: So you're coming out after the Korean War. It's during the Eisenhower Administration. You're living in Ohio at this point in time. Did you anticipate living in Ohio the rest of your life?

MH: Well, my parents wanted me to. They actually forbid me to leave the street, Delhi Pike, much less the city, much less the state. So it was a very, very difficult decision for me to make. I would have loved to have stayed at UC and taught there, but there were no openings. I don't even know if they'd have hired me, but there were no openings at UC. Probably around my sophomore year in college, I knew I wanted to teach teachers how to teach. I had one great teacher and one very weak teacher. I can remember it was the great teacher telling us, "Well, you're learning how not to teach," when we would complain about the other teacher. I'll never forget that. I wanted to teach teachers, which meant I had to go from college to college teaching, which back then you didn't do. You usually had to have a master's to teach on the college level. But I still wanted to teach the teachers. So it was then that I decided, about my junior year, that I wanted to be a college teacher. It was my basketball coach at that time who told me I could do it and that I should do it. She really encouraged me to do it.

PC: I'm assuming that all the coaches that you had, at least at the college level, and maybe even the high school level, were women. That would have been the norm back then.

MH: Yes. Absolutely. Absolutely the norm. However, the summer softball and all those teams had men coaches.

PC: Where did you get your first job?

MH: It's funny how I got it, but my first job was at Douglass College of Rutgers in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

PC: Really? Your very first job was there?

MH: My first job.

PC: How did you find the job or how did it find you? What happened?

MH: Well, you can edit this, but that in itself was amazing. I had worked at summer camps in Maine and one of my friends, who became a good friend, was graduating from Sargent [School of Physical Training]. Back then, that was the best phys. ed. school, or at least that's what we were told, up in the Boston area. So we were going to live together. I was going to teach in a college up in New England someplace, and she was going to teach at a high school. So I had heard about the job at Douglass and applied for it, just to see how good I could be at being interviewed and all that. I was turned down. Douglass said, "No," they had a student in their own program who they were going to hire. I still remember driving on the Garden State Parkway up to Waltham and Boston, and saying, "Well, there's one job gone," as we passed exit nine on the New Jersey Turnpike. They weren't interested. I did have an interview at Brandeis [University], but they also wanted me to be an RA [resident assistant]. While I was waiting to have the lady change that so I could live with my friend, I get a letter or a telegram saying that Douglass would like to interview me for the job. Classes had started. I had to go to school, had to keep my grades up, and I said, "I'm really sorry. I just came back from spring vacation. Had I known two weeks ago, I could have been there." I spent my spring vacation interviewing in the Northeast, and I said, "I'm sorry, I can't come for an interview." Never heard back from them. Then I did hear from Douglass, "We talked to your one reference and were told"--I might be saying this wrong. "We were told, 'You don't have to worry, you should hire Marge sight unseen.'" They said, "We're now interested in hiring you." Well, I had a major dilemma because the Brandeis job was on hold until the board of directors, I guess, had to approve the teaching job without the RA part time job. Thus, that job didn't come through and it didn't come through. So I really had a decision to make. After getting help from the house mother, at my sorority, I finally decided to take the Douglass job.

PC: Did it seem to you, in any way, to be an opportunity or something you didn't even think about to be at an all-women's college? Was that something that mattered to you at that time?

MH: That never crossed my mind because the only thing I knew about Rutgers was Dr. Mason Gross on television with some kinds of birds or something. [Editor's Note: In the late 1940s and 1950s, Mason Gross was a judge and personality on the television game shows Think Fast and Two for the Money.] You would know that show, Paul.

PC: He actually had a couple TV shows. Yes.

MH: That's all I knew about Rutgers. I hardly ever left the state of Ohio, other than my camping jobs, and I only did those because it would look good on my resume. So that's all I knew about Rutgers. The fact that Douglass was a women's college, that never entered my mind.

PC: You got hired while you were still a senior in college.

MH: Sight unseen.

PC: Sight unseen. You were going to start your job July 1, I guess, after you graduated?

MH: No, it was September.

PC: Okay, September. You were hired by the physical education and health program. I think it was both by that time at Douglass.

MH: Yes.

PC: You joined a faculty of how many people? Do you remember how many were there?

MH: That year, there were, I think, five of us who were new. I think we had thirteen to fifteen on staff because it was a major program, and it was a big dance program. I know there were five of us hired the same year I was hired. I still remember all five. I think there were like thirteen to fifteen of us in the department of physical and health education.

PC: You're starting to work in September of 1958. Do they, at that point, have any varsity sports programs or is that the next year?

MH: They never had anything like that, and they didn't want anything like that.

PC: Did you know that when you got there, or was that something they told you?

MH: No, I didn't know that until I got there. But I was lucky. Come to find out my basketball coach at UC went on to Penn State to get her master's degree, and her best friend was hired to teach tennis and health at Rutgers. So I was at least able to have a friend right away, and that's how we roomed together. So that gave me some security because I was insecure as far as my teaching ability then, never having taught before.

PC: What did you teach? Do you remember what your first year of teaching was?

MH: Yes, being the youngest on the staff, I taught twenty-one different sports, and my joking line was, "Jack of all trades, master of not a darn thing." But I also taught the

teachers how to teach. I think I was teaching them basketball and softball then, P.E. majors.

PC: Did they put you very quickly into some sort of faculty role with the athletic association at Douglass?

MH: We didn't have an athletic association then at Douglass. Actually, I helped start it my third year there. We didn't have anything like that. Nothing like that. They had a lot of dance stuff.

PC: But when you got there, did the women have an intramural program at least?

MH: No.

PC: Nothing. But they had play days, I assume.

MH: No.

PC: Not even play days with other schools. Okay.

MH: I mean, had they had it, like five years before I got there, I'm not sure. But when I got there, there [weren't play days.]

PC: This was in part because the people who were running physical education weren't comfortable with any sort of competition or it just didn't occur to them?

MH: I think they were old-thinking, very old thinking. Neither heads of the P.E. department had ever played sports. Both of them were health or dance. I think varsity sports was just foreign to them really. I hate to say it.

PC: It's not uncommon. I mean, there are a whole group of physical educators of that era who were not entirely comfortable with sports or had much background in it. That's what I found at least in the research and reading I've done.

MH: Right, and especially for women.

PC: Where did you live?

MH: Well, I moved with my friend, from Penn State, to Highland Park, into a nice neighborhood [with] two other friends of hers from Penn State. So there were four of us in this house.

PC: Could you walk to work?

MH: No.

PC: No. So you had to get a car or bus?

MH: Well, my uncle gave me his car to get here. Unfortunately, it was an old Nash--I don't even know if they still make Nashes--but anyway, it was an old Nash. The trip to New Jersey, and many miles traveled in the first year, the block busted. So I did have to get a new car in '60.

PC: Tell me about how you did get programs started at Rutgers and became a coach if initially your responsibilities were simply teaching.

MH: Well, I guess it was inbred in me being a varsity athlete myself. I wanted to start a varsity program. I put a sign up sheet on the bulletin board to get people to sign up--and back then, before all the wonderful gadgets, that's what you did. You put a sign up on the bulletin board, and because the department did have physical education majors, those were the first kids to sign up. But looking through all my memories, I found a piece of paper where my boss told me I could not call the team varsity. No way. It had to be extramural. So from that point on, the word varsity could never be used. I started an extramural basketball team. It's funny. I don't have all those facts with me now, but somewhere in here, Paul, I can look up, and it'll tell you exactly how many girls came out that first year. I had both a varsity and junior varsity team-some twenty-four plus.

PC: That first year, you were coaching only basketball?

MH: Yes, basketball was the first sport I started because, back then, it was the most popular. What I can do is send you the dates and how many kids came out. I should have done that before I got here.

PC: It's okay.

MH: Softball was the last sport to form, and I only had one softball team. Field hockey was the second varsity sport to form because back then field hockey was much bigger here in the East than it was even in the Midwest. But I had two basketball teams because you only could play six at a time. So I had lots of kids come out for basketball. Field hockey, I finally did have two teams, but because it took so many players, it was basically just one varsity program. I only had one softball team. Softball was the last sport. I only had varsity softball for four years. That softball team never lost a game in four years.

PC: Was there a track program for women at any time that you were there?

MH: Never.

PC: Never?

MH: Track and field was at Rutgers. You know what? I don't even think track and field was even taught at Douglass then for the teachers. As I said, D.C. was more into dance,

but they did do a lot of swimming. Douglass had a great synchronized swimming program then, the coach was one of my mentors. She then went on to the University of Florida. But no track and field.

PC: The yearbooks always feature the synchronized swimmers.

MH: They were very good.

PC: They were very good. That's the impression one gets.

MH: But my friend, Dot Shields was the synchronized swimming coach then, and she was excellent.

PC: Can you remember what you were paid back then, what your salary was?

MH: Yes. Stop that [the recording].

[TAPE PAUSED]

PC: So your memory of your salary is that ...

MH: I think my starting salary was like 4,020 dollars, something like that. When I left, it was maybe 4,200 dollars, something like that because I did get one or two little tiny promotions.

PC: That actually sounds like a reasonably good salary for back then. That's coming from a teaching family myself. I'm sometimes startled to look at what my father made as a teacher at the University of Maryland, which is where he was employed.

MH: But think of what C. Vivian Stringer is making now for one sport and no teaching responsibilities. I taught like twenty-one credit hours that first year of different sports, and eventually ended up coaching all four teams, two baseball, one softball and one field hockey.

PC: Were you paid any supplemental money for coaching?

MH: Nothing.

PC: Nothing. That won't start until the '70s at Rutgers. In the '70s, when Rutgers takes over the women's sports program, people who coach, who are at that time still physical education teachers, get money for the coaching. But that didn't happen back then. So how did you recruit a team? You posted something on a bulletin board and people just showed up.

MH: That's funny. That's a good question too, because I was, after the first year, given more responsibilities because I guess they knew I was one of the few people on the staff

who was actually good at team sports. So, as I started teaching more of the teachers and more of the classes, I would promote my teams through my classes because I wanted non-majors on the team too. And notes on the bulletin board. So it was just my personal talk, and then I convinced the players that they had to go out and recruit, too, their friends who they know that played sports in high school. That's what brought in a lot of kids--it was the phys. ed. teachers who brought in their friends who were interested in sports. I remember when I knew I needed a taller person on my basketball team, and I'm serious when I say I would just go around college and look up--and this is a true story. I finally saw a tall girl come into the gym. She went to Highland Park High School. I said, "Have you ever played basketball?" She said, "A little bit in high school." I said, "Do you like basketball?" She said, "I'm not very good." I said, "I really could use you on our basketball team." She didn't really want to play, but I convinced her to come to a practice, and she met the girls and she really liked them. I taught her how to shoot and she became one of my better players for her last two years.

PC: Now when they were playing basketball for you, initially, this was six on six again. Is that how you started?

MH: To start, yes. Yes.

PC: How did it change over the time you were there?

MH: Well, they would allow you to do a few more things, like you could dribble and few more passes, and then it went to the roving player. That year is somewhere in that stuff I gave you--what year the roving player came into play. I probably should tell you, once I got here, all the women's sports--you might already know this, Paul, but all the women's sports were under the jurisdiction, not of NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association], but it was called the Division of Girls and Women's Sports, DGWS. Each sport for the entire state had a chairman, and it was the chairman of that sport, who was supposed to go to the high schools and the colleges, to teach them how to play their game or their sport. Well, once Douglass girls became a good basketball team, I became the New Jersey basketball chairman for DGWS, and I traveled all over the state. I can remember going to Syracuse University and other schools conducting women's basketball clinics. This was even before the roving player took over because that was supposedly my job. I got connected with DGWS because I, at a very young age, was the highest ranked basketball official, and I had a good rating in softball and field hockey, and it was my national official's basketball rating that immediately plugged me into all the officials here in New Jersey. A lot of them were college teachers. So I think basically my ability to train officials--plus, my girls were good player--that is what got me the job as the state's basketball chairman. I didn't do that my first year, but I think I did it my last four years.

That's how I got started. So when the roving player game came into being, I'm thinking, "Good gravy, I have to teach this new game to everybody." I had to teach it to my own team. So I was taking graduate courses at Rutgers and the assistant basketball coach then was Bruce Webster, and a good friend made while taking graduate classes. So I had

Bruce over for some beer and pizza. I said, "Now Bruce, help me. You know the way the guys play ball. I know the old way that the AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] women played basketball, let's put our heads together." That one night, we came up with lots of ways to instruct the roving player. Then it was just a matter of me testing it in my practices. So I would just tweak a little bit here, tweak a little bit there. I came up with very good ways to institute the roving player game. I was traveling through the entire state and teaching the new game, the new women's basketball game with the roving player.

PC: With a roving player, you still had six players?

MH: Still had six players.

PC: Just so I'm clear on this, when there's a change like this, everybody changes. So your women don't go off and play against another school which has a different system. So everybody in the state changes at the same time?

MH: You're really good, Paul, at what you do. Believe it or not, that's what's supposed to happen. It didn't happen in New Jersey. I later found out that in some of the Midwest schools, way out there--we're talking Utah, Wyoming--some of them never changed to the roving player game; just stayed with the old game. That's supposedly what should happen. But there were some coaches in New Jersey that said, "No, it's too complicated. I'm not going to do it." So then they had to find schools who still were playing the old game.

PC: Did your basketball team, or any of your teams for that matter, play out of state at all? Did they play in New York or Connecticut or Pennsylvania?

MH: Well, some of my goals were to travel out of state like good varsity teams do. So I had to fight very hard to make that happen. We did play away games. Unfortunately, I had to drive my car. My fiancé, at the time, would also drive. Many boyfriends would drive. Whoever we could get to drive for our away games, did. We didn't have a bus or anything like that. My first goal was to give the girls an overnight trip, it was in New York City, our first overnight. I don't know if we played Adelphi [University] or who we played that weekend, but we did have one overnight trip per season for basketball, only for basketball.

PC: Obviously you had to pick a school that was playing the same type of basketball that you were.

MH: Well, I only played the colleges where they were playing the roving player game.

PC: In the five years you were there, it stayed a six on six game? It didn't change to a five on five game?

MH: No, it just went from six to the roving player.

PC: How about softball? What was that like when you coached that?

MH: My softball team at Douglass-Rutgers was probably the most successful. We never lost a game in four years. Our first trip, I remember, was to Bridgeport, the University of Bridgeport, up in Connecticut. I remember driving there, and back then the girls didn't have their own locker room or anything. I happen to be in the bathroom, and I hear one of the Bridgeport players saying to one my players, "We're undefeated this year." Then there was hesitancy, and my player said, "Well, we are too." Well, with that, I almost fell off the john because we hadn't played any games, hadn't even played one game. We did finally go on to win that game because I had a rule, anybody who traveled on the team, if they were good enough to come to all the practices and had good grades and could hang in there with my coaching, if they got selected to travel for an away game, they would get to play. So I had to put in my second string pitcher, who wasn't as fast as our fastest pitcher, so the Bridgeport girls didn't get any runs that last inning. We did go on to win, and never lost from that point on.

PC: Was this slow-pitch softball?

MH: No. In college, it was fastpitch. However, nothing like you see today, like you saw in the Olympics a couple of years ago. But it was fastpitch, no arc. It just wasn't as fast as even some of the high schools pitch now.

PC: Did they use a whip motion to throw the ball?

MH: A lot of them did pitch windmill whip. I had some good pitchers, and I'm trying to think--I had one non-major, who was a good pitcher. I think hers was windmill.

PC: It's interesting. When I talked to your former players, the one thing they don't all remember the same is the nature of the pitching. Some of them say it was fastpitch definitely. Some of them say, "No, no, it was underarm and it was slow-pitch. It wasn't lobbed."

MH: Well, that one pitcher that probably played for the first three years was fast pitch, who didn't throw hard. No windmill, nothing like you see today. She'd throw it up there, always strikes. Definitely under arm because softball's only under arm, but I think Mary, the non-major, was windmill. I can't remember.

PC: You also coached field hockey?

MH: Yes.

PC: All three sports?

MH: Yes.

PC: How did your field hockey team do? I assume that a lot of the women who played one sport, played the other two because presumably they were staggered seasonally.

MH: My natural athletes, who were phys. ed. majors played all three, but most of them played basketball and softball--other than the natural athletes. My field hockey team was good because I had lots of non-majors playing field hockey because they came from Pennsylvania. Field hockey in the Philly area was great. I didn't have as many majors playing field hockey as I did the other two sports.

PC: Where do you think sports, in general, fit into the life of Douglass College? Were these women playing ever in front of other women who came to watch them play, or were they a group apart, your physical education majors? Did they fit in well at Douglass?

MH: Oh, very much so. A lot of them were leaders. It ended up, the class of '65, one of the class leaders was a phys. ed. major, and she became very good friends with the class president, who was a non-major. That happened to be Sarah Noddings, who you talked to. They became good friends, and they would recruit other people, but they actually ran the Class of 1965 because they wanted it their way. They actually even asked me to be the advisor to that class, which was unheard of back then. But we weren't able to have any spectators because we played in the old Douglass College gym that was made out of packing cartons--that's what I was told--from the old wars. There were no sidelines. Lucky we had one sideline to sit our players. So there were no spectators at all of our home games. They loved it when we travelled because we played in gyms where there were seats. This was, I guess, one of the reasons I tried to get more games in the Rutgers gym, until my boss disallowed that. We did get one game. But the varsity athletes were good kids. They were well known on campus, and they were leaders on campus.

PC: Did the women ever play a game for fun against any of the men athletes over there?

MH: No, but they did play a fun game. We'd always have a faculty game. One time, one of the girl's boyfriend came and wanted to crash the game. But then I knew I'd probably be fired that day if that had happened, so it was just a fun thing. So, no, that never happened. I was told my teams weren't supposed to play like men. I wasn't to pressure them to win, and we had to be very ladylike. This is why we couldn't be called a varsity team.

PC: But I assume you, to a certain extent, did pressure them to win. Did you want to convey a sense to them that winning was important or didn't you?

MH: Well, that's funny because my attitude always was--what's the old saying?

PC: It is--"winning is the only thing."

MH: I would say, "Winning is everything," but to me, it was how they played the game. I was a big stickler on sportsmanship. To me, it was how they played the game. If I saw

any kind of poor sportsmanship or anger, they just sat there next to me on the bench. If they were lazy and didn't play like I knew they [could], they'd get pulled out. I did yell a lot, but it was not the yelling like you see today in women's sports. It was more correctional type things. I don't think I pressured them to win because back then, I knew there was a shadow over my shoulder, that I wasn't supposed to be winning. But how could you be a good coach if you don't coach to win? But if we lost, they didn't get in trouble. They didn't get chastised or screamed at or anything like that. The important thing for me is how well they played. If they lost and played well, they really heard praise from me and got applauded for that. If they won and played lousy, they heard about that too. That was the way I did things. Heaven forbid, their grades were bad--their grades came first. I knew I wasn't supposed to be pressuring them.

PC: Where did you play softball and field hockey? Where was the field back then?

MH: We really didn't have a field. We played on Antilles, I think that's what it was called. We had a wonderful janitor from the old gym. I would have him line the field for field hockey, and it was a great field hockey field--wide open, no boundaries. Then for softball, we had no backstop, but I'd have that same field lined for softball. So we played there, on the grass. Believe it or not, our softball was played on the grass. I'd just make sure they mowed it really early that day. That was a great field. We did have the little cement bleachers there.

PC: When another team came to Douglass to play against the Douglass women, were there shower facilities and things like that for the team, or did they just get on the bus and go home?

MH: Well, first you had to socialize. Then they'd get on the bus and go home.

PC: Okay. So there was a socialization afterwards?

MH: It had to be. Back then, that was part of it. That was part of the women's game. You had to socialize. You always had to have oranges for them, both at halftime, and you had to have oranges at the end. Then it was always some kind of drink with cookies or some kind of snack. But socializing was very important back then.

PC: Did it ever go beyond that? Were there ever parties after the games or dances?

MH: No.

PC: Nothing after. Which does happen with some women's teams at some schools. So it was just a little bit more modest than that. What is your favorite memory of those years, in terms of the accomplishments of your team? What stands out for you as something that you were proud of your women for?

MH: The kids that they came to be. I like to think that I had a lot of input into, not just their lives as a collegian, but as a collegian athlete. What it meant to work hard and

accomplish your goals, what it meant to be the best in your field as a phys. ed. teacher, had a lot to do with the value system that I tried to teach and gain friendships. I guess the most rewarding thing was seeing my students go on to such great success. Some went on to college teaching. Some just went on to high school teaching. Some went on to play those sports after they graduated. I still hear from many of them. A lot of it is just to see the great successful kids that they turned out to be. It really changed my life because it was not fun working with my bosses because of their thinking. It was a battle for me the whole time. My players never knew that until my hall of fame speech, but I guess it was neat to know that if I had a goal and set my mind to it, I too could achieve.

PC: It's very clear your players didn't know it. When I did the interviews, I already knew something about this tension because I'd read the annual report to the physical education department there and the ambivalence about this sort of activity. I asked each of your players about whether they felt in any way that this was something that the college didn't totally approve of, and none of them had that sense. They were just having a good time, and working hard too.

MH: Well, the sad thing is--we didn't call her the president of Douglass, but the head of Douglass there--

PC: The dean.

MH: The dean, yes. That office [was] for my team's success, and gave us good publicity. I heard from some of them personally. They were all for my success until they would then talk to the heads of the phys. ed. department, or the administrative second-in-line. The other thing is--I think it was *Home News*. What's the newspaper in New Brunswick?

PC: *Home News [Tribune]*.

MH: Still?

PC: Yes.

MH: They were all for my team's success! They gave us publicity better than most university's get now. You see where I live now, the newspaper gives very little publicity to women's sports. Well, *Home News*, we were always in the paper. I had to give them the results, and then they always wrote an [article]. I had to drop info off in their little mailbox there. I can still remember the street. So the kids became known for their achievements on campus by the other kids. As I said, the Dean's office was supportive, however--the kids weren't allowed to ask to get out of classes. Never. I wouldn't allow it, but it was amazing how the players would say, "Oh, my teacher will let me make up my lab." It just seemed like it was the head of our department who was telling me what I couldn't do. So that was interesting.

PC: Did you get to know Mason Gross at all?

MH: No.

PC: You'd heard about him from afar, but once you got here, you never got to know him.

MH: I got to shake his hand at one tea or something when I first came.

PC: I think my entire contact with him was something along that same line. Right after I got here, I got to shake his hand. He died several years later, but I got to shake his hand.

MH: He was in awe by a lot of people, and me too.

PC: You stayed at Douglass for five years, is that right?

MH: I started in the fall of '58, and I left in the spring of '64.

PC: Can you tell me a little bit about why you left and why you didn't stay on as a coach there?

MH: You really want to know?

PC: Yes.

MH: [laughter] Well, I wasn't asked back. That was the first thing. Had I stayed in NJ, I would not have had a job at Douglass because I was told I won too many games. The reasons for not being hired back is I won too many games, I put too much pressure on my kids to win, and the same sort of thing that hung over me the whole time: I treated it as a varsity program. It all had to do with my ability to coach these kids and how I treated them. Had I been asked back, I wouldn't have come back because my husband had just finished his PhD study under Dr. [Leslie A.] Stauber in parasitology at Rutgers. He then moved to Connecticut to work at Pfizer in Connecticut. So had I been asked back, I couldn't have stayed because I was moving on with my husband. I'm not sure had I been asked back if he would have done maybe more postgraduate work here. I don't know. But because I wasn't asked back, it was a good reason for us to leave.

PC: So what did you do with the rest of your career? You had five years behind you at Rutgers. What came next?

MH: Well, that's what's funny. Because of DGWS, I immediately, when I got to Connecticut, plugged into the officials and they went, "Oh my goodness, you were state chairman in New Jersey. We need a good basketball chairman here." So I immediately became the basketball chairman for the state of Connecticut.

PC: How long did you stay in that position?

MH: I stayed very, very active in that position. I had to go around and teach all the coaches how to teach, I remember vividly, while I still was officiating too. I was officiating basketball and I did all the college games because I had the highest official ranking back then. It was called the national level. Because of that, my job was to teach the college coaches the roving player game. It was still being played way back then. I can still remember going to the University of Connecticut and their coach, god bless her--I loved her dearly--was not very knowledgeable. My parting words to her were--well, I then was pregnant with my third child. I can remember my parting words to her were, "You got to get out of this dumb gym and hire a man to coach this team the way it has to be coached." But that was in the late '60s. So my last involvement with sports was in 1970 as their basketball chairman. Then, wouldn't you know, two years later, Title IX came, and changed the whole life for women's sports. But at that time, I was just taking care of [my family]. I had three boys in four years--taking care of them and just officiating. Then I was asked to be the interim coach at Conn. College there in New London, Connecticut College. Their coach wanted to take a sabbatical. The head of the department, who was a man and the man's basketball coach--because he had met me and I had done officiating--the only way, he said she could have her sabbatical is if she convinced me to take over the coaching job for one year. I inherited a team that didn't win a game the year before. I can't even remember if we were playing roving player then or the way the game is now. But I took that losing team, and we won our last game to a team that we lost [to previously by] fifteen points in the first game to give us a winning season. After that, I was asked to help coach at UConn [University of Connecticut], Avery Point. That was their two-year school, at Avery Point in Groton, Connecticut. I was just doing that for fun, and was very busy. When my husband died, I didn't work, because my kids were then in high school. I was still totally out of basketball. One day, I was sitting--this was probably about 1994, at my computer. We only had one television. My son, who loves sports, could never play them, my middle son, because he had a heart problem. Well, I probably should say after my boys were born I went on to coach all my boys in all their sports, especially the one with heart problem; coached him in everything. When they asked me to coach him in Pee Wee football, I drew the [line]. No way. Not going to do Pee Wee football. So he saw on TV where UConn was playing in a Final Four, I think it was in '94. My son said, "Look, mom. Look, they're playing the game the way you used to coach." That sort of brought me out of retirement. It's funny. This long story goes 360 [degrees], but their post player, Jamelle Elliott, was playing the game the way it should be played, and so I got really then involved with UConn women's basketball, and would just go to the games. Then I ended up working there as event staff, and helping the Women's BB office, doing player comp., etcetera, just so I could see the games, because you couldn't buy tickets because they were sold out. What's really funny about this story is now Jamelle Elliott, who brought me out of retirement in '94, is now the women's basketball coach at the University of Cincinnati. Because I moved there in 2001. So now I'm helping her. Last year, I got the most valuable supporter for that program just because I'm always around and helping her, but that's a 360 story.

PC: So the Cincinnati coach today, for the women's team, is a former player at--

MH: University of Connecticut.

PC: Was that under Geno [Auriemma]?

MH: Yes. She played for him. When they won their first national championship in '95, she then stayed on as his coach for years and years until she came to Cincinnati four years ago. What a 360 story. But what I did in between, after having three kids, my middle son had a heart problem from birth, so I just coached him in his sports so he could play.

PC: How long did you go on officiating at games?

MH: I officiated until about 1997, maybe a little bit longer because my three kids--well, no, '97 that's not true. My youngest son was born in '69. I was still officiating then. I can remember when in Connecticut, I was officiating for many schools and they knew if they wanted me to officiate their high school games, they'd have to have a babysitter to watch my kids. So, guess I was officiating for quite a while.

PC: Did you get paid?

MH: Oh, yes. Officiating pay back then was pretty good. Nothing like it is now. I mean, they get travel and everything now.

PC: It wasn't bad.

MH: But as the highest official, back then, oh yes, I could get forty-some dollars for a college game. But that was through DGWS.

PC: Also, that is a Title IX thing. Official salaries is one of the things that really did improve under Title IX.

MH: Yes, definitely. And now you have men officials.

PC: Yes, you do.

MH: Back then you never had men officials do women's games.

PC: I definitely can see the change at the college level because I've been going to Rutgers games since the late '70s, and the officiating has changed dramatically.

MH: Women's games or men's games?

PC: Women's games.

MH: Then you probably were there when I got my hall of fame stuff.

PC: Probably was. I didn't know much about what was going on in the larger program, but I got taken to games very early in my career at Rutgers by Richard McCormick and his wife Katheryne.

MH: That's neat. Good supporters of the women's program.

PC: Very big supporters of the women's program.

MH: That's great.

PC: I started attending very early. My daughter was a ball girl. My son and I went to the Rutgers opening game. He's in his thirties now, and he's a big fan of Rutgers women's basketball.

MH: That's great. That is great, Paul. Yes. I went down to a couple games with one of my students, Dr. Eleanor Ahsler who was a non-major. She was a big supporter of C. Vivian Stringer's program. I guess she's the one that recommended me to the hall of fame, but I guess it took two years for them to even think that there was merit to put me in until they found out what I did for the roving player game. But Fred [Gruninger] knew me way back then as a coach because he was [Albert W.] Twitchell's assistant. He was a good guy. He really was.

PC: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

MH: I was before my time. [laughter] Thank goodness for Title IX, allowing the women to play. Somebody once asked me if the women were as talented when I coached as they are now. Back then, the women didn't have the jump shot like the guys do, that the girls can do now. But I feel they were every bit as--actually, I did have one girl who could do a jump shot--I think they were just as talented. It's just that they had never been taught. That stupid three-on-one-side and three-on-the-other-side game, which some of them played in high school, thwarted their ability to be as good as they are now.

PC: Well, thank you very, very much for conducting this interview with me. I hope to hear from you again at some time.

MH: Thank you.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by Molly Graham 6/14/2019
Reviewed by Marge Howes 7/6/2019
Reviewed by Zach Batista 8/20/2019