



Marianne Vydra Oral History Interview, May 27, 2015

Title

“Leading Women's Athletics in the Modern Era”

Date

May 27, 2015

Location

Valley Library, Oregon State University.

Summary

In the interview, Vydra discusses her upbringing in Missouri, her early interests in sports, her participation on the volleyball team at Southwest Missouri State University, and her academic progression as an undergraduate. From there, she recalls her shift to graduate studies at the University of Maine, her experiences as an academic counselor during that time, and her decision to accept a similar position at Oregon State University.

Reflecting on her initial impressions of OSU, Vydra speaks of the dilapidated facilities and shoestring budgets that pervaded the Athletic Department during the early 1990s. She then emphasizes the arrival of Mitch Barnhart as Athletic Director as a turning point for improving intercollegiate athletics at OSU. From there, Vydra focuses her attention on the evolution of women's athletics during her career, remarking on how her own background in athletics has shaped her interactions with student athletes and noting mentors who helped guide her along her path.

Vydra next provides details of her advancement at OSU. She describes her initial position as an academic counselor as well as the circumstances by which she was promoted to Senior Women's Administrator. She also outlines her service to multiple NCAA and PAC-10 committees over the years, reflects on the impact that her collaborations with other female administrators have made upon her own work, notes her involvement with OSU's Leadership Institute, and shares her memories of the creation of the Beavers Without Borders service initiative. Vydra likewise discusses her leadership style, her contacts with various OSU presidents, her memories of Bob De Carolis, and the many changes that have come about since the creation of the PAC-12 conference.

As the session nears its end, Vydra speaks of past celebrations marking the implementation of Title IX, notes her work in creating two endowed scholarships for female athletes at OSU, and reflects on the great progress made by the women's basketball program. The interview concludes with Vydra's thoughts on change at OSU and her hopes for the future direction of the Athletic Department.

Interviewee

Marianne Vydra

Interviewer

Janice Dilg

Website

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

Transcript

Janice Dilg: Okay, so if you would like to introduce yourself, please.

Marianne Vydra: My name's Marianne Vydra, I'm the senior associate athletic director and senior woman administrator at Oregon State University. I work in the Athletic Department.

JD: And I am Janice Dilg, interviewer for the OSU Sesquicentennial Oral History Project. Today is May 27th, 2015 and we are in the Valley Library filming this interview. Welcome.

MV: Thank you.

JD: If you would begin I guess at the beginning and just talk a little about where you were born, a little bit about your early family life.

MV: I was actually born in Cleveland, Ohio, and my dad was a salesman for Simplex Time Recorder, so we moved around quite a bit, ended up in Springfield, Missouri at the time with five sisters. So I'm the oldest of six. Grew up in Springfield, went Kickapoo High School; I actually went to high school with Brad Pitt, and then did very well in high school, but at the time, it was real interesting, our counselors at the high school, they thought I would be best off going to Southwest Missouri State, which I did and I had no problem going there. All my friends went there. I was a science major and I played sports in high school; I played sports, I always was real active as a young person and ended up playing sports in high school and then in college.

I tried out for the volleyball team, and luckily the coach, she tolerated me, so I got to stay around the team and work out and played some games and stuff like that, low-level games, and kind of bumbled my way through college. But at the time I was paying for it on my own; I didn't care. It was, probably cost a hundred and fifty dollars a semester, right? And then I would work enough jobs to make—camps and jobs—to make three thousand for the summer. I'd quit my job when school started and then not have to work all year. My rent was a hundred dollars a month, paid for school. And it's too bad that young people can't go to college that way anymore, because I mean you kind of make some of your lifelong friends in college that way, and certainly that was my experience; had a lot of fun, probably didn't go to as much classes what I should have, but got out of there with a degree in biology with a minor in physics.

And that was due to my asking the dean of students, who saved me, she's at Northern Arizona, Sarah Bickel, and she said "the quickest way out of here is you need to get your degree in biology and minor in physics." I'm like "yes ma'am," and I got that done probably in the course of a semester or two. But then, right at that point it was like "what do you want to be when you grow up?" So I was a little bit older, because I took longer to get through college, probably twenty-five or twenty-six at the time, and I had the opportunity to key out all the red algae in Missouri and be a phycologist, or—they were going to pay for my grad school and I would stay in Springfield—or I could start an academic services project for the athletes, the female athletes in the athletic department at the time. I was programming computers for recruiting and keeping the coaches organized on a bunch of different fronts, so they thought I could organize something for the student athletes. And so what I tell everybody is I chose—it was like people or algae, people or algae, and I chose people.

So, I did that for one year and freaked out. I got it all—all the organizational stuff was easy but the people part was a little bit hard for me, because there's a lot of conflict. And at the time and at that age, I don't think that I had the skillset to really deal with that conflict. So I sought master's degree programs to kind of deal with—I opted toward pieces that would help me understand how college students develop as young people. I didn't know it even was a career path, but started looking into it, applied to a lot of schools, and actually I chose the one that was the furthest away from Springfield Missouri. That's how I made my decision. I knew I had to get out of there. I was the queen of road trips, so it wasn't anything for us to go take a car, drive to Colorado, go skiing on the weekend—that's a twelve hour trip—and come back. So, that was a bit dangerous and I just figured I just need to get out.

So I chose the University of Maine, or it chose me. I actually got the job—I didn't know I had the job. They offered me the assistantship, I wasn't back in Springfield yet on the Greyhound bus and my boss said "oh, you're going to Maine," I go "oh, I am, okay." So I go up to Maine, work with—I asked my boss, who was really great, Margaret Szilu [?]. She understood the business enough to know that I had to have a well-rounded experience, and she paired me with men's ice

hockey and men's basketball student athletes. I was their academic counselor, talked with them about how classes were going, what they needed to do to succeed. And—

JD: So you're doing this while you're doing school as well.

MV: Going to grad school, correct. So yes, that was a crazy time. We would have study hall from seven to ten at night and then I actually would, we would go out with the coaches till about one in the morning and I would come back in seven in the morning and do it again. You can do a lot when you're young. But I had a really—that was a really fun time of my life, partly because you're figuring out who you are away from your family and all that kind of stuff, so it's the same stuff what college students go through. I think I was a bit delayed because I had it so easy in Springfield. So that's shaved how I talked to our student athletes here, because of my experience.

[0:05:34]

So, I got that degree, applied for jobs, and then again really based my choices on geography. I knew I didn't want to be in the middle, and I had made a promise to myself that I would visit every single state in the union by the time I was thirty, and I had almost done that at that point in time. There's like North Dakota, South Dakota, there was a few up there I hadn't hit. So I knew where I didn't want to be. I was in my older twenties, so I figured anywhere where there are mountains or oceans, good enough for me. So Oregon State; did an interview, they brought me out, I think it was a hundred and four degrees. And I struggled with accepting the job because I had just come from the University of Maine and the facility there reminded me—were somewhat better than the facilities we had at OSU.

When they took me around I was like wow, because the University of Maine was Division I-AA and Oregon State was Division I, so I'm thinking okay. And my Division I experience had been going to a football game at Tennessee, or where was the other one we traipsed to; Arkansas, because it's so close to where I grew up. Maybe Oklahoma State, too. And so I thought oh, it's going to be big time, and it really wasn't. It was kind of small, I had concerns. But it wasn't just about facilities; I mean it was that I was going to be a one-person show in an Academic Services Program for five hundred student athletes. Past my boss it was just going to be me. And I knew I had done that at Maine and we had a smaller group of student athletes, so I'm like wow, okay that's going to be a lot of work. But not afraid of it but just I did enough research to understand that we should probably have more staff than that.

But anyway, through convincing, cajoling, I packed up everything I had on the Greyhound bus and moved out and showed up August 15th or 19th, one of those two days, 1992. And then I promised myself I would do it five years, and in that five years I saw so much change. The athletic director resigned at the time; I got promoted during all that change, and we at some point or other—I forgot when Mitch Barnhart got here from Tennessee, but he came onboard and then he set the tone, I think. I call his tenure "giving us the paddles," the tone for what Division I is really supposed to be like. And—

JD: So before you go into the changes that Mitch and you and the university brought about, talk a little about—a little bit more about what it was like when you came to OSU. When you talk about the facilities being less than you were used to, describe that a bit more.

MV: So Reser Stadium did not have—I forget, it doesn't, you know that big, I call it the north side, everyone calls it maybe the east side or the west side, but the new space, that wasn't there. It was something much smaller that went down into a hill, and it reminded me a lot of the University of Maine. And I started asking questions like "how many people go to football games here?" Really low numbers, similar to what happened at Maine. At Maine, ice hockey was king and football was their second tier thing. And I asked questions like "do people just get in free to games?" "Oh yeah, they let people in free." That's what we did at Maine; to get people there we would let them in free.

And not—so that part was interesting. Gill, I remember Gill, oh my gosh; they had this army, it looked like army-issued green seats in Gill, probably because they were not expensive when they first built it, but it really looked like some kind of military operation in there. The green was hideous and I couldn't figure out why we would ever have green in a venue when we're, you know, I knew the Ducks were green. So I just thought that was interesting. And we had carpet, there was this brown carpet on the wall in Gill and it made it look like a dungeon. Really, it was really depressing. Great windows and everything, but a great historic building just really in shambles.

[0:09:58]

And probably at the time the best facility, they showed me the gymnastics facility; they had just maybe acquired that, the Gladys Valley Center here on campus. That, at the time; very, very nice. The other thing that was pretty nice was the baseball field. So, you don't have, historically, you don't have baseball fields in the middle of campus like that. So OSU's is very special. So the baseball field I remember being kind of cool. And then the softball field was a wreck. The softball field was out by the railroad tracks; it had a tree, I remember a tree hanging over left, third base, left field and it was kind of out-of-bounds. But I found out they used to call it, what's that game, Plinko or whatever? When that ball was there [mimics ball bouncing between branches] in the tree. I mean, it would be dead but I mean there was a tree, and I'm like okay, this is PAC-10 at the time, I'm like okay. And no mechanism to take tickets or anything, it was just open seating, you just go out there. It didn't feel that much removed from Maine or a high school venue, to be honest with you. That was a major, major concern for me.

And then what else...those are the main ones. I didn't get to see the crew docks and what those were like. Oh soccer, soccer I don't remember that we had a home except for maybe behind Peavy Auditorium. There was a field back there and I think they practiced on that a little. But I would come to find out that our men's soccer coach was only on a halftime contract; women's softball, she was only halftime, or paid very, very little. And just to hear kind of where we were positioned with respect to salary and access to equipment and those kind of things, after I took a job I learned all that. I was like wow, we got a way to go there.

But we scrapped it, you know. The students were always great, they'd come here and they'd fight hard, you know, God bless them. The only thing that we seemed to win at, though, was—we did okay in rowing but we did well in gymnastics and wrestling and everything else just kind of stumbled along the best that they could. So, when Mitch got here I call it "giving the paddles" with Bob. You know, all the sudden what you see is you see a fulltime men's soccer coach, you see a fulltime women's soccer—or sorry, you see scholarships in women's soccer. We didn't have those. You see scholarships in women's rowing, we didn't have those. We went from zero to twenty scholarships overnight, just because they were going to do it right. We had student athletes sleeping on the road, four to a hotel, and Mitch is like "none of that, one to a bed, two to a room." Big adjustments like—but that's the way our competitors traveled. You just can't have any of that.

JD: And how did you make that—I'm assuming you and Mitch were a team, or even more people on the team, how did you make that come about?

MV: Oh, I think—well at the time, so I was still young in my career, I don't know that I was involved in all of those seminal conversations, but what Mitch was really good at was convincing people this is what; we need your support financially if we're going to compete at Division I. He was really good at messaging that, and what we didn't have and where it needed to be. And I think that got people jazzed about being competitive and investing in a program. So the other thing that was coming about during that time was the internet was so new—I just forget all about this—so then you have internet exposure, you can't hide anymore, but it was really good. He made some really good hires with some of our coaches that were able to breathe some success in the program, especially football.

And Dennis was here for—Dennis Erickson was here for a short time but he was also a person who gave it the paddles. He's like, you know, got us to the Fiesta Bowl and that changed everybody's—people thought we just couldn't win here. I mean, when you have a losing football season for twenty-nine seasons—that was the other piece, the mentality—and we are just climbing out of that—of "we can't win here," with everybody onboard. So that mentality was the hardest thing to shake and it's been the hardest thing to shake, and I think Mitch did a good job at framing the conversation. He was like "you know, we can win here. This is a wonderful place. Look at Corvallis, look how pretty it is." So when people come here, it's really hard for them to leave and they tend to come back.

JD: And you probably first got involved in college sports around the time that Title IX was coming in.

MV: Yes.

JD: And by the time you came to OSU it was really starting to hit its stride. It had taken a while for things to get going. And you're talking about Mitch making sure there were some scholarships for women athletes.

MV: Oh, yeah.

JD: Talk about kind of what women's athletics was like, in particular, when you arrived, and how that started to change.

[0:15:08]

MV: Well, I think the facilities for one. I mean, so the easy things like finding money for scholarships for the women, that's easy. You get your women's soccer up to fourteen, you get your women's rowing up to twenty, that's a thirty-four scholarship swing. My sense is men's soccer didn't have their compliment. So, the NCAA has a limit on scholarships; we are below limits on a lot of our Olympic sports. I don't know all of them, but Mitch goes "no, we're going to have all of our scholarships funded." So that gives you a recruiting advantage when you can go out and take a scholarship to some parents and a young person, say "hey, we can pay for your school." He changed that right away.

And then we started investing in facilities. So, I remember with softball when we built the Truax Indoor Center there was leveraging piece that because we displaced the softball field that there was funding to build a new one where it is over across Western. So, that all happened in one fell swoop, which was kind of cool. You saw an investment in the soccer fields out by softball, so there's a complex out there. And then you fast-forward to 2005, 2006, Mitch is now gone, Bob's here, well we're going to add women's cross-country and indoor track, and now we just build a track. So, the opportunity for women here has expanded exponentially since I first arrived in 1992. It's been unbelievable.

And I'm very proud of the fact that we have a Title IX review every year and we sit down with the Title IX officer on campus and we go through all of our numbers and all of our facilities, and it's just so nice to be in the place that we're at. You know, very compliant with respect to participation rates, scholarships, and then all the other things that fall out from there. So, that piece I'm really proud of. And I haven't had to do a lot of cajoling or telling anyone; it's just that Mitch and Bob came here and that was the right thing to do, and that's what they did. So it's been easy for me.

JD: So as an athlete yourself, how do you think that's shaped how you've dealt with student athletes?

MV: I think, so there's, it's an interesting space to be in now too, because now we're on the flipside where coaches get paid five million dollars a year, some of them, football coaches; and student athletes, they have everything. I mean, they really do. And I remember we were just talking about how I used to drive a van to volleyball matches, because I was one of the authorized drivers. Well, you would never put a student athlete behind a wheel right now, in these days and times. We try to avoid it. There are a few times where it's necessary, but it's extremely rare. And one or two of my teammates had scholarships, but we were all there because we wanted to be there.

And I mean what you see now is, unfortunately, you see some students now once they get the scholarship they feel like they made it and now "I don't really have to work, because I have the scholarship." And I've seen that a lot in the last five years. It's a little disheartening, but it's the minority of young people, and more-so on the women's side. So I've had to struggle through that, without getting too preachy. It's like this is Division I, this is the highest, elitist level, there's only three hundred schools at this level and you're in one of the top sixty-five, and there's only so many spots and you have one. And we frame it like that so that they understand that, for instance, in women's basketball at this elite level where there are sixty-five schools, there's probably only four scholarships available at each school, so you talk two hundred and forty opportunities at the highest level every year. You have one, what are you going to make of it? And so that's how we frame the discussion with the students.

It seems to help a little bit, anyway, to make them understand. It's like "whoa." I'm like "yeah, you've arrived, you've made it." And we tell the parents that too. It's like "look, your son or daughter has made it, whether you go to Oregon State or Oregon or Stanford or Cal, to compete at this level, at this highest level in the United States, it's a gift and they, you know, we appreciate that they would treat it like that." So that's how I shape my conversations now. It's just, you know it's hard because I feel like, I mean when I played it was like you could not kick me out of the gym. I was one of those, and I had to prove myself. If we were going to run a fifteen minute two-mile, I was going to run a twelve and I was going to lap all my peers.

Because this is what I talk to our student athletes about; you figure out what you're really good at and you stay really good at it. So for me it was about being really fast in a sport that you don't need to be fast or run that far, but that was a

test, so I was going to show everybody that you can do this in twelve minutes. And then for volleyball it was about, for me, the serve, serving part of volleyball. That's something you can control, so I just never missed. And so that's how I frame everything with student athletes. I'm like "you have an opportunity; what can you control? And just get really good, become an expert at whatever that is and whatever you're doing. So, that's how I kind of shape my discussions.

[0:20:09]

JD: And did you have mentors that were helping you develop those attitudes and work ethics?

MV: I did, I didn't realize it at the time though. It's like one of those times where you're just a kid at eighteen, nineteen, twenty, and you're a mess. You step away and then you realize when you get older. I did, I had—and it was really funny because I found a t-shirt last night that I went to a celebration back in Springfield, Missouri. Dr. Mary Jo Wynn, who was the women's athletic director, was there—she's still alive and well; she plays bridge with my mother, poor old thing—and my volleyball coach, Linda Dollar, and the women's basketball coach at the time, Cheryl Burnett. Cheryl's been a real driving force in my career. She's really kept up with me, as she does with all of her people that have been around her.

So it's just kind of cool how the network works. There's a basketball coach by the name of Charity Elliott, she is the head coach of women's basketball down at LMU, and so it's nice to be able to reach out to her. We're all the same kind of family. You don't realize that network and what that does for you in times when you need. It's pretty cool to be able to call up on it and reach on it. So yes, definitely had some awesome mentors. And then Patti when I get—Patti Drapela and Robyn Sharp, I consider them mentors as well, and probably Bob, as much as anybody, because he's been here the longest. So that's what I'd say.

JD: And for your predecessors like Patti and Robyn, did they have sort of different perspectives of women's athletics in the institution, just being here at an earlier time period and kind of being more of that transition, that they ever voiced to you?

MV: Robyn would voice some things to me occasionally, but I think she was in a position, too, where she didn't want to, I don't want to say protect me; she didn't want to take me to whatever struggle she was dealing with. Patti was a bit more outspoken about them, but at the time, I mean the environment was such if you spoke out, there were ramifications, and you weren't as protected. Today it's like there's no retaliation. Any retaliation it's like the institution's done. So, I feel blessed that I'm in a different space than they were, but I do think they had their challenges when they were here at—and Robyn was a player, she played basketball, she was a coach, she was assistant coach with Aki Hill and then she was an administrator. She's the only one that can claim that on the women's side. So it's pretty cool. I forget, and it's fun to remind her of it. She's kind of really humble but it's kind of a cool thing. You know, she belongs to this institution more than I do. She was a student athlete here. That's what we tell our student athletes: "this is not where I went to school; this is your school, make of it what you will. I will help facilitate that, but all of us as administrators and coaches, we move on. It's all the students." And she's one of them.

JD: So, you come here in 1992 as an academic counselor.

MV: Yes.

JD: Talk a little about what that job entailed. You've mentioned that you had quite a number of student athletes that you were kind of jumping into the deep end of the pool with.

MV: Yes. So my job was to run study hall and organize all the tutors, and there were five hundred—might have been at the time, maybe there were four hundred student athletes, because we didn't have track. So maybe there were four hundred. And I had two or three grad assistants part time, young people helping me. They may show up to work and they may not, depended. I didn't get to choose them. But when I got here it was kind of a challenge because I didn't have relationships with them. So I had to immediately forge all these relationships with all these new people, all the coaches, all those coaches, and get them to trust my system and what we were going to do. So it was challenging being the only person there for the first two or three years.

And then I got to hire a learning specialist, and she was great because she could test the student athletes for learning disabilities and really, we were like, we were like slice and dicing. We could talk to a student for five minutes and kind

of what was going on with them; just consult and say okay, this is what we need to do, boom boom boom. And I missed, when she was done, I missed having someone like that as a resource on staff. She and I were so good together. So, that happened probably about, I think, when Mitch came. He let me hire a learning specialist, and then more counselors, and I was just, maybe because I was young, I didn't care, I just worked. I would come in at seven in the morning and we would get done at ten-thirty at night and I would do that day in and day out, and I loved it. So, I just made the best of it. Yep.

[0:25:05]

JD: And you've commented that it was a much smaller department, and did you just sort of try things? Or how did—was Mitch your first tier boss?

MV: No, it would have been Patti—who was—Mary Alice Stander was my boss. She was in Compliance. Well, she was in the Learning Zone with me and then Robyn moved her over to Compliance, but she was mainly my boss, so she was there nine to five doing all the other work that needed to be done and I would be there with her and then at night I would come in. So, I was shepherding, I mean literally shepherding the tracking of five hundred student athletes with her and then probably shepherding close to a hundred that were at risk. You know, because we'd peel off study hall, I could only have so many in study hall. Our facility for study hall was probably a thousand square feet, I don't know. It was small. No, maybe two thousand square feet. It was really small. It was upstairs in Gill, that's all we had.

And when I got there, there were no computers. There was two. So I'm like "we need to have computers," and luckily somebody found computers and we were able to get computers for all the student athletes, because at Maine, that was the other thing; I had computers for all the student athletes. We had probably a room with twenty of them, and when I got here there were two. So, that was a big change right away, and I told Mary Alice "we need computers," and then all the sudden we have computers.

So, and then there's a professional organization for academic counseling and academic support for student athletes. I was very connected with the national organization, so I had all the best practices in line and all the systems in line and I was a computer programmer, which that helped me. Before we had Banner I was writing algorithms to track the student athletes and their classes and what they were doing. On my own, I would just write a code and do that, and then they came out with Banner, which I thought was great, and then the data warehouse thing, and programming, that I thought that was the coolest thing ever. But I used to do all by hand. I can't believe that now that I'm saying that, but I did. Yep. And that was, I remember email, it was just started when I got here, '92. We had just started it at Maine, and I can remember the blue screen on the computer and the blink, blink, blink, yeah. That was pretty fun. And [in high voice] "stay off!" it was like "stay off email, it's dangerous!"

JD: [Laughs] well, and it was so kind of inner-institutional at that point.

MV: Oh yeah, yeah.

JD: It didn't really go out into the world at that point.

MV: Yes, yes.

JD: So then in '96 you moved into a new role here.

MV: Yes. Is that when Mitch got here?

JD: I had him getting here in '97.

MV: Okay, maybe it was '97. So maybe it was '97. So what happened in '96 is Dutch retired, then we had an interim, Lee Schroeder, for one year. We patched it through that year and the university, that was Paul Risser at the time, went and hired Mitch, and before he hired Mitch I had to go fly out and talk to him. And I was very familiar with Tennessee campus because I have friends there, and I just got on a plane. I said "Mitch, I need to see you, I need to talk to you about some things here at Oregon State," which he may or may not—who knows if he knew about them or not, and I just laid it out. I said "you know, these things we've got to change. We've got to get into the real world. I need a staff, x, y"—I mean that was pretty bold of me for—when I think about it, it makes me scared. It's like why did I do that? But I think at the

time I was pretty fearless. I didn't care if I worked here or not. It had gotten to a point where we either got to do something radically different or I got to go. So I took that chance and I was willing to do it.

And so he came here and through a series of many, many, many conversations, I ended up with the director of Academic Services role and the SWA title, which is the governance title for the NCAA. So then I was able to attend conference meetings, which was interesting, and I think I was probably one of the youngest people in room at the time, scared out of my mind.

JD: And talk a little about what that meant. What happened there?

MV: Okay, so that SWA position?

JD: Or at the conferences and kind of what you had to do.

MV: Yeah, so my head's all study hall and go to class, tutors, so then all the sudden your mind goes whoa, so then—and at the time I didn't have Sport Oversight; I kept Academic Services, but I had these meetings where we went to three or four times a year to discuss things like how much we're going to pay the baseball umpires or what's the rain delay policy for softball, and I was kind of taken aback by those conversations. I'm like really? This is what we discuss at this level? I never knew where any of that information came from. And so here it was. And then the other pieces of the NCAA legislation, which really interested me. So we are able to shape NCAA policy and procedure by those discussions in the room, and that part I really liked a lot.

[0:30:25]

But it was a little intimidating walking into a room of nine of my peers who probably had been there awhile and here I come kind of this kid into the mix, and how do you make all that work? And I was quiet for—I listened a lot for our first year or so, till I got the hang of it. And it was just weird coming back from the meeting we had last week, and I'm not the oldest one in the room but they call me the dean because I've been there the longest now. It's freaky. Right, and you have all these young people coming up. So I make sure the women in the room were as warm, I would say, when I first got there, to me; I had to work myself into. I'm not like that with new people. I'm like "we're in this together," boom. You know, we had a new SWA from Arizona State, a new SWA at Utah and we just grabbed them. I'm like "you guys are part of us," because I will never treat anyone like I was treated when I first got here.

So that's what I learned. So why do you got to be like that? We're all in this together; yeah we compete against each other, but that's the fun of it and the comradery of it. You know, I'm texting with the SWA at U of O; they're down in my alma mater at Springfield Missouri where I think we should be. It's just kind of cool. So those little connections. So that opened my world up. So then, what happens there is you get placed on committees, you meet other people, your network goes like this [spreads arms wide]. And then I got placed on NCAA committees and my first one—and I stuck my foot in it—was softball. And this shows my age: "oh, you're going to be on the NCAA softball committee." I'm like "okay." "Well, you're going to have fun because Joan Joyce is on the committee." Me, being in my thirties somewhere, I said "well who's Joan Joyce?" Well, wrong thing to say. She's like the legend of softball. And she's on my text messages now, but she, if you Google her, she is softball. So everyone kind of looked at me, it's like "ohh, we're sending her to Oklahoma City?" It worked out, it worked out.

And I made great friends across the country through those committees. So I worked softball, soccer, and I'm now on the gymnastics committee, and it's just been fascinating to meet all those people. So that piece—and their world's changed now too, with the new governance process and what we're doing, so I'm really, right now, really involved in a piece where we're integrating student athletes into our council. So, it used to be SWAs, FARs, athletic directors; now we're forming a pod of student athletes that will meet with us during those council meetings twice year, which is totally cool. So that's what I'm charging up right now, and I'm super excited about it.

JD: And so how does your, you know, your network expands, as you say, and how does that translate perhaps back the other direction in how you do your work here at OSU or...

MV: Yeah, so I got, I'm probably an anomaly; I got the position at Maine sight unseen, they interviewed me there; "you got the job." When I came to Oregon State I had no network, but maybe I did and I didn't know. So maybe—see here's

the thing; I just didn't know. I just thought I applied, I interviewed for the job and I got it, but maybe my network was my boss, but they told me they didn't call her. Maybe it was Kevin White, who's now the AD at Duke, but they told me they didn't call him. I don't know who they called on the interview thing, so I feel like I got that job sight unseen, so I'm like you know, you don't need a network. I've done this. Well, the world's changed.

So when I work with student athletes now, we've created a system; we used LinkedIn. Everything's on the internet, it's so great, but we talk to student athletes about their network and who they surround themselves with, that in a way I consider myself a collector of people. I choose people and where I place them in my orbit and where I don't for certain reasons, and it's not always for my good. It may be for somebody else's good. And it's funny, the older you get, the people that you place in your network now, it's for them to help me help these younger people get through the system. So, it changes. I don't need those people as much as we all need each other to help these—to help shape the next conversation, which could be scary at the Division I level. So, it's all—to think about ourselves as mentoring that way, it's just different.

So, through the Leadership Institute, when we're working with our student athletes, we talk about how...I was a dork, I don't know what's the best word, I mean I was immature as a college student, so we talk about that and choices you can make. The good thing when I was messing up, screwing up, there was no internet, there was no twitter or any of that, you could kind of make mistakes in private. But now you can't. I mean you make a mistake and it kind of goes [makes expansive gesture], and so we talk to the student athletes a lot about managing themselves in this world of high alert media and how that shapes them, and really that they need to pay attention to the people around them that care about them. You know, because we have, we have student athletes who some people use them because of what they're going to be.

[0:35:36]

You got to watch out for that; that's a different discussion with some of our folks, but really, really trying to pick out the people that really care about you and can help you do the next thing. So we try to make our students cognizant of that. I mean, besides they're working on their own relationships; they're trying to go to school and they're trying to play ball, and then they have this other piece out here and it's like "you know you are shaping—what you do now is going to impact you when you're forty. So you can chose between getting a 3.0 or a 2.5 or a 4.0, you can choose." I feel like that's a choice.

That's what I tell my students, I go "if you had enough time in calculus you would get an A, but we don't have enough time. Some of you might need years and you would get an A. If we said 'you're in jail until you get an A in calculus,' you would get an A, but you're not up against that wall, right? And we're going through ten weeks of whatever and you do the best you can with what you got, and it's a mess." So, I just tell the students "there are some choices you can make, whether they're fine ones between a 3, a 3.25 or a 3.5, because what you do there is going to launch you to your next thing, your next opportunity, and not all the doors are going to be open if you have a 2.5. If you don't go to class you're going to have a 2.5 and that door and that door and that door is going to be shut, or to get around it your path's going to be like this [indicates maze-like patterns] to get around it, as opposed to straight through it. So you're wasting time." So that's the message I give the student athletes, and that's just based on my own convoluted history when I was a college student.

JD: And as you say, there are young people who are learning a lot, they've got a lot going on, and sometimes things do get away from them, and it's very out in the public world, in the newspapers or whatever. It can't—it has to be dealt with, partly by you, partly by them; how have you come to figure out kind of your strategy, I guess, when things really go negative and uncomfortable?

MV: So my strategy is to get to the student first, and I've had these conversations so many times, unfortunately, but in a good way; they're adults. So we start there. It's like "run me through what you were thinking. Let's start there." And then we start problem-solving. So what happens is usually the student equates what they've done, they go to "I'm a bad person," psychologically that's what they do. So then they hole up and you can't get at the core of what's going on. They don't want to talk to you, they don't want to see, they're embarrassed. So first thing you do is you separate that. "This doesn't make you a bad person. What you did doesn't make—this is a normal thing a college student does, but you have to stop. We got to stop this behavior or it's going to really hurt you going forward. And there's forgiveness; you're eighteen, nineteen, twenty, so people are going to forgive you, up to a certain point."

So we have that conversation and then we deal with "okay, run me through your head about what you were thinking." And usually you find a weak moment, they're under a lot of stress, made a bad decision, especially when you see things that are alcohol and drug related. They're just medicating. So "what is really going on? Talk to me here." And then we can get the root of it and then get them counseling, get them a support group. Sometimes it means sending them home for a little while, then they come back. But sometimes we discover a lot of issues in those conversations.

So I see those as usually opportunities to get to know a student better, and the ones that have really struggled—you know the funny thing about my position now, I used to have students come through a lot all the time, they come through because they're doing extremely well or they're failing extremely bad. So I have the tail ends of the normal curve, and I really enjoy the ones that are struggling the most, because you get to appreciate kind of their background and where they've come from and all that kind of stuff. So I've been able to use those as teachable moments. And when it's wonderful is when you can reach a student like that and you notice that they grow. And the coaches have a big influence on them, but my mantra is "it takes a village." It can't be just a coach. A coach has to approach them from one end because they got to make them perform on the court; we can approach them from a whole other angle that has to do with the whole person; that doesn't get, even though the coaches are about the whole person, the student views that as court time or playing time. It's not the coach that can't get that, it's just the students' perspective, that's what they see. So to have other voices around the table I think is really, really, important.

[0:39:58]

And I've really appreciated one thing of the growth that we have is our men's sports—I told Bob this long ago—traditionally my job as SWA has been to oversee women's sports. That's so limiting, it really is, and I told Bob, I go "I don't want to just oversee women's sports, and our men who oversee sports should not just be overseeing men's sports either. They're missing out, everybody's missing out. That's not how the real world works." And so Bob shuffles it up. Every two or three years he's like "okay, you have this menu of sports, you have this menu of sports." So while I've been here I've overseen I think every single sports program we've had, except for maybe men's golf. That's it. So I've overseen them all. And I'm just saying that because I enjoy my interactions. A lot of people think I'm talking to women a lot; I mostly talk to male student athletes. I would say eighty percent of my time is spent talking to our men, and Twenty percent of the time is talking to women, but in a much different fashion. Women are—they're already kind of focused on where they want to go, what they want to do; the conversation's different, whereas men usually have the identity they're wrapped up in their sport and they haven't thought about some other things and kind of what that means for them, because they're a little bit, they haven't, they need to get on the runway, as I call it. So that's what I try to help with.

JD: And you briefly kind of touched on the Leadership Institute; expand on that a little.

MV: Okay. So when I was working Academic Services, my job, ninety percent of the time, was dealing with students. There's a lot of joy in that. So when you get promoted, then you're dealing with the people that you supervise; there's a layer, and then the next development in my career I was overseeing sports, so that's even another layer. So my interactions day-to-day, from nine to five, what I'm dealing with today was all coaches. All coaches. So there's a colleague of mine who is here, Todd Stansbury, who is very student-centered. He came up through that vein, and we just resonated on a lot of levels.

So we have the Student Athlete Advisor Council, which is great, they meet once every other week and you know, every other month—or twice a month, and that's okay but not—that's a certain subset of students. They're usually high-achieving, have their stuff together, they're great, and they move the needle and they talk about stuff in the department. I wanted a messier interaction. So we created this thing called the Leadership Institute, and Joe Wells, who's passed away now, but he helped me get it started, and we basically picked off students; we said "you're invited, you're invited, you're invited." We talked with the coaches and it was a mix. And it had—we did this rubric based on GPA, race, ethnicity, international, nontraditional, whatever. So we got the rainbow of our student athletes in a room together to talk about leadership and what it means and who they are and why they're on the planet and to spend time that way. And those conversations have been extremely meaningful, to where you get a different hint from the students. And I think that's one thing we do really, really well here. I have other people now helping me with that. And that's where the Beavers without Borders came out. It's Taylor Kavanaugh knew he could come see me with an idea. I'm like "why not? Let's do this thing." So and we go to the Dominican Republic in two weeks. Again.

JD: So expand on, a little more went into Beavers Without Borders than just Taylor walking into your office. So walk us through that a bit.

MV: So Taylor had been part of Engineers Without Borders and just got back from a trip to Guatemala, from Guatemala. He goes "Marianne," he goes "why can't we do a trip of all student athletes? We just did one with all the engineers." I said "that's a great idea." And so I reach across campus to International Programs, and this is at a time, this would have been in 2011; campus was just pivoting about their international strategic pieces and wanted to be more open to all of this and wanted more students. And so this was a prime—so I didn't know the ground was fertile across campus. And Michele Justice, God bless her, she shepherded us through that first trip, but there was a lot of, what do I want to say, bureaucratic hurdles about how students can pay for the trip, fundraising and all of that. We spent that first year just knocking through it, and it was messy.

But we made it and got that first trip launched. I was able to go with that group just to, you know, part of me was worried, but it was fine. And that changed that group of student athletes; now they're still a team and they're mixed. You know, it's football, men's basketball, gymnastics, swimming, they're still a team. They talk to each other, they have this other life. So when you say in college you get some of the best friends of your lives, and I'm sure they have best friends on their team, but I guarantee you the Guatemalan group, they would consider each other another group of people they're probably going to be in touch with the rest of their lives.

[0:45:08]

So yeah, we got that trip off the ground, and then it's gotten easier every year to where I'm interacting with Julie Walkin now over at OSU GO, is what it's called, Global something, and she's asking me how to get this soccer player registered—no, she's helping with that. He came to me, he wants to get on the trip, we're two weeks out, the plane fare's cheap, I'm like "David," I'm like "I think you can get on but go talk to Julie." So she's helping him right now.

JD: And so what are the projects that our students are doing at their locations?

MV: Depended. Guatemala we built houses, in Ethiopia we built houses, in Macedonia we put a roof on a house, in the Dominican Republic we are putting in irrigation systems. So it changes, it depends. And I'm not fully aware of what they're going to do. It changes once they get down there, and we're just open to that. You know it's like okay, we think the project's going to be this, but they go down there and they see a greater need, depending on who shows up, and they'll pivot on the project, which is fine. I don't really care what they do down there as long as they're, you know, tired. Right? At the end of the day? So the projects change, but they're usually physical projects, because the students athletes, they—I tell all my providers, "work 'em. They can work from seven to seven, just work them, because they like to be physically active, and they enjoy it."

JD: And so Taylor, or other students, they walk into your office and they have this idea, kind of how did you develop your leadership style or your receptivity to somebody coming in with an idea and deciding "well yeah, we can make this work?"

MV: Probably because I'm an ideas person, and everybody I've...I've found my most frustrating points have been when I've had an idea and gone to somebody and they're "that'll never work." Well then that's not—that's like then I go into "I'll show you," because Beavers Without Borders started like that. I mean I went to meetings, there's meetings I walked out of because "this is never going to work," and I just got tired of it. And so there is nothing more challenging to me than when someone says "this will never work" or "you can't do this," when I know you can. It's just yeah, it's hard work, who cares? But you can get it done.

So when the students come to me and they have an idea, I'm always open. We walk through the challenge, you know; "Taylor, what about risk management, what about this, what about this? We got to solve these problems." But Taylor is a problem-solver. So when you can partner with someone like that, it makes things go smoother. I've had other students come with ideas, inventions; "here's where you can take that." "Oh, I have this idea for this." So what's really cool right now is kind of just we have our hands a little bit in the startup space, so when students have an idea about an invention or innovation, we know where to take them or where to shepherd them. But I, rarely if a student that I—unless there's going to cause harm to self or somebody else, rarely do I say "oh, that's a bad idea," because you never know. I mean it could

be not the right idea—this is what I say; "it may not be the right idea, it may be the wrong time for your idea, but keep putting it out there because eventually the world will come around, something will happen out there, but if you never put it out, it's never going anywhere." So I just believe in that.

JD: And how would you define your leadership style?

MV: Oh, I think I'm a possibilities person. It depends on who you talk to. Some people say I'm reckless, but that's just because I'm an optimist. I'm not reckless. I think that I'm just very, I think—so I believe in my core that everybody has a reason to be here, and what I work with people on is like why are you here? Everybody has a gift, let's talk about what that is. And this is what we do in the class, and students sometimes start crying because they've never quite heard it like this. It's like everybody needs a purpose. Why are we here? Why are you here? You're just bumbling through whatever, that's what I did at a college, right? I was having a lot of fun, maybe that was why I was there, was life is fun and you just have fun, right?

But everyone has a purpose, so you really stay still with the students, and I even stay still with my coaches on that; "why are you here, why are you doing this? You obviously like the young people, and to keep do—that's why we're here, that's why all of us are in this college environment. There's something that draws us to these young people and teaching." So with the young people I just invite them to, you know, what I call fail fast and fail often and just embrace it, because they already do it; as student athletes out on the court, you're going to shoot a basketball, if you make it thirty percent of the time you're going to be All American. Thirty percent is an F. "Oh, right."

[0:50:10]

So when you have an idea it may take thirty times to get something out there, but it's the one—just before you quit is the next time that it works. That's what I tell them, too. I go "just when you think you're going to quit, go one more time." That's when you usually have a breakthrough, right? So, we kind of instill that. And then with my staff, the same way. I don't mind, I'm like—one of my funny sayings when they have an idea, I'm like, I look at them and I go "run!" So they go with it. And if they don't execute it perfectly, I don't care, but the idea is right, they're trying, they're hustling, they're trying to get it done. What I don't like is sitting with my young staff and if they say—I'm like "okay, I have this idea we're going to do and da da da da da, and let's figure out where you guys can come in here," and when you see someone go [sighs] "that's a lot of work," I'm like "okay, we're going to have that talk, because you don't know what a lot of work is. You know, we are not hauling stones up a mountain without water, or we're not trying to find food for the rest of the day. That is a lot of work. This is time, which you have, right?"

So I have a very firm side too, but I think I have a way of just convincing people that you're here for a reason, pay attention. Maybe you don't like your job now, but stay present, things are going to show up and you have something to give. And so when you can help people find what they can contribute, everyone wants to give to a project or whatever; they want to solve a problem, and sometimes you just give them permission to solve the problem and they feel awesome. And we have staff members that are like "oh, I don't want to ask for help." I go "well, have you thought about when you ask somebody for help you're actually giving them an opportunity to feel good about a gift that they're giving you, instead of just doing it yourself? Let them do it for you." A simple thing, like we solved the sandwich problem this morning for baseball. You know, Ron's like "oh god, I can't get ahold of the"—I'm like "Ron, hand it off. There are people that want to help you." And we solved it. And you know, he's like "oh, that's awesome."

So it's just things like that. I do think, and I'm very clear, I hold people highly accountable and I have high expectations and when they don't meet them I'm also [snaps fingers] able to say "you did not meet that expectation, let's talk about it. Where can we make adjustments? Because if you fail again you're not going to be here," or "is there something—" usually I'd look first at systems before I look at people. Is there something in the system that is not allowing you succeed? And sometimes there are, because this state's just dumb and it's a mess. So I think both of those; I am extremely inviting but I hold people very highly accountable. I was held accountable so high when I was in college, mostly, for the things I needed to be held accountable. I think because I did so well in high school people really didn't pay attention to how I managed my school. They just let me do whatever, which I did not need that.

And I think then people understand that you care. That's why—I mean I was going over my year this year, we've had to let go of four or five people, and you know that you're in the right spot when at the end of the conversation they thank

you. "This is not where you're supposed to be, you are not shining in this position. We need to look at that. What is holding you back and why are you not succeeding?" You have that next conversation, not just "oh, this is not working out, I'm going to let you go." Let's have a conversation. I'm not afraid of that conversation at all, because ultimately people want to be happy and if they're not happy in their job, usually that leads to poor performance, not the other way around. There's something in this job that's not a fit for you; let's try to figure out what that is. And we usually try to have that conversation early before it gets to a point, and usually at the end of it we're like "okay, see this is probably what we've been talking about."

So I think—and I think the other part is I can—sometimes I feel like the path is just so obvious, and what we need to do, to me, I can make really quick decisions, and that helps everybody. There's no lingering. It's like "nope, we're going to do this, and if it doesn't work I'll take the hit, but I think this is where we need to go." You know, that just having enough, I call "enough world" under your feet, that you've been around the planet enough to know that that'll probably work. And so there's, you know, might as well tell our young people, there's nothing like—it's not because I'm smarter than you guys; I've failed more. That's why I can keep you out of trouble, right? Okay. So and then we go on.

JD: And there's a lot of dynamics that are changing all the time on a university campus. One that comes to mind is the president of the university, that they don't stay in one place forever, and you've had a couple during your tenure here. Talk about how different presidents change either the tenor of the campus or perhaps more related to your work.

[0:55:12]

MV: I think—so for me, so the big change, it's ironic where these changes are going to be. They're not going to really be in an athletic realm. I will say when Paul Risser was here—well, before when we had John Byrne, I don't know how much support there was for athletics at that time. I think he was a humanities person and really was the traditional faculty president that way. Paul Risser, I forget where he came from before here but he understood that athletics were the front porch of the university, and they gave us big financial support at that time, which helped Mitch get the paddles going, right? And I think Ed's continued that, but the things that have continued, I think Paul had a lot of shoring up of the institution to do. I think we were probably behind on a lot of different fronts when he got here, just thinking of all the things that went into place.

And then Ed comes and then they changed the structure, just the infrastructure of the university. For instance, College of Business. My friend Andrea, who's in Graphic Design, is now in Art, is now in the College of Business because they did a whole redesign of that whole major, which to me was fascinating. What they're trying to do with all the science pieces, and those things are fascinating to me. And the fact that we were able to do a one billion dollar capital campaign, that's unheard of. I mean it blows my mind all the buildings that are going up on campus, and you would never think that in this day and age, because things are so expensive, that we could get that out of our supporters. So it's been pretty amazing.

So what's helped us; you have those new campus buildings I guarantee, anytime we have a recruit that says they're in business, we're taking them over to the new business building, or science or whatever, we're taking them through the new dorms. We didn't used to do that. We just took them around our athletic facilities and if there was a newer campus building, like the MU, maybe we'd take them up there. Not anymore. So we recruit entirely differently because of what's going on, on campus. So and I feel like there's more integration with the academic unit because of it. So I think that's pretty cool.

I just don't know, I mean I don't know enough about what wasn't here when Paul got here. I just had a feeling he had to shore up a lot of holes in the lake, you know. So I think that's what his tenure was about. And part of that was hey, if you want to have—so you think about the internet coming on, us having a more of a global reach; we were hiding out here in Corvallis for a long time, and so Paul understood athletics to be this window through the media where you can attract students, and he went for that. And the timing couldn't have been more perfect. So that's, that's the paddles. Paul Risser, Mitch and Dennis Erickson gave this place the paddles, whatever year that was that they hired him.

So and then that's what's launched us up to here and now we're on this next trajectory, which is, in this world of athletics right now, when you're talking about cost of attendance, payments for image and likeness, I mean those are millions of dollars for OSU. And it's hard when you set up a system where we're paying some coaches five million dollars a year

to do a sport, so of course people are going to start questioning that. It's like where's the money going? So we're in an interesting time right now.

JD: Sure. Well, and one of the things that's changing is Bob De Carolis is leaving as athletic director. The two of you have worked together for quite some time, maybe talk us through a bit of the trajectory of your time together and bring it up to the present.

MV: The thing I'm going to miss is Bob would always allow me to disagree with him, in private. We were a good "have you thought about this, have you thought about that" kind of, and he allowed me a lot of leeway to bring in a different voice, and that part I'm going to miss. I mean it takes somebody with a strong sense of self to be able under—to be able to be under constant scrutiny, constant pressure and all these forces coming at you all at once. And he's just been very supportive of me and my career and has expanded my role a lot since I first started. So I feel indebted to him for that. And now I feel like my position is more like when I was talking to you earlier, the bridge. I've been working with this staff for so long they kind of, they know me, they know my style and how I work, and there will not be another Bob De Carolis, and that's the conversation we're having right now, and to have them get their head around that. There's only one of all of us in the world; there's only one Bob De Carolis.

[1:00:23]

So yeah, it's a little scary. Change is a little scary, but I firmly believe as long as you're working hard and moving the needle, stay the needle every day, we're going to be okay. So the personal side of that's really hard for me to see him go. So he was a—he's a great friend and a great mentor.

JD: And as SWA, you have kind of a series, or a series of responsibilities; institutional, conference and then NCAA. We've touched some on the NCAA piece, we haven't really talked about your conference work for many years as the PAC-10, now it's the PAC-12. Talk about sort of what you've done within the conference realm.

MV: Well I think the biggest piece has been we've been—the SWA group has been really involved in when Larry Scott brought in the TV contract to the presidents and they signed it; "okay, we need 800 live events, which is twice as much as any network in the country. All the other networks have 400, we have 800. So you have to schedule all your games to be on TV." And so we have this system. It took over a year to get it set up and running to where we—all the checks and balances are run through our group except for football and men's basketball. Football and men's basketball, all those games were on TV always. That's part of the contract. Those they figure out first, then everything else comes down to the Olympic sports.

And so to have been able to shape that conversation—and we're still shaping it—we were having discussion in May about how some of this is still not working and this is why. We're talking about our soccer programs. Case in point: they want to have—our soccer programs, we're going to play Thursday, Sunday. Traditionally they played Friday, Sunday. And they say they need the extra day of rest, well when we met with the student athletes down in San Francisco about time demands, their first thing to say was "please don't let us miss more class time," of anything else that they said. So we're in a room where we have coaches telling us, "for health and safety and sport we need another day of rest," at the same time, in order to get that, "students, you're going to have to be out of class one more day."

Those are the conversations we're wrestling with, because it's like where do you go. And we had a long, long—the conversation's not over, it got pushed to June 2, actually. So we're still wrestling with it, wrestling with shaping things like the women's basketball tournament and being in Seattle and how good that's been for the program and should we stay in Seattle. Those kind of big kind of discussions. You know, all the way down to what are we going to do with wrestling. We have a sport, there's only three teams in the conference now; us, Stanford, ASU and then four or five, maybe six other affiliates, and what are we going to do with that sport? Because you have the Big 12 who's soaking up a lot of the west coast teams and their super conference and now we're hanging out here by ourselves. And I knew that would happen. I predicted that.

So what are we going to do as a conference as these teams out here to make sure we're positioned to have a good segue way into the national championship? So those kind of discussions. You know, all about to how are we going to get, with limited—as of 2008, I don't know if a lot of people know, but flight options have become more limited. Portland is not a

hub anymore; Seattle is our hub. So our teams, it's very dicey when our teams come here to visit. We just had this happen, and I need to—I told the people at the conference it can't happen again; Utah missed their plane. They were on the last flight out of Portland and it was at six o'clock pm, Salt Lake. That's the last one. That's early. So we had a baseball game that started at noon; it probably should have started at 10:30. But I wasn't part of that conversation. It's like we need to do some extra checking here, because—and their SWA's great. She's like "well there was a traffic development." Right. You still wouldn't have made the flight had that game gotten over and, there's no way.

So we really pay attention to those pieces that'll hit the student athletes, which I enjoy a lot. And you know, we talk about video systems and all these other pieces for volleyball or how to pay, how much to pay umpires and all that stuff too, but really focusing on what, how are we impacting our student athletes, and we get to have those discussions a lot and that's what I enjoy.

[1:05:08]

JD: And you've talked about I think both institutionally and then in the conference you get to sort of work in different relations with gymnastics or wrestling or different sports.

MV: Yep.

JD: Kind of what's your experience? Are there similarities, more differences between one sport and another, or?

MV: They're all different. I mean it's interesting. So depending on—we rotate sports, so I've been like the liaison with softball coaches, I've been liaison with gymnastic coaches, men's soccer, there's been a bunch. Wrestling I think I even have had. So you get in the discussion in the room, you're—I'm just the one SWA but you have all the head coaches in the room, and yes every sport is different. There are some deep relationships there, there's interesting relationships there in between; you have to manage all that between coaches. So yep, every sport's different, and the goal of those meetings is if they have anything globally they need to talk about as a coaches group, as it affects them in the conference, this is where it pops up. So some of those meetings can get a little heated, but it's okay. I mean conflict is kind of how you make a diamond, right? So we kind of allow that process to happen.

But I've enjoyed that part, I've enjoyed it a lot. I have gymnastics right now; they are a joy. I mean they're just the greatest group of people. And all of our coaches are, but they're just at a different lev—and I think it has to do with who's in the room, what level of experience is in there. You have people in there with lots and lots—Tanya, Val and Megan, with deep, deep, deep experience in gymnastics. They hold the tenor of that meeting, and it's great.

JD: And we've touched on Title IX a couple of times; I know that you were one of the key people in organizing at least one, if not multiple, kind of Title IX celebrations. Talk about arranging that and why that's important.

MV: That came out of my experience at Southwest Missouri State. So I grew up with—we were an all-women's athletic department, and I have to say the work I did in that department, we had so much fun. I just remember we'd be working and we'd just be laughing so hard we were crying at night and just didn't want to go home. And so that work was more like a party and I wanted to recreate that. And there was a lot of women here I think that didn't get properly recognized. You know, as I learned, not all of our women got their letters. We got our letters when I went to college, but our women didn't get their O for whatever reason, because they were, quote, "outside the department at the time."

So the first one I organized was probably I think had to be twenty years ago, because of where we're at. It can't be fifteen. Every five years we do these. Five people showed up, okay? The next one we had probably forty, the next one there's like a hundred, and hundred and twenty; the last one we had four hundred people. So every five years we do this. So in 2017, I actually got to put my committee together this year; we do it two years out and we settle on a theme and who we're going to celebrate, and I think this time we're going to celebrate the coaches and administrators, the pioneers that were around during all this time. It'll be from Robyn all the way back down to probably Pat Ingram, who's in her eighties. We'll do this great—to me it's a party, so I like throwing parties.

And we have a committee and what I've done is, I keep saying "I will not be here forever," and I keep showing up. Luckily the university keeps employing me, but I need this committee to take control of it, because these are the student athletes that went here and this is their—I go "this is your project, I'm giving you a budget for it, you shape it. And so the

reason this last one was so successful was because they owned it. This is the first time I got them to own it. And they went and got their people here, they found a softball coach they haven't talked to for years, lot of forgiveness going on there, because it was a crazy time. They were under different pressures then. So and I always talk about healing, because they don't want to invite somebody because this happened. I'm like "well, let's look at what it was like when they were here and why maybe they behaved this way. So let's get past that a little bit." So a lot of healing. And so really have charged that group—it's a standing committee of people and we'll have the same committee again—to really run with it. And it's just turned into this party that we do every five years, and it's kind of cool. I just love it.

[1:10:05]

So I can remember last time we had it, so it was '12, 2012 and I can remember—and it was a mess, because there were so many people and there's not a lot of support staff to help around with that, and everyone went with the flow. I mean we had the seating was all messed up and everything, but it didn't matter, and I told people, I go "people haven't seen each other for ten or fifteen years, they're going to want to talk." So we just needed to be a little organic on how we let it erupt. And so the first hour it was seventies music and talking and letting people, just let them have a beer, get some hors d'oeuvres, whatever, just let that happen.

That was the best thing we ever did, because I remember my bosses walking, Bob, he walked in, he came in really close to when we were supposed to start, he goes, his face was like "oh my god, who are these people." Right? When you almost have four hundred people in that room, you're not supposed to have that many people in the room. And we just killed it. And part of it was they owned the music, they owned the program, everything kind of worked in our—it was just the stars aligned that night. So that's something I'm really proud that I created here, and I hope it lives on. I have another one to do in '17, and like I said we're going to honor some coaches and administrators at that time. We'll see what that looks like. It's a blast.

JD: Mary and Joy thoroughly enjoyed talking about their participation in that event as well.

MV: It's a party.

JD: And you also ended up establishing two endowed scholarships for female athletes, named for a couple of your predecessors that you've touched on during this interview.

MV: Yep, from Pat Ingram and Sylvia Moore, and that was because someone said "you can't do it," so I did it. Right? "Oh, that'll never happen." "Watch me." So I went and found four or five people that gave five thousand to get those both started, and I did it twice, and that was because someone said "you can't do that." So there you go. So now we have those and then what happens is Sylvia and Pat—I forget how the process worked—they have criteria and we pick the athlete or they help pick the athlete and then the athlete, at some point, reaches out to them with a note or something like that and they're aware of where they're scholarship is going.

So I wanted, in some way, to memorialize those two, because I will tell you at the time when I started that there was a lot of resistance. There was some resistance too. And I wouldn't say it was because they were against, that tone was against, it was they were too busy with other things. So it's like "oh, we don't have time for that." So "okay, I will take time for this." And I just didn't want us to get past these stories that are out there. You know, now we have Pat Ingram's picture hanging up next to Paul Valenti's right outside my office. And so every day I come in, I'm like "yes," because that was a story that not a lot of people know about. She held the first AIAW national track meet that OSU ever had for women here at OSU. She ran it. I think she was pulling hurdles off the track. You know, it was her and her friends, and they had great stories about how they'd take breaks up in the Women's Building; she'll come in, they would go smoke cigarettes and then come back. I'm like "you guys used to smoke up there?" She goes "oh yeah." So it was different times.

JD: It was the times.

MV: Yeah.

JD: Very different times. Well, but I think you're right, those stories are important because, as you said, for athletes today it's pretty almost impossible for them to know, men or women athletes, to know what it was like for female athletes back in the day when there weren't facilities or anything.

MV: Well, and Pat flat out told me they weren't allowed to run with the men at all. They had to run around them and they had to have these schedules. The only one that was allowed to practice with the men was Joni Huntley, that was it. So I'm like "okay." So you know, and then you have to move that generation away. There's a lot of bitterness there and it's like yep, I get it. And even to get them to come to Gill, come back, there's a lot of healing with that, because they weren't treated very well. They were not. I mean there are stories; Pat told me a story when field hockey got dropped. I had to argue that field hockey was a sport here with some of my administration. I go "it was a sport, here's the schedule, here's our alums, here's all the people that played in it." But we finally have field hockey was put back up as a sport, and I was told when women's athletics came from the Women's Building over to here they dropped field hockey and they burned everything. They burned the kilts, they burned the sticks, whatever. So I have a stick and a ball in my office that I won't let go of, and it's probably one of the only—I got to get it to archives, actually. It's one of the only ones that's probably around the campus.

[1:15:14]

I don't know if that happened; that's what I was told, but there's a lot of bitterness around that from, if you talk to our field hockey women—and we have them, they were here—they did not have a great experience all the way around. So there was a lot of struggle, I'd say sixties, seventies, up till the eighties, and then it all changed.

JD: And there have been some great experiences, some great winning teams at OSU, and we would be remiss if we didn't capture a bit of 2014's exciting women's basketball season.

MV: Yes, yes. Yep, that's been a journey. Basketball, women's basketball was pretty good when I got here. We'd get to the NCAA tournament a few times but then we'd lose that first game. And Sweet 16, Aki had a team when Robyn was on it, I believe; they made it to the Sweet 16. So that benchmark for her, she comes with me to the games, we're going to the Final Four, but that Sweet 16 piece is real important for her, and to have gotten so close to that, we were one game off; we were one game off last year, one game off this year, I don't think that's going to happen again. I think we're going to break through now. So it's been very fun to shepherd and watch that all play out. Pretty cool.

JD: Well and I think it's partly intriguing, because it's sort of where women's basketball was just not that many years ago, and...

MV: Yep.

JD: Maybe talk a little about how that all evolved.

MV: Well I think you do your best to make a good hire in those situations. We had Aki and then we had Judy Spoelstra was an alum; definitely at the time probably felt that that was the best hire we can make. She was doing a good job, wherever she came from. And you know, when you can go back to an alum, which is where we're at right now, you get a different flavor. They're invested in a different way, and Judy was very invested here, very. But you know, she just didn't have the success that she thought she would have. Then we got a different direction, we go someone who's been in a power house as an assistant coach for seventeen years, and who better to be a head coach than someone who's had that much experience at a high level program, only to find out—and this is what we learned through the process—Division I jobs are extremely, extremely high level, and going forward we made a decision that we won't try this out on assistant coach anymore. That step is too high. It should be like natural, but it's way bigger than what we all think.

And it can be painful for some people, I think. And that's why I think that that was just an unfortunate situation that we had with LaVonda, because she has all the pieces, but there's this space that you have to be in that's very, very public, and people scrutinize you 24/7 and you have got to have, it's just—I mean Scott talks about it now because he's, the more successful he gets it's more fun but boy, there's more people with eyes on him now than he's ever had. It's extremely stressful, and you can't predict, unless someone's already had that and gone through it, which Scott did at George Fox, how that will bear out on somebody unless they've gone through it. And that was the lesson that we learned.

So in our high profile sports, we kind of made the way we shape our—how we go out for our search is we're going to look at sitting head coaches first. So we learned that lesson, which I think was good. And so with Scott we got an alum, and then we got someone who's been a head coach. And so that—and plus he knows basketball. I should say a successful head

coach. I mean he won the national championship at Division III. So that says something. That's not hard to do—that's hard to do. And so if he hadn't won the national championship at Division III, we're not talking to him. There's no way we can talk to him. You have to come to this level, to do what he did at that level with no scholarships and to win it all the way, that takes something special, so we knew he had that in him, and that's why we took the risk on him.

And you know, and having the alumni pieces is really cool. I mean again, he's invested differently. He sees the gym differently; "Marianne, those seats need to be black. We don't need one orange seat in here." So hopefully by the time he retires Gill will be all black. That's our goal.

[1:20:08]

JD: Lots of details that wouldn't necessarily be obvious to—

MV: No. No, but he knows those things, like "you know, the speakers are dusty up there." It's his house, and that's what I tell our people: this is his house, he's going to look at it a little bit differently, pay attention. And I could appreciate what he brings to the table.

JD: So this campus has been your house for a long time now, and perhaps we could start to wrap up here with just some of your thoughts on what OSU was like when you started, where it is now, perhaps where you see it going, or—

MV: Yep. Well I think the number one piece is our mentality's changed. I hate—we used to always say we're the underdog. I hate that, I hate that, I hate that. We're not. We're different, right, and we don't have to start behind. An underdog means it starts behind; no, we're at, this is where we're starting from and our path is different. You know, there's eighty-five ways to skin a cat, and we can win with what we have. We definitely can win with what we can have. It takes good teachers, and so that goes back into our DNA and who are we and who are we hiring; we're hiring good teachers. And I learned this early on when I was camp-coaching volleyball; I always take the worst kids. I go "give me the worst kids, we're going to beat you guys," and we would figure it out. I mean and these students, these are kids, I mean ten, eleven, twelve, they're awful volleyball players, scared of the ball, you name it. We would win games and people would get so mad at us, but I truly believe there's always a way, you just got to find it.

So we try to find people who understand that, and they don't make excuses. I don't need that, I don't need that, I just need this group of people and this is what we're going to do. You know, I saw that in our volleyball players this year for the first time. They believed in themselves. But I think getting past that psyche of the underdog, that we belong here in this conference, that we can compete with everybody, I think that we've reached the tipping point where that is our culture now, and we expect to win. So that's been, I always expected to win. I grew up with winners. When I was at Southwest Missouri State, all my people that taught me all my sports, they were winning national championships. The softball team at SMS won a national championship, field hockey team, they win a national championship. These were all my peers, we won. And we weren't afraid to play UCLA, Southwest Missouri State play UCLA. We weren't afraid. Or Oklahoma State or whoever we were playing. We'd just go play them.

And I had a real hard time when I started overseeing sports and our coaches wouldn't go play a Duke or an Oklahoma State. I'm like "we have to play them anyway if we're going to win a national championship." Well, you've seen a whole-scale change in our scheduling, which I love, but there are a couple things that I want to get done. I feel like it would be really great to endow the leadership program, I have a plan for that, just so it goes on. Right now it's really people-dependent; it needs to be systems dependent. So endowing it allows who's ever in charge to hire the people to make it work. And then winning a conference championship at football is real important, because I think we can do that, and getting to the Final Four in men's and women's basketball are the other two big things.

Those, if we do those four things, I feel like I did my job. So we'll see. And people from, not when I got here, we weren't—we couldn't score a touchdown. So to talk about winning a conference championship in football, when I got here, men's basketball, we were the bottom, bottom, bottom, bottom, bottom, and we have the right person in place right now. Women's basketball; we went through our struggles, we have the right person in place right now. And I think it's helped. People say "well gymnastics and wrestling win because there's only forty wrestling teams and there's only a hundred gymnastics teams in the country." To me I don't care. To win you still got to beat everybody. I don't care if there's five or a hundred. So people kind of give them an "oh, well they have to do that," but when you start winning national

championships in baseball where there's three hundred teams and you have a women's basketball team, a volleyball team, a men's soccer team this year, all going to post-season, it's like "no, we can compete at this highest level in all these sports. And we don't have everything. We don't. And actually we don't need everything. We're going to be fine."

So I just think that from going to this underdog, "there's no way, roll the ball out" participation piece when I first got here to "we're in it to win it," mentality has changed tremendously. That I feel good about, because I don't know why you can't win, and when someone tells you you can't or you don't have a chance, well that's when you go prove them wrong. That's been my life.

JD: Well that seems perhaps the perfect note to end on.

MV: Alright.

JD: Thanks so much Marianne.

MV: You bet.

[1:25:00]