



Paul Valenti Oral History Interview, February 24, 2014

Title

“Looking Back with Coach Valenti”

Date

February 24, 2014

Location

Valenti residence, Corvallis, Oregon.

Summary

In the interview, Valenti discusses his upbringing in the San Francisco Bay Area, his family background and his experiences at Tamalpais High School. From there he shares his memories of his arrival at Oregon State College in 1938, his life as a member of Slat's Gill's basketball teams, and his recollection of campus culture in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Valenti then notes his military service during World War II before detailing his return to Corvallis, his career coaching baseball, basketball and tennis, and his memories of several individuals important to the history of OSU athletics, including Ralph Coleman and Ralph Miller.

Interviewee

Paul Valenti

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

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

Transcript

Chris Petersen: Okay Paul, could you please introduce yourself, tell us your name, and today's date?

Paul Valenti: Okay. Paul Valenti.

CP: February—

PV: February 24th.

CP: So you were born in 1920, in San Francisco?

PV: What's that, sir?

CP: You were born in 1920 in San Francisco, and you grew up in Mill Valley? Is that right?

PV: I was born in San Francisco.

CP: And you grew up in Mill Valley, California?

PV: Well, I went to high school there, at Tamalpais, Tamalpais High School in Mill Valley. My old town was a town by the name of Larkspur, in Marin County.

CP: And what was that town like?

PV: What's that?

CP: What was Larkspur like?

PV: Larkspur like? Oh, it was a little town, a nice, very residential town.

CP: What were your parents' backgrounds? What were your parents' backgrounds? Your mother and father?

PV: My mother and father were both born in Italy, and my mother worked for the Queen of Italy for ten years. And my dad was a wood carver.

CP: What did your mom do for the Queen of Italy?

PV: Well, why, she was just a lady in waiting for the Queen of Italy.

CP: And what brought them to the United States?

PV: Well, they both came over here. They both came over here with the intentions of getting married, not to them, but to other people, and it just didn't work out that way.

CP: Oh, really?

PV: They got together and then—

CP: Did they know each other in Italy?

PV: No, no.

CP: So they met in San Francisco?

PV: Yeah, they met in San Francisco.

CP: You have an older brother as well?

PV: I had a brother, an older brother.

CP: His name was Val?

PV: Val, yeah.

CP: What were your hobbies as a boy?

PV: Athletics. Played a lot of—I used to play a lot of tennis, and then the basketball and everything.

CP: Uh-huh. And what was basketball like back then?

PV: Basketball then?

CP: Yeah.

PV: Well, it was, you had to play. It was a good, tough game like it is today, you know.

CP: Uh-huh. Who were your role models as a boy?

PV: Huh?

CP: Who were your role models, your heroes?

PV: Hank Lusetti, Stanford.

CP: Basketball player?

PV: Yeah, yeah, All-American. One of the top collegiate basketball players of all time. Hank Lusetti.

CP: You also had a stuttering problem when you were a boy?

PV: What?

CP: A stuttering problem? A speech impediment?

PV: Stuttering problem? Oh yeah, you bet! I used to always—guys used to always kid me about it. "Come on, Dago, spit it out, will you!" [Laughs]

CP: [Laughs]

PV: Oh, it was a problem.

CP: How did you overcome that?

PV: Huh?

CP: How did you overcome your stuttering problem?

PV: I don't know. No idea.

CP: You just—

PV: It just happened, yeah. It just happened.

CP: Your Italian heritage is very important to you?

PV: What was that?

CP: Being Italian?

PV: Yes, very

CP: It's very important to you.

PV: Yes.

CP: Were there specific bits of being Italian that you remember growing up, that were important for your family?

PV: No.

CP: Holidays, or a particular food, or anything like that?

PV: No, it was just, I had a lot of fun with it, a lot of fun with it.

Dominic Cusimano: Family's important.

PV: Huh?

DC: Family is important to Italians.

PV: Oh, yeah, yeah.

CP: Absolutely. Your father worked at San Simeon Castle during the Depression?

PV: He was what?

CP: San Simeon Castle, your father, during the Great Depression?

DC: Your dad did the wood carvings at San Simeon?

PV: Oh yeah, yeah. He was very fortunate to get on, with a friend of his who had a job with—what the heck is that? Anyhow, he was a woodcarver, and he got on with a good friend of his who had a woodcarving business, and was kept on during the Depression, and worked out real good.

CP: So he was an artistic woodcarver, like an artisan?

PV: Yeah, yeah. My father always wanted—he wanted my brother and I to learn the woodcarving business [0:05:02], and, "Can't do it, Pa. I've got a game."

DC: [Laughs]

PV: "Got to go to the playground."

CP: You had a job at Twin Cities Fuel and Ice Company?

PV: Yes, Twin Cities Fuel and Ice Company, yeah.

CP: What did you do there?

PV: Huh?

CP: What did you do there?

PV: During the vacation time in school, from school. During the summer time, I'd deliver ice, and during the winter I'd deliver coal and wood to people. And it was a good job. Twin Cities Fuel and Ice, yeah.

CP: Uh-huh. It sounds like your family wasn't too deeply impacted by the Great Depression.

PV: What's that?

CP: It sounds like your family was not too deeply impacted by the Great Depression.

PV: No, no. We were very fortunate, very fortunate, yeah.

CP: What was high school like for you?

PV: High school? Well, not too good to start with, and then I started getting a reputation as a basketball player, you know, an athlete. And my good friend started—my good friend started; he told me, "You'd better pick it up, Dago, because you might have a chance to go, to go to school somewhere with your basketball ability." So I kind of—the principal told me that I'd have a hard time making it, you know. And, but so I kind of bore down a little bit, started going to school, becoming more, more—putting a lot more importance on it, so.

CP: On academics?

PV: Yeah. So then I started getting feelers from others, from schools, about going on to college.

CP: So what was your recruitment process like, when you were being recruited for schools?

PV: Well, Ed Lewis was an All-American at Oregon State, a good friend of Slats Gills, and he recommended me to Slats, and they started the process. And I had to bear down a little bit, you know, go to school more, and put my mind on my business more, and it worked out fine.

CP: University of Oregon wanted you, too, didn't they?

PV: Huh?

CP: University of Oregon, they wanted you too, didn't they?

PV: What's that, sir?

CP: University of Oregon, they were recruiting you as well, were they not?

PV: Who were?

DC: The Ducks, the Ducks.

PV: The Ducks, oh yeah. Yeah, the Ducks were after me pretty good, yeah.

CP: Uh-huh. So why did you decide to come to Oregon State?

PV: Oh, because of Slats Gill, mostly. Because of Slats Gill and also Ed Lewis's recommendation. And I just decided. I'm sure a lot of people said, "You'll have a tough time." But I bore down on it, and made it through.

CP: How did you know Ed Lewis?

PV: Huh?

CP: How did you know Ed Lewis?

PV: How did I get to know Ed Lewis? Well, he was a good friend, a real close friend of Slats Gill's, and when Ed recommended me to Oregon State and to Slats, well, we became very close then.

CP: So what did you think of Oregon State and Corvallis when you came, your first impression?

PV: Well it was different; it was different, yeah. It was a lot different. Corvallis was a lot different then, and I came up here. I came up here and spent quite a bit of time in Corvallis before deciding what to do, and then finally decided I'd better stay here and go along with what Ed Lewis recommended, you know. So I just came to Oregon State.

CP: So how was the transition to college for you? Was that difficult?

PV: Yes, it was difficult, when they said you'd better bear down or you're liable to—but it worked out great. It worked out great. I became—I came up here. I came up here and came to Corvallis [0:10:05], and never went back. Never went back to the Bay Area at all, just stayed here the rest of my life.

CP: Yeah. Tell me about Slats Gill.

PV: Slats Gill was a great person, a very dedicated man to his profession, not just as a basketball coach, but he was very dedicated and to giving his people, his players, a rounded education, where basketball was very important, but there was a lot of other things that were as important as being a basketball player. It was a great experience, great experience.

CP: What was his personality like?

PV: Slats?

CP: Yeah.

PV: Very dedicated, very serious-minded, and put basketball in a very important position in a young man's life, and expected him to appreciate the fact that they have that ability, and to have a game like basketball have a lot to do with their future. He was a tough son of a gun, boy.

CP: What were practices like?

PV: Huh?

CP: Practices?

PV: Very serious, no fooling around. Very serious, and he dominated the practice. You went along with what he professed, you know, and he was a tough guy. Tough guy.

CP: What kind of style of basketball did he coach?

PV: What's that?

CP: What was his style as a basketball coach?

PV: A lot of control. A lot of control, and he ran the show.

CP: Uh-huh.

PV: He ran the show, and it was just a great experience for a young guy.

CP: So the team played in Langton Hall back then?

PV: Huh?

CP: You played your games in Langton Hall, in the men's gymnasium? Langton Hall?

PV: Langton Hall, that was the old men's gym, little PE department.

CP: That's where the games were held?

PV: Yeah, that's where the games were held, too.

CP: What was that like?

PV: Tough. We never lost very many in there. Tough place to play, boy. The old men's gym, tough son of a gun, boy.

CP: What made it tough?

PV: Well, it was small, small, and didn't hold very many people, you know, but a real active crowd, and very, very involved. They'd get very involved in the game, and it was a tough place to have to play for visiting teams coming in. Tough place to play.

CP: Yeah, yeah. So, what were some of the stand-up memories of your playing days, as a player at OSC?

PV: It was so long ago that—it was so long ago now, you know. We just had a lot of tough games in there, especially against Oregon, Washington. Well, everybody—everybody was tough. Everybody was tough, and we had to bear down and do our job.

CP: You played against the Oregon team that won the national championship, is that correct?

PV: Yeah.

CP: The Tall Firs.

PV: Yeah.

CP: Do you remember anything about playing against them?

PV: Oh, very difficult, very difficult. I didn't have a very good reputation down there, either.

CP: [Laughs]

PV: They'd get on me pretty good. Great competition, though, great competition.

CP: Were they playing at MacArthur Court at that point?

PV: Yeah, yeah.

CP: Another tough place to play.

PV: Tough place to play, boy, I'll tell you. You bet your life.

CP: So what was it like to be a student athlete when you were in college? Very different from now, I'm sure. [0:15:01]

PV: Yeah, I guess so. With Slats, it was very serious, very serious, and he appreciated what basketball and athletics had done for the young people. And he was very difficult to play for—very tough to play for. He just made you do your job, and that was important, very important. But we had a big responsibility as a basketball player at Oregon State University. So it was a great experience, great experience for us.

CP: Did they have a training table then?

PV: Yes. Uh-huh. We used to eat down at Wagner's Restaurant.

DC: [Laughs]

CP: Really?

PV: Yeah. Wagner's Restaurant was our training table.

CP: Was that just dinner, or was it every meal?

PV: Huh?

CP: Was that just dinner, or every meal?

PV: Every meal, you bet, yeah. Yeah. Quite an experience.

CP: There was a good football team here when you were in school.

PV: What's that?

CP: The football team was good when you were in school, too. In 1939, they went 9, 1 and 1. The football team?

PV: Yeah.

CP: Do you remember that team?

PV: Oh, heck, yeah. We had a good football team, boy. We were tough. We had good football teams, yeah.

CP: And they played at Bell Field?

PV: Huh?

CP: Bell Field?

PV: Yeah, Bell Field.

CP: What was that like?

PV: Oh, that was something. It was like playing out in the—that was like playing out in the farm, the farmyards. It's about that.

DC: [Laughs]

PV: Yeah, that was really something, Bell Field. And then they had the baseball fields right adjacent to it, so you could go and watch the football game, and there might be a baseball game going on, too, so you could watch them both, you know? It was a great place, great place to go to school, especially with Slats in charge of your program. He'd be serious and dedicated, and how the thing was very important to him for the educational process of his athletes. He was very serious.

CP: Where did you live when you were a student?

PV: What's that?

CP: Where did you live?

PV: Lived in a fraternity, Alpha Sigma Phi.

CP: What was fraternity like?

PV: Oh, it was good. Very different.

CP: Yeah?

PV: Different. And then my dad and my wife's father are both Italians, and they came up one time during the summer to visit us, so we put them up in the Alpha Sigma Phi house. This one morning, they came out after me; we were already out. My dad and Joe came out, and they came out of the fraternity. The Corvallis police was driving by Jefferson. They saw my dad and my wife's dad come out. And they stopped. They said, "What are you fellows doing coming Alpha Sigma Phi house like that?" [Laughs] They were stopped by the police. It was kind of interesting.

CP: Did you have a job during college?

PV: Huh?

CP: Did you have a job during college?

PV: Yeah, we had to work on scholarship. We worked on athletic fields.

CP: As maintenance?

PV: As maintenance, yeah. And it was great experience.

CP: Did you have any particular place that you hung out or socialized, or was it mostly the fraternity?

PV: What's that?

CP: Your social life?

PV: Mostly wrapped around the fraternity, you know.

CP: So you went to all of the dances, that sort of thing?

PV: Yeah. Yeah.

CP: Do you have a memory of the attack on Pearl Harbor? Do you remember that day? [0:20:01]

PV: Oh, I do. I'm sure I've got others. That was a long time ago.

DC: Do you remember where you were when you heard about it, Paul?

PV: What's that?

DC: Do you remember where you were when you heard about the attack? Were you in the fraternity house when you heard it?

PV: Oh, yeah. I was in the frat house then.

DC: Yeah.

PV: Yeah. I don't know what the heck happened that day. We were drafted then, I guess, you know. That I remember.

CP: Well, you joined the Navy in 1942.

PV: Yeah, I joined the Navy. Yeah.

CP: You were originally assigned as a dental technician?

PV: Huh?

CP: A dental technician?

PV: Dental tech, yeah. I was a dental tech, yeah.

CP: How did that happen?

PV: That was—I don't know; it just happened.

CP: [Laughs] So what did you have to do in that, that role?

PV: We cleaned teeth, assisted the dentist. Did a lot of cleaning of the athletes' teeth, and they used to, "Hey Dago," he says, "How about cleaning my teeth?" "Oh, no, I can't do that. It's just supposed to be for medical reasons." And then I thought a little bit, and I said, "Geez, I might want to do something about this." So every time a guy would ask me about cleaning his teeth, I said, "What do you do? What's your job?" And the guy would say, "Well, I kind of head up the choosing of guys to work different jobs in the department for me." I said, "Well, I tell you, you take care of me when it comes time for looking for somebody to work for you. You know, think of me a little bit. Think of me and we'll work it out some way." So I got a good deal going.

CP: Yeah?

PV: But yeah, I'd get a guy who would have a job to do, and, "Hey, Paul, you can work for me. Work for me." So it worked out real good for me.

CP: So did you switch jobs at some point?

PV: Yeah, yeah.

CP: What did you switch to?

PV: Yeah. Well, no, the guy would have a job to do on the calendar, athletic department fields, or something like that, and they'd, "Come on, Paul. I've got a set-up here. Why don't you work?" So it worked out good.

CP: So were you cleaning teeth for the most part for your whole time in the Navy?

PV: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

CP: And you were on the USS Chenango?

PV: Huh?

CP: Chenango? Chenango?

DC: Chenango?

PV: Chenango, yeah. Yeah, that was three converted oil tankers were made into aircraft carriers, and I was on one of those, Chenango. It was a converted oil tanker. But it had a good duty, good duty.

CP: You were involved in battle?

PV: Huh?

CP: You were involved in battle?

PV: Yeah.

CP: The Battle of Leyte Gulf.

PV: We got in a couple of skirmishes, yeah. I was in the South Pacific for four years on this carrier, and it was a great experience, great experience.

CP: Any standout memories from that?

PV: Not especially, except for the fact that I was in the South Pacific for four years. Great part of the world. It was beautiful. I was just thinking it'd be great to have my family come over here and spend some time, because it's such a outstanding part of the world, yeah.

CP: You played basketball with Frank Lusetti?

PV: Yeah, yeah.

CP: What was that like?

PV: Oh, that was fun. I was the only enlisted man on the team. All of the other guys were officers. "Get over here, Valenti."

CP: [Laughs]

PV: [Laughs] "Get over here Valenti." "Okay." It was fun. [0:25:00]

DC: Do you remember what Frank Lusetti was like, Paul?

PV: Good guy.

DC: Good guy, yeah?

PV: Nice fellow, yeah. Very humble guy.

DC: Yeah?

PV: Yeah. Played like hell, boy.

DC: Good basketball player, yeah?

PV: That man could play.

CP: You met Francine in 1945 at a Christmas party?

PV: Huh?

CP: You met Fran?

PV: Yeah.

CP: At a Christmas party.

PV: At a Christmas party, yeah, and her sister had just gotten married to a really close friend of mine. And we got acquainted, and then I had to go back. I had to go back to the South Pacific again. I went back there for—I went back there four different times, and we stayed together, you know. Got acquainted. It was nice, yeah.

CP: You got married in February, 1946?

PV: Was it? [Counts under breath]

CP: So, after you were discharged from the Navy, you came back to OSU?

PV: Yeah.

CP: What made you decide to do that?

PV: Well, hell, I was on a scholarship then, you know? And they just, Oregon State wanted me, and with Ed Lewis' background with Oregon State, and I had gotten acquainted with Slats. Anyhow, it all worked out that, when I came up here—I came up here in '48, I think it was—but anyhow, I never went back.

CP: Yeah.

PV: I just stayed here and never went back.

DC: You promised Slat's when you left for the war that you would come back and finish.

PV: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: Yeah.

PV: Oh, it's so long ago now, too, you know. Geez.

CP: You coached baseball?

PV: Huh?

CP: You coached baseball?

PV: Of course, coached freshman baseball, yeah.

CP: And was Ralph Coleman the varsity coach then?

PV: Was the varsity coach then, yeah.

CP: Can you tell me about Ralph Coleman?

PV: Oh, he was a character. He was different. There wasn't much—in those days, they had freshman baseball, varsity baseball, and there wasn't that much connection, you know? Because he ran his program, and I'd just run the freshman program. And he never interfered with anywhere, and just let me run the program. It was fun. It was fun.

CP: You say he was a character?

PV: Huh?

CP: He was a character?

PV: Oh yeah, he was a—Colie was a real character, yeah.

CP: How so?

PV: Oh, he was just a different guy, very independent. Old Colie, you know, very independent, good fellow.

CP: You went to Omaha in 1953?

PV: Yeah.

CP: Do you remember that trip?

PV: Oh yeah, great trip, great show. We played good, too, boy.

CP: Yeah.

PV: How'd we do back there? We won, didn't we?

CP: I don't think we won.

DC: I think, did you win one game?

PV: One game, I think. I forget now, exactly. Then I went back there one time before that, before when we went, and they just took me back with them. Went back. It was a great show. Omaha was a great show.

DC: You remember how hot it was.

PV: Huh?

DC: You've told me how hot it was.

PV: Oh, geez, hotter than hell back there. God almighty! Terrible, terrible.

DC: Do you remember what you did in the dugout in between innings? You told me you guys cooled off in between innings, during your games out there—had your feet in buckets of ice water.

PV: Yeah. [Laughs] Oh, geez. So goddamn, so gosh darn long ago now, you know, you forget a lot of those things. But it was a great show.

CP: Do you remember the opening of the basketball coliseum?

PV: Huh?

CP: The basketball coliseum in 1949?

PV: What about it?

CP: The opening?

PV: Opening?

CP: Yeah.

DC: Gill Coliseum.

PV: Yeah, you know. It was just a great, great change.

CP: Must have made a great impact.

PV: Oh, big impact, yes, great show.

CP: Uh-huh.

PV: Great place to play. [0:30:00]

CP: You were coaching freshman basketball in the 1950s?

PV: Yeah.

CP: Tell me about that.

PV: Well, it was competitive as heck, you know. Especially against Oregon, yeah. It was fun. It was fun; it was tough. I had to do my job, too, because Slats was right there, you know. Slats was very determined, and expected you to do your job and to carry on, pretty much like the same attitude as the players had. And this was a great experience, really.

CP: What was your coaching style?

PV: Huh?

CP: What was your coaching style?

PV: Oh, get after them pretty good. Get after them pretty good, yeah.

CP: Did you emphasize defense?

PV: Oh, yeah. Yeah, worked like hell on that.

CP: Was that the same with Slats?

PV: Yeah.

CP: So that was sort of the foundation?

PV: Oh, yeah, yeah. Yes, yes. Yeah, we'd get after their defense pretty tough.

CP: Were you involved in recruiting at that point?

PV: Yeah. Yeah.

CP: So did you travel around?

PV: Yeah, travelled around the country looking for people.

CP: Was it mostly the northwest, or did you go all over?

PV: Oh, we'd hear about a guy and Slats would send me out on him. Go check him out, you know? It was just a—well, like the way it is now, it's just, why not? Heard about a guy, you went and checked him out. And, yeah, I went all over.

CP: Were there any particular coaches, high school coaches or high school programs, that there was a—?

PV: What was that, now?

CP: Were there any particular high school programs that there was a close connection with? Like, the coach there would tell you about a player that you should look into?

PV: Yeah, oh, yeah. They'd call. Yeah, they'd call.

CP: Uh-huh.

PV: And I'd make a run out. I'd go take a trip and watch them, you know?

CP: Do you remember Norm Monroe?

PV: Who?

CP: Norm Monroe?

PV: Norm Monroe, yeah. Norm Monroe.

CP: He was the first black basketball player at OSU.

PV: Well, the first basketball player was Charlie White.

CP: Well, Norm played for just a little bit. He was mostly—

PV: Huh?

CP: Norm played for just a little bit. He was on the track team mostly.

PV: Say what?

CP: Norm was just—he only played a little bit, he was mostly on the track team.

PV: Yeah.

DC: Norm. Norm was a track guy mostly.

PV: Yeah, yeah. The first black guy was Charlie White.

CP: Who you recruited?

PV: Who I recruited, and still keep in contact with him.

CP: Yeah.

PV: We call each other regularly. Good person, boy, I'll tell you. He took on his responsibility of being the first black, you know, and we got along great. He was great. Great person.

CP: How was that for him, in Corvallis?

PV: Oh, he handled it great. Went along with the program, that's all, you know.

CP: Was he treated pretty well?

PV: Yeah, yeah.

CP: Yeah.

PV: He was respected. And he played on a good basketball team, too. Had a hell of a basketball team when he played.

CP: So you became head coach in 1964?

PV: What's that?

CP: You became head coach in 1964? You became head basketball coach in 1964?

PV: '64 was it.

CP: Do you remember how that happened?

PV: Well, Slats retired.

CP: And the athletic director just promoted you?

PV: Yeah, yeah. There was no question about it, as I recall, you know.

CP: That must have been pretty exciting.

PV: Oh, yeah. Quite an experience, boy. Following Slats Gill, you know.

CP: Did he give you any advice?

PV: He just—he just left me alone.

CP: Did he stay in Corvallis?

PV: Yeah, yeah. [0:35:00] He just left me alone, you know. Did my job, too. Yeah, he was a interesting person, boy.

CP: Uh-huh.

PV: Interesting guy. Very dedicated to his profession, have big responsibility. He felt that big responsibility to his players and to—yeah, he was a good, good tough, good tough guy.

CP: You had a very good team in 1965 to 1966. That team won their conference, and they went to the Elite 8 of the NCAA tournament.

PV: Yeah. [Unclear]

DC: [Laughs]

PV: So long ago now, you know.

CP: Some very good players on that team. Loy Petersen.

PV: Loy, oh, yeah. [Unclear] like heck, Loy Petersen. Then we had Mel Thoms and those guys too, playing during that period of time.

CP: You mentioned Charlie White.

PV: Charlie White, yeah.

CP: Scott Eaton.

PV: Scott Eaton, good guys, good people, too.

CP: Ed Fredenburg.

PV: That's the year we upset the—we upset, what's the big team we upset?

CP: You beat Elvin Hayes.

DC: Elvin Hayes.

PV: Huh?

DC: Elvin Hayes. Houston.

PV: Yeah, yeah. Houston, Elvin Hayes, yeah.

CP: Do you remember that game?

PV: Oh, yeah. We knocked their ass off.

DC: [Laughs]

PV: [Laughs] Yeah, that was a big win for us, boy, geez.

DC: Ed Fredenburg played for you.

PV: Fredenburg. Ed Fredenburg, yeah. Yeah, geez. Got to play—those guys on that team did a tremendous job doing what they did, going as far as they did, you know.

CP: Yeah. You must have been very proud.

PV: Yeah, oh, yeah. It was great.

CP: You also coached tennis during this time.

PV: Huh?

CP: You were coaching tennis as well.

PV: Tennis, yeah.

CP: You mentioned you played tennis as a boy, so.

PV: Yeah, played a lot of tennis, yeah. Then I coached freshman baseball, too. That was kind of fun, too, freshman baseball. [Laughs]

CP: So you were coaching all three sports at the same time?

PV: Yeah!

CP: Wow.

DC: [Laughs] Wow.

PV: Yeah, different.

CP: Did you know Irwin Harris?

PV: Huh?

CP: Irwin Harris?

PV: Irwin, oh, yeah. Good friend, yeah. Good guy.

CP: He was the tennis coach before you?

PV: Yeah, tennis coach. Yeah. Yeah, he was a good one, old Irwin, yeah. Yeah.

CP: Well, you resigned from coaching in 1970.

PV: 1970, was it?

CP: Uh-huh. What made you decide to step down?

PV: Well, let's see. Now let me think about that a little bit. Slats retired. Slats retired, and then I had to [pause] and then I had—oh, I had to make up my mind whether I was going to stay on, you know. And, gosh darn it, I can't at all remember that.

CP: From what I've read, it was getting harder for you to find players that would fit your style.

PV: Yeah. I forget now.

DC: It was also, you were travelling a lot, Paul. You were taken away from your family a lot, to be on the road to recruit.

PV: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I just had to make up my mind: stay with it or make a change, and I made a change.

CP: So you became assistant athletic director at that point?

PV: Yeah.

CP: And you were involved in hiring Ralph Miller.

PV: Hired who?

CP: Ralph Miller.

PV: Ralph Miller, yeah.

CP: Do you remember the process or how that happened?

PV: Yeah, not especially, but he was a character. Good guy.

CP: Yeah.

PV: Coached like hell, too. He coached.

CP: As part of, when you were in the Athletic Department, one of the things that came about was Title IX. [0:39:59] Title IX became a law in 1972.

PV: '72.

CP: Were you involved in having to implement Title IX at OSU?

DC: Title IX, it—

PV: What was Title IX?

DC: When women's athletics started to get more important, and more money was—

PV: Yeah, I [unclear] that.

CP: You were involved in that?

PV: Not too much, I don't think, as I remember.

CP: Well, Ralph Miller had some great teams at OSU.

PV: You bet, boy.

CP: Do you remember the 19—?

PV: Did a heck of a job.

CP: Yeah. The team in 1980-81 was number one.

PV: Huh?

CP: The team was number one in the country for a while.

PV: Yeah.

CP: Do you have memories of that team?

PV: Yeah, he was a good guy, old Ralph. He was a character. Good coach, good coach. He was tough to get along with at first, then he became more involved, and more personable, and he was pretty independent there for a while, then he became a good person, and hell of a basketball coach, too.

CP: Did you socialize with him?

PV: Huh?

CP: Did you socialize with Ralph?

PV: Yeah.

CP: What kinds of things did you guys like to do for fun?

PV: For him and I?

CP: Yeah.

PV: We didn't socialize that much together, but we were always good friends, you know.

CP: What were some of the things that you've done for fun over time?

PV: Huh?

CP: What have you done for fun over time that's in your off hours? Is there anything that—?

PV: I played a lot of tennis.

CP: Yeah.

PV: Played a lot of tennis.

CP: With Irwin?

PV: And participated, and was a great fan for all of our teams, you know.

CP: Uh-huh.

DC: You still are.

PV: Yeah. Yeah, I still enjoy going. Enjoy going to games all of the time. It's just been a great place for me to spend my lifetime, it ended up. Great place for me to spend my lifetime, being a Beaver.

CP: Yeah. Why do you think Ralph Miller was so successful as a coach?

PV: Huh?

CP: Why do you think Ralph Miller was so successful as a coach?

PV: Why was he good?

CP: Yeah.

PV: Discipline. He ran the show. Old Ralph ran the show, boy.

CP: Did you get to know any of his players very well, like Steve Johnson? Did you know Steve Johnson?

PV: Oh, yeah. You know, I didn't interfere.

CP: Uh-huh.

PV: I always felt that once you were out of it, stay out of it. Let the guy do his job. Let the guy do his job, and don't be sticking your nose into what he—you know. And yeah, I had a great experience there.

CP: How about Gary Payton?

PV: Huh?

CP: Gary Payton?

PV: Jerry Beger?

CP: Gary Payton.

DC: Gary Payton.

PV: Gary Payton?

DC: Remember, you saw him last year when he came by?

PV: Yeah. Well, he was after my time, you know. Play like hell, boy.

CP: Do you think he's the best player that's ever played at OSU?

PV: One of the better ones, no question about it, yeah. One of the better ones. We've had some good ones, and he was one of the better ones, yeah. Yeah.

CP: Tell me about your friend Jimmy Anderson.

PV: Huh?

CP: Jimmy Anderson.

PV: Jimmy Anderson? Great friend; did a great job for me, boy. Did a great job. He let you know—he was a great assistant coach, and a good coach, too, but he was a great assistant coach, because he went along with your business, and he was dedicated to doing his job. Great person, yeah.

DC: Players loved playing for him, too.

PV: Huh?

DC: Players really loved playing for him.

PV: Yeah, yeah. They liked Jimmy, yeah. Good person.

CP: Well, I've met some other people from OSU athletics in the past that I want to ask you about, that you may or may not have known. Did you know Lon Stiner?

PV: Huh?

CP: Did you know Lon Stiner at all?

PV: Lon Stiner? Oh yeah, good guy. Good, tough guy. Yeah, he was a good one.

CP: How about Tommy Prothro?

PV: Good guy, character.

CP: Yeah? [0:45:00]

PV: He was a good guy, too. He was very independent, very independent. He was, as I say, very independent. Good, intelligent guy. Good, intelligent person, yeah.

CP: How about Sam Bell? Sam Bell?

PV: The track coach?

CP: Uh-huh.

PV: Oh, he was a good guy. I didn't know him real well. He was a good guy. We had a lot of good people. We had a lot of good people all of the time.

CP: Did you know Berny Wagner?

PV: Huh?

CP: Berny Wagner?

PV: Berny Wagner, yeah, yeah.

CP: How about James Barratt?

PV: Jim Barratt, the Athletic Director? Oh he was a good friend, good kid, good, young guy.

CP: Yeah.

PV: He was a good guy, old Jim.

CP: Spec Keene?

PV: Spec Keene. Good person, boy. Old Spec, yeah.

CP: How about Dale Thomas, the wrestling coach?

PV: Who?

CP: Dale Thomas.

PV: Dale Thomas? He was a character. He came here and he said that he was going to—that his wrestling program was going to run the basketball program right out of Gill Coliseum.

DC: [Laughs]

PV: [Laughs] That didn't quite turn out.

CP: He was very successful, though.

PV: Yeah, yeah, he was a beauty.

CP: Did you know Jess Lewis?

PV: Huh? Yeah, yeah.

CP: Did you know Jess Lewis?

PV: He was a good kid, he was all right.

CP: How about Dee Andros?

PV: Dee Andros, good guy. Different. You know, he was very, a very independent guy. Good person, old Dee.

CP: Yeah.

PV: Did a good job.

CP: Did you know Terry Baker at all?

PV: Huh?

CP: Terry Baker?

PV: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Good person.

CP: How about Mike Riley?

PV: Mike Riley. Oh, good guy, old Mike, yeah. They were all—we had good people. We had good people, and we got along pretty well, too, you know, and respected one another. And we had a good program. We had a good program.

CP: Sounds like a tight-knit group.

PV: Yeah. Yeah.

CP: Did you know any of the OSU presidents very well?

PV: Who's that?

CP: The presidents of OSU. Did you know any very well?

PV: Oh, a little bit. Yeah, they were good. They had a good relationship, good relationship.

CP: Well, the last question I want to ask you is what are you most proud of when you look back on your career here?

PV: What's that?

CP: What are your points of pride when you—?

PV: I think we did a good job, won some championships, you know. And just a great, great place to work, great program to be part of, and very, very, very proud of my relationship with Oregon State University, not just the athletic program, Athletic Department, but the whole institution.

CP: Yeah.

PV: Good place to be, and good organization to be part of, you know. Yeah.

CP: Well, thank you, Paul, I appreciate this.

PV: Well, okay. Hope it was all right.

CP: It was great.

DC: It was good, Paul. [0:49:05]