



Legends of OSU Gymnastics, October 4, 2014

Title

“Two National Champions Reflect on Oregon State Gymnastics”

Date

October 4, 2014

Location

Dilg residence, Portland, Oregon.

Summary

In interview 2, Mary Law and Joy Petersen discuss their careers in gymnastics. The session begins with their reflections on first interests and involvement in gymnastics, their recruitment to OSU, and their experience of the impact of Title IX. Law and Petersen also comment on early (and, in many ways, inadequate) gymnastics facilities at OSU, gymnasts' diets, training routines, and memories of competing in Gill Coliseum. The duo likewise remarks on travelling to away meets, their Olympics aspirations, the environment at the NCAA championships, the coaching staffs under which they trained, and injuries that they both suffered.

The interview then turns to memories of specific standout meets, the community that supports Oregon State gymnastics, and the circumstances by which Law and Petersen came to know one another. The session concludes with Law and Petersen reflecting on the conclusions of their gymnastics careers and lending their thoughts on the broader impact that their athletic careers have made on their lives.

Interviewees

Mary Law, Joy Petersen

Interviewer

Janice Dilg

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/gymnastics/>

Transcript

Janice Dilg: So, today is October 4th, 2014, we're in Portland Oregon, my name is Janice Dilg, I'm the oral historian with OSU Oral History Project and we have now had Mary Ayotte-Law join us along with Joy Selig-Petersen, and the two of them are going to talk together about their individual and kind of joint memories of being involved in the wonderful gymnastics program at Oregon State University. So Mary, why don't we start with you? Why don't you talk a little about what your inspirations were and how you got involved in gymnastics many years ago?

Mary Law: Many years ago. Well, I was always interested in sports but back in the fifties and sixties, I was born in fifty-nine, but in the sixties really girls didn't really have very many opportunities for sports, and so I grew up watching my brothers play sports, and so I—when we moved to Portland, the Portland area, I moved to Gresham when I was in eighth grade, I had the opportunity to take gymnastics in a PE class. That's actually how I started gymnastics. And then there was a club there in Gresham with Mr. Pat Lloyd who was a teacher and he started a little gymnastics club, and that's when I started gymnastics, when I was fourteen years old. So it was really great, and—

Joy Petersen: That's very late.

ML: It's very late, yes.

JD: So Joy, how old were you when you first got involved?

JP: I was like five. That's—I had that many more years to try to get good. That's amazing though; I mean really, that's like, most kids, like if you think of the national team, right? They're fourteen to eighteen right, wouldn't you say?

ML: When they're on the national team, yeah.

JP: When they're on the national team.

ML: When they're peaking.

JP: They're peaking. So Mary's staring. That's impressive.

ML: It is unusual, yeah.

JP: Yeah, when you think about that, I mean.

ML: It's unusual. Things were different then though, but that was still, even then it was very late, to be starting, but that was my opportunity, and that's when I started.

JD: And was there someone or something for either of you that you said "gymnastics is what I want to go try" and then "gymnastics is really the thing for me?"

ML: Well for me, as a young girl, Olga Korbut was the person that I just loved, and then of course Nadia Comaneci later in the Olympics, was really inspirational.

JD: And maybe just say real briefly for folks who don't, who won't know who those two women are, who they were.

ML: So, Olga Korbut was an Olympian for the Soviet Union in the late sixties, early seventies, and then Nadia was for Romania. Probably lots of people have heard the name Nadia, maybe more than Olga, but Olga was really kind of the pioneer in fantastic gymnastics, as far as lots of flipping and on the beam, and—

JP: She was the first one to do a back tuck on the beam. The first flip, a real flip on the beam.

ML: And she flipped on the bars, like she stood on the high bar and flipped on the bar and grabbed the bar and grabbed the bar and—

JP: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, like first bigtime, real big skills.

ML: Very acrobatic.

JP: Yeah.

ML: Kind of changed the sport from more—to a more acrobatic sport.

JP: Yeah.

ML: So Olga, it was, I loved, I loved her.

JP: Yeah, I was a Nadia Comaneci fan, yeah. That's when I remember seeing her on TV scoring perfect 10s.

ML: Yes. She was the first one to do that.

JP: That's right, I think she was.

JD: Well, and it's interesting, there's definitely kind of those bumps, I think, that still happen with the winter and summer Olympics of young people being able to see these athletes performing and getting inspired and going off and following in their footsteps.

JP: Yeah.

ML: I think so, yeah. It's an amazingly high level, to do at that level, but yeah, I think that's right, there's a bump. Usually a bump—USA gymnastics does always see that, they see their club programs, so.

JD: And so, Joy had talked a bit about kind of her connections with and getting recruited by Oregon State University, so maybe you can fill in that piece for what your experience was, how you ended up at OSU, Mary.

ML: Well, recruiting was really different back then, and again, I was able to do high school gymnastics. Oregon had OSAA-sponsored high school gymnastics, so I did gymnastics at Gresham High School. But the recruiting just, of course, was very different back then. I graduated in 1978 from Gresham High School. I did take some recruiting trips with my mom. We went around and we went to Washington and Seattle Pacific, Boise State, Oregon, Oregon State, so it was kind of the schools that we were looking at, and really Boise State was great, they were interested in me, and Oregon State was really the only other school that thought that I would be able to make their team and compete.

[0:05:14]

So, I started out at Oregon State. And when I visited Oregon State it was Mom's Weekend in May and we loved it. It was beautiful, of course of anyone that's been on the campus in May, all the rhododendrons were blooming and it was just gorgeous and everyone was so friendly. Really stood out as a campus, that the administrators were very friendly. And I was in education, I always knew I wanted to be a teacher and so we visited old Ed Hall, which has been beautifully renovated since, but it was Education Hall, and just everyone at Oregon State was really welcoming, and I think that's probably one of our hallmarks still, is that Oregon State University is very welcoming. So, Ron Ludwig at the time was the coach and he offered me a partial scholarship. At that point we could get partial scholarships. So I think my scholarship was nine hundred and ninety-nine dollars. I don't know why I remember that. That's what it was. My freshman year I came and got a partial scholarship and then I had a successful freshman year, so then I was a full scholarship athlete the last three years.

JD: Oh, okay. And I know that, you know, you were at OSU from '79 to '82, Mary?

ML: '78, fall of '78 to '82.

JD: Okay. And Joy, you came in?

JP: '87 to '92.

JD: Okay, so you—so there was, you know, a bit of time between when the two of you were there, and I want you to both talk a bit, but if you would perhaps start Mary, about Title IX. I mean it was still fairly new in its implementation, certainly when you were there and not that far down the line when you were there, Joy. What was the discussion like, what were some of the feelings and sentiments on campus or that you were aware of around that issue?

ML: Well, I don't really recall discussions particularly about Title IX. I remember just sort of some back grumblings that women were having to get more money; we were having to get more facilities. When I came to Oregon State in '78, we worked out in the women's building, which is a beautiful building, we loved it, but we had to set our e equipment up every day in the gym, the women's building gym, and take it down every day.

JP: That's a workout in itself.

ML: Yeah, it was a great workout. Bars were interesting. So, we start from there and then, I think because of Title IX and funding and, we did get our own gym in Langton Hall later, and then we ended up moving to Gladys Valley Gymnastics Center in 1990, which was, did you, yeah, did you ever work out at Gladys Valley?

JP: I never did.

ML: You were still at Langton.

JP: Mhmm.

ML: Yeah. Langton Hall.

JP: Nice pole in the floor.

ML: Yeah, we had a pole in the middle of the floor.

JP: That we had to tumble around. Remember?

ML: Yeah, we put out mats out in the gym to do full floor routines. Did you guys do that?

JP: I think no. No, we had full floor, but there was a pole.

ML: There was a pole in the middle, yeah.

JP: Yeah. So all of our routines did not have something in this one section of the floor.

ML: Yeah, you kind of work around it. But I think Title IX helped with just, for one thing, facilities, and then budgeting for more scholarships for gymnastics in particular and other sports.

JP: I think, looking back, I had no idea about Title IX. But I think—I mean until after—I mean, and people, I remember later in my college career people thinking that I knew a lot about Title IX, but I was like "I don't really know anything about Title IX," but I'm a product of it, because the whole reason I think I got a scholarship to Oregon State was because they fully funded that sport right at the time I was coming in. And we had a new coach, we had a whole new coaching staff, except for Jill and yourself, but like, and they—and so all this that we finally got fully funded and so the enthusiasm and the growth of that year was just huge, but I didn't know it was because Title IX and all the work that went behind that until, I remember it was somebody asked me to speak at an NCAA Title IX conference. I was like "okay." But now looking back and knowing more, I am like, oh I think I am like so lucky for that, because I probably wouldn't have had a scholarship if it wasn't for that, so.

[0:09:59]

JD: So, I want to step back a little, and you were talking about being in, was it the basement of the Women's Building, or?

ML: No, it was the gym. The main gym. So, when you go up those beautiful stairs and there's the lobby, there's these beautiful wooden doors and a fireplace; behind that fireplace is a gym. And there's a beautiful wooden balcony around it and that's where we set up our equipment every day.

JD: And so it got used for multiple things, so that's why you were setting it up and—and how, and so the gymnastics team, basically, was hauling the stuff out of closets and?

ML: Well yes, and on the side, and our mats folded up. We didn't have a spring floor. Spring floors weren't invented yet. So we started. Actually, I think maybe they started like maybe my freshman year, I think we had a spring floor in Gill, but we didn't have one to practice on. We just practiced on this little foam mat and it folded up, and maybe we had a wrestling mat that we rolled, I don't know. I think we had a wrestling mat.

JP: Ouch.

ML: Yeah, it was really hard.

JP: Ouch. Those are hard to tumble on.

ML: Yeah.

JP: Didn't Sylvia Moore used to talk about horsehair mats?

ML: Yes, we had horsehair mats.

JP: Yes.

ML: And we put those on the side, yeah.

JP: Those things, those things—

JD: What is a horsehair mat?

ML: It's just a mat made out of horsehair.

JP: It's all—

JD: So it's like a wool blanket, a thick wool blanket?

ML: Sort of, yes.

JP: Very thick.

ML: Kind of like a thick wool blanket.

JP: Because remember when you—we were moving out of Langton, it was my senior year, we had to remove those horsehair mats that were over by the lockers, in that corner, and they were so, super, so heavy. I mean usually we were just throwing mats around like this, you know, you put them under the beam or you just throw them over here, you have two people just carrying them over here, but those are like we couldn't even move them. They were so thick.

ML: Really heavy. Yeah, it took a couple people, a couple gymnasts to move them. Things have changed a lot. We had a wooden beam.

JP: That's right.

ML: A wooden beam. Lots of changes.

JD: And so, I guess I'm trying to wrap my head around this, and thinking, so you would spend, I don't know, an hour setting up equipment?

ML: Oh no, we got really fast. We got really fast at it. So we would—oh, I don't know, maybe twenty minutes. But the thing was after practice. We had to be really efficient, because the dorms would, the cafeteria would close, and so if we were too late, we missed dinner.

JP: I mentioned the same thing in my interview.

ML: That was really important to us.

JP: I'm just thinking, you know, my food issue is like so hard.

ML: Yeah, it was like "we got to get to the dorms!"

JD: Well, I'm guessing you were hungry.

JP: Kind of.

ML: We were really hungry. Terribly, from the long workout.

JD: Well, was there dis—did you—was there discussion about diet, or did athletes who—you're just burning a lot more calories than a student who's not doing the kind of vigorous workouts that you were doing. Did you have unlimited food that you could eat, or how did that all work?

ML: It's changed, that has changed a lot too. That issue has changed a lot in gymnastics over the years, too. We just didn't eat—I mean I would say I ate cottage cheese and crackers and those little sesame cracker things. I don't know how we survived. I mean really, we were just small, teeny tiny little things.

JP: Yeah, used to be like, on Fridays I remember going to, was it Sizzler? Downtown Corvallis, and the food bar and we would have—

ML: They would have a big salad bar.

JP: Big salad bar and we would splurge.

ML: I didn't eat salads for probably twenty years after.

JP: Yes.

ML: Now I like them again.

JP: Yeah. But it was like a long –

ML: It was like I hated salad.

JP: Yes, long...

JD: So, when you say you didn't eat, was that because the cafeterias were closing or you didn't have a big enough food allowance, or?

ML: No, it was because we wanted to weigh, like I weighed a hundred pounds in college. A hundred and two was way too much.

JP: Yeah, yeah.

ML: It was just kind of the mindset back then. I think that's changed and improved.

JP: Yeah, I mean you had—we had body fat testing and I just remembered doing that. They would put us in a tank, and I'm sure they don't do it like this anymore. Do you remember that?

ML: You know what; they hadn't invented that yet, Joy. All we did was weigh in. That was it.

JP: We had, we had to sit in a tank on a swing and we had to blow all the air out and then they would dunk us under to get us a body fat measurement somehow. I still don't understand all that. I never did understand how that translated. Because now they just like pinch you or whatever with little calipers, but like, and then we would have to be, they would try to, they were trying to give us the healthiest weight, I think.

[0:15:06]

ML: Healthiest weight and body fat percentage, because you do have to have muscle to do the gymnastic skills that you want to do. Anyway. And now the skills have changed so much and they're so much more powerful and so much more difficulty that you do have more muscle mass than we did.

JP: You have to, definitely, and that's healthier.

ML: It's healthier. Yeah, that's healthier.

JD: So, I—that kind of segue ways into the actual training and I'm sure, as you're both saying that changed and perhaps was a little different for each of you, so talk a little about what was an average practice like? And I'm sure they change throughout the year and as competition increased. What was a typical practice day?

ML: Yeah, they would change throughout the year, depending on if you were in season or out of season. So, out of season you would work new skills, so you would just do not full routines, you would just try to get your skills. And me, coming in as a freshman and having so little experience and so little skills, I mean I came into Oregon State being able to do a round back—handspring back layout, and that was like, I couldn't, that's what I could do when I came. And I could do an Arabian. But I couldn't twist. So, they worked and worked and worked and worked to try to get me to twist and I couldn't twist, so then they just had me do double backs, which people didn't do back in 1979.

JP: It was a big skill.

ML: It was a big skill. So, I was the first one to do that in college, and just—but that was because I couldn't twist. I just couldn't figure it out. So, in the offseason you worked a lot on trying to get new skills and then in the season we worked routines more. But a typical practice, they didn't have as many rules as far as how long you could practice. Now it's very strict with the NCAA, how many hours they can practice, how many, you know, per week, and this season they can do this many hours and it changes all the time, those rules, but oh, I don't know.

JP: We practiced, I think we practiced—

ML: Like four or five hours?

JP: From two to five, I think it was Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. We got Wednesdays off, I remember. Because I remember being ecstatic to have Wednesday off. I've never had Wednesday off.

ML: Yeah, we didn't have days off. I don't remember having days off.

JD: And does that include weekend days too?

ML: Oh, we had weekends off.

JD: Okay.

ML: Yeah. I don't remember going in on the weekends.

JP: Oh no.

ML: Did you ever? No.

JP: We had to build, remember, do you remember doing that? We had to build our spring floor for our competition. Or was it workout? Yeah, I remember going on weekends and doing that, though.

ML: You guys set it up?

JP: We actually had to put the screws in the bottom of the plywood.

ML: You did?

JP: Seriously, yeah. Our coach Jim had us all—"we'll have all the girls come in and do it," and we had to, we had to—

ML: At Gill?

JP: Uh-huh, and one of the rooms in Gill, totally did that, when—

ML: Oh that must have been when they got a new spring floor, they had you guys put it together.

JP: Yeah, I mean like our coaches were like, especially Jim Turpin, so resourceful, a little over the top sometimes. He was making us do it all. But, it was—

ML: Resourceful, that's a good word.

JP: That was, he, we needed a new floor and he was going to figure out a way to get it done, so we were going to make our own. I don't know, I just remember that, the plywood and I know how to put those springs in the bottom floor, and they were all measured and, anyways, whatever. I thought you were in on that one too.

ML: No, I don't remember doing that. I should have been there.

JP: Oh I know, you missed out.

JD: It was not on the gymnastics recruiting trip.

ML: Yeah, that wasn't on the recruiting trip.

JP: They didn't mention that one.

JD: So, when—is there a way that you can kind of, either one of you or both of you describe what's the process of learning a new skill or a new vault or something?

ML: Depends on the event.

JP: Yeah, depends on the event and you just, you know, you start with either in the pit and timers, like doing half the skill, portions of the skill that you can do, and then getting a spot and just seeing how, if you can progress to each level, if you can, you know, can you land on your feet in the pit or whatever the skill might be. If you can do that, then you throw a mat in the pit, oh you can land, okay great, now we can take it, maybe we can try it on the floor with the mat. You know, all these different progressions that you do. And I was so lucky because like, the assistant coach Dick Foxal just loved teaching new skills and I loved learning new skills, so he would just work with me forever, and I remember learning a release move with him that took me, oh my gosh, a long time. I mean, we would go in on our own and practice, and he, you know, I belly-flopped millions. You remember him?

[0:20:16]

ML: What skill?

JP: Jaeger.

ML: Oh, Jaeger.

JP: So yeah, I finally got to compete it but it was after just persistence, him being in there. A lot of times he took up extra time on that, so.

ML: Did he—oh, we didn't have a belt in Langton.

JP: We didn't have a belt.

ML: So now in Gladys Valley they have belts, body belts that are like a pulley system in the ceiling, so they can use those.

JP: You didn't have pits, though.

ML: In Langton we had a pit. We had an above-ground pit. Wasn't it still there?

JP: Yeah. Same one.

ML: Yeah, so that's...

JP: Wasn't it Jim that had been—

ML: Ron built that, Ron Ryan Lee built that pit.

JP: That's right.

ML: We had that little bar set in there on the end.

JP: Yeah, uh-huh, that's where I learned that, yeah.

ML: That's probably where you learned Jaegers.

JP: Yeah, that's where I learned the Jaegers.

ML: And then on the end we could vault into it, into the pit. We couldn't tumble into it; we didn't have any pit to tumble into.

JP: We could, because we could move the vault and push it to the side and then we had that awesome ski floor.

ML: Oh, we didn't have that. Oh you had the ski, so did you put it up on the platform when you would use it, and then take it off for vault.

JP: Yeah, they would lean it against the wall and then we just pulled each panel down. There's only probably like four panels, because it's just a tumble strip.

ML: And then you would tumble into it.

JP: Yeah.

ML: That's awesome.

JP: It's awesome, yeah. You would have been awesome in that day, because you already had springs built into your legs.

ML: Yeah, I had springs in my legs, yeah.

JD: So Mary, when you're talking about sort of the equipment that was there, and I mean, was there, I read one account where, and this would have been coach Turpin, so this was after your time, but it may have happened multiple times, where he was talking about one of the gymnasts running into a wall.

JP: Yes, I remember that too.

ML: In Langton?

JP: Linda Pierce. I totally remember.

JD: In Langton.

JP: Yeah.

JD: And that that ended up being kind of a motivating factor to create safer, kind of more state-of-the-art facilities, which became Gladys Valley Gymnastics Center. But when you're in either the women's building or then in Langton, are you aware that there's other types of facilities out there that you all were asking for or?

ML: When we got Langton, we thought we had struck it rich. I mean, Langton was awesome because we didn't have to take the equipment down.

JP: Yeah, that's huge.

ML: So that was great. As far as other universities, I think everyone was kind of in the same boat. I don't think anyone had facilities to speak of. Probably the University of Utah was the first program that really started getting some amazing funding and getting, you know, more state of the art training facilities, and then as people, as programs started getting more funding they started building facilities like Gladys Valley Gymnastics Center and now even bigger. So, I don't think we thought about "oh, this is..." I mean, if you recall, like the whole idea of women being able to even do sports in college was new. And so even for us to have a team was such a blessing and such a great opportunity. Just being able to continue to do gymnastics in college and travel and compete all over the country and go to the national championships and, that was all so exciting and such a great opportunity. We thought it was great, what we had. Even though compared to today it sounds like it wasn't great, but we, it's what we had and that's what we used.

JD: So, you train, you train, you train, you get really good, and let's talk about competition a little. You know, I think a lot of people have a sense of what a gymnastics competition involves, but talk about being there and, you know, I think it's one of those interesting sports where there's both an individual component as well as a team component that have to kind of go on at the same time. Do you each remember kind of your first big college competitions, or a memorable one, maybe not the first? Just to give a little glimpse of what it's like to be the perf—the people on the floor.

[0:25:02]

JP: Well that is like a new deal when you come to coll—I feel like—I mean when you come, get to become part of a college team, that's what it's about. It's about the college team. And that's different for gymnastics. Usually, I mean even though you've been part of a club and you're being raised in this club and you're having—it's still you, even though you're—right, would you say?

ML: Mhmm.

JP: And then you get to your college team and it's now, it's team, and so that added pressure, that like—in this sport you have six girls that compete and five of those scores count and wow, that's like a new deal for new added, I don't know, added to the pressure or something, and for me that, I probably did not do very well with that the first year. No, I mean like I fell, like I remember my coaches just kind of like okay. Alright. I mean I remember one meet at Seattle Pacific. I fell on my mount on beam and then soon after that I did like a little dance move and then I did a layout. I found my mount, I got up, did my dance, found my layout. And I remember just standing there going you've got to be kidding me, just like what is going on, but just, I think learning how to deal with all those new different kind of pressures and having so many people come watch you. I didn't know what it was like when people came, like how many people were at a meet for when you competed.

ML: Well, we just started competing Gill Coliseum, I think my freshman year was like the first time that they competed. They competed in the women's building before that. So, the crowds were just starting to be built in the program, so we would have several thousand people towards the end, like my junior and senior year, coming to Gill to watch, and that was definitely different, of course, than club where you don't have anyone except your mom.

JP: Yeah.

ML: Watching you.

JP: So true.

ML: But that idea, that's I think what I loved about college gymnastics, was that idea of team, because I came from a really tiny club and I was the only one that was at my level and you know, so coming to a college team and having that team aspect was just really so much more fun. I loved that.

JP: Yeah, so much more meaningful and everything you did now affected the team, you know, so just a neat dimension you get to experience in that sport, because gymnastics is so much more individual.

ML: There was that interesting dual role that you had. You had to hit your individual routines and there were individual awards but you also had to—

JP: Half the focus, though, was so on team.

ML: Yeah.

JP: Like did—in order to get to those championships you have to qualify as a team. I mean you can qualify as an individual, but I think the recognition comes when your team makes it, you know? Making it to regionals, making it to nationals as a team, it kind of puts your school on the map too, which is pretty exciting.

JD: So, what was travelling like? I mean I'm assuming there's travelling both for the college competitions in what was then the PAC-10?

ML: Yes.

JP: Mhmm.

JD: But then—

ML: But we weren't a PAC-10, well when I was in it, PAC-10, there was a PAC-10 but it—PAC-10 wasn't PAC-10 gymnastics.

JD: Okay.

ML: We were set, the country was set up not by conference but by region, so it was really set up very differently. PAC-10 conference gymnastics has not been around very long. Did they have it for you?

JP: Uh-huh, yeah.

ML: So, it must have started right when you were close.

JP: Yeah, we even got—because when we won we even got a, I have a PAC-10 ring.

ML: I think it was in the nineties when they started that, realigning all of it.

JP: Oh, yeah. Oh, okay.

ML: And having a PAC-10 championship meet is fairly new. I guess twenty years isn't that new.

JP: It's pretty new. But I agree, it is new. I would like to go with that.

ML: It seems new! That's funny. Perspective.

JD: So what, would you guys like pile in the bus and go up to Seattle Pacific or UW, or?

ML: We would take buses and vans.

JP: Yeah.

ML: We didn't have fancy buses though, we took vans.

JP: Oh, I have such a funny story. I remember, you know because you pretty much dressed the same, you know you all have your bags, obviously you're a team, but they could never figure out like what team we were. You know, because gymnastics isn't your first sport that pops into your mind, you know, it's always like basketball or obviously not football, but you know those that pop into your mind, and we had one guy come up to us and be like "so, who's your team, what sport?" And he goes like, and he's looking at us: "basketball?" And we just start laughing, we're like "no," I mean because this is as high like, I'm as tall as it gets. Even the coaches were all kind of not much taller than this.

[0:30:11]

ML: Five-four, five-six.

JP: I know, maybe five-four you have in there, but we're like "gymnastics." He went "oh yes!" We laughed so hard about that, it was just so funny, because he knew he was way off but he couldn't think of any other sport.

ML: He couldn't think of anything. Traveling was fun.

JP: Traveling's fun, yeah. Very fun.

ML: And we had a really good time.

JP: And ventures.

ML: You always had a venture.

JP: Yeah.

ML: A venture of some kind.

JP: Yeah, so we always traveled, always, you know, we stayed in hotels, and I was always treated very nicely.

JD: And did the team travel to other types of meets or kind of outside of the college competitive circuit?

ML: The only meet that Joy and I both had the opportunity to do was the World University Games. We both had the opportunity to be on those different teams, but other—yeah, I don't think that there were any other meets that they did.

JP: No, just World University, you're right.

JD: And I know you both went to those, how did you get selected and sort of what was that all about, what were those games?

ML: When I was on the team, they took your all-around finish at nationals. So, there were four people on the team and then one alternate. So, I finished seventh that year all around, my junior year, but a couple of girls ahead of me didn't want to go or weren't able to go, so I was able to go, so that was really great, and it was in Bucharest, Romania. It was a wonderful, really awesome experience. Really, really great. To be able to represent the United States, I'm sure Joy felt the same way, was really a special opportunity of a really great thing to be able to do. And it's set up where it's all Olympic sports, men and women. So, when we went it was huge. There were so many countries there; it was you know, very much like the Olympic Games. We had to be a university student to compete. And so, we at our team was from all over the country, from UCLA, Arizona State, University of Florida, you know, all over gymnasts. And it was really exciting to be able to be on the platform for the United States and have that opportunity, it was so fun. And then you get to see the other sports. Our meet was actually towards the beginning. The games were about fourteen days long and so we were there for almost two weeks and so ours was at the beginning, so then we got to go to basketball and water polo and all kinds of different sports and it was really, really exciting.

JP: We had tryouts. We had to—Oregon State even hosted them. Do you remember that?

ML: I don't remember that.

JP: It was after the season was over and Jim said "hey"—and it was my senior year and you—and I could have been a professional athlete, I mean that's probably why I still run because I think it's so cool to be an athlete. It's the closest thing I can get to right now at this age. We'll see what happens, but like he's like "do you guys want to try out?" Three of us did. It was Chari and Amy and I and we had a big meet and tried out and made it and same experience, it was awesome. I mean, when I first started gymnastics, I wanted—I was little and this little redhead with you know, pigtails, and they'd say "what do you want, what are you doing?" And "I'm going to the Olympics, I'm going to go to the Olympics, I'm going to go to the Olympics." And obviously when you get realistic you go "oh okay, I'm probably not going to go the Olympics." But I still got to taste that, I still got—I always wanted to wear red, white and blue and I got to do that. And the same—it was set up the same way. I mean we had the marching ceremonies with all the countries and closing ceremonies and you all—we were wearing United States gear, I mean you have training camp, I mean I just ate it up. I mean, I did not perform very well. I performed horrible. But I almost didn't care because I was like "I'm wearing red, white and blue."

ML: Yeah.

JP: I'm okay with this.

ML: Yeah.

JP: I have reached, you know, I've gotten everything I'd hoped for out of this sport and then some, you know. And it was—and ours was over in England, so that was, so we got to go tour all that afterwards as well.

ML: That's great.

JP: Yeah.

JD: Well, and you've been talking about kind of all these different types of competitions, I'm sure there's larger and larger crowds, both at you know, kind of a season meet and then when you get to the NCAA championships the crowds get a little bigger and then you go off to nationals and you know, talk a little about sort of how you keep it together and what it's like being someplace where, as you say, you're usually in a gym sweating and working hard and then all the sudden you're there and there's maybe eight, ten thousand people there watching and cheering, and how does that change the competition?

[0:35:33]

ML: You have to learn to really concentrate on every little movement that you're doing at the moment. And I think that Joy was just a master at that. On balance beam she was just so focused in, it was like you were in this little box and you were on that balance beam and when you were just on it was just a joy to watch, Joy. But that's what a gymnast has to do, and I think other athletes do that too, but gymnastics is so, I don't know.

JP: It was a lot going on, I mean every second.

ML: You can't make a mistake.

JP: You know, you're constantly—

ML: You can't make any mistake.

JP: --correcting yourself in your head, you know. It's constant. So I think part of it is you're just so focused on what you're doing that you don't notice. And not that you don't notice but you, it's just like "okay, I don't have room for that right now."

ML: You can enjoy it at the end the routine.

JP: Yeah. And you enjoy—when you see the people coming in and stuff and you enjoy it but then you get really, when you get, you know, focused on what you have to do, there's just so many things that your body has to be in the right spot at the right time.

ML: And of course you're practicing, trying to practice. Every practice that you do, you want to do it perfectly, so you are going to compete how you practice. And again, I would say that's why Joy was so amazing, because she practiced so hard.

JP: I annoyed everyone with that, because I could not let it go, and when—I mean I remember—

ML: You were always, yeah, we were similar. You didn't know this, but we were always the last, we were the athletes that were the last ones out of the gym. One more, just one more.

JP: One more, just okay, was not satisfied, can we just do one more.

ML: And if I was doing leg lifts or whatever exercise I was doing, if the assignment was ten I would do eleven. That's what you would do.

JP: Mhmm, yes. Totally. That's funny. But our coach, my, one of the assistant coaches, and that's one of the bummers about being an assistant coach, you know, head coach is like "okay you've got this, I'll see you in the morning" or "see you tomorrow," you know, he takes off while the assistant coaches are stuck until you're finished, and Jill had a family, her kiddos were babies then, and I'm like "one more, one more," she's kind of like [makes exasperated noise] "I want to go home and have dinner with my family," and I had no clue about that. And now I'm still like "I'm so sorry, I never—I'm so sorry," because now I'm like all I want to do is go home and be with my family and now, you know, so I get it, but I didn't get it then.

ML: She loved it though, she loved it.

JD: So, you did both compete under different coaches, or head coaches at least, talk a little about who each of your coaches were. Maybe you would start, Mary, and kind of what that coach-athlete relationship was like for you.

ML: So, our head coach was Ron Ludwig and then we had assistant coaches Brian Lee and Jackie Johnson, and then Jill Hicks was Jill Joree then, who coached Joy. She came in as an athlete the same year as I did, so we're the same age, same class. And she had an injury, so then she started coaching, and so she did coaching a little bit too, so those were our coaches. I'd say one coach that I had a really special relationship with was Brian Lee, and he coached the tumbling, which was my best event, and so he taught me everything from being able to do a layout to two double backs in my routine and winning the national championship on that event. So, Brian was the coach that would stay there till we were very, the last done, do the extra, you know, and so that was really, he was really instrumental in my success, I felt like. Well, all of them were. That was, that stands out.

JP: So, Jim Turpin, and I think it was his first year. I don't remember if it was first year or second year. Like I said, everybody was new, Dick Foyal, it was his first year, and then Jill was our— and they were all just super passionate about the sport and had been in the sport for a really long time, and I think Jim had just come from a club atmosphere and in college, so it was new for him. And then it was almost like—this is going to sound so weird—Jim Turpin and Dick Foyal, it was almost like a marriage because Jim's really passionate and a little bit high strung and then you have Dick Foyal over here who's just, I mean I never saw that man get, I mean maybe a little bit at the rental car place.

[0:40:34]

ML: A little irritated.

JP: Yeah, a little irritated. You know what I mean? He was always so calming and it's just what I needed because I've come into this new territory, all these people, like what you were saying, are learning how to do to all this, and he would just be like "Joy," every time, he was just calm, even, you always knew what to expect, and yeah, he's the one that taught me new skills on bars, and—because I never really tried to new skills, so learned a ton with him. And he would watch videos with me and he'd, you know, I'd always stop by his office, even just to say hi between classes, and "oh, I got a new

video, come, let's check this out." We'd sit and watch videos together. Just a very dear man, and he's still super passionate about the sport. Yeah, good friend.

JD: And it's very physical, I know you both had injuries, sometimes perhaps those were ones that you could perform through and compete with and sometimes they weren't and sometimes they needed surgery, talk about just kind of that tough side of the sport and how you handled that.

ML: I was really fortunate in that I never had to miss a meet for an injury. I really didn't have injuries. I had back problems, as far as I just wasn't, I wasn't in the sport very long and I would always say to myself I wasn't very flexible. The normal, for a normal person I was probably just very flexible, but for a gymnast that wasn't my strength. I was really very strong and powerful but flexibility—so my back, just, and my shoulders, weren't really very flexible, so that gave me some troubles. But the training facilities, again coming to college and having those—that athletic training facility and athletic trainers that worked with you every single day, they were at every practice and they helped you and they taped you and they told you "stop" when you were supposed to stop, and it was just tremendous. I mean, that is another thing about college athletics. That is really a huge advantage and really great. So, and again, all that whole part of athletics for women and men too, but that whole, the whole training facilities has just grown so much and advanced. But we still had a full time trainer that was with us and really was really helpful. So, I had accidents, but I was very blessed as far as not having injuries.

JP: Yeah, me too. I mean, I had to have my knee scoped and that was like, that was like not the best, but it was right during season, the beginning of season. I can't remember what year it was, but seriously, when they discovered I needed to have a scope, they did it with, I don't know, MRI or something like it, I had surgery scheduled the next day and I was competing in two weeks. Because of the trainers and just all, I was just like this, [snaps fingers] it was awesome. We were so well taken care of. But I was, again, like Mary, very fortunate I didn't have a lot—I mean we definitely had bumps and bruises and stuff.

ML: Yeah, and definitely sore every day.

JP: But like the four athletes that we started with, two, let's see, Shannon and Linda were on medical scholarships due to back injuries and Jamie had hurt her ankle. And—do you remember that? And so she had become a vault specialist. And so, so yeah, it was a strong reality in our gym, just because of the sport, but I was super fortunate.

JD: And, I mean we kind of touched on this before, but were there, you know, was there a routine or a meet or something that you remember just kind of like it was yesterday, that something really clicked or something really special happened that you can recall? And maybe many of them were special. You know, this is from a kind of a non-athlete asking that question.

[0:45:05]

ML: Oh, two kind of come to mind. One was my junior year. We were just rolling, we were just, our team was just really, just a special year, and we were at regionals at Washington State and we were just nailing everything, and we got to beam and I went to do my beam routine and it was just one of those beam routines that was just like, you're just, I was just in the zone. It was like perfect. We didn't score tens then, they just did not give tens, but I just nailed my beam routine. I stuck my dismount, everything, it was like perfect, and I got a 9.85, and I was like "this is just amazing," I was so excited. I mean, it felt so good, it was like perfect routine. I didn't wobble. Laurie Carter gets up after me and goes 9.9. I was so mad! She had a perfect routine. It was perfect. She won the national championship that year on beam. But anyway, that was, but that was a special moment, because I just remember that beam routine felt really great, and then she beat me. Terrible.

JD: So, you can actually sort of feel it and experience it while it's happening?

ML: Yes, you know that like, you're on. And especially beam. Well, bars too.

JP: I couldn't with bars. I had a bar struggle. I couldn't.

JD: Well, and it is, it is so interesting, because the scoring in that sport, as well as some others, you know, its tenths and hundredths of a second or points that make the different between, you know sometimes, first and seventh place. It's miniscule.

ML: Yeah. And then they could only—the scoring's really changed a lot, but then they could only take a half a tenth. So you either scored a 9.8 or a 9.85 or a 9.9, or... You couldn't go, yeah, a 9.25 or whatever.

JP: Yeah.

ML: So that, and that beam routine and then I think winning the national championship, of course, was really exciting. And I did not hit a perfect routine, but in that year, your scores were counted from both days.

JP: Oh.

ML: Yeah. So, the first day was all the teams and then if you made finals your score from the first day carried over. And so I had a lead going into the second day and I didn't hit a perfect routine, but I had enough cushion that I still won. So, just to celebrate that at the end and actually win it was really exciting.

JP: I remember freshman year, and the first half of freshmen year was bumpy, and then things started to click. And the whole, our whole team was excited because the coaches had set these, I think it was 189.89 or something like that, as a team score, that the team scored, which is hilarious now, because you wouldn't even, we wouldn't qualify for anything if you got a team score like that now. It goes 189 or 180—now you have to be like 196 or something like yet, you know. And we were achieving all these records and all these goals, the whole team and it was really exciting. We were so fresh, and so many freshman on the team and we had made nationals and so that was super thrilling, this new, brand new program progressing, and I had made finals on floor, which floor, which is kind of funny, I have to say it, it floored everybody because I had such a bumpy year, you know, they're kind of like "okay." And so I made finals on floor and the cool—I still remember this, like you were saying—because I'm warming up for floor and I look around and there's like ex-Olympians there, there's national team members, everybody that I dreamed of competing—not everybody, there were so many athletes there that I had dreamed only to compete with and I was on the floor with them. I remember like going over and it's Kim, remember Kim? Tall, from UCLA, African American?

ML: Yeah, and what was her name?

JP: I want to say Anthony, something like that.

ML: An—no, not Kim Andrews—

JP: Oh, Jill Andrews, yeah.

ML: Jill Andrews.

JP: So, they're all on floor and I would just go stand next to them and be like "I'm standing next them!" and just being like "oh my gosh." The only time I've been unfocused was like that warm up where I totally remember just being like "I just tumbled right behind her!" I'd look over at Jill and be like "look at me!" and I'm like "oh my gosh."

ML: Yeah, it's exciting.

[0:49:58]

JP: And I end up taking second, and even though like I had—after that I won stuff, that second place is like, everyone was just like "wow." I mean, first time I became All American, I'm like "I became an All American, that's crazy." I was just, I just remember that it was just a super sweet achievement. It was small in some ways to what was to come, but I just remember being like "wow, this is what I wanted to do, this is cool." And I feel like I just grew from that, right after that, you know, as a competitor.

ML: That's great.

JP: And so, you both did have illustrious careers there and you know, accolades came along the way, as you're commenting, but also some kind of years after you left the sport, either being in the OSU Hall of Fame or the Oregon Sports Hall of Fame, can you recount a little about hearing that you'd been selected and perhaps the induction ceremonies?

ML: Well, the, I always get a warm feeling in my heart because, for the Oregon, the State of Oregon Sports Hall of Fame, good friend Paul Valenti who, my husband and I sat in front of Paul and Fran and Jimmy and Fifi Anderson for years at football games, every, probably for about five years, Paul would say to me "I voted for you, kid! I voted for you for the Sports Hall of Fame!" And I never got enough votes and finally when I got enough votes I had to thank Paul for voting for me all those years.

JP: Aww, that's sweet.

ML: And so I always think of Paul when I think of that award. So, it was really an honor to get both of those Hall of Fames and to be able to, I don't know, I just didn't think of my—I don't think of myself as that kind of an athlete. The award ceremony too, with Bill Schonely, a long-time Oregon legend, was really fun. I had fun to be a part of that.

JP: Yeah, I think you really, it's those two opportunities really give you—you get to really understand your—more of your experiences and what the gifts that you were given through Oregon State and athletics and things like that. Because you get to see, you get to actually sit back and kind of think about it and be like amazed at, you know, because we kind of just go on with life and those were two opportunities for me where I was just really kind of stunned by it all. And I remember—do you remember, you, yes, the Oregon State Hall of Fame, yeah I had just gotten married and so it was exciting because I got to bring my husband and share Oregon State with him, and we're sitting at the banquet table and Mary says to me "you know you have to speak, you have to share some memories," and I was like "what? They didn't tell me that!" She goes "yeah, you're going to ha—" I was like, I was like "oh!" I was so lame. I get up there, I'm like "thank you very much," and that was like it. I don't even remember, I just—

ML: I think you did better than that.

JP: I said "thank you, thank you, thank you," and that was about it, so I was like this is not what I do. I don't, you know, I had been out of—especially had been out of that you know, like away from Oregon State in a whole other world and I just remember think—sitting at the banquet table and you whispering "did you, did you know you were going to have to speak?" "What?" There was this huge, I mean the whole, huge crowd.

ML: Yeah.

JP: And they're all just, and they don't, I get the impression you just get up there, I mean they have just all smiles, they just love Oregon State, they love, I just, I don't know, neat atmosphere to be a part of.

ML: When you're in the midst of your athletic career, you're not thinking of what you're doing. I think, most often, you're just so focused on every practice, every day, trying to get better, and it's just you don't think. So, I think years later when these kinds of awards come, it is kind of shocking. You don't expect it.

JP: Yeah.

JD: And how did—so you two weren't competing at the same time, how did the two of you get to know each other?

ML: I was volunteer coaching at the time, I think, when Joy came as a freshman. I was teaching second or third grade in Lebanon and at Cascades School, and Joy came, what year did you come?

JP: '87, '88.

ML: '87, '88, so I coached for two years and then when my son David was born in 1990, then I stayed home and started doing the, more of the floor manager side of Oregon State gymnastics. So, that's how we met, because I coached Joy a little bit and she just—

JP: And then she—

ML: Much Joy.

JP: And she was always good too, she'd always like kind of coach me on life too, it was good. "Mary, I can't do it." "Come on over tonight, we'll talk about it."

ML: That's good.

[0:55:25]

JD: And so, with anything like this, and perhaps earlier with something as physical as gymnastics, at some point you have to decide "this is it." Can you talk just a little about making that decision or knowing when that was going to be your last competition and there would be no more?

JP: Oh. I think that, I think that's a hard transition because, especially in our sport, it's so encompassing. It's who you are. I'm Joy, I'm a gymnast, you know, like that's how you were introduced. And so, and then when you graduate it's, there's, I mean I think I kind of had this year of just in a lull of like "well, I'm not Joy the gymnast, then what am I," you know? And I think that is a big transition for college, especially gymnastics. I mean probably a lot of other sports too, if you don't have that professional aspect to run into, but, sorry, what do you think?

ML: Other sports you can kind of play, like you can do a pick-up basketball game or play flag football or—I mean it's not the same, obviously it's not the same. In gymnastics you can't really play it.

JP: You can't even play it.

ML: I mean, you can do it a little bit, I still teach gymnastics classes at Oregon State and I can, I mean my students are amazed that I can do handstands and cartwheels, but you could do that but you can't really compete. I mean, you could, but yeah, it's just yeah, you pretty much, college gymnastics; there are a few that have gone on and done national team things after, or towards the end in college gymnastics.

JP: Very few. I mean I can think on like one hand how many there actually.

ML: There aren't very many. They're—one thing, their body can do the training level that they have to do, but yeah, it's definitely a transition. You have to try to find other things that you enjoy doing. It's not ever going to be the same as gymnastics, though. Nothing is really like gymnastics.

JP: And that whole team that you got to experience in college is so precious that you don't really have. Even though you just laugh, like trying to do different sports. Like I was sharing, like with my boys and stuff like that. And then you start to you know, have an ache and a pang like "where's my trainer?" I'm still like that. "Where's my trainer? Oh, I miss my trainer." Even though it's been like twenty-five years, I'm like "where's my trainer, I wish she was still here," you know. And then you're just, you just don't have anything like it. It's such a special, a special four years that you're given.

JD: So, I have one kind of wrap-up question, but are there other recollections that you have from your time being at OSU or in the gymnastics program that I haven't asked you about that you want to make sure get captured here?

JP: I can't think of anything. I'm sure we will as soon as you turn the—as soon as we stop. "Oh, I should have talked about that." I can't think of anything. It's been good.

JD: Well, after we do the last question and I turn it off, if you think of it, the on button will go back on.

JP: Okay.

ML: Okay.

JD: Well, and I guess I wanted to, you know my final question was just, you did both mention you were the beneficiaries, whether really knowledgeable or not, of Title IX, and I guess if you had any final thoughts about sort of what being able to be an athlete and being able to compete, kind of how you think that's changed you or shaped you, both then and up till today.

ML: Well, I guess it has changed me, as far as just, and I guess I was thinking about this when you asked that closing question. When I came to Oregon State, thinking about my character and my own faith, walk and journey, and how that was developed through college and bible studies, and that's one of the things that Joy and I did together as a team. Learning about, as a whole person, where, where what I believe, how I want to live my life spiritually and then ethically, physically, you know, fitness-wise, how do I want to live, I think college athletics, especially at Oregon State for me, really did a lot to pour into me and in myself as a woman of god and as a woman of Oregon State, if you want to say it that way, as a wife, as a mother, I think all of the things that I was able to experience at Oregon State and as an athlete there and all of the people that poured into me and my professors, my coaches, my teammates, it really impacted me for the positive. And how do I live my life now and how do I want to give and how do I give back to Oregon State in different things I've been involved with there. I feel like I could never really give back enough to Oregon State and everything that I gained from the people that were good to me, and how just my education there and becoming a teacher and a coach and even teaching at Oregon State and coaching at Oregon State now has been really instrumental in making me the person that I am today. They don't really, they can't really come apart. Oregon State and Mary Ayotte-Law don't really come apart. They're just kind of together.

JP: I don't know if I can top that, that was well said. I can, can I say I agree, I feel the same way? No, it does, it really, I do feel like at that time I really formed because of people like Mary and Jill and people I met there. I remember the Irvings and all these people that just make you feel special and important and significant, and you think "well, maybe I do have something to offer the world," and I felt like there is where I finally got a glimpse of that. So...no, I can't top Mary. That was perfect, well said.

JD: That's great. Both well spoken. And I thank you both for taking time to record these wonderful memories of yours.

JP and MP: Thank you.

[1:02:10]