



## Aki Hill Oral History Interview, April 14, 2015

**Title**

“Coaching with Love”

**Date**

April 14, 2015

**Location**

Hill residence, Albany, Oregon.

**Summary**

In the interview, Hill describes her family background and upbringing in post-war Japan, making particular note of the educational reforms that led to increased opportunities for girls and young women of her generation. She then recounts her introduction to the sport of basketball, describing the influence of her high school coach and detailing the ways in which the game was taught by Japanese coaches of her era.

From there, Hill recalls an important trip that she made to the United States in 1972, during which time she was granted close access to the UCLA Bruins men's basketball team, as led by head coach John Wooden and All American center Bill Walton. In reflecting on this experience, she emphasizes the impact that Wooden's methods made on the development of her own approach to coaching the game.

The primary focus of the session is Hill's seventeen-year tenure as head women's basketball coach at Oregon State University. Hill shares her memories of her hire at OSU, the state of the program upon her arrival, and early allies who helped her to gain traction. She likewise notes the impact that Carol Menken made as a player at OSU, her approach to recruiting student athletes, the style of play that she emphasized as coach, and the division of labor among her assistants. She discusses her team's successes in the early 1980s, remarks on becoming a U.S. citizen, and touches upon the internal disputes that led to her resignation in 1995.

The interview concludes with Hill's memories of three players, Tanja Kostic, Anette Mollerstrom, and Boky Vidic; her reflections on OSU men's coach Ralph Miller; and the pleasure that she has taken in the more recent successes of women's basketball at OSU.

**Interviewee**

Aki Hill

**Interviewer**

Chris Petersen

**Website**

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

## Transcript

**Chris Petersen:** Okay Aki, if you could please introduce yourself with your name and today's date and our location?

**Aki Hill:** Yes. My name is Aki Hill and today's date is April 14th, 2015. This is my home.

**CP:** Terrific. So, we're going to talk a lot about your experiences as head women's basketball coach at OSU, but we'll start from the beginning and talk about your background. You were born in Japan.

**AH:** Yes.

**CP:** And where were you born?

**AH:** I was born near Narita Airport, which is north of Tokyo. However, my experience, most of the experience until thirty-two or three years old was in the city of Yokohama.

**CP:** So, that's where you grew up?

**AH:** Yes, from middle school, high school and my adolescence, I was in Yokohama, yes.

**CP:** What was your parents' backgrounds?

**AH:** What I remember was my father, of course, participated in World War, Second, so I didn't have too much time with him. Then he came back right after the war, he left for big city to establish his construction company. So, however, very loving father, however I didn't spend too much time with him.

**CP:** And your mother?

**AH:** Mother was just a lovely housewife, dedicated, loving housewife and mother.

**CP:** Did you have brothers and sisters?

**AH:** Yes. Two younger brother. However, they treated me like younger sister.

**CP:** What was Yokohama like for you as a community, growing up?

**AH:** Cosmopolitan city, and produced the probably, of that time, best ship in the world. So, kind of, yeah, very exciting city.

**CP:** What were you interested in as a little girl?

**AH:** I played a lot in the—when I was very young I was evacuated Japan seaside, Niigata Prefecture, so it had beautiful river and mountains and snows, and I had wonderful opportunity to play in nature. And when I was five years old, war was over, wonderful philosophy of democracy was just given to me, and you know, so I'm thankful to USA; I was taught men and women are equal, so I can do anything I want. So, it was five years old and our education system started in the new education system, which was given from USA too, started when I just was getting into the elementary school. I am the first girl student of the new education system in Japan.

**CP:** So, how did that differ from the old system?

**AH:** Of course men and women were not equal and everything was for country. You know, right before that was more of the military government, so everything I have to—we have to do is for the country. So, a huge, huge change.

**CP:** Did you enjoy school?

**AH:** Oh yes, yes. And probably I was a diva [?] to play outside, even after the school. That's what I remember.

**CP:** Well, how did you become interested in basketball? Where did that start?

**AH:** Good question. I started in my late, you know, I started when I became a high school student, and it doesn't matter, I wanted to get involved in excellent program, and basketball happened to be the best sport was offered at the high school. So, instead of the tennis or anything, I just jumped into basketball.

[0:05:24]

**CP:** So, how long had basketball been a sport for women at that school? I wouldn't imagine it had been for very long, had it?

**AH:** That's true, but I have to make sure this one, this point; that time in the USA, women didn't play basketball vigorous way with full-court. Only in the USA half court, three-on-three type of way, women participated. However, in Japan as soon as basketball was introduced, we played basketball just like boys. So, Japanese women participated in basketball just like boys before American women. However, still now today coaching is still men's job in Japan, I am afraid. So, as a player we had a huge opportunity, but not like being coach or being athletic director. I think it's way behind in Japan. However, as a player it was introduced a part of education, so girls, women, had immediately had opportunity to play very vigorous, pressure defense, you know, fast break basketball. So, I learned with my skin that type of basketball.

**CP:** Tell me a little bit more about learning the game as a player.

**AH:** I think that—oh, okay. In Japan sports, anything, martial arts, flower arrangement, kind of philosophy is you learn the way of life. *Do* means the way, right? So, like for example, we have to wash the floor with cloth, washing the water and knee down and run with the dishcloth. That's the way we start practice. Polish the ball. In the USA, like equipment manager later on, but coach has to carry out the balls. But we polished the ball and took care of the balls on the part of discipline; all student has to do it.

So, I knew a different way we approached to sports. Of course, you know, we don't talk back to the coaches, you know; whatever Coach says runs everything. However, I was educated very different way, because of my great mentor had totally different philosophy. So, that was one of my treasure. Even rest of the county, Coach ordered and you have to just do it, but my teacher and greatest mentor, my great mentor was my teacher who was a high school coach's teacher. So, he let us think, and we had to take initiative to—like setting up the goal, and more likely not Coach said, not Teacher said. We have to set the goal and more likely—for instance, this great teacher was, during the war, even sport we have to do for the country, type of atmosphere; he just, it's just—his philosophy was we just chase the—joy of chasing the ball. That's why we do the basketball. So, I'm surprised he wasn't in jail during the war.

[0:10:39]

That is my great mentor who taught nothing but enjoy; how to enjoy the basketball and how to enjoy the life itself. So that was—meeting with him truly let me be kind of basketball crazy.

And I was going to be architect, and after my career as a player was over I was going to study architect, because my father had a construction company. But this sticking with my great mentor at that same time, we had Tokyo Olympic in '64. Sticking with him and observing our national team practice, which not the women, that time women are not participating in Olympic, so watching our men's national team practice with my mentor just taking a note and all of the sudden, within myself, how to develop the teaching the skills, develop the student individually and as a unit, as a team. It's in me. So, just naturally I forgot about I'm supposed to be architect, but I couldn't stop teaching basketball. There wasn't any women coach at that time, so I had to do basketball, just looking at when I was in a train, commuting to Tokyo, back and forth, looking at the basketball pole, a tear came out. So this, because of this great teacher, just learned joy of chasing the ball.

So, I didn't care if any women are acceptable as a basketball coach or not, how people think about it, doesn't matter, I just have to do it. So, later on I thought I was one of the lucky person learned to follow my bliss. That's the way I did basketball. And I wasn't paid when I coached like high school boy—boys' team was my first team in Japan, and since we beat the state champion team, so nobody can complain we have woman coach. So, I just did. Then, when I watched all of the Olympic national teams, I said why USA team played so different way? In that Olympic, USA and Japanese team

are the only two teams played defense very seriously. '64 I kind of thought wow, someday I'd like to go to USA, why they play such a basketball game. I have to know. So, all my steps was because of my curiosity.

[0:14:57]

So, it materialized '72, '73, I had the fortune, you know, this is amazing fortune, to observe Coach John Wooden at the UCLA. So, it is '72, '73 season, Bill Walton was junior. And so, that time UCLA won the national championship. So, that's the second great teacher I met.

**CP:** How did that happen?

**AH:** Oh, it was very simple way. I just had a letter, recommendation letter from Japanese Basketball Association, JBA, and from my great teacher. I had—and also when I observed Japanese national team practice, Mr. Pete Newell, who is Hall of Fame and very much of the teacher of the basketball, and he, even after he retired he taught fundamental skills to NBA player, the session called Big Man Camp. So, very much of the teacher. So, Mr. Pete Newell came to Japan and we followed the national team practice. So, I met Mr. Pete Newell and he was, at that time, in Los Angeles. So, I supposed to kind of ask Pete to introduce me to one of the school coach. Pete thought that time Coach Wooden, UCLA, is too busy to go after national championship, so he was going to introduce me to USC. However, I learned UCLA has great teacher and coach, so why not I should go and ask him?

And my friend in Japan knows a person work for UCLA, so I went to see her and asked if she can just introduce to Coach Wooden. So, we did and Coach Wooden said, no hesitation, "okay, come on." And that's the way I went to his very first practice. UCLA, Pauley Pavilion that time was, door was about middle of the building and basketball court was way down. When we opened the door, this court, look back and wave the hand. Even this is the very first practice for the very important year. So, he was waving the hand for this little something, unknown little Japanese girl. I said "hmm, this person is something special." So, that very first day he invited me to his office, I was skirt and high heel and everything, then "what can I do for you?" that was his first question. He means it when he says it, he means it.

So, I, you know, it was exciting and I have a couple of questions, what you did? Then he, no hesitation, we didn't do any small talk; "okay, stand up." So, I stood up with high heel and we both demonstrated, jumping to the serious basketball discussion. So I said, then again, wow, this person is, treated me very sincerely and seriously as a coach.

[0:19:54]

Then that kind of, for me; sabbatical, quit coaching in Japan and came. Experience with him and the coaching staff was my treasure. Another treasure. So it's—and nobody did such a thing, no Japanese probably, you know, just came and tried to study. But I thought, when I was in Japan, took for me a long time. I thought if I go there, over there basketball I understood, but one of the Japanese medical doctor who was educated in the USA: "no, you have to study English, and just to go to USA, you have to study under excellent coach and learn everything." It's like "no, I don't like to study English," because in Japan we do not study conversational English, just in grammar, writing. So, I have to study little bit English. And so, I came and supposed to ask Mr. Pete Newell, but I decided to go study under Coach Wooden, and it happened. And I had just a magical year with him and his assistant coaches—

**CP:** So, you were there for the whole year?

**AH:** Yes. According to my question, sometimes I had meeting in the morning with Coach Wooden himself, or junior varsity team coach sometimes, sometimes first assistant teacher, Mr. Gary Cunningham. So according to my questions, I had meeting in the morning, then afternoon. I observed every day practice.

**CP:** Were you the only one, or was there other coaches like this?

**AH:** If somebody came, they didn't stay a whole season every day, but a week or two, probably they came. But I went Day One until when the National Champion was St. Louis, with charter airplane we all went to. And that time Indiana was in the final four, so I said to Mr. Cunningham, "I think Indiana is excellent team and very soon they're going to win the national championship, so I like Indiana." Then he brought some Bobby Knight, this practice notebook from his desk: "here, Aki." So, I studied and I was shocked. A couple fundamental drills I was doing, he was doing them too. So, it was

very interesting experience. And also, Bobby Knight was a student of Mr. Pete Newell. So, very interesting, you know. I hope he behaved a little better. He did, but I think he has brilliant mind.

**CP:** That's an amazing experience. It's hard to imagine that happening now. I mean, the generosity of Coach Wooden to allow you to be there for an entire season.

**AH:** He's extraordinary person first, before he's a coach, because he took sports more than winning/losing. And of course he won the most, however he defined the truth success. He doesn't say winning was everything, but sometimes in the sports and in the USA in the sports, winning means everything still. But Coach Wooden said "no, your success is the kind of—you know, if you can satisfy by 'I did my best, as much as I can,' if you can say that, that's a true success." So, if you win the game, if you didn't, couldn't play your best game, it wasn't successful. So he was, for him, religion came first, then family came second, basketball was just the third.

[0:25:39]

And not only he saying that, he live that way. His most important philosophy was balance within yourself. Body balance, floor balance, which is—we didn't talk about it, but I read his couple of books, and the way he conduct his life, and of course he has famous pyramid of success, but recently I found out before he passed away, he passed away ninety-nine years old, he told Bill Walton "well, we have to add love, L-O-V-E, into that pyramid of success." Before he passed away, he said.

So, I was taught by him balance is the most important. So, it took for me about ten years; what is most important thing, what is my philosophy in coaching basketball? And took about ten years; why I work so hard, twenty-four-seven? Why? Because I like to be famous or I like to be the most winning coach? No, I thought. So, thought if I can do something good for student, each student, then that's the only reason I work this hard. Even—whatever I teach has to be the best quality, otherwise it's not fair to let them work so hard, the hardest than anybody else is, then this method has to be done good, quality. So, that's why I study hard. So, I have to be the best teacher available, wherever teachers are. So, starting that, so that's why for me I decide okay, for Coach Wooden; balance. For me, what is it? It's not such a huge religious means, just do something little bit good for each student. So, I said probably love is important thing in my coaching career.

So, that was very, very clear, and I don't like to drive or live in a big city. It's scary, so my kind of—as a coach, you know, get the promotion to the largest school is not the most important thing. I'm very happy in a small town in Corvallis with very loving people, surrounded by loving people at OSU and the community. So, big school recruited me, I says "no, I'm not going to go to anywhere else," so that's why I stayed OSU seventeen years.

**CP:** I want to ask you a little bit about, before I get more deeply into your coaching career, about the time that you spent playing in Japan, because I'm interested in knowing a little bit more about that. So, you played in high school and then you played professionally for a while after that?

**AH:** Professionally at that time. Company-sponsored AAU team is next level. So, eventually after I started at UCLA, went back to Japan, I coached one of the AAU team, after I finished career, high school boys' team and AAU women's team.

**CP:** Your first coaching job was the high school boys?

**AH:** Yes.

**CP:** And then the AAU women's team after that.

[0:30:27]

**AH:** Yes.

**CP:** Okay. Well, you came to OSU in 1978, tell me the story about how that happened; how did you get to Oregon State?

**AH:** Well somebody, means Dr. Sylvia Moore was women's athletic director when I had the interview. And quite honestly, I knew when I came to United States and studied under all men's coach, Coach John Wooden, Coach Mr. Pete Newell, all of them are men's coach. As you know, '72 Title IX, until Title IX was implemented, women's sports are nothing here in the USA. So, '78, just about Title IX was implemented, I arrived. So, I knew I can coach. I know how to do it. So—but my language, I didn't know the system of the college level, but I kind of helped out, went to community college in Santa Clara University, women's basketball team, then their coach, so-called coach and PE teacher, knowing I studied under Coach Wooden and everything, immediately "okay, you do it," and it was very generous of them, too. And so, I had a little bit experience in the USA as a volunteer. And OSU has opening spot.

I think true reason is I had a recommendation letter from Coach Wooden and Mr. Pete Newell and Mr. Stu Inman from the Trailblazers. So, she wanted to try. She had the guts to try me. And fortunately, luckily, Carol Menken kind of recruited herself. U of O coach said "you can't even sit on the bench," so she came to OSU and Sylvia Moore gave the partial scholarship and we came same time, so we beat U of O and won the conference champion, immediately. So that's what—so my husband said "you should try if you are really serious about this." Probably he doesn't want me to going back to Japan by homesick. So, he said "I will move to west coast with you." At time OSU's one of the school that have the open spot, and I had great recommendation letter, so that's why I got the job. But I think mainly Dr. Sylvia Moore had guts to try me.

**CP:** What was your impression of the university and of the town at the time when you arrived? Your first initial impressions of OSU?

**AH:** It was May, fresh green, which I missed. I was in Palo Alto at that time. Nature; it's just like Japan, vegetation and everything, fresh green. I missed so much. That is number one. I just love the people. You know, they're relaxed, caring people at university, and this interview session, my interview there were, I don't know, six, seven people there. I thought oh, the person over there with glasses and three pieces [indicates clothing], he must be one of the very high ranked administrator. That's my enemy, I thought. However, not so many questions came from those people. Most of the time that Coach Ralph Miller, men's coach asked question.

[0:35:27]

**CP:** So, he was part of the hiring committee, Ralph Miller?

**AH:** Oh yes, and most of the questions are asked by him. So, this job interview became like almost a coaching clinic. We're excited about talking about basketball, no problem for me. So, even after this interview, he invited me to his office. After that, conversation lasted another two hours or so. And he invited me "okay, if you don't understand this terminology, why don't you come to my summer camp; I don't know if you want to get the job or not, but"—so, I came to summer camp. You know, of course I got the job and met Carol Menken. So, interview was fun, because I had great, very interesting basketball clinic went on between two of us. So, I had good time. I didn't care about how much money they have or what kind of a situation will I have to get in. It didn't matter. So, that was '78.

**CP:** So, we've established that women's basketball had only been around for a few years at that point as an official sport at OSU.

**AH:** Yes, yes.

**CP:** I'm interested in knowing a little bit more about kind of the state of the program when you arrived.

**AH:** [Laughter]

**CP:** [Laughs], maybe a loaded question.

**AH:** Yes, we had two people: me, I hired assistant coach, Ross Cook, who wanted to probably get a master's degree at OSU, in a small office in the so-called Women's Building, you know. There was a little room. We didn't have money, so we didn't have money to offer the scholarship. So my husband's—one of the parents underwrite the scholarship and offer the scholarship. That type of situation. And when we go and, like California to play against Berkeley, sometimes my money ran out, so my husband have to buy the dinner, couple of dinners for team, and he bought video camera.

**CP:** Wow.

**AH:** But so what? We had still magical time. And however, we proved we won the, that time I don't know what the name of the conference, conference champion team, which included Montana schools, Washington schools, Oregon schools. So, after school offer the scholarship, so my husband didn't pay, didn't need to pay, however that's the way we started the program.

**CP:** So, you had an office in the Women's Building, did you practice in Gill Coliseum, or did you—

**AH:** No, no, took a long, long time to practice in Gill Coliseum.

**CP:** So, you were practicing in the Women's Building, too.

**AH:** Yes. Sometimes we try had game in women's basketball, too—no, Women's Building too, I think. I forgot it all a long time ago. So, we practiced, of course, six-thirty in the morning, seven pm type. So, I didn't speak up, arguing "hey, women are equal," I didn't do that. First I wanted to show women can be very competitive, women can provide quality sports, and they did good educational matter... thing to compete in the very big, rough sports. I just wanted to show it. That's the way I, you know, so I really didn't care about Title IX or anything. Just teach good basketball and build a good program. That's the way my role was.

[0:40:17]

However, without Title IX, American sports didn't start it, couldn't start. However, I was very impressed by USA; once this country decided the direction to go, they can just explode and immediately change—not immediately, needed some hard actions, step by step, just like any other law. Law on the paper doesn't mean too much until practiced, until—I don't like fight, but actually, you know, to make it happen needed cutthroat actions. That time I—my honest feeling is I felt bad for—I didn't feel bad for football team and men's basketball team are very secured, but we had excellent program like wrestling team I loved coach; baseball, men's baseball team, they were scared women's sports is coming in, get their money, and they were scared. So, I understood and I felt so bad for so-called the minor men's sports people, and I liked them, I liked the way they run the program too, so I felt bad, so I really didn't speak "well, I need another"—I didn't do that.

However, I can see, like football and minor sports people, when some—okay first this take action, first action to me—I don't know I supposed to tell this honestly—the first action was the student signed, and I really don't know what it was exactly, but didn't sue the school, but "hey, we need the gender equity here, to start women's sports here." So, then you know what happened? My car was egged, throws eggs and everything. So, they thought I am the responsible; I wasn't responsible. But I think Carol Menken has signed for that paper or something. So, that's the way our women's sports are started. So, first actual was by student. You know, little, made a noise. So, tried to get attention from university. Then, quite honestly, we cannot ignore how much Dr. Sylvia Moore worked hard to launch our women's sport. Even, you know, she has to do her job, which she did.

So that time, that period, culture was women's sports, we like—even NCAA fought very hard, like you know, we shouldn't include the football number of the student participant type of thing. NCAA fought hard not bring in this Title IX into athletics, only in education. But unfortunately, athletics is under education, right? So, including athletics. My understanding is came in about '75, even though law came in '72 or something. So, step by step, compare to Japanese women, it's so behind in the USA; took step by step action. Sylvia Moore really spoke up and tried to establish the sport for women at OSU. So, I called her, gutsy way she did, mother of the women's sports.

**CP:** Yeah, I've heard that from many people.

**AH:** Yes. Otherwise we are not here. Very clear about it. Yet, even after she was kicked out from the Athletic Department, still kept nurturing, like you know, being chair of the National Gymnastics Association and brought gymnastics national events to OSU. She didn't stop to supporting, nurturing women's opportunity. So, that was, I think we really dependent upon her fight. And still culture was very, very biased, but then, I don't know, third thing was our softball coach sued, so it was really—my understanding was central university administration wanted to correct our situation at Athletic Department, but athletic director didn't want; that's my understanding. However, softball coach sued,

so that really, really, central administration got attention. They knew already what's going on in Athletic Department and they wanted to change the—then that was huge. Sylvia and the softball coaches, and the last one, I waited fifteen years and we outdraw men, you know, my last '93, '94, '95, that time. And we packed the gym, which was dream come true, I never thought we can. So, I brought gender equity concerns; time to correct the situation, but I didn't take to the court. For me, university is my university. I worked so hard, I don't want a hard time recruiting. You know, a couple more, my husband is dying. So all of the—and I thought this is still my university, this is still my program. So, I didn't sue, but we negotiated. That was, you know, I contributed a little bit.

So, after I—well, athletic director said "I will not renew your contract next year." So, after that, after me, women's basketball budget went up to the same budget as men's program. It was good enough. I did right thing, I thought. And salary, went doubled my salary for coaches too. So, I contributed a little bit too. But until then, I wanted to show women can do it and it is important to give the women opportunity. But the last moment I had to do it, so those actions took place to become—to be here now changing the culture. And I think you will find out Marianne Vydra know that transition time, huge culture change. One of the athletic director, his name is Mitch...

**CP:** Barnhart.

[0:49:54]

**AH:** Yes. He came, president changed; they truly changed the culture. And Marianne Vydra awarded as a top fifteen senior associate AD this year. But Sylvia couldn't do the job like Marianne is doing. They didn't give her that much power. Instead, she was kicked up to president office. So, this huge, this is a celebration. You know, Marianne got award, means we changed culture in Athletic Department. So, this means not just the associate AD award, you know; celebration of changing the culture in the Athletic Department at OSU. So, I'm so happy about her award. Now she can do it.

**CP:** Yeah.

**AH:** Yes.

**CP:** I want to ask you a little bit more about your—sort of the details of your coaching career. We've mentioned Carol Menken, she was obviously very important to those early years, and will you tell me a little bit about how she arrived at OSU and the impact that she made on the program?

**AH:** Okay. She played—she thought she cannot run, she cannot jump, she didn't, actually, and she played a year or two at LBCC. So, she went, asked to play for U of O, they said no way she can make the team, so she went to see Sylvia Moore and "I'd like to play for you," said "give me at least tuition or something." So, I guess she gave it to her. Fortunately, I had excellent method, compared to any other—from my mentor in Japan, fundamentals; to make fundamental skill, you can execute better if we implement this method. So, I said "Carol, you have to forget about your height, so you have to just see the full speed you can do. This is how to jump, this is how to land, start from there." We taught her the fundamental skills, and I don't know, she became All American, she became Olympic gold medalist Olympian, but happened to be very, very open-minded; coaching a dedicated person helped.

And at that time, another part is when women moved to NCAA, immediately fundamental skill in spring and summer time was prohibited. However, AIW, that was organization, woman's organization, they didn't prohibit it to teach some fundamental in spring and summer time. So, I could, we could teach her fundamental skills. Now finally, this is interesting, I believe last year NCAA changed regulation and they can work on the fundamental a few hours a week, even spring and summer time, which is excellent idea. To teach the discipline, schedule your life in spring and summer time, it's not going to hurt their spring academics. Probably other way around. So, that's why it's just on the paper: president council or something decided no, nothing in the spring and summertime.

It doesn't work that way, so I am so glad that they can teach a little more, because Mr. Pete Newell and I believe the teaching part is very poor in the United States, compared to global coaching, that Mr. Pete Newell says. But luckily we could have taught from how to run, how to stop, how to jump; you can jump, you don't need to scare to landing, type of thing. So, it's really unbelievable teaching method I inherited from great mind. That is my treasure, I had—I am lucky person to have greatest teacher.

[0:55:21]

**CP:** What was your approach to recruiting?

**AH:** Ah, recruiting is not my—so, I said what I'm going to do to competing against like Berkeley, Stanford and wonderful sunny country. I decided OSU, because of the supporting system from professor—actually we had a couple professor took a couple student under the wing, and we thought academically a couple students are not going to make it, but because of the counseling, genuine counseling from all of the Educational Opportunities Program, couple of professors, because of them we could help some student to graduate. So, that's my selling point about OSU. Of course we have Linus Pauling and everything, however, you can—this is the best environment; not party town like some southern schools, but good environment to study and really loving people at the school, you know, Athletic Department, school and community. So, you really can develop your potential to the maximum. That was my recruiting tool, only I had—but that's good enough for me. However, recruiting is most important at a collegiate level, but it's not my favorite thing. That's why I was amazed and I thanked the current coaching staff member to assemble this phenomenal, talented team. Yes, that's the most difficult, important thing, to win.

**CP:** You had a lot of success in those early years. You won the National Women's Invitational Tournament twice?

**AH:** That's right, when we went to, you know, yes.

**CP:** What was your sort of style or play that you were coaching in those early years to get the program off the ground and to have the success these early years?

**AH:** Yes. If we have less talent, I was very much defensive-minded coach, and of course utilizing defense to more like full-court fast breaking, fast break. Then we can kind of neutralize lack of talent a little bit. Of course Carol Menken, we've got Carol Menken; we need offense to score. And all, my emphasis, my strength is teaching the fundamental skills too, and play as a team, not one, one superstar. Probably—after I didn't watch basketball couple of years, I came back to again watching basketball; three-point shooting and one-to-one driving skills are very much emphasized and improved. However, finally NBA, standing around and passing around, which will come back, influence the college level, too. However, I like to see passing to the moving person. In other words, we have to teach how to move to get open without the ball, then we can implement out of the passing game, has to come back, my opinion. Otherwise, it's not as interesting. We have five people on the floor, if you go one-one and taking the circus shot, then what, how about rest of the four people, you know? So, that's one thing, and also I like to see more of the full-court, more passing game.

[1:00:21]

**CP:** On defense? The pressing game?

**AH:** Defensively, also offensively. I like to see offensively get the ball, then pass down. Immediately pass to person. Like Ralph Miller said "we don't want to put the ball on the floor when we get the ball," you know, pass, pass. And before defense set up, we have so many opportunity to get open and to take an easy shot type of—we have to play too many games, I don't know we can be conditions that well or not, but so to me, right now I started to watch basketball, I am a little bit hungry to have conversation with good basketball mind, but I was very frustrated. I went to men's team; "how about Duke, how about this team?" and I went NBA championship series, "where is good basketball?" So, still I am exercising my mind, so I'm a little bit hungry to discuss about good basketball.

And yes, three-point shot, one-to-one driving very much improved, but the other part are missing, such as moving, passing, getting open to play the very good system, including excellent defense and excellent full-court basketball type of thing. So, I'm looking for the good basketball mind to discuss. So, occasionally Bill Walton is doing the caller, when he doesn't talk too much; honest basketball conversation comes out and I enjoy it, and the other day I saw Bobby Knight was the caller for the NWIT championship game, which was Stanford against Miami. Yeah, his mind is still coaching, so it was fun to watch. Sometimes caller commentary doesn't stimulate me good enough sometimes, so I was still coming back—so right now, during the season when I'm watching the player, I have only urge to teach the fundamental. When basketball season is gone, I get busy with something.

So, Pete was bugging me, you know, "not enough teaching, over-coaching in the USA," you know, it come [points at head]. Pete Newell passed away of course, already, ninety-two years old. So, my mind is still in basketball. Other part I don't miss anything, but I'm excited to cheer for OSU team and I'm so happy it happened when still I'm alive.

**CP:** How did you organize your assistant coaches and divide up duties as the head coach?

**AH:** I first, my style of leadership is words. First finding out what their strengths, and I am more than happy to delegate whatever his strengths. And like my last career, I have Michael Abraham, who was very good talking to like media people. I didn't mind him to talk to all the media people. Ah, you go over there, talk to those people, type of thing. And first assistant coach was understanding the we had very unique method, one to ten, and deliver to student. Sometimes better than me, I let him coach the fundamental and we had wonderful time together. So usually, I take a look at assistant coach's strengths and let them do whatever they can do the best, and I kind of felt that something worked, you know, that type of leadership.

[1:05:12]

However, as far as basketball system counts, I was very much clear about it. And, so that's my probably leadership style, and because as a head coach to help assistant coach become true, truly then to love sport of basketball, learn how to enjoy basketball, finding out the fun and wherever they like to do, help them to go. It's one of my role, I thought. So, that's my kind of style of leadership. I'm not dictator of a micromanaged person. So, whatever we can work together, you know, it depends on our assistant coach. It's fine with me, type of style, probably.

**CP:** You had a couple of really good years in 1982, '83, you made the NCAA Tournament for the first time, and you were also named conference Coach of the Year that year. You went 24-6 that season.

**AH:** Okay. Yeah, only we played third, and also you know all this type of thing, never dream about it, but I don't know which year but I was chosen one of the seven nominees of the Coach of the Year, and I remember we went to New York. Carol was one of the nominees of the Wade Trophy Award, which is Player of the Year Award, so we both went to New York. So, we went shopping to the tall people's store and he came to the size one or two people store, and we had a great time. I forgot what, I don't remember, but that was fun experience. So, that was the honor, to be selected from this region, not from conference, no, and it was fun. But the paper was sitting in a desk, so Sylvia found out, then she got money from President Office, she decided to send me to New York, but otherwise I didn't think it a big deal. So, paper was in my desk; Sylvia scold me about that situation. And also, USC Coach Linda Sharp won the National Champion, and after that she was assigned the selected team, national women, junior kind of selected team coach to compete in the Jones Cup in Taipei, Taiwan.

She chose me as assistant coach and she delegated me as a defensive coach: "you do the defensive part." So I don't know, I forgot which year it was, so I went to coach selected team, and Korean team had a good team. They sent the senior team, so they won the championship. We couldn't win. At that time ABA USA really liked my coaching, and after that, couple years in the law, asked me to change it to US citizen, because we got stuck at San Francisco Airport [laughs] everybody have to wait for me. So, they asked me a couple years in a row, send me the letter, "please, change your nationality so that we write, put you in the coaches' pool, national coaches' pool." But I wasn't interested. I thought now; before Russian was dominate in the world, but any good coach USA team we can win, in the world. I'd rather develop the excellent student player from all over the world and teach those player become good Olympian, that is my interest. So, I didn't say anything. Sylvia probably didn't know I received that letter [laughs] so otherwise I was scold, you know.

[1:10:15]

So, I became eventually, financial reason, my husband asked me to become American citizen, so I am American. I have American citizenship. That time I wasn't interesting. So, not too many people knew about it. I kept secret [laughs]. The letter went in my desk, I think. So, those were, if I think about now, it was such an honor, and it happened more than my imagination or my will. I was lucky person, right? So, I like to see at OSU all of the coaches, assistant coaches and the students' dream come true. We like to be the one of the powerhouse, and PAC-12 bring the national championship to the west coast, I'd like to see still, you know, I am alive. Yeah.

**CP:** Well, I mentioned the '82, '83 team made the tournament; the '83, '84 team also made the NCAA Tournament.

**AH:** Okay, who was playing? Okay, this generation I forgot. I think the team who went to Sweet 16 wasn't Carol Menken's team.

**CP:** Right, they came a little bit later.

**AH:** Yes, little later.

**CP:** The player's I'm wondering about are Judy Spoelstra—

**AH:** Yes. Robin Clark...

**CP:** And Juli Coleman.

**AH:** Yeah.

**CP:** Juli Coleman?

**AH:** That era we went to Sweet 16 and we beat UCLA just after they won the National Champion. We beat them in Seattle, then we went to regional. They got beat by Long Beach State, if I remember. And my last team had the potential to be Elite 8. I think after season was over, I think next season, pre-season, I believe, they were ranked when Judy they were ranked eighth or something. But I was—somebody can do it, then that's fine with me, and I was happy to leave the decent team, before I leave. So—and I had to take care of my husband. I could have take care of my husband three years without being coach, which was just, you know, right thing.

**CP:** What was it like in 1986, the year OSU entered the PAC-10? What was the impact of that, do you think?

**AH:** PAC-10, the transition time, competition is high but we have to, you know, we right against good team and we have to win anyway, why not in the conference? But when we—this is a little bit complain; my athletic director didn't like that excellent team, to build excellent team like these two Swedish kids are already made commitments to come to OSU, he didn't want any foreign student, even OSU is international university, we have thousand, you know, at least a thousand international student, and I am foreign too. The America was built by recruiting, attracted the best minds in the world, that's the way USA became great country, right? But he didn't want foreigner.

[1:14:31]

He told me, then I didn't know what to do, but I brought student anyway, which was a no-no to him. All department people never, never spoke up to him. That was the air in that department. Number 2, I did it against him. That time University of Washington was powerhouse and we are building up the program, and after University of Washington we are chosen to be on the national TV exposure team. And my AD said "no." I don't know why he said no. So, that's a heck of—I mean, very important opportunity and that's we are—in the in the down the future, that has to happen. So, I couldn't back off. I called PAC-10 office, three other teams made arrangement and we played at Washington, national TV, televised game. And we won, against Washington, at Washington. That was a no-no. Then, kind of situation is getting shaky, so now we have a PAC-12 network that was direction we looked for it, right? That was no-no. Number three, the day everyone said I should get a lawyer, that time advanced university, coaches had lawyer to negotiate the coach's salary. But I got a lawyer, I didn't bring in the very fighting, tough lawyer; instead I brought very soft-spoken negotiation lawyer, and he asked my personnel file. The very day he was mad and he said, in December, he said "we do not renew the contract."

So, I was very chicken and didn't spoke up to much, but whatever we have to do right thing to make the progress. I couldn't just say yes. I am a yes person, yes man, but that I couldn't do that, you know, recruiting the foreign student and put the team on the national televised game. I couldn't back off. So, that was a [claps hands once, with finality].

**CP:** Wow.

**AH:** But it's okay. It was a big picture, one of the action we had to get attention from central administration, change the culture and direction of the Athletic Department, and I contributed a little bit, so I'm happy about it. And I protected university and program, too. So, I don't have any regret. I am very happy.

**CP:** You mentioned a couple Swedes, I'm interested in talking about them, Tanja Kostic especially, how did you get to know her in the first place? What was the recruitment pitch, I guess, to get her to come to Oregon State?

**AH:** Okay, now I forgot, which one came first?

**CP:** Well, it was Tanja and Anette Mollerstrom were, I think they were the same class.

**AH:** Yes. I sent one of the assistant coach to European championship. Then, that time he found it, well, if you remember Danny Evans played in Sweden. So, those two connection, because of the two connection I went to Amsterdam also, myself. So, from—I forgot if Danny Evans—I think other assistant coach went to Europe and watched European team. That's the way I believe he found Tanja. I've forgotten that time, which way it worked, but those two connections very important, very strong connection in other country. And trust us, very, very important. So, I went to Europe too, of course, to recruit. I don't want to drive, I don't want to go to big city, but I went everywhere for recruiting. I went to Watts, I went to Detroit, I went to Flint, Michigan, wherever, you know. The good student is there, I have to go.

[1:20:13]

So, that's the way we started. I think I sent first person was—he became very close to a German junior national team coach and we became very close to a Swedish national team coach, especially when Danny came. And right until Danny came, we couldn't knock the door in the big time high school coach in like Chicago. And when Danny Evans came, because of his personality, genuineness, I was invited the south side of the Chicago from famous black high school coaches to their home. We went restaurant in the south side of Chicago, soul food restaurant type of thing. So, it's whole teamwork. What kind of assistant coaches you have, this is teamwork. And also, what kind of support we get from Educational Opportunity Program, academic advisor, professors, everything is teamwork.

**CP:** What was it like coaching Tanja? I think that she wound up being the program's all-time leading score.

**AH:** Yes, is she?

**CP:** I think so.

**AH:** Okay. Carol only played three years, see. That's—those two Swedish student are most disciplined, best conditioned student. Why that type of quality human my athletic director don't want to have? Hardest worker and genuine heart. Genuine heart, you know? Both of them are such a quality human being. So, just as university's international university, I have a couple Canadian student too. So, you think I should say "no foreigner?" I should say that? Who am I?

**CP:** Yeah. Another student on that team, an international student, was Boky Vidic, who made a big impact as well.

**AH:** Yes. Probably what I did my best was she had huge transition, realization she had—she, after sophomore year, she couldn't—she really had a hard time. She wanted to quit the school and she even didn't want to live, because she couldn't accept she was a lesbian. So, I did in my power best as I can, then she accept herself first and she became very open, helped lesbian community and everything. And also, I had to move to international program. She was, starving kid [?] when she was seven years old, coming from her background, in such a background, so she knows the pain in herself. So, other people came and talked to me, came to my little booth over the international program office, and concerned about how I am doing over there, I was doing, so she's one of the student and invited me to the home and introduced me her partner. So, that transition I was with her. That's probably most important thing for her. She was fun. Crazy, [laughs] but that, I hope I could have helped her, that transition. Those are important for me.

[1:25:11]

**CP:** For sure.

**AH:** Yeah.

**CP:** I want to ask a little more about Ralph Miller, he was at the interview at the very beginning. I'm sure you got to know him over time.

**AH:** Yes. In the whole department at that time, women sport's a no-no. He's the one just doing all—told me "Aki, I was influenced by my mother, watching my mother play three-on-three basketball I started to become interested in basketball." That time his daughter into OSU as a freshman, so he's the only person I can say, honestly, open-minded to receive the women's sports. So, he was very secure, that's why I loved him. He had very clear mind and he is not afraid to tell all football booster, or men's supporter "hey, I have enough money, why don't you cut a check for Aki?" People went "what?!" So, and I think he said "okay, this woman can coach," so that's why probably Sylvia chose me as a coach. So, he's very much responsible to bring me to OSU. Of course Sylvia had the guts to try me.

So, I was lucky having Ralph over there, in that department. Otherwise every men's athletic people are just scared about receiving women's sports, and he wasn't. Only one person. And we are pretty much similar in a way, playing good defense and going for the full-court basketball type of style and more passing-oriented, movement, passing oriented basketball style. So we, you know, little terminology was different, style was different little bit, but basically immediately, so I remember. Of course, daughter was there. We won the first conference champion in Montana, we arrived the coliseum about midnight; here he is waiting for the team, greeting the team, Ralph was. Of course, they have to pick up Shannon, their daughter. Very fair person, but tell you what it is, you know, very honest, fair. Wonderful mind. I liked him. I was lucky.

**CP:** Well, the last thing I want to ask you about, we've sort of touched on it a bit throughout this interview, but this was a special year for women's basketball at OSU and the program is very strong right now under Scott Rueck, and that must be very gratifying for you to see that.

**AH:** Yeah, it happened, you know, I was told, thankfully it happened when I was still alive, but we are not satisfied, you know. I saw we are not satisfied. I said "Scott, we beat Stanford four times, which I could have done, but we don't want to be just a giants killer, we want to be giants, and it's possible with you guys recruiting ability. However, strong recruiter left for U of O, I'm a little bit sad, but because of this championship, we like to get going, and as a conference I have dream too. You know, two teams constantly Elite 8 from PAC-12, and top teams should be, if not the national champion, always in the final four. That I'd like to see from PAC-12. We have great commissioner, very aggressive commissioner, too, so I have dream still, with them.

**CP:** Well Aki, I want to thank you very much for this, this has been—

**AH:** I don't know if this interview is good enough or not.

**CP:** No, it's been great. I really appreciate it, thank you very much.

**AH:** Oh, thank you.

[1:30:24]