

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH GREGG ANDERSON
FOR THE
RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and
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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an oral history interview with Mr. Gregg Anderson, on October 9, 2020. I am Shaun Illingworth. I am in Hightstown, New Jersey. Jess, do you want to say your name and where you are?

Jessica Aumick: I am Jess Aumick, and I am in Hackettstown, New Jersey.

SI: Okay, and Mr. Anderson?

Gregg Anderson: I am Gregg Anderson, and I am in Somerset, New Jersey.

SI: To begin, yesterday we left off talking about your time in Tunisia with the Peace Corps. Just to kind of put a cap on that, how did that come to a conclusion, and did you have to decide between staying or going home? Was two years a typical tour overseas?

GA: It was a typical tour. There was no opportunity to continue. So, we finished that. We bought a ticket to Amsterdam and bought a Volkswagen van and then toured Europe a little bit, and part of the price of the car was to ship it home. That was my first car. We toured Northern Europe and then caught a plane home.

SI: Go ahead, Jess.

JA: I am just curious, the Peace Corps, did they pay you for that, or did you work a side job when you were there?

GA: We were paid in excess dinars. The United States had a trade deal with Tunisia, and the Tunisian dinar wasn't worth much outside of Tunisia. One dinar was worth about two dollars in Tunisia, and you weren't allowed to bring any [dollars]. You had to tell them how much foreign currency you had when you went to the country and if you flew out and came home. So, there were excess dinars, and so the United States put those to use by paying us a small salary. I can't remember, it was like fifty dinars a month. Plus, they gave us vacation time, one day for every week you worked. We had too many dinars left over when it was time to leave, which is why we bought this, the Tunisian Bedouin rugs. So, it didn't really cost the United States anything because it was excess money that they couldn't cash in for any money.

SI: Was there any oversight by any Peace Corps personnel in country, or were you kind of left on your own?

GA: No, we had a director in the Peace Corps office in town, and his name was Ed Bitar. He spoke Arabic fluently and was part of the embassy. There were two classes of Americans in Tunisia, the embassy people and the Peace Corps people. We could go to the embassy and we could go to their snack bar and get a real cheeseburger, that kind of thing, but we weren't allowed to use the commissary, which a lot of people did. Some of our friends were the Marine Guards in the embassy. They could go to the embassy commissary for us, and a lot of Peace Corps people did that.

It was interesting, the embassy would always make sure the Peace Corps volunteers had somewhere to go for Thanksgiving. Each Thanksgiving--we were there two Thanksgivings--we got invited to the *chargé d'affaires* in Tunis. We all knew--it wasn't just a rumor--but he was like the CIA guy. During the course of the evening, each one of us was taken into his office separately and kind of questioned. It was silly but interesting, you know, about our loyalties and what was going on with us and stuff like that. But we always knew who he was and what he was doing, so it was okay. It was just a fascinating kind of thing that happened, and we got a good turkey dinner.

SI: I am curious, I am sure the kids you coached and the other Tunisians that you ran into must have had some ideas about America or that sort of thing. Do you remember what was most surprising that they thought about America or that you taught them about the country?

GA: One of the interesting things is they thought that Americans wore their clothes once and then threw them away. The kids would come in with Boy Scout uniforms and they would be wearing University of California t-shirts and NBA shirts and things like that. Some of those drop boxes that we have here with the clothing, some of them get packaged into great big ton bundles and they get sent over to places like Tunisia. We would go over to the old clothes souk-- a souk is part of the bazaar--and what they would do is they'd bid on the ton of material, the clothing. One of the guys told us that they would always look for denim because jeans would always sell real well. Sue and I would go to the souks for shopping and so on, and she bought a dress that looked practically brand new and I got new jeans and so on. But they really believed that Americans wore their clothes once and just tossed them out, because that's where they got a lot of their clothes. We had to bargain for everything, and that was interesting.

The kids were real curious about the music and they wanted us to translate like a Beatles song or a Led Zeppelin song, but they were real interested in that. [laughter] I remember a conversation with a couple of the coaches, and they asked me, this might sound gross, but he says, "What does 'fucking' French mean?" How do you explain something like that, because that's what the Americans said during the war. We kind of had to explain that, or I tried to explain rock music to some of the kids. They didn't understand what was going on with Nixon, why they were picking on Nixon. That was hard to explain, but it was the end of '72. When we got home, he finally resigned, but to explain it because to the Tunisians, he wasn't a hero, but he was well respected. I mean, Nixon's foreign policy was, I mean, he opened China. He had a great relationship with North African countries and Israel at the same time. So, they didn't really understand what was going on and that was tough to explain, but we tried.

SI: Jess, do you have a question?

JA: I do not.

SI: Are there any memorable events from this tour of Northern Europe that you went on?

GA: I mean, it was kind of hippie-ish. We had a Volkswagen van, and Sue put curtains in it. After our first year, we had about a month in September, and we bought Eurorail tickets. We had two vacations, one in the middle of our tour and one at the end. The one in the middle of the

tour, we took a ferry from Tunis to Sicily. It was supposed to leave at eight o'clock at night and it didn't leave until two in the morning, which was typical.

If you went to the bank over there, you'd have to stand in line. You'd have to write your check in front of a teller, and they would go to a book and open it up to your account and literally subtract the amount. Then, they would hand the check to somebody else, and then somebody else would run it somewhere else. Then, they'd go get the money, and then they'd give it to you. It was like six people involved. Anyway, everything took a long time. Shopping would take a whole afternoon to do regular shopping.

It was typical that this ferry didn't leave until two o'clock in the morning. It was a horrible [trip]. A lot of the people that were going were, I think, immigrants, and they were trying to get to Italy. They were partying and drinking, and by the time the ferry left, it was kind of rough and so they were seasick. We didn't arrive in Sicily until nine the next morning. We were supposed to be there [earlier], I can't remember, but it was a horrible trip.

Then, we had bought Eurorail passes. We went through Italy, up into Switzerland, Austria, back to Switzerland, Germany. I think we went to Amsterdam, then to Paris. Sue had an uncle, Uncle Mal, he and his wife had a place between Nice and Monte Carlo on the Côte d'Azur. She was very wealthy. She and her sister each had villas next to each other. It was right on the Mediterranean. It was just beautiful. It was the kind of place where you'd wake up in the morning and go up to the patio, and breakfast would be served. You'd go downstairs, and your bed was made and your laundry done. It was not a Peace Corps kind of thing. [laughter]

The second trip, we bought the car in Amsterdam, and we went to Denmark, Belgium, a little bit of Germany, Denmark, Norway, Finland, and then did the reverse back, a great trip. It was a learning experience to be in all those places, and we both figured that we wouldn't have a chance to travel like that ever again, especially if we were going to go back into jobs and so on. It turned out to be true. When I mentor young people, I always tell them, "If you get a chance to travel, do it."

SI: Since you had the van, did you sail back or fly back?

GA: We flew back, but the price of the car included the shipping back to the United States. You ship it back in, it's a used car, so we didn't have to pay that much in taxes.

SI: Where did you guys settle when you came back from overseas?

GA: Sue still had a semester or so to do at Douglass. Well, we got back in September, and her college didn't start until second semester. So, we took a month and we drove across country and then went out to see my folks. We basically camped all across the country and back. Then, we settled in first Highland Park, and then we rented various apartments in different places. I went back to school because I wasn't certified [to be a teacher], and I decided at that point, that's something I wanted to do. So, I went to Kean College and got certified to teach social studies. Sue decided that she was going to change her major, and she got a bunch of education courses too. So, we were both certified to teach by the next fall.

SI: Once you got your certification, where were you looking for jobs?

GA: In that year when I was getting certified, we had various jobs. I worked at a department store. Sue worked for a department store. I substitute taught. But anywhere where there was a social studies opening. What happened to me is typical. A guy called and said, "North Brunswick High School is opening a new high school and they have a pool." In fact, to this day, it's the only high school in Middlesex County that has its own pool. They wanted a swimming coach and I said, "Well, I'm certified to teach. I'm looking for a full-time job and I'm not going to take the swimming coach unless I have a full-time job." They didn't have any openings, but they wanted a swim coach, so they made me a permanent substitute my first year and the swim coach. Luckily, the last quarter, I think, one of my colleagues eventually, she had to have surgery and so she was going to be out for an entire quarter, so I took over her whole schedule. I got my four observations, and basically, I had my own classes the next year. Sue got a job fairly quickly in Bound Brook High School when a teacher left suddenly. Her husband got transferred, and she picked up a social studies job. So, we both were rich. We had real jobs and an income with health insurance and all that.

SI: Was the market, the job market, pretty tight then?

GA: Very tight, especially in teaching.

SI: You mentioned the school was the only one in the county with a pool. Would that indicate that there were not that many high school swim teams in the area?

GA: Up until 1973, North Brunswick students went to New Brunswick High School. As a part of the whole '60s, I really believe that people in North Brunswick wanted to pull out of New Brunswick for basic racial reasons, when you think about it. Originally, when the school opened, it was ninety percent white, middle-class working families, some very, very wealthy families, but basically a white school. They pulled out of New Brunswick. Originally, it was like a seventh, eighth and ninth grade [school] and then the next year it was eighth, ninth and tenth and then the next year it was nine through twelve. But that's basically the history of North Brunswick. Now, by the time I left, the whole demographics changed completely. It's probably thirty percent white now and thirty percent Asian and another fifteen percent Hispanic and fifteen percent Black. That changed completely over the course of my teaching.

JA: Did the shift in demographics change anything about your job?

GA: Well, I thought it was healthy, and it was an interesting change. My swim team changed. I mean, at the beginning, it was a lot of basically middle-class white kids, and by that time, I had a lot of Asian and Hispanic kids on the team. I thought it was a healthy environment by the time I left. It was very well-balanced demographically.

SI: Do you mind if we take a quick break?

GA: No.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

SI: You were hired at the school before they pulled out of New Brunswick or after?

GA: The school opened in '73, and I started in November of '73 as a permanent sub.

SI: Were there any aftereffects of that change that you could feel?

GA: It was like NIMBY, "Not in my backyard. We want our own school." I'm convinced that the reason was because there was violence in New Brunswick in the '60s and in Franklin in the '60s, and so they wanted to pull out. Now, I don't know about a reaction. That's all in retrospect. I didn't think about it then, but I think about it now.

SI: Tell us a little bit about what it was like being in your first few years as a teacher and as a coach. Particularly looking back on your forty years, what strikes you as being different about that period or maybe not?

GA: Sue and I were both teaching. We had an apartment in Metuchen and then one in South Brunswick, and then we bought this house. Well, my first year coaching we were 0-11 and it was a seventh, eighth and ninth grade school. The athletic director didn't schedule junior varsity teams. He scheduled varsity teams. So, I had these little seventh and eighth graders, these little kids, swimming against these men and women, and so we were 0-11. The second year, I think we won one meet, and then the third year, by that time, those kids were juniors and seniors and we finally--I didn't break .500 until about ten years. But it was a lot of fun. One of the things that kept me teaching was the swim team, a good group of kids.

I went through various subjects that I taught and ended up mostly United States history. They had to take "World History" as freshmen, the first half of American history as sophomores, and then they called it "Modern American History," from about 1900 until today. So, I taught that. I also taught a course called "American Law," but I also taught sociology, geography one year. We had a freshmen class with one quarter each of economics and sociology and psychology and geography, I think. I was certified in K-12 social studies. Basically, they could put me wherever they wanted, but I ended up teaching mostly U.S. history and law, and the swim team. The swim team's a winter sport. It's November until March.

SI: During that first, say, ten years, would your athletes come to you having already competed a little bit? Was there a club, or were you really teaching them from scratch?

GA: About fifty-fifty. The core of any high school swim team is club swimmers, and there were some clubs around. There was a couple of Y teams. My ex, she started a team at the new pool at Rutgers in the '90s. So, the core of the team were people with club experience, like I had, but there were always kids that came out for the team--and I never cut kids, they would cut themselves--but some of them developed over the four years to be pretty good swimmers. When I retired, they had a party for me. To see some of these kids, I mean, they're fifty years old, it was pretty fun. [laughter]

SI: How heavy was your schedule, so to speak, or how many teams in the area would you compete against?

GA: At the beginning, it was whoever you could pick up. East Brunswick had a team. St. Joe's in Metuchen had a team. But over the course of the years, we developed a Middlesex County Conference and now there are twelve teams in the conference, but that took a long time to develop. Our goal always was the state meet. Over the course of the thirty-nine years I coached, the state meet even changed. It used to be you had to qualify to go. They would keep score at the meet, and I would always have maybe two or three, maybe a relay, four people, qualify. So, I wasn't in contention for state championships. Then, they developed a dual meet state championship, where they have a tournament, where you turn in your entry and then you get seeded. Then, you'd swim against each other over the course of two weeks, and you could have four meets. If you swim the first one and lose, you're out, but if you [win], then you swim the next best team and then the sectional finals. Then, you're part of the top four, and the top four swim against each other. But it's a dual meet, it's the whole team gets to swim. My girls in [1997]--now I can't remember the date--my girls won one state championship over the course of the thirty-nine years. The boys entered a couple of tournaments, and we made it to the sectional finals but didn't go any further.

SI: Was there always a boys' and girls' team, or did the girls' team come later?

GA: At the beginning, it was a combined team, and we swam against combined teams, so it was boys and girls together. Then, I had so many kids, we had to split them into two teams, and I coached both the boys and the girls at the same time. I had one assistant swimming coach and another assistant that was a diving coach. Then, New Jersey changed the state bathing rules, and our diving boards, we couldn't use them anymore because our pool was too shallow. But we had diving for probably twenty-five or thirty years. Diving is part of a swim meet.

SI: Who would you say were your rivals?

GA: East Brunswick, South Brunswick. St. Joe's, we couldn't compete against because they had two club teams that really supported the St. Joe's swim teams. There was a team that worked out of Cranford, the Jersey Gators, and there was a team from Bridgewater that sent their kids to St. Joe's and they were perennial state champions. We beat them one time, and that was a mistake. They took us too lightly. I had four boys that were state-meet quality. In fact, they qualified twice for the medley relay and the 200-free relay, and the coach sent basically his JV for the dual meet. There's a series of events and then a diving break in the swim meet. At the diving break, you see all these St. Joe's premiere swimmers come running in, because they were so far behind, but they were so far behind, they couldn't catch up. [laughter] So, we beat them one time in thirty-nine years. That was a funny experience. [laughter]

SI: What would you say were the biggest challenges you faced as a coach, either athletically or just dealing with young people on your team?

GA: The biggest challenge. I always had kids that wanted to be on the swim team and they were motivated and they liked the team. Like teaching, the biggest challenge is always the parents. I would have several meetings before the season to introduce myself and the other coaches and to make sure that they understood that their kids were safe and that my goal is always to have each individual improve and make varsity if they can. There's always some parents that are a little bit difficult, but I didn't have too many problems with the kids. The kids were always motivated.

SI: Jess, do you have questions?

JA: Not on swimming. I saw that you noted you went to graduate school at one point, but we could circle back to that if there's more to talk about with swimming.

GA: Teacher salaries, they give you more salary if you have a master's. There was an off-campus program offered by Fairleigh Dickinson in human development. At the time my daughters were young and I could go to the class, the classes were held, one of them was right at North Brunswick High School, another one would be in East Brunswick, so I didn't have to go to Fairleigh Dickinson up north at all. I could do almost everything remotely and it took four years, but I finally got my master's. I was mostly motivated because I could move up on the salary guide. Now, we had a young family at that time, and my ex, when we had Sally, stopped teaching completely. She was just coaching the local Y team, and so we had to adjust the schedule. I was the main breadwinner. I would get home, and she would go off to her practice and that's how we did it. We needed more money, so I took that course. It was fairly easy but very interesting.

JA: What was the balance like between graduate school and your career as a teacher? Did you have to take night classes or anything like that?

GA: All night and one summer course I took, but it was all after swim practice, eight to ten. I got certified as an administrator too, and I took those courses out at Rutgers, again all night classes. Luckily, Sue's parents lived in Highland Park, so on the nights that I had classes, Sue would drop them off in Highland Park or they'd come over here and I could do my class and then relieve them. Things always worked out.

SI: When were your children born?

GA: In '79 and '82.

SI: Let us talk about your teaching in the class. You kind of mentioned this wide range of subjects you taught but United States history really being the main one. Looking back at those early years, was there anything that you note now as being different or something you would not necessarily do today?

GA: That I wouldn't do today? I don't know. By the time I ended, there were parts of the book that I had experienced, like the Nixon years or the Kennedy years. I had lived through some of that. Too often in high schools, you don't ever get up to the present, and that was always my

goal, especially in modern. So, I'd skip a lot of the early stuff [laughter] to make sure that the last quarter was spent on what's going on in the world today. That was always an important goal.

My favorite course though was a law course I [taught]. We had an opportunity--my supervisor said, "We have an opportunity to pilot a book," and it was a preliminary test of the law course for high school students. So, we piloted that and followed a lot of their directions and so on, and that eventually became U.S. Law I and II. I ended up teaching that for a good twenty years. It was really a lot of fun. It was mostly based on a very introductory kind of law. There's a history of the law and then constitutional law and tort law, criminal law, family law. So, it's a real broad introduction to what the law's all about, but with each unit, I developed mock trials. The second or third day of class, we'd have a mock trial, where the kids would have to be judges and jurors and lawyers, and really a lot of fun. It was a very popular course. By the end, I was only teaching two histories and three laws, because you could only teach five classes a day.

SI: Well, it sounds like you had some leeway in terms of what you taught and how you taught. Is that correct?

GA: Well, there's always a state curriculum and the township has a written curriculum and you have to follow that. We never had a social studies state required test and I don't think they have one yet today, but they kept saying they were going to. There's a guideline, a state guideline, of things you have to cover, and you'd always cover that.

SI: Had Common Core been introduced before you retired?

GA: In the last ten years or so.

SI: Yes, my wife is a high school history teacher. We are always talking about this.

GA: Where?

SI: She is up at Mother Seton in Clark.

GA: We swam against Mother Seton too. [laughter]

SI: Yes, okay.

GA: Because they have a girls' team.

SI: Yes.

GA: Yes.

SI: Yes, St. Joseph's is their partner school, yes. Now, in talking with them and talking with people at Rutgers, it seems like there is so much oversight, so much paperwork. Would you say that got worse over time for you?

GA: Oh, definitely. I still keep in touch with some of my colleagues. I can't imagine teaching with this Covid-19. I can't imagine doing it through Zoom. But one of the guys showed me his annual review, and it was a thick binder. I asked him, "What does that have to do with your teaching?" He goes, "Nothing, but it's all paper." It was getting worse and worse by the time I ended teaching.

SI: What was most memorable about your time as a teacher in the classroom? What did you enjoy, not so much the subjects, but interaction with students?

GA: The only way I can do it is in retrospect. When I retired, my first year, I had this awful feeling that something was wrong and I couldn't put my finger on it. What was wrong? I realized that for thirty years, I had contact with anywhere between ninety and 150 kids, and I would stand at the door and greet every one as they came in and say something. I wanted to make sure I said something to every student. That's what was wrong. I was not seeing that number of people every day. It took a while to get used to, but that's what I miss the most. The demographics changed a lot but, the kids didn't change. They were still the same as when I began. They were a little more challenging then because I was new. I didn't know how to deal with them, and there were challenges at the end. There were always some that are challenging, but I always really enjoyed that, the interaction that we had. You do a lesson plan and have three classes of the same thing. You'd start off and you'd do the lesson once, and then the second time, it would go off the rails and then the third time, completely different than what you planned the first time you did it. That's because of the kids. The kids demand different things. It was always very interesting.

SI: There is obviously the demographics, but over that forty-year span, how did you see the community change? Does anything stand out in that regard?

GA: I can't think of anything other than my swim team got smaller. Asian kids and Hispanic kids are not as tall as the white kids, but they're just as strong and just as competitive and work just as hard, but it was a big difference. No, I can't think of anything.

SI: Did you do any work with other organizations related to coaching and teaching? Were you involved in the teacher's union?

GA: I was a member of the union but not directly involved. But in coaching, I served several terms as coaches representative on the NJSIAA Swimming Committee, which oversees New Jersey high school swimming. I also joined and have a position on the National Interscholastic Swimming Coaches Association, NISCA. I have been the New Jersey Delegate, Chair of the Education Committee, and I administer the NISCA.

SI: Okay.

GA: I was the Student Council advisor for a good twenty-five years, and so I would have Student Council meetings. We'd belong to the state Student Council, and I had a couple of officers in that. So, I had a lot of responsibilities to do after school stuff with the Student Council. If they'd have a dance, I'd have to be there, or they did fundraising activities and so on.

What else did I do? Model Congress. Kids would have to write a bill, and we would debate it in school. Then, we'd go away to a Model Congress weekend, and they'd try to get their bill passed. That was really fun. I would take a small group, usually twelve to sixteen kids. What else did I do? So, I was active with the extracurricular stuff also, as a part of social studies.

SI: Was there any kinds of swim coaches association?

GA: I belong to NISCA, the National Interscholastic Swimming Coaches Association. I didn't join for the first ten or twelve years, but then I joined and I became the New Jersey coaches rep at the NJSIAA, which is the New Jersey [State] Interscholastic Athletics Association. I was pretty active with them for a long time. I'm still involved with NISCA today. I'm the chairman of their education committee, and I have their store in my basement. It's not really a store, but we sell coaching books and we have leftover t-shirts and certificates and stuff like that. It's not an active store, but I go to their convention every year, which is held with the Men's NCAA Swimming Championships, and they have a clinic and we have our meetings and so on. So, that keeps me busy.

SI: Being so close to Rutgers, did you stay involved as an alum, or did your work bring you into contact with the University?

GA: I volunteered for a long time, helping to raise money, especially for Rutgers swimming, but then they went to student volunteers and they didn't need the alums doing that anymore. Today, I'm active in my class. I'm the treasurer, Class Agent. I don't do any collecting. It's just a name, and they send me a report every year. We have an alumni scholarship that's endowed at this point. So, I would go volunteer my time.

I got a scholarship from Rutgers, and I felt like I would do something to try to repay that. For a long time, I would volunteer to raise money for athletics, and then Rutgers cancelled men's swimming and turned me off completely. It's a resentment that I don't think I'll ever get rid of. They said it was because of Title IX, but every university in the country that has used that as an excuse to cancel a men's sport has lost in court. So, it can't be Title IX. They said it was money, but actually, Rutgers swimming paid for itself because of the rentals that they would get for big swim meets at the new pool. My ex-wife's team, I mean, her team won state Junior Olympics several times. They were very good. They brought in thousands of dollars in payment to the University in rental. So, it couldn't have been money. To this day, it angers me that they got rid of that sport, but there's nothing you can do about it. We fought that, but what do you do? [Editor's Note: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination in education programs that receive federal financial assistance.]

SI: I am curious if that came as a total shock to you or if they tried to prepare the alumni that that was going to happen.

GA: The coach at the time was told that he was safe and that nothing's going to change, everything was fine. Then, all of a sudden, it was dropped on them in a new budget that was suddenly presented to the Board of Governors, and he was totally unaware. I mean, there was rumors around the Athletic Department, but it just was dropped on them. The kids were

shocked. I was the last swimming All-American and I got All-American in '69. When they cancelled men's swimming, they had four men who had qualified to go to NCAAs or were on the cusp of becoming All-American, and their careers, their swimming was just cut right out from under them. It was terribly sad. They still have women's swimming but not men's. [Editor's Note: In 2007-2008, Rutgers eliminated six Olympic sports as varsity sports. Men's lightweight and heavyweight crew, the men's swimming and diving team, the men's tennis team, and the men's and women's fencing teams were relegated to club status.]

SI: Have you had any other interaction with the University over the years?

GA: My ex started Scarlet Aquatic Club, and they're still at Sonny Werblin [Recreation Center]. I worked for her for a couple of summers. I was her assistant, and so I did get a check from Rutgers for coaching in the summers for a couple of years. But I'm not involved with the swimming program hardly at all. I know who the coach is. I'll go to one meet a year and follow them.

SI: Would you, obviously before this changed, but would you encourage your students to look at Rutgers?

GA: I've had a whole bunch of kids that were recruited, and so it depends on what university was recruiting them. I didn't have anybody recruited from Rutgers. I've had kids that ended up at Rutgers and swimming there but not that they were recruited. Today, I would recommend Rutgers as a place for a woman to go to compete. It's a great facility, and the coach is really good. He's had a lot of success. He's got a couple kids qualified for NCAAs. Yes, I would; I would recommend it.

I'm trying to think, all the women that were of college level ended up being recruited by other universities, a lot of Big Ten, like both my daughters. I mean, they went to Franklin High School right here in Somerset, and both were state champions in high school swimming. Now, that's kind of weird. [laughter] One year, my girls' team was in the state finals against my daughter's team, and they beat us. They went on to be state champions. The next year, the same thing happened, and this time, we beat them, we knocked them out. Actually, one daughter was there the second time. So, we went on to win a state championship that year. That was the only time my girls ever won. Both my daughters ended up at Penn State. I've had kids go to Notre Dame, Boston, Northwestern, I'm trying to think, North Carolina on scholarship, and that was fun to help them negotiate. A lot of that comes from a NISCA. They had a couple of guidebooks, how to help your athletes negotiate with the colleges.

SI: You mentioned how tournaments would change, the way they did the state tournament, but overall, would you say that there were major changes in the sport that you could point to?

GA: Technology is different. A pool that was brand new in '73, we couldn't dive anymore, even though for twenty years, we could do diving. It's still a good pool, although it's really shallow at one end. In fact, the starting blocks were in the shallow end at the beginning, but everybody did that. Then, technology changed. The swimsuits changed. They even banned some swimsuits

because they were too buoyant. Lane lines, the lines between the lanes, have become Wave Eaters. It's a different kind of sport today. The technology has changed a lot.

SI: Jess, do you have questions?

JA: I was curious, did you also find a shift in technology in the years that you were teaching in a classroom?

SI: Definitely. By the time I ended, we had Smartboards in all the classrooms and computers. Term papers had to be submitted online and they had these checkers--online, you could check for plagiarism. Grades, you had to do grades remotely. In one sense, you had access to more things. With a Smartboard, you could Google something and you could get a video instantly. But it made it also more difficult because of the time we'd have to spend in planning, no more chalk boards, you know. [laughter] Technology really changed the way we teach. I still can't imagine how they're doing it through Zoom and so on. Did that answer your question, Jess?

JA: Yes, thank you.

SI: You have also lived in Somerset for quite a while, is that right?

GA: Here since '77, yes. My parents moved every five years. Once I got this house, I said, "I'm staying put." I don't know why. I should move out of New Jersey, but I'm still here.

SI: How have you seen that community change over time, and have you been involved in anything in the town or the area?

GA: Not really, I'm not active in anything in Somerset. I mean, when there's an issue in the neighborhood, we'll go to a township meeting and complain, but that's about it. I was very happy with the well-rounded education my daughters got. People would say, "Oh, you're going to send them to Franklin High School. There's riots here." I had a totally positive experience, and they loved it too. The one thing Sally said when she got to college is, she would play her music and nobody, because Penn State basically it's not a very diverse school, or it wasn't then, and they were used to a lot of diversity and their friends were from all races and, you know, shapes and sizes.

SI: Is there anything in the two sessions that we skipped over or anything you want to talk about that we have not touched on?

GA: I don't want to brag. I'm in the Rutgers [Athletics] Hall of Fame. I'm in the High School Sports Hall of Fame here in New Jersey. I just got this huge trophy from NISCA, in their Hall of Fame. I have the most wins of any high school coach ever in the State of New Jersey, 574. There's some people that are in NISCA that have a thousand wins, but that's comparative. [Editor's Note: Gregg Anderson was inducted into the Rutgers Athletics Hall of Fame for Men's Swimming and Diving in 1994. Anderson's Hall of Fame biography states: "Anderson is a two-time All-American in swimming, winning the honor in the 200-yard backstroke in 1968 and 1969. Both of Anderson's times were ranked in the nation's Top 10 to accord those honors. The

Coursen Award recipient as the school's outstanding graduating male athlete in 1970, he was the Eastern Intercollegiate Swimming League's champion in the 200 backstroke in 1968-69 and the 500 freestyle in 1969. He lost only once in the 200 backstroke during dual meets in his three-year career. During his time at Rutgers, he held four individual school marks (500 and 1000 freestyle and 100 and 200 backstroke) and he was the team captain his senior season. In his sophomore year, he won the James Reilly Trophy for leadership and loyalty and in 1970, he was the August Heinzman Trophy winner for competitive spirit and sportsmanship. A native of Sacramento, CA, Anderson Scored 105 points in his senior year with 15 dual meet wins and 10 more finishes in the top three. He was selected as a Loyal Son of Rutgers in 1991."]

We didn't talk about my mother's parents. My grandpa was married, and his first wife died. He married my grandmother. She had two kids, and there were two kids from the first marriage. My Grandma Cable was probably the crabbiest woman on the face of this earth, just crabby. But she went back in my grandfather's history, in the family tree, and his grandmother was Marcia Lincoln Cable. She was a Lincoln from Illinois. My great grandmother's cousin was Abraham Lincoln, and I thought that was interesting. She wanted to trace his family back, and they found people in Connecticut in 1724. My mother came here once and went to Connecticut and found the graves of the Cables, and I thought that was interesting. She wanted to be a part of the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution].

Part of the history class that I taught is in the '60s ['30s], they wouldn't let Marian [Anderson] sing at Constitution Hall because she was Black. I told my grandmother that story, and she just got all miffed. I said, "They were discriminatory. They were terribly racist." She wouldn't have anything to do with it. Then, she told me that she didn't see a Black person until she was thirty and she had to go to Chicago for something. She was from a small town in Iowa and went to Grinnell College and married my grandfather, and they had two farms. She had her family farm, and he had a farm. One was in Iowa, one was in South Dakota. The town that they lived in was right on the river between Iowa and South Dakota. She had a Derringer. She had a gun in her purse when she went to Chicago, she was so scared. So, anyway, that was just an old family story. [Editor's Note: In 1939, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) refused to allow world-renowned Black opera singer Marian Anderson perform in Constitution Hall, a segregated facility. In protest, Eleanor Roosevelt resigned her membership in the DAR and helped organize a concert for Anderson to sing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Anderson's performance on Easter Sunday, April 9, 1939, drew a crowd of 75,000.]

SI: Did they stay in that area their whole lives?

GA: Yes, he was a farmer. Actually, he was a state senator in South Dakota for one or two terms, and then he got appointed postmaster. He was a farmer, he was the postmaster, and lived in southeastern South Dakota. My uncle--their step kids, Grandma didn't like them too much--but anyway, I had an uncle that lived in western South Dakota and he died in 2001 and left me and my sisters his ranch. So, I spend my time today, I'd really love to be traveling, but both Catie and Sally have become Midwesterners. They live in Illinois and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, so they're an hour apart. I go visit them and I go to South Dakota and I visit them and come back here and so on.

SI: Looking back on your career, what was the most rewarding part of it?

GA: Teaching. I actually loved my job. I loved going to work every day. I loved the interaction with the kids. Last year, they named the pool after me.

SI: Oh, wow.

GA: North Brunswick High School has the Gregg Anderson Pool, which is bizarre. I thought they did stuff like that when you died, but I have a pool named after me. I have no regrets teaching. I actually really loved every day that I went there.

SI: That's good. Well, Jess, do you have any other questions?

JA: None that I can think of.

GA: Okay.

SI: To tie it back to Rutgers, you mentioned some of your professors contributed to your teaching style. Looking back, how do you think your time at Rutgers affected the rest of your life?

GA: I mentioned I took political science because it gave me a whole bunch of options. I took Spanish literature, German literature, French literature, not in those languages. I took Spanish because you had to take two years of Spanish. I took art history. I loved the biology classes, where other people were just struggling. I barely got through math. In high school, I only took algebra and geometry, because they only required two years of math. That's all I took in high school. So, when I got to Rutgers, they let me take "Algebra II" for three credits, which I don't think they do anymore, and then I had to take "Calculus I." To this day, I don't know how I got through that. I was getting tutoring. I failed the first hourly, so I got tutoring. I don't know how I did it, but I got a "D" and was more than excited that I'd never have to take another math class.

The method of teaching. There was a freshman English teacher. I got a "D," a "4." Back in those days, a "1" was an "A," a "2" was a "B" and so on. I got a "4" on my first paper, and I thought I was a good writer. I went to him afterwards and it was all marked up, you know. It was probably terrible, but I understood what he was saying and I can't remember his name. He'd come in and he was a young guy; he was probably an English TA [teaching assistant]. He'd put an ashtray down and his cigarettes and he'd smoke, chainsmoked throughout the whole time. [laughter] I eventually developed a sort of working relationship, and by the time I was done with that class, I was getting "1's." To this day, I think I taught, without cigarettes of course [laughter], that way. It was more back and forth, give and take, question and answer. I wish I could remember his name. I might have it written down somewhere, but I don't know.

SI: Unless there is something else you want to share, you have answered all our questions. We really appreciate it.

GA: Okay, I don't know if it's going to do anybody any good.

SI: I think people are going to get a lot out of it. We will produce the transcript. Let me just conclude the recording. Thank you very much.

-----END OF TRANSCRIPT-----

Transcribed by Jesse Braddell 11/18/2020
Reviewed by Michael Farner 4/1/2021
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