

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RITA KAY THOMAS

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

OCTOBER 12, 2009

TRANSCRIPT BY

JESSICA ONDUSKO

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview on October 12, 2009, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Rita Kay Thomas and ...

Paul Clemens: ... Paul Clemens, of the History Department.

Thomas Frusciano: ... Tom Frusciano, the University Archivist.

Sarah Malcolm: ... Sarah Malcolm.

Kristie Thomas: ... Kristie Thomas.

SH: ... And Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Thank you so much, Ms. Thomas, for being here today and speaking with us. I know it has been a long time getting you on the schedule, and with great enthusiasm, I might add. For the record, would you mind telling us where and when you were born?

Rita Kay Thomas: No, I don't mind. I was born in; you want the exact town? ...

SH: Sure, please.

RT: Butler, Missouri, and that was in 1944, on Thanksgiving Day. ...

SH: Can you tell us a little bit about your family background, how the family came to be in Butler, Missouri?

RT: Oh, they weren't; that was the only hospital nearby. So, Montrose, Missouri, is my hometown, and we ... all grew up there and my parents raised us as staunch Catholics. We were very active in the Catholic church there, went to Catholic elementary school, public high school, and then, I went to Catholic college, Mount Saint Scholastica, in Atchison, Kansas, which, now, is known as Benedictine College, because they combined the men's college and the women's college. ...

SH: You said you had brothers and sisters.

RT: I have siblings, yes. I have an older brother, an older sister and a younger sister, and all of us were provided with the college education opportunities our parents didn't have, and they wanted to make sure that we had those opportunities. So, through very hard work and cooperation and support, our parents worked very hard for us. So, my mother made my wardrobe, she made all our clothes, and my dad worked thirty-six hours at a time. ...

SH: What did he do?

RT: He loved telling that. [laughter] He and his brother owned a poultry hatchery in town. They were one of three, which was a major line of business in a farming community, and then, my dad was also mayor of the town, but he worked extra hours and he worked sexing chickens.

... So, it was [through] that "sex" money that he was able to help provide us with our college education. [laughter]

TF: [I] didn't know that. [laughter]

RT: Nobody knows what that is, probably, but that's determining which sex the chick is and separating them accordingly, and then, shipping them all over the country, the baby chicks, all over the country for the farmers to have. ... Then, my dad should have been a veterinarian, because he was also one who would go to all the farmers and help with their livestock, when they had a disease or an illness, or any particular ailment with their herds or their flocks, and would help remedy that. ... Then, when that industry became so heavily commercialized and large companies took that over, then, they went out of business, and he then went and studied and got his real estate license and worked in Kansas City as a realtor, but that was in the early '70s. So, at that point, that wasn't really good, but he also then went and got his license for selling mutual funds and he worked with that, and then, ... following that, he then became a car salesman for Ford, and then, Buick. ... He worked until he was, you know, like, forced to retire, at age seventy, but he was very unhappy being retired. So, at age seventy-two, he went back to work, and he worked until he was eighty, late eighties. They were just tremendous couple. They were married for fifty-four-and-a-half years and they were side-by-side, and they worked together hard and they played hard. So, they loved to dance and they were very good dancers and would do that during the week, but [it] didn't matter what time they got in at night, they were always up, my dad was off to work, my mother went to church. ... So, at seven in the morning, she was in church, and we grew up with that and going to Mass every day, and then, as I was in the Catholic college, [I] had that opportunity. So, it was Mass every day. It was a liberal arts college. ... My mother, though, was so supportive in helping me achieve so many things, or any of us siblings, and she made sure the high school provided the studies programs that would allow us to qualify for college and she was on top of things like that, and very creative with, you know, artistic creations and stuff. She was very good at that, and so, it was a hard work ethic that we learned from our parents, and, if you worked hard, you had your Christian faith, that you would be contributing to society and be responsible for your own actions and adhere to all the rules and regulations, and have fun doing it. [laughter]

SH: When you went off to college, did you know what you would be majoring in and what your career plans were?

RT: I started off as a chemistry major and quickly changed over to a physical education major, and then, I minored in psychology, but I loved sports and my parents both were very good athletes. ... My dad, he didn't tolerate losing, shall we say. [laughter] So, they were both very competitive, but they were very fine athletes. So, my dad, when he played ball, nobody ever got him out. He'd, you know, make contact with the ball and be on first. So, watching a pro sport on television, he would get mad at those guys, "Being paid all this money and can't even make contact with the ball," but my mother was like a tomboy, she was very athletic, and so, she encouraged us. You know, if we wanted to play sports, we would go do that. I'd always ask my dad, "Why can't I play in the boys' league?" and, "Why can't I play? I practice with them, play with them every day of the week, and then, when the weekend comes and they have a

competition, I can't play. Why?" and it was always, "Because you're a girl, because you're a girl." ... So, when I went to high school, you know, we didn't get to have all that competition and it's very limited, and my mother was, you know, concerned about it, because, when she was a young girl, in high school, the girls' game was the premier game and the boys' game was the pre-game. So, there was a thirty-year difference in our age, yes. So, I kept thinking, "What happened?" [laughter] So, when I went to an all-women's college, it was a delight for me, because, then, there was no restrictions, due to your gender, as to what you could do. So, you could develop all your skills, your academics; there was no holding back. You could run for any office, you could, you know, be in any position. You had to take a hold of all the jobs, whether you liked it or not, to get them done in organizing any type of activity on campus and supporting it, performing it, fulfilling it. So, it taught you a lot of responsibility.

SH: Was this competition intramural or did the college compete with other colleges?

RT: They competed with the other colleges. So, it was [that] there was intramurals, there was intercollegiate activity. ... Because there wasn't all this layer of national rules, I played on three basketball teams at the same time when I was in college. ... So, I played on the college team, and they had certain rules, where you couldn't cross the line, in basketball, for instance, and then, I played on a town team that competed with other town teams in other states, and those rules were, like, more like the boys' rules, and then, I played on a basketball team and a softball team in Kansas City that played international rules, and then, we played in our area of the country, and then, we played out East here, and so on, like that. So, I loved sports. It was just [a matter of] trying to remember which rule I had to abide by, [laughter] but I preferred the international rules, which is like today.

SH: Did your older sister and your younger sister also have this athletic inclination?

RT: Yes, but not as passionate, say, as mine, but, yes, and so, we would play, you know, at home. We'd play football and we'd play catch, you know, we played baseball. We didn't play softball as a child. So, we all played baseball, played baseball with the guys, and basketball and football, and it was just normal, you know, to do that, and then, I was just delighted when I got to play on a team that would, you know, compete against other women. ... I found that, you know, this is what I, you know, really enjoyed in this life. So, when I graduated from college, I had my teaching certification, and so, I became a phys. ed. teacher, and I was, you know, anxious then to make sure that there were programs for young ladies to experience, whether it be on a recreation, intramural or competitive level, structured level.

SH: To go back to college, when you were competing on these different teams, what was the fundraising aspect of this like, to be able to do this?

RT: [laughter] Fundraising? Okay, I babysat. You had to provide your own means, and so, [for] the school, ... you know, you wore your gym suit when you competed, and on these other individual teams, private teams, they had a sponsor who then provided the uniform and the expense for traveling, and, you know, fed us and lodged us, that sort of thing. ...

KT: How did you find the time to balance your studies with the sports? You were playing on these three teams; that seems like it was a rigorous schedule.

RT: ... Well, it was, and then, I would take full loads. The lightest load I had was sixteen credits, but I was taking even eighteen credits and I was a member of Madrigals, which was a singing choir at the university, or at the college, and so, you just did. I mean, you worked hard, you applied yourself. Of course, we had very stringent rules. You couldn't go off campus during the week, you had curfews, you had lights out. You're nodding like, "Yes," but I don't know if you've ever experienced this.

KT: I have never experienced it, but it makes a lot of sense in the context of your story. [laughter] That is why I am nodding.

RT: Well, yes, so, you know, ... on campus, you had classes and all freshman had eight o'clocks. ... The buzzer in the dorm would go off at seven, didn't matter whether you had an eight o'clock or not, but you had, three days a week, ... at least, eight o'clocks and you would be in classes until six o'clock at night, and then, you know, you'd go to the cafeteria and eat. You had to be someplace at seven o'clock, either in the library or in your room, and studying. So, study hall was seven to nine. Then, they expected you to, you know, get yourself all ready for the next day between nine and ten; ten o'clock, lights out. I shouldn't say lights out; it was ten o'clock was Rosary, ten-fifteen was in your room, ten-thirty, lights out. ... Then, we had prefects, nuns, who lived on the floors and, you know, [there would] be fifty-two women on a floor and they would, you know, monitor all that. So, to stay up and study at night, you had your ways. So, [you would] put the towel down at the bottom of the door, so [that] the light didn't go through, you know. [laughter]

KT: You made it work.

RT: You had your stuffed animals ... in your bed, with sheets over it, so [that] when they checked with the flashlight that, you know, they thought you were in there, instead of being somewhere else, studying. So, you studied hard and applied yourself.

TF: Now, when you participated in these college teams, when was practice and your competitions?

RT: On the weekends.

TF: That would be just on the weekends.

RT: On the weekends, yes. There weren't games during the week.

TF: Right, you practiced during the week.

RT: I practiced on the weekends and competition would be on weekends as well.

TF: Oh, okay. So, there was nothing going on during the week.

RT: Right.

TF: Interesting, a little different than it is now.

RT: Right, different than now. [laughter]

SH: Were you coached by women or men?

RT: On the college campus, it was coached by women, and the other teams were male coaches. So, there weren't women coaches around, so, yes, I mean, there was a void. That was an obvious void, but, so, I understand how.

SH: Did you go on for graduate work after you finished?

RT: No, I went and taught, and I started teaching; pardon? I did later go to graduate school at Syracuse University and graduated with a master's degree in education.

SH: Where?

RT: At General George S. Patton, Jr., Junior High School, which is on Fort Leavenworth, in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and that was like a big feather in your cap to land the job there. It was one of the top schools in the state, and it was a junior high, but I had over 330 young ladies in my phys. ed. classes. ... I also then had the cheerleaders and I also had the pep club, which was a couple hundred members. So, [I was] teaching, and, oh, you come in for work, you're dressed in your heels and had your staff meeting, then, you went, changed into your teaching clothes, then, you changed back into your dress clothes to monitor lunch hall, then, you would go back and put your work clothes on, teach, then, put your dress clothes back on to go home.

SH: Were you housed on Fort Leavenworth?

RT: Oh, no. I lived across the river in Missouri, and Fort Leavenworth is on the bluff, right, of the [Missouri River]. ...

SH: I did not know whether they provided housing for their teachers.

RT: Oh, no, no, that was [not provided]. Fort Leavenworth is where the War College is, so, you have all the top brass in the Army there. ... One of the first things I had to do with my classes was to let them know that I had no military background, I had no military schooling, to be aware of what their markings on their uniforms and their fathers' caps meant. So, whether it was a gold oak leaf or a silver one or how many stars, you know, I didn't know a general from a lieutenant colonel from whatever they were. So, as they learned that, then, they stopped expecting special treatments, because they had come from other military bases where they were the top dog and everybody had to cater to their wishes. So, I just treated them all the same and we got along fine.

They didn't mind that at all. So, it was just once they understood, you know, what we were doing. It was great. They were wonderful. So, I taught there for two years, and then, I went on to Hartwick College in Oneonta, New York, and taught physical education there and coached women's basketball and tennis.

TF: Was that your first coaching experience, there?

RT: Yes, that was my first coaching experience there, and then, from there, I went to Utica College in Utica, New York, and taught and coached there for four years, and then, it was in 1974 and Title IX was coming forth. ... A position here at Rutgers University was posted and I applied for it, and I got interviewed in August and a committee of ten, comprised of student-athletes, coaches, teachers and administrators, interviewed me, and it was, like, from ten in the morning until ten at night, right over here at the College Avenue Gym. [laughter] So, fortunately for me, I got the position and became the Director of Women's Athletics at Rutgers University. So, I was the first women's director, and the only one that was Director of Women's Athletics *per se*.

PC: So, you came the same year I came, 1974.

RT: Hey! [laughter]

PC: There you go, and I can remember watching women's basketball in the College Avenue Gym. That's how old I am. [laughter]

RT: We are very young.

SH: Yes, you are.

RT: This is only my second time to be thirty-two, but I'm doing a better job. [laughter]

TF: Second time around, right, it's going better.

RT: Yes, it's much easier.

SH: Which sports were you coaching at the college level when you first started out?

RT: Basketball and tennis, coaching those, and then, I got my national officiating rating in softball and basketball, and so, I would help in the communities, you know, at the high schools and college, to referee events like that for them. ... When I got the position here, at Rutgers University, I did one JV game up at Montclair and I realized this would not be in anyone's best interest. I would be impartial, yes, but I didn't think it would help anyone to hire an administrator from a college to be a referee. So, I gave that up, and it was difficult to do, because ... you had to start everything at the grass roots, with getting people interested in wanting to referee and teaching them how to referee, and then, getting them experience in forming ... the organizations that would help these referees stay current, maintain their status,

improve it and bring in new apprentices at the same time. So, we'd worked long and hard in the various states to do that, and so, giving it up, at that point, I felt, you know, like, "Well, that's not good, because they need us. ... They're so few," but I just had to, because, when I came in, ... here, besides being the Director of Women's Athletics, I was also the women's tennis coach. ... I wanted to maintain contact with the student-athletes, direct contact with them, and so, I chose, then, to be the tennis coach. Basketball coach would have been my first choice, but I knew that to be the Director of Women's Athletics, to achieve the goal that the University had and my personal goal, which was the same, to develop a nationally successful women's athletic program that was comprehensive, ... with, you know, as many sports as the men had, the men had sixteen sports, so, to do that, if I was the basketball coach, I knew that it would take away from my time to be able to develop that program. So, I felt my priority was for me to ... develop a program that would benefit so many more people than where my strength was in basketball, because, being from the Midwest, you know, we felt like we really had an edge or we were ahead of the Eastern area of the country in basketball.

TF: What was the status of women's sports before you arrived, Rita Kay?

RT: Here at the University?

TF: Yes, here at Rutgers.

RT: Douglass College provided athletic teams that competed with other colleges, and they were the strongest ones. Rutgers College had just started allowing women to enroll and they had a softball team, and ... Livingston College had a club softball team as well, and there was synchronized swimming over at Douglass, besides the basketball, gymnastics, field hockey and lacrosse teams they had [as well]. So, they were pretty darn good, and then, ... in '74, '75, when we initiated then the University's intercollegiate athletic program, then, those teams, more or less, ... became the intercollegiate team. ... You know, there was no longer a Douglass team *per se*, or Rutgers College team *per se*, or a Livingston College or a Cook College team *per se*; it was all Rutgers University now.

SH: Was that just for women, or did that include the men as well? Obviously, there were no men at Douglass.

RT: ... For the men, they had, you know, the intramurals, they had recreational intramurals, club teams, and then, the only intercollegiate teams were in the Athletic Department, but, there, later on, there was club ice hockey and that was conducted and structured equal to any of our intercollegiate athletic programs. ...

PC: Was there any controversy, or at least resistance to, especially with the Douglass programs, to making them University-wide programs?

RT: Fortunately, there wasn't. The women at Douglass ... initiated contact with the University to form an intercollegiate program, University-wide, so, there wasn't that resistance. It was nothing but support, and they were, you know, just great about that. ... So, the schedules they



had, you know, they were passing that on to me, and then, I had to develop the schedules for the programs.

PC: Was there any significant amount of alumni money coming in to help support the women's sports programs at Douglass at the time they merged? Do you remember?

RT: At the time, I do not think there was. It was from the University's Board of Governors that the [funds came], or the University provided the money from the state, for our budget.

PC: I just wondered, because, I mean, Douglass has always had really generous alumni.

RT: Yes.

PC: And I just wondered whether they had. ... I have no memory of them contributing to the school.

RT: Well, we inherited their uniforms, so, whoever paid for them beforehand, yes. [laughter]

TF: There you go.

PC: Got them.

RT: Yes, fortunately, we ... had those uniforms and, see, we shared uniforms. So, you know, field hockey would wear them, and then, basketball would wear them, and then, lacrosse would wear those same uniforms. ...

TF: Yes, that opens [into] my next question, [which] was, okay, now, you start this all-University program; what did you have to go through to get this thing off the ground, and what problems did you confront?

RT: I don't think we have time.

SH: I think we should go back even further and talk about how you became interested in the job.

TF: Okay, yes.

SH: Who recruited you?

RT: Well, I was very interested. I was tired of being a jack-of-all-trades, because I, at the college level, was teaching, I was coaching, I was a faculty rep, I worked with academic committees, justifying your classes and how many credits you had, I ran the intramurals for the women, I was given, you know, cheerleaders. So, you, as "the female," if you wanted something there, you had to provide. You either grubstaked it out of your own pocket, the money, you provided the transportation, you did fundraisers of bake sales and all, to get money for uniforms, or for, you know, the ball and bat, whatever, and so, that's how it always was, that, you know,

you had to do it on your own. You had to provide it. So, you had to be very resourceful in every shape and way, so that you could play the game. ... When Title IX came about and these opportunities were provided where you would be able to be a full-time administrator for sports, women's sports, just was absolutely great, and so, all the colleges in the country were now, you know, establishing these programs, or positions and programs, for women, and so, I was just delighted. When I came to my interview, being that I was from a small school background, a small town, I was used to great school spirit, I was used to knowing, you know, everybody. ... So, when I came to New Brunswick, and this was a big school and all, and I know, walking down College Avenue, on the sidewalk, ... I would see somebody coming down the walk and I would nod to them, say, "Hello," get eye contact, they would kind of shun away from you, thinking, "What's wrong with you? What do you want?" [laughter]

TF: Welcome to New Jersey.

RT: You know, keep my distance, you know. That was that safeguard they would throw up, but what I found with this committee of ten was the spirit and the excitement about women's sports and about having programs. ... The students that I met, they were excited about it, they loved playing, they wanted to go forward with it, and [following] what Douglass had done and how they were so supportive of this movement, I wanted to be here. ... I found that great spirit, school spirit, and that's what made a difference.

SH: Were you recruited to make an application?

RT: No.

SH: You picked Rutgers. How did Rutgers get on the top of your list?

RT: They just put out a flyer, a page, one page or an ad in a [publication]. I was at a national convention and there was an ad for this position, and so, I followed up with a written application, and then, you know, they selected that and called me and I came down. ...

TF: Had you applied to other schools as well, at that time?

RT: No. Well, yes, I had; I'm sorry, I had, Temple University. I'm trying to remember what other ones. There were a couple others, but I really wasn't that [enthusiastic about them]. You know, I went to an interview down at Temple and I thought that would be, you know, not as desirable a place, for me. It was too metropolitan. ...

SH: Do any of the names on that ten-member board stand out, that panel that interviewed you? Did you continue an association with them?

RT: Oh, definitely, yes. Two or three of them were, you know, athletes on teams, (Maryanne Kramer?), I think, Eileen Kassower, [Douglass College Class of 1976 and captain of the tennis team]. Of course, [Professor] Nancy [K.] Mitchell, Professor Jan [Janet] Koontz were faculty people on there from Douglass. Judy Vogt was from Rutgers College and she was the softball

coach; of course, [Athletics Director] Fred Gruninger, yes. Right now, I can't recall the other names.

SH: That is okay.

RT: [laughter] It's been a little while.

SH: That is okay. That was such a huge board, I just thought maybe there were people who really stood out.

RT: But, no, I worked with them throughout then. ... I tried to maintain contact and involvement with them as much as possible, so that, you know, it would be a wide support base, so that everything was transparent, that they were aware of what was going on all the time, and they could give me some suggestions, you know, how we could do things better, fine. So, you know, [at] that point, yes, I was twenty-nine and full of energy and anxious to see this go forward, and I missed the teaching, and so, ... being a coach and having that interaction with teams was very important, I thought, and crucial to me developing a program that was adequate; not adequate, that would meet all their expectations. ... So, it was, you know, quite a task.

SH: When did you start? When was day one?

RT: Two weeks later, I think. They called me in the middle of August and said, "Okay, you have the job." Then, I had to come down and find a place to live. I lived in a hotel room for a month. I had to coach. Then, they said, "Oh, by the way, you're hosting the field hockey regional championship for the collegiate and club level," which was enormous. [laughter] So, they said, "Don't worry, we'll help you, we'll help you," and they did, they did, but it was, you know, just rolling constantly. ... You know, they put you before the camera ... because it was, you know, a big to-do that, you know, we were moving forward now. We had, you know, hired someone and we're now going to have a [women's] program. So, we started off with seven sports, and they had coaches for the softball. Judy Vogt was the softball coach. Ellen Johns was Douglass staff and she was coach for women's field hockey and basketball, and we had Sandy Petway, Rutgers College, and she coached track. Gymnastics was Arlene Norris, who was Douglass, and that was it, so, myself as the tennis coach, and then, we had to fill the swimming coach position, and Frank Elm was the current men's coach. He had quite a resume on him, as far as developing swimmers to the Olympic level, and so, he was the one we hired, then, to do the women's, but ... they were all part-time coaches. No one was full-time, because Frank was coaching both men and the women, but here in the College Avenue Gym, and the women that were coaching from Douglass, they were full-time teaching at Douglass, and then, coaching in the athletic program part-time.

SH: Where were the practice fields?

TF: Yes, this was before the RAC [Rutgers Athletic Center].

RT: All over. [laughter]

TF: All over.

RT: Douglass College had the field hockey/lacrosse fields, and the gymnastics was in Cook Gym. Then, softball was over on the Busch Stadium [area, the facilities around Rutgers Stadium] and basketball and swimming was here in the College Avenue Gym. Tennis was up on the Busch Stadium area, right next to the President's House. So, it was spread out.

PC: I'd watched the field hockey team in '75, I think, playing over [at]; it was on the Douglass Campus. ... The field is still there. I don't know how much it's been built up. It was right across from where the college [student] center is now, I recall.

KT: Yes.

PC: I don't know what they use the field for now, but I do remember that.

RT: I think that's all recreation and club level now, and they put a sidewalk, or a walkway, through the middle of that field as soon as we moved onto the fields that we built, then, over behind the Athletic Center. ...

PC: If I can ask you, ... this is a completely out of the blue question.

RT: Sure.

PC: ... The thing that struck me most about field hockey, other than the fact that I like it because I've had students who play it, is that it's that sport where the women still wear, not exactly skirts, but ...

RT: Kilts.

PC: Kilt; why? Where does that come from?

RT: That's a historical thing, where the game is from England and they play it on a pitch; they call fields "pitches" there. ... They were ash pitches and they wore kilts. That's the traditional uniform. So, that has carried over to when the people, Europeans, came over and brought that game in here. So, fortunately, with women's lacrosse, even though that was established by the American Indian, here, in the United States, as they trained for war among the tribes, ... up there at the Onondaga Reservation, ... up there in New York, where they made all the lacrosse sticks out of mulberry, so, we're lucky they didn't have to wear those American traditional squaw outfits. [laughter]

SH: Is not field hockey a traditionally male sport in Europe?

RT: Oh, certainly; ... in India, they play it. So, we have had men wanting us to bring field hockey into the intercollegiate athletic level, but they're club level here, and would petition the

department to do that. ... I mean, it's an incredible game, and you see it played a lot. Especially, if you go down to Washington, DC, you'll see it a lot in the parks, because of all the international communities they have there. Yes, they take full [swings], they take wicked swings.

SH: Rutgers College was just becoming co-ed when you arrived on campus. Women were definitely in the minority at that stage. What was your first priority? There could not be just one, I can tell, with this job, but what did you see as what you had to work on?

RT: Well, the first thing, of course, was to get all [the] coaches onboard, to have schedules, so, I had to schedule competitions, and to get teams prepared. So, you had to ... cut your teams, you had to have your tryouts and get your teams established, and then, preparing them for their competition, you know, putting them through practices and training programs, and getting them ready to travel for the competition or host it, and to get officials and get them under contract, and then, for the facilities to have [the games], you know, to schedule the facilities, because these were all shared facilities. ... So, fortunately, Douglass had, you know, those things established, so that we could play all our field hockey games there, and that was a joy to schedule, but the College Avenue Gym, with so many activities going on, from classes to rec. programs to intramural [games], men's basketball, it was very tricky. ... The swimming, we were able to do that because of Frank being [the coach], coaching of both, but we would have different days, different dates, for those competitions, but those became my priorities. Then, of course, uniforms, getting uniforms ordered, and so on, but there were many, and among the first, of course, was locker rooms. ... We were given a locker room area at the College Avenue Gym, which was the former men's basketball locker room and training room, and so, they gave that portion, that side of the College Avenue Gym, to us, and so, you know, ... that's what is there today. So, we had a small equipment room, and then, we had different bays where you had lockers. ... So, that allowed gymnastics, let's see, it was basketball, gymnastics and swimming, those are the only three teams that had locker rooms. ... Of the seven teams, those are the ones that had locker rooms. Now, that locker room had to be renovated, [laughter] and so, I formed a committee. ... [When I was hired], they went down and they showed me the locker room. ... At the end of that interview, we went down, and I remember that cage, metal wiring of cage that opened up, and we walked in there and it was rather drab. It was Army green coloring, all the lockers, and the floor was the green tile and the lighting was rather dim. ... Then, they had a sauna, they had their shower area, and then, they had a training room and they had a storage room, and then, this laundry room, which had a half door on it. So, that became our equipment room, and so, I put together a committee of students and coaches and faculty and had them select colors and stuff. I said I, you know, would steer this to a color-coordinated type thing, so that we get assigned teams, okay. Basketball had the red room, intramurals and recreation had the yellow room, the green room was for gymnastics and the blue room was for swimming, and we had one small room for our staff, so [that] the coaches could go in there and change, and there was a shower in there. So, we had to renovate it and had to add showers, had to add toilets, things like that.

TF: Was there any problem with the money, the budget for this? Did you have to fight for that?

RT: Well, that was very interesting. My committee did a great job, and they were all [members of affected parties], because I felt it was helpful to have them be part of all this and they would take pride in it and all. So, we utilized the hallway for the recreational lockers. ... That was for women of Rutgers College and the women in our three intercollegiate athletic programs, that was their locker area, and the funding was coming from the University. I had to write the proposals and everything, ... and then, it would get approved, but I was concerned with how long it was taking to complete the job, and all ... this paint, I'd go downstairs to check on it and there'd be all these red lockers being painted. ... These are half lockers and [they were] painting them and it was taking so long, and I'm going, "How long does it take them to put in, you know, two toilets here and one toilet over here, you know, four showers, one shower over here?" and we only had, I think, 527 lockers in the entire area and that was, most all, all but the basketball, were half lockers, because the men's basketball, we got the leftover JV lockers from the men and they were full-length lockers. ... Anyway, so, I was talking with the gentleman from the facilities department, and [who was] in charge of it, and I said, "Well, you know, ... how much paint did you get in, you know? How long is it taking?" He says, "Well, to paint three thousand lockers, it takes a lot." I said, "Three thousand, what?" He says, "Oops." So, it was revealed, by accident, that we were painting all the men's lockers, too. ... So, as far as how much it cost, it didn't matter; whatever money was approved for the women, the men were benefiting, because they were getting all their lockers painted and their locker rooms painted, and they even got new benches. ... After we got all the locker rooms [renovated], we had them carpeted and painted, and these old lockers painted, they had no benches. So, the women, we had no money left. So, there weren't any benches. The women had to sit on the floor to change their shoes or, you know, if you're taking your clothes off, you hang them in your half locker, but your coat, lay it on the floor. So, one day, as I was leaving the office, headed out to the parking lot, there, stacked next to the parking lot, were all these benches, old, gray benches that were sawed up in half. ... That was because when the workmen replaced the benches in the men's locker room area, the men's old benches were so long, they couldn't get them out, and so, they cut them in half to bring them out. Now, there's nothing wrong with them. That was good wood. So, I called my tennis assistant coach and he came over and got them, and we used them over at the tennis courts for our spectators to sit on, painted them. [laughter] That's how we used them, and, now, for us to have benches in the women's locker room, they wouldn't give us any, they wouldn't make any. They said, "We're all out of money," and so, we found a way to observe that the men's locker rooms had these new, red benches and, somehow or other, we managed to get some benches in the women's locker room. [laughter] We went by way of what we called "the dungeon." So, there were obstacles, but, you know, we'd find ways around them. ... We had to have a locker room for our visiting teams, so, ... the nicest thing would be to put them into the recreational locker room, the yellow locker room, and, of course, ... back then, you scheduled gymnastics, swimming and basketball all on the same date, because you all traveled together for cost purposes. ... So, a swimming event would be going on at the same time as basketball. In the College Avenue Gym, there's a wall that separates the two, and I was always concerned with hearing the gun go off at the start of the women's race, interrupting the basketball game, but that wall is so thick and is beautifully designed, so, it wouldn't disrupt. It's just that you couldn't have any spectators then, at the swimming, and then, gymnastics was over at Douglass. So, with all of that happening, then, if you had an opponent, then, that you had to put in a locker room in the College Avenue Gym, which, sometimes, we just didn't have room, so, we were allowed to use

the men's, one of the men's opponent's locker rooms. ... To access that, you had to go through the women's locker room, but there was a door that took you along the side of the base of the pool, with the pipes overhead, and so, [you] go along that way, under the pipes. ... Then, you could come to another door that would then lead into the men's visiting locker room, and then, I'd have to go lock off that entrance from the men's area, so that none of the men would come into the women's area. So, you know, it took a little bit of coordination and, you know, we did those things. [laughter]

TF: It's hard to think about that now, you know, with the way women's sports has grown.

RT: Well, you had to be resourceful. You had to, you know, just take hold of things and do it.

SH: Did you have counterparts at other universities who would have had very similar stories to tell?

RT: Yes, but they did not have the size program that we had. They were quite envious of the spotlight that we were in, because we were the State University and ... most they had was, maybe, seven sports and their enrollment, you know, was such that it was a smaller enrollment. So, they weren't under the scrutiny as much as you would have here, where you had a lot of women libbers on campus who were constantly pushing buttons, and then, you had, you know, all the politics involved. So, they had their challenges as well, and so, we would get together and share how we can resolve this and that. ...

KT: Was it ever a challenge to find other colleges to have the women compete against, in the newer sports especially? With softball, you were saying ...

RT: Yes, that was extremely difficult. We were the "new kid on the block," and so, the other teams already had all their schedules done, so, there wasn't a date, and their budgets were already set, so, they couldn't add another team, they couldn't afford to hire more officials, and so, it was very difficult. ... Fortunately, Douglass had a schedule, you know. It wasn't ... completed and all, but I would go to the scheduling meetings that they would [have] ... and you would have to be patient and wait your turn, and what happened was, our women's swimming team catapulted to the top immediately. ... Those young swimmers were coming here ... who would later try out for the Olympics, and we had the top young ladies in our swimming pool. ... Frank Elm, because he was on the Olympic coaching staff for two different Olympics, and then, also, the head coach for the 1980 Olympics, which was boycotted, so, he's not a household name, he was able to recruit very fine swimmers. [Editor's Note: The United States boycotted the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow to protest the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979.] ... We just ruled at the regional level, which was wonderful. So, it was very hard to find competition for the swimming team, because nobody wanted to swim us, because we would blow them away. ... At that time, we were a region that went from the Ohio River, so, you include all of Pennsylvania, to the Atlantic, and then, from Virginia north to Maine, including Maine. So, you had, say, 360-some colleges and universities in that region. So, to take your regional was something, and we would excel in swimming beyond belief, and so, we would go to regionals and win it and the second place team would be 144 points behind us. So,

there would be Princeton, 144 points behind, or Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh wasn't that close, Penn State, Maryland, you name them, and we just blew them away. ... In basketball, for instance, to schedule University of Maryland, when they hired their new person, AD, and coach, women's basketball coach, Chris Weller, I was on the phone with her, and so, we scheduled our basketball and our gymnastics and our swimming on the same date and everything. ... I said, "Now, Chris, you maybe want to go talk to your swim coach, you know," and she says, "Why?" and I said, "Well, you just [see]. Just go talk to your swim coach," and the next day, she calls back and she says, "Holy smokes, he turned absolute green, saying, 'You didn't schedule Rutgers, did you?'" So, we took our lumps in basketball and I wouldn't schedule them in basketball unless they'd schedule us in swimming. So, we'd beat them up in the swimming and they'd beat us up in basketball, but it was very difficult, and to expand it. So, you weren't able to have, you know, all that you wanted right away. It took years to get on people's schedules, and they didn't want to compete against you unless you were really good, but, fortunately, we became really good. [laughter]

KT: That always helps.

RT: Yes, but that's a very good question, because that, it was tough to do. ... Especially, you just didn't have, you know, a facility dedicated to that one thing and you could just book it whenever the other opponent was available, you know. ...

TF: According to Title IX, the number of women's sports was supposed to equal that of men. Was there a timeframe for schools to develop that?

RT: ... There was not a set timeframe, but, because of Title IX, certainly, equal opportunity for women was a necessity, and [I] found that New Jersey high schools had the largest number of sports offerings of any state in the Union. So, again, that [would] compel us to have a comprehensive program to reflect that interest. ... When we would have tryouts for any of our teams, we were averaging fifty-five women trying out for any of our teams, and it was difficult ... to try and meet all the demands and expectations, but we were very successful with providing so many opportunities, but quality experiences, and finding quality coaches who grew up in your backyard and would come and work for love instead of money, because the salaries, ... all these part-time salaries, were extremely low. ...

SH: They were all part-time positions.

RT: Yes, and it was not a competitive salary. ... So, I had to do, you know, a sales job to get them to come here.

TF: What did you promise, besides just the love of the sport, that they did this?

RT: I made no promises, because there were no benefits. ... So, I said, you know, that we were an up-and-coming program, that we want to develop this to the max, so, you know, we will develop the women's talents and go forward with that, that, you know, we would have the facilities and provide, you know, the uniforms and the equipment, we would try to schedule the



best we can, but they had an opportunity to take us along that path and make it a quality experience. ... Obviously, they coached because they loved that sport. They loved coaching. ...

PC: You mentioned, in mentioning individuals before, that ... many of them were teachers at Douglass or something. Were there some that were coming in from the outside that did the coaching, too?

RT: Yes, yes, I had high school teachers, who then were also coaches, like, our assistant coaches, ... most of them were high school teachers and coaches. ... So, to get them to come into this and ... to paint the picture for them, where we were headed and how we could get there with their help, then, they would buy into that and go, you know, and I supported them, you know. We wanted integrity. We wanted it to have, you know, the best opportunity for these young ladies to balance, you know, their lives with academics and athletics. Academics came first and athletics was second, social life was third, [laughter] and so, you know, it was something that everybody was striving for. We were all on the same page.

PC: Was there any money for the individuals? Were there things, athletic scholarships, for any of these women at this early stage?

RT: To start with, we went from no scholarships to, today, where we have the full rides. The scholarship, the initial scholarship, was provided to Charlotte Walker and she was a Douglass student who was a very fine runner. So, she was a track athlete and she also liked to play basketball. ... She was a full-needs student, so, she didn't need an athletic scholarship to attend college, but she was selected to receive, I think it was a thousand-dollar scholarship, but a scholarship then was provided by means of, you know, replacing that much money in her grants, her financial need package. ... Then, she signed a letter committing to play basketball and track, and the next year, she found she just wanted to do track, and so, she, you know, asked, "Can this be changed without reducing her scholarship money?" So, we did do that. ... She's a brilliant woman, she's very successful, has a family, and let's go off record here. [laughter]

SH: Do you want this off?

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: To scholarship these young women, was there any effort to reach out to alumni for these types of scholarships?

RT: Yes, you know, there certainly was. The fundraising arm of the department was the Scarlet R [Club] and Douglass also would provide scholarships. So, Douglass would have a scholarship that they would provide and they would have their qualifications for that. So, we would have women that were on a Douglass scholarship, or provided a scholarship for them in athletics, and, also, from Rutgers College, and that, of course, then, would grow and we would have more and more of that. ... Then, people would contact us, ... or to me, as to how they could make contributions and donate, and so, I encouraged them to set up endowments and do it that way, so

that it would always be specified for that and not be siphoned off into some other fund, which was a good habit of the department. [laughter]

TF: If it wasn't spoken for.

RT: Oh, even if it would be spoken for. ...

SH: You said you wanted academics to be first. Was that easy to do or not?

RT: Pardon?

SH: You said that you wanted academics to be the first priority for these young women. Was that something that you had to provide, what do they call it now, the sports table?

TF: Academic support for the students.

SH: Academic support; was that something that you initiated right away?

RT: Oh, no, no, these women, ... those who were applying for admissions here, had to meet all the admissions standards here and there was just a tremendous application of students coming from high schools to come here. ... So, we were, you know, very fortunate, because they all were studious. Certainly, there were those who struggled with it, but I want to say all, most all of our students graduated on time. Women's basketball, they all graduated on time. They would only recruit those who could cut it and they knew that if they didn't, [they were out]. ... Theresa [Grentz] would tell me, she says, "Rita Kay, I learned, early on," she says, "that you've got to ... recruit the students who can cut it, because, otherwise, you're going to have problems and you just can't succeed that way." So, it was not any major issue for us, as far as the women's athletes and women's sports went, of getting admissible students or those flunking out. I mean, certainly, there would be those who were on the border and all, and I remember one young lady, a swimmer from Delaware, who was a marginal case with her academic grades in high school. ... When we explained ... to the admissions office that her parents were going through a divorce that was pretty tough on her and all, well, they permitted her in. Well, she just shined here academically. . . . You know, she could handle the academics and her sport and it was just great, because that's what so many [women did]. If I [may], let me just; there were so many things, I did make a couple of notes here, but many of our graduates had 4.0s, you know, there were so many of the women that were three-point-whatever average, so, they would be scholar-athletes as well as MVPs. They went on to successful careers in all fields. We have many who are doctors, we have many who ... graduated from [the College of] Pharmacy, and they work in Fortune 500 companies, they work in medical institutions, such as Johns Hopkins [University], right now. They're very successful, that, meanwhile, they also are enjoying motherhood and have families. So, they have career and family, and then, you have those who succeeded as being, you know, stay-at-home moms, but they were running their households. We have a New Jersey Supreme Court Justice [Justice Jaynee B. LaVecchia, Douglass College Class of 1976, Rutgers School of Law-Newark Class of 1979]; we have an Assistant Attorney General in New Jersey; New Jersey social service people; with CBS Sports, we have producers; we have

teachers, coaches, referees, Wall Street brokers, financial advisors; we have those who own their own [businesses], have their own financial firms, equities brokers, civil engineers; we have researchers for Parkinson's, cancer. I mean, [in] every field, these women have succeeded and athletics is providing them with a balance of life and, when they would be a part of teams and be part of our programs, as with any athlete in a program or on a team, it enhances your life. It's not the life, but it enhances your life, [laughter] and it allows them to have a balance that carries them forward and to be the best they can be, to deal with the wins and losses on a daily basis, so that, you know, [if] they're in their business and they have something that goes wrong, or they weren't successful that day, they don't fold and leave. They come back the next day all ready to go again. They know what competition is like, they know how to deal with wins and losses and they have structure. So, they are responsible for their actions and help in society, and then, they emulate that and are role models and it just continues. So, it's been, I think, a wonderful opportunity for students if they choose to go into athletics. ... It's a very tough decision in that there's so much they have to commit to, but their love of that sport and the passion for it is great, but they have joy when they do it. So, many a time, I would see some teams huddled around and they had their scowls on and looking serious and, you know, talking about, "Well, what's wrong with us? ... Why aren't we doing this?" and I would go over and ask them and they said, "Well, the coach said we have to figure it out." I said, "Oh, the coach did?" [laughter] So, I'd ask them a few questions, and then, I said, you know, "Well, what's the problem?" you know, and they'd say, "We're not winning. We're not this and we're not that," and so, I would just try to help them refocus on the fact that, "Well, you are students here and why do you play this game? Well, you love it and you enjoy it and you have fun." So, I said, "I think that your job is to have fun and the coach's job is to coach you, and it's the coach's job to help you win," and I said, "You're just to go in there and have fun by applying yourself the best you can." So, that was my philosophy that I would push on to teams and to young people who would feel like they had the burden of, "Oh, my goodness, it's my fault that we're not, you know, successful here," but there were so many wonderful opportunities for these young people to experience. ... You know, hopefully, they gained a lot from it, ... even in negative ways, but there were many, many things that just were constantly proving why we should have the program, why we should provide these opportunities and it should be comprehensive that we allow students to excel in all areas, whether it's fencing, swimming, basketball, gymnastics. You look at what the Olympic sports do and how that revs up the globe about, "I want to be a gymnast," you know, "I want to be a swimmer. I want to be this [or that]," and what it does for everyone. ... It could be utilized more for peacetime relations, you know. [laughter]

TF: I thought it was interesting [that] you said the Olympic sports, basically, can generate interest and get the imagination going every four years when the Olympics come around, you know.

RT: Yes.

TF: It's unfortunate, because ... this is going on in their lives, as you say, every day; they're balancing academics and they're participating in these sports.

RT: Well, I've found ... the interest in women's sports grew and grew and grew, and our problem, or my problem, was trying to get the media to cover the sports, because once people saw the game, saw the event, they would be, you know, wanting to come back for more, because when you'd go and you'd see these young ladies out there playing, they had to play [differently]. They played teamwork, they had finesse, they would run plays, execute them, you know, but it was a team effort, and they would give it all they could, and so, it was a pleasure for most sports enthusiasts to watch, to be a fan. People who didn't know the game came out, but they just loved that energy and the excitement that these young ladies had for the game. ... Coaches would be excited about coaching these young ladies who were willing to listen to them and absorb this part of their education. Of course, we had ... many women head coaches and we had many men head coaches, and, numerous times, when I would be interviewing; there was only, like, one summer that I didn't have to interview for a head coaching position. [laughter] Because we had part-time positions, you just couldn't keep these people, because they'd either move on to a full-time position or they could no longer afford to coach with us, [laughter] because they had to earn some more money, but the men would come in with an attitude that, "Oh, I've coached high school boys, therefore, I'm qualified to coach college women," and that there's no difference between coaching men and women, but the men who coached our women's teams found quickly that there is a difference. So, the ones who had that experience of coaching men prior would come into my office and say, "There is a difference with women, to coach women. There's an emotional factor that you don't have, say, with the men. The men, you know, don't react to whether they had a falling out with a girlfriend or some other problem in school, whereas the women, that would have an impact on their playing that day and how they would deal with things." ... One of the assistant basketball coaches, ... he was a coach over in the high school here and very successful for the men, and then, he came back and he was coaching the JV girls at that high school, and then, he applied for our position here, ... Bill Blindow, and he was quite known throughout the state for his ability to coach basketball. ... I talked to him and he said, "I love coaching the women." He says, "They are just dry sponges. They just would absorb it," he says. "With the guys," he says, "they come in with a know-it-all attitude. You can't tell them anything. They don't want to learn it. They're just going to play street ball," and so, the women, because they didn't have that super speed, didn't have that extra strength, they had to have finesse. They had to execute the play. They had to complete it. They couldn't just power over their opponent. So, it became much more entertaining, I think, to the fan, to see basketball, to see the other sports, soccer and all, to compete rather than just being a power of some superstar; so, a lot of teamwork.

TF: So, you have these Olympic sports and, suddenly, Rutgers emerges in women's basketball, and kind of reaches, I think, the top fairly quickly. ... Can you talk a little bit about that?

RT: Well, we were the first, you know, in developing the program here. I had to establish, you know, all our sports and the schedules, etc. Well, then, we needed full-time coaches. So, I had to continually push for full-time positions and I'd have to justify it and you have to write out all those documents, fill in all those forms, go forward with it, make your presentations, and it'd be a yay or nay. ... We were the first school in the nation to have a full-time women's basketball coach, and that made the headlines as well. So, we'd had the part-time coaches and, now, we had a full-time, and certainly that made a big difference, and so, we moved quickly forward with

basketball. ... Douglass had a very strong program, and then, women's basketball just started blooming, because there were basketball camps in the summertime and there are clinics, and so, now, you had more women with greater skills coming forward. ... Because we were right here in the hub of everything, it was just great. ... I always felt that, you know, Rutgers was in the right place, we were at the right time and we had the media outlets, but, unfortunately, in my opinion, we could have been there much sooner and much easier, and without as much expenditure, probably, in time and money, if they had allowed us to just evolve and not put up any of the obstacles to slow us down in being successful.

SH: What were the obstacles?

RT: But, every, for instance, press release on women's basketball, for many, many years, [laughter] would always have to be intoned with a men's basketball lead-in, and that was because our sports information director was convinced that the press would not pick it up if it was just women's basketball. ... So, you had that attitude that you had to deal with all the time, and so, that was always very difficult. ... So, it was important to get a full-time position for a sports information person who would be just doing women's program, women's sports.

SH: That is what you did. You just divided them, okay.

RT: No, I didn't. We would get the bits and pieces; we didn't get anybody divided.

SH: You did not get your own press person.

RT: We finally did, finally did, but, in the beginning, it was [that] we would just get, you know, assigned like it was another sport to cover, and they, the guys who got that, resented that assignment. It was certainly a negative assignment in their view, to have to cover the women's program or women's sports. Fortunately for us, Larry Pitt, [Rutgers College Class of 1939], who was a long-time Rutgers alum, and he ... was a dean of students here and he was a supporter of athletics here, at Rutgers, men and women, he did the color for football on the radio, and he and his wife, Kay, would be at all our events. He was the announcer for all the swimming meets. ... He was not paid, and he ... did all the men's meets, and then, he did all the women's meets, and his daughter was an Olympic swimmer, Sue Anderson, Sue Pitt Anderson, and she currently works in Colorado Springs with the Olympic development. ... Larry Pitt had his position, a part-time position, with WCTC [radio station] in covering Rutgers basketball and football, so, he covered women's basketball. ... So, we'd be down at the University of Maryland, playing in Cole Arena, and we'd won and we're leaving the building, you know. I'm making sure everybody's, you know, on the way out, and there's Larry in the phone booth and he has to get his report to WCTC and it has to be under so many seconds. So, like, [in] under fifty-four seconds, he has to do this, and he would be in there, ... working with [WCTC news director] Bruce Johnson on the other end and giving his report, and he said, "Oh, I'm going to have to do it over." So, he would do it over and over until he got it. So, through him being our voice on the radio, and making sure those things got done, then, we got some coverage there, and then, he was also our softball announcer. ... So, we had many people who volunteered like that and were just

dedicated and devoted to sports, ... whether it was a male or a female, but they wanted to make sure the women got their fair shake, so, thank goodness. [laughter] It was something else. ...

SH: What were some other obstacles? There must be some, because it was new.

RT: Well, I can list [them]. ... Well, I have to go back to the achievements if I give you obstacles.

SH: [laughter] So positive.

RT: Well, there were double standards in the size of a team. So, the women's teams were always restricted or limited with the number of athletes we could carry on a team, where the men were not. ... That was a very significant issue with Title IX, because, in Title IX, the regulation for administering or providing scholarships for athletes was based upon your athletic population, so, how many student-athletes did you have in your program, male and female? So, we would have a thousand; well, eleven hundred. We'd have a thousand in our program, all right. Of those thousand, seven hundred would be men and three hundred would be women. So, the women, then, would only get thirty percent of the scholarship money that the University was providing. So, that became very important, that the women's teams were not restricted unless the men's were restricted, but they played that for a long, long, long, long, long time, and so, that was very difficult to try and change. So, in field hockey, ... we provided varsity programs and JV, or sub-varsity, programs, and so, on the field hockey team, we would have eleven, we'd try to carry, then, fifteen, and have player managers, you know, and then, you have a JV of the same size. So, you know, you didn't have much substitutes there. My tennis team, though, ... you know, we averaged fifty-five on tryouts. I had twenty-two on my tennis team, but that was when we played six singles and six doubles, so, there was no repeating. So, whoever played singles didn't play doubles, and then, you had a JV of that same size and you had back-ups for that. So, we were dealing with a lot more athletes and providing many more opportunities than, say, today, but, again, the population count was always skewed. Men's lacrosse, for instance, they had, like, four teams, A, B, C, D, and we were allowed to have a varsity and a sub-varsity, and then, when the year came along ... that Fred decided to do away with the sub-varsity programs, he allowed, then, a little expansion on, say, the softball team, ... to go from eighteen, maybe, to twenty. ... With men's lacrosse, all those guys that were on the sub-varsity just were now members of the varsity. So, you have forty-some guys there. [laughter]

KT: When did they finally allow the lack of restriction?

RT: Pardon?

KT: When did they finally change all that? When did they finally make it even, the restrictions?

RT: Oh, I don't know that it has ever changed.

TF: Yes, I was going to say, I don't think it's changed.

KT: They did not. I thought they restricted both sides now, to some degree. Maybe I am wrong.

RT: ... Well, the NCAA has restrictions on the number of scholarships you can provide and how you count that scholarship. So, in the football and basketball scholarships, ... any amount of money you give to a student-athlete counts as one scholarship and you're restricted. I don't know what it is today, but, when I first came in, it was 105 scholarships in football, fifteen, I think, in men's basketball, and then, in the other sports, if they gave a scholarship, and let's say we gave you five hundred dollars and you two hundred dollars and you got a thousand dollars, then, you would add that money up to be fifteen hundred dollars. ... What was a full ride at Rutgers? Say it was seven thousand dollars; well, then, ... you could take and give away seven thousand dollars and it would only count as one in the scholarship count, in the other sports, see. So, they have now set, you know, what sports count in your scholarship thing. So, that makes it a little complicated when you have to speak to the issue, you know, but ... that's how they would do it. ... So, in football, though, ... any amount of money would count as one; ... pardon?

TF: So, coaches, many times, would split up one scholarship to attract several people for that sport.

RT: Oh, yes.

TF: Yes, offer a half a scholarship. ...

RT: Right. Well, the coaches had to be very selective, and so, when you're recruiting, they had to know how much money they had and who [needed it], you know. So, we would require all of our student-athlete recruits to fill out a financial aid form, so that we knew exactly what it cost that person to come to this school, and then, the scholarship would be applied accordingly, so that somebody who had a means, but, you know, didn't need any scholarship money, okay, then, you were offering them an athletic scholarship, you know, of "X" dollars. Another person may have a need of a thousand, or fifteen hundred dollars, so, you knew that that's what it would take for them to come. So, the coaches had to figure out how they were going to do it. So, it's very difficult, you know. ... You know, the best, ideal world is to have full rides across the board. So, right now, today, they do have, most of them have, the full rides, not all of them, but many of the sports do. So, we've come a long way, [laughter] in many ways, but, you know, ... job's never done.

KT: Absolutely. When they first had the women's teams, how did the men's teams react to them? Was there camaraderie? For example, did the men's teams go watch the women's swimming meets or watch the women's basketball games, or were they really separate?

RT: Well, it depended an awful lot on the coach, and, in swimming, for instance, they would support one another, because they knew one another, worked out in the pool at the same time and all. So, they supported one another, and women's swimming, they went farther than the men, as far as national recognition, because we were a regional power and we'd go to the nationals and come out ninth with just five swimmers, and no divers. ... Arizona, Arizona State, UCLA, all the California schools, would have eighteen qualified swimmers there, three divers and fifteen

swimmers, to compete. So, for us to go up against all those schools, we were doing super. So, there was that support there. Most of the time, they didn't have much opportunity to meet other teams, support other teams. So, as far as the basketball teams went, there was not that kind of support with men's and women's basketball, but the men's coach was insuring that his kingdom was not going to be invaded and felt threatened by the women's success and would throw his weight around, especially when he felt threatened. So, for instance, we were hosting one of the rounds of the national championship in women's basketball [the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) Women's Basketball Tournament], and I had already worked out with the assistant basketball coach the schedule for practices and when the men were practicing, when the women's teams for the nationals were coming in to play and practice. ... So, just before one of the women's games, I think it was a twelve noon game, or a one o'clock game, the men's basketball coach decided to extend his practice a little longer and hold up the women coming out to practice. Men's basketball did not permit dunking in the game and the coach allowed his team to practice dunking, and specifically told me that, "You know, they may bend a rim," which would then cause a delay in our program and [we would] not have, you know, equipment for the game and embarrass us in that respect. ... So, you get jerked around like that, and there wasn't anything you could do about it. So, you would have to learn to deal with a variety of individuals, and their egos, and try not to make them feel threatened, but we've had other coaches who were very supportive and who are there, themselves, and their team members. ... I think one of the biggest eye-openers for everyone in regard to this bias was when Sue Wicks was a member of our women's basketball team and she was an All-American and Naismith Player of the Year, and she played in the pro ranks for over ten years, beautiful basketball player. ... So, she was playing on our teams and, at that time, to schedule the women's games, we were now over at the RAC and we were always the pregame to the men, and I did not ever want that. I wanted us to have separate dates, separate times, not be a doubleheader but, maybe, occasionally, but they wouldn't allow that. We always had to be a doubleheader, we had to be the first game and they would pick the best time to play, and then, we would be put in before that. ... The problem with that was that playing at five-thirty or five-forty-five in the evening was not a good time for spectators. I would have a difficult time getting to the game just going from one side of the campus to the other, let alone other faculty and staffers who wanted to go to the games and the students and let alone people who lived in the community who, you know, would come. ... Then, we're selling tickets, so, who in the world can come at that time that's, you know, employed? So, now, who are the unemployed that have money? So, senior citizens was our target, and they were wonderful. [laughter] So, they could make it to the games, but I felt we could have a better crowd if we had a different time for the event, but they did not want to test those waters. ... I said, "Well, how about going seven to nine for the games?" "No way. You know, the women would probably be having overtime and it would make our games start later, and, ... if our game's televised, we have to start on time." I said, "We will start and finish before," and I'd already done the timing down to times, minutes, seconds and everything, and for, you know, a long time, ... they said, "Well, no, the media, ... the press, would go to bed before we could get our results in, so, we can't do that." So, they always had an excuse why they couldn't do that. ... I said, "Okay, then, let us play the second game." "Oh, no, you wouldn't want that, because how embarrassing that would be for the women. How would those players feel when everybody got up after the men's game and left the arena?" I said, "I don't think they would do that. I think these are basketball fans, basketball fans would love basketball whether



it's men or women playing, you know. I think they would really like it." "No, no." So, what happened is, one afternoon, Saturday afternoon, we had a doubleheader and the men had to play the first game and the women, you know, the second game, or, excuse me, I take it back, not that way; it was the women were playing the first game of a doubleheader and the men the second. So, we had big turnouts. Sue Wicks was a marvelous basketball player and a great draw. So, we had a full house at the RAC, so, we had eight thousand spectators there, and, after the women's basketball game, seven thousand fans got up and left. ... The men's team were humiliated, because they had such expectations and had touted, you know, how the women would be [humiliated]. So, these guys were really, you know, down. They then started coming out at the women's games and the women were getting autograph seekers and all that, and the guys would come out and nobody was, you know, looking for their autograph, and so, it was a reverse situation for them. So, they finally agreed, then, "We won't do any more doubleheaders."

TF: It took the men to get embarrassed to ... get what you wanted. [laughter]

RT: I know, ... and we didn't want that to happen, but it did, you know. So, getting [back], I wanted to provide opportunities for women, you know, as many as possible, and especially if it was a women's event, I thought women should get the opportunity to work at the event. So, I wanted women officials, I wanted women announcers, women clock[keepers], scorekeepers, all that, and that became a struggle from the beginning. [laughter] First, they, you know, didn't want to do the games. Fine, we would get our own, and so, I would go to the; I want to say the Speech Department. ... What's the one that [Professor *Emeritus*] Roger Cohen's head of?

TF: Roger Cohen?

RT: Yes, media.

TF: Oh, you mean Journalism and Media. ...

RT: Journalism and Media. So, I would go to him and ask him if he had any up-and-coming young ladies who he thought had good voice and who, you know, had some savvy about sports, or I'll teach them. ... You know, so, we would do that, and then, I would go to the Music Department, ask them if they had any singers who could do the *National Anthem* for us, and I thought it was very, very important that we provide an event that was very formally structured and was exactly like what you would see at any major sporting event. So, we would have the *National Anthem*, we'd have the flag displayed, we'd have an announcer and we wanted to have programs, and that's what we were trying to [do]. I was trying to add that to this environment, so that the women knew that they were in, you know, a very fine environment, quality. So, I had gotten those things achieved, but, then, as soon as I was no longer responsible, or in charge of that aspect, it was all male. They kept one or two females, and then, they'd gradually [say], "No." So, I had female announcers coming to me and saying, "Rita Kay, what's going on? I don't have a game." I'd say, "Well, you have to go and see So-and-So," and they would go see them and they'd tell them, ... "Nope." They just gave it to the men and male announcers. ... They expected that if ever I didn't have an announcer, that the men could just step in, any of them, whether they had experience at it or not, didn't matter, and, yet, when their announcer had

a sore throat and called in, couldn't do it, my announcer had just finished the women's game, [went] right into a men's game, they would not [allow them to announce for it], absolutely no way, no way. Now, one of the other achievements I had, was able to achieve, was to get our women's basketball program to play in, they call them venues, but to play in major venues in the East. So, I was able to get us into Madison Square Garden, into the Meadowlands, we played UCLA on national television, into the Palestra, to play at the Orange Bowl. So, I was able to achieve those things, and that, you know, was a major thing. I wanted to be, and did achieve, oh, like, in the early times, third or fourth year, the ability to schedule the upper crust in competition. So, UCLA, I'd be on the phone with Judy Holland to schedule UCLA in here. Whatever teams were top ones, I wanted to be able to do that. Now, the men used guarantees, and I asked in the budget for guarantees, and I was denied that. ... I only wanted, I said, "Okay, ... let's just start with five thousand dollars, totally. So, I would give a thousand dollars to each team. Then, they'd come in and they would give us a thousand when we'd go back the following year." "No." So, there was not that kind of support here at all, and that was unfortunate. So, we could have been, I think, farther along ...

TF: Sooner.

RT: ... In a shorter period of time, but, you know, I figured out a way around it. So, I got UCLA to give us the guarantee first, and I said, "Okay, now;" of course, the money goes into the budget, and then, it dissolves by the end of the year. I said, "No, we have to have that ready for them when they come out here." [laughter]

TF: Put it away and don't touch it.

RT: So, it took awhile, but I managed. So, the other day-to-day difficulties in the treatment of the women's programs, they would always take money from the women's budget to buy and pay for men's equipment or men's budget overruns. I would make my coaches stay within their budgets, and that was not true of the men's coaches, and I'm not [saying it was limited], I mean ... all the sports. ... If we bought, you know, we managed to get approved for a piece of video equipment, well, the guys would be using it first, whether they took care of it or not. For transportation, we thought it'd be better for us to buy a van, and a big enough van, fifteen-passenger van, so that a team could travel in that, so [that] the smaller teams could use that. ... Seventy-five percent of the time, the men used the van. We had gotten a limo, and it was a red Mercedes limo, and, you know, we put the Rutgers [logo] on there and the teams would use that. Well, gymnastics had a meet up in Yale and it was not an overnighter. They would have to go up, drive up, compete, come back, and it was on a Sunday. ... So, they got the limo here, they get in and they get up, they're on Route 18, and, next thing you know, you've got thirteen gymnasts pushing a red Mercedes on that exit ramp off of 18 to go down onto Route 1, to hopefully make it to that Exxon station to get some gas, because the football coaches had taken the limo the day before to the Lehigh football game and they didn't bother to put gas back in it. So, the van, whatever we bought for transportation for the women, with the women's money, was always helpful for the men. The business manager came to me and wanted me to sign off on this purchase and it was a gymnastics budget and track budget. ... In this track budget, I said, "What is this?" "Oh, it's a high jump pit." I said, "What is this, a high jump pit? Women don't even

compete in high jump." "Oh, it's the men's pit, but you're going to pay for it out of the women's budget," and I said, "No, I won't sign off on that." Gymnastics, I said, "Wait a minute, we compete on uneven parallel bars. What are these parallel bars doing here? What is this pommel horse? We vault off a horse. We don't use the pommel and do that. That's a men's event." Well, they were purchasing men's gymnastics equipment for a men's club team; it wasn't even an intercollegiate sport in the department. It would just go on and on. . . . No matter [how] much ground you made, if you got an expansion or an increase in your budget, you had to guard your flanks constantly, because no matter where it was, they would be taking from the women to provide for the men. . . . I took a lot of pride in a compliment that I got from Matt Bolger. He was our head baseball coach, and he's been inducted into the Hall of Fame, Baseball Hall of Fame. He was a crusty, old gentleman who had a lot of pride, and, when you said, "How do other teams respect us at all?" well, he was . . . chair of our awards committee. . . . When Hallie Cohen, our softball pitcher, was up for an award and some members of the committee were questioning it, he said to them, "Hell, any pitcher that's got an ERA like that," he says, "is a pitcher. Look at her stats," and he had nothing but respect for these women, and they looked at the statistics and most of our coaches respected all the women's teams for what they had achieved, because they knew, in their sport, how tough it was. So, it was just the one or two that were, you know, feeling threatened by it, but his compliment to me was at an awards presentation. . . . He had members of his [teams], former students from his baseball teams, there and he told them, he says, "If it wasn't for Rita Kay here," he says, "you still would only be getting five dollars a day for meals." [laughter] So, every inch of the way, every inch I gained, it would be men's Olympic sports were gaining as well. So, to get meal money for the women, to get money for equipment, to have enough volleyballs to practice [with], to have enough field hockey balls for the game, you'd have to paint the volleyballs. Our equipment manager had to paint the volleyball, the field hockey ball, for the game, because they used it in practice and you had to have, you know, a really white ball. So, anyway, you make do with lots of things, and other things, we just couldn't anymore. So, just to be able to provide the normal amount of meal money; now, for the football and men's basketball programs, they provided these things, you know, well, more than adequate, and, here, we were just trying to provide, you know, adequate things. So, it was difficult to see that these disparities were real and existed, still, and I had to constantly deal with them, you know, [by] whatever means that we could. . . . It just went across the board, so, no matter what the issue or so. So, it was a little challenging; . . . pardon?

TF: Were these issues brought to your attention by the coaches of the women's sports and you had to [try to do something about it]?

RT: These issues?

TF: All these issues that, you know, you were talking about; they came from the coaches to you, and then, you had to try to do something about it.

RT: Yes, but, you know, it was an established pecking order that the athletic director had us, you know, set, and most places where . . . men's football, men's basketball ruled, . . . they got the bulk of the money. So, I'd try to explain to the other men's teams that, "Look, it isn't Title IX. Don't be mad at the women, don't be mad at Title IX," and, of course, after awhile, they realized they

were benefitting from it, more so than if it hadn't been in existence, but that the establishment of the priority of sports was already done by men. We were not defying that, we were not intruding in that, we were not in any way impacting that negatively, and so, they were not, you know, put down at all. ... So, when they realized that, it was obviously much easier for them, but, of course, that was, you know, a card everybody was playing and it was just difficult. ... So, I was anxious for them to get to know our student-athletes and coaches, and I was always feeling, because I was from Missouri, the "Show-Me State," that [if] we just show them, you know, they'll believe it. [laughter]

SH: Regarding the hierarchy, was there an AD over men's and women's athletics or were you co-ADs?

RT: They liked to keep that kind of muddled, but, when I was hired, I was hired as the Director of Women's Athletics and I was given the position of Assistant Athletic Director in the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics and Recreation, and that Fred Gruninger, who was the Men's Athletic Director, was the Director of the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics. ... He was my boss, and then, he had an assistant director, Bud Heilman, and Bud was doing all the day-to-day operations. So, I was doing whatever Bud was doing, plus, I was doing whatever Fred was doing in, you know, proposals, in writing things up, in representing the women. I was the voting delegate at the state, regional, national levels, but he was never one to equate me to his position at all. He would always equate me to the subordinate position. ... When the NCAA took over the women's programs, forcibly, ... because the women had their own national, regional and state organizations, and then, the men [had the NCAA], the NCAA then decided to provide women's championships. They never did, and then, all of a sudden, they're going to do it. [Editor's Note: Founded in 1971, the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women regulated women's intercollegiate athletics and established a national championship system for twenty sports. Beginning in the late 1970s, the National Collegiate Athletic Association began to challenge the AIAW for control of women's athletics, culminating in the offering of two national championships during the 1981-1982 season. Rutgers participated in the AIAW Women's Basketball Tournament that season and ultimately beat the University of Texas to win the championship. However, the AIAW soon collapsed as many of its members left for the NCAA and was dissolved in June 1983.] ...

SH: What year was that? Do you remember?

RT: '82, I think it was.

SH: About eight years into your career here.

RT: ... So, the presidents of the universities were told by the NCAA, you know, that this was the best way to go. Then, you only pay one membership dues, instead of paying a second membership dues to a women's national [organization], and so, you know, that's what they're going to do. ... Of course, all the men athletic directors had direct lines to their presidents and they convinced them to do that, keeping themselves well-seated in their spot, and so, the women were saying, "Wait a minute, you know, we won't have a voice, we won't know what's going on,"

and so, the NCAA, in an attempt to bridge that gap and provide a spot, they then created what they called initially "a primary woman administrator." ... Then, it became "senior woman administrator," because all the different schools had different labels for their woman AD, and so, I was to be listed, then, as the primary woman administrator, which would then allow me to receive all the NCAA mailings on what rules and regs they were proposing and what was going on. ... Also, they then allowed that position to have a seat on the voting delegate floor at their national convention, which was only permitted by the athletic director, the school president and their faculty rep, and, now, they were adding a fourth spot, women, and so, that was ... the NCAA's attempt to, you know, allow women to have a voice. I went to a couple of those. Fred was a person who kept everything very close to the vest, shall we say, and did not want to share information, or anything. So, it wasn't long and he then put himself down on the form for the NCAA, which came out annually, as the primary woman, and then, I no longer got any of those mailings. So, I'd have to rely upon my colleagues at other schools [laughter] to say, "What's going on? What are they voting on? What's going to happen?" and then, of course, then, I had no voice. ... You know, it was very difficult, again, to have input on these issues that were going to impact our women and scholarship numbers, how many games you can schedule, what rules you'd play by, etc., like that. So, anyway, it was a significant thing. So, you know, that's the type of support that you got.

SH: What about from the administration? When you first came here, who was President of the University?

RT: Dr. Bloustein was President, John Martin was Vice-President, and he was pretty attuned to things and was very interested in being supportive. ... So, that year that I came in, men's football and basketball were scheduled to go to Hawaii and play the Hawaiian teams, and so, that was a major event for everybody and all the alums that could were getting on the planes to go and do that. So, I was very busy with the program, getting it under way and coaching, and, the next thing I know, I'm invited to go. ... So, Vice-President John Martin called me into his office and he said, "Look, I'm not going to be able to go and I would like for you to take my place on the plane and at the hotel." So, I was invited to go, and I thought, at the time, "That's very, very generous of you, but I'm so [busy]. I've got a lot of things I've got to do. I don't think I can take, you know, a week's time to do this," but it became apparent, politically, that I should accept this kind, generous offer, and so, I did go. ... So, he was a very good ally, yes. We had our first awards banquet at Dr. Bloustein's home, in the yard, and Mrs. Bloustein, who was a pediatrician, she was delightful. ... So, I was, like, the MC and we had had our awards presentation there and all the student-athletes in their first year received blazers, because that was what ... had already been established in the department for first-year recipients of a letter winner, was to have a blazer, because, at that time, schools, when they competed, when you went away on a trip, to, you know, play at Princeton or wherever, even though it wasn't an overnight, ... you dressed up. So, they wore ties and these jackets. Well, not all the kids could afford that. So, then, it was wise to provide a blazer, and then, the next year, they got a little sweater with the, you know, big "R" on it. So, we then got blazers for the women and presented that, and it was just a wonderful, wonderful evening, and so, we were underway with our success and, at one time, we were the state champions in all seven sports in the same year. ...

TF: What year was that? Do you remember?

RT: I don't remember that year right now. It had to be in the late '70s, because we had volleyball, track, cross-country, basketball, tennis, field hockey. Well, let's see, yes, I think I was still coaching the tennis, so, maybe the third year. Anyway, we had many successes and I did not have any direct contact, though, with the President, or the vice-presidents. I was instructed to always go through Fred Gruninger, and he made it very clear that that's how I should always proceed. So, all right, well, okay, but it was very limiting and very restricted. Now, if you want to go off record ... [laughter]

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: All right, I am turning it back on.

RT: Okay, I was able to negotiate a contract with the IGA, International Group; oh, I can't remember all the names of it, but, anyway, they're the ones that ran the women's professional tennis championships, and so, was able to get the indoor national championships hosted here, at Rutgers University, at the RAC. [Editor's Note: Ms. Thomas is referring to the US Women's Indoor Championships, sponsored by the US Tennis Association, which were held at the Rutgers Athletic Center in Piscataway, New Jersey, in 1987.] ... That would give us national television coverage and, in that contract, I was able to have them put down that we would get a thirty-two-second commercial that they would air each time they would advertise it. ... So, it took a couple of years to do because Fred Gruninger would say, "No." I would have to take the contract to him to get his blessing and he would say, "No," and I had worked it out and there would be no cost; at no time was there any cost to the Athletic Department or to the University. The entire cost would be covered by the promotion group, by the professional tennis association. So, they would bring in their floor mat that they would roll out onto the floor, they would put up their nets and we did not have to buy any of this equipment. They would put it up, they would do the advertising on national television for it, they would advertise the ticket sales, and that ... they would be sending out all their flyers to their standard customers, that our ticket office could handle tickets for it and that we would be given "X" number of complimentary tickets, that, let's see, what else? the commercial that we would get for Rutgers University, and that we would get some money. Let's see, how much money was it? I can't remember, initially, how much money we would get paid for hosting this, and he would say, "No," and I would ask why and he would not have any real reason to say no, other than the men's ego. ... So, I think it was the second or third time I had presented it, the third year [I] presented it, so that I had whatever he'd said before [about why] we couldn't do it was, I'd covered that one, I got it all. So, I had it all covered, and I had done a lot of politicking around the campus, so that I had some faculty people and others supporting this, and so, then, got Fred to reluctantly agree to it. So, we had it, Martina [Navratilova] competed, won that, Pam Shriver was the interviewer and she played in the doubles. We had all the big names in women's tennis here. It was a huge success. ... It was a whole new group of fans. It was tennis fans, and so, it was a whole new, different group of fans than what Rutgers usually appeals to. ... In this contract, I had gotten us for the first right of turn down to host it the following year, I got it so that we could access all of their mailing list for donors and I had it so that we could have a reception with the participants and invite whom we

wanted, and what was the other? There was another caveat, and they made some donation to our women's scholarship program. So, I was getting anxious for this to occur and I wanted our commercial to be on women's athletics and I wanted it to be [about] all of our athletics. So, I just thought, "Okay, in thirty seconds, if they can just do a little blurb here and there, and throw in, you know, the field hockey, the gymnasts and all this, make it into a little, dynamic one," and so, I was getting concerned, because there was no one working on this. ... I went to our media guy and said, you know, "We have this; you know, I'll work with your people," you know, and he wasn't going to do that much. ... So, I was told that they would work on it. So, some time goes by and, every time I'd enquire, "They're working on it." So, we get to a couple weeks before the event and I said, "Look, I need to see this." "Ah," He says, "don't worry about it." He says, "We're just going to hop in their ... van and they'll drive down College Avenue, just with their camera shooting with the door open." I said, "What? and if it's raining?" "Oh, that's okay, they're in the van, you know, shooting. They won't bother it." I said, "Look, we want to have this to promote women's sports. We want it to promote Rutgers. We want it to show that Rutgers University has academics and we want to show them [everything]. You know, we can have a bit of a classroom, you can show the graduation, you can, you know, do all of this, and add these sports to it." ... I was told this was not my responsibility, that I was not to have anything to do with it, and Fred made sure that I was told that. So, I called, ... or I went over to our television/media department, and I said, "Don't you have, in the can, a commercial that we could use that would show all of Rutgers University? but let's just do it." I just couldn't believe we would have this opportunity and blow it with just a camera going down College Avenue showing students walking up and down, you know, but they did not have such in the can, and they didn't, you know, have video of, or enough, with women's sports to provide one. So, we didn't have one.

SH: No commercial at all.

RT: Oh, they drove down College Avenue. ...

KT: That was really it; they just drove down.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Ready?

TF: Yes. We're talking about the spread of popularity of the women's sports. ... All the women were accomplished, but, then, basketball seemed to just catapult [to the forefront], and we think part of that was Theresa Grentz's role as head coach. Could you tell us a little bit about how she came to Rutgers and your involvement, if you were involved with the recruiting of her as head coach?

RT: Yes. Our first coach was Ellen Johns. ... It was a part-time position, and then, Dottie McCrea, who was from Monmouth [University], and she was a very good coach, and then, we were able to have a full-time position created. ... Dotty, though, had an opportunity to go to Stanford, and so, you know, I gave her a very good recommendation and the women's AD out

there was happy to get Dottie, and she'd call me many times and say, "Boy," she says, "what a background you gave her." She says, "I can't believe, you know, all this." I said, "Yes, they've got to do fundraising, they've got to do this, they've got to do that." [laughter] So, anyway, we had that first position and Theresa was the one we hired. I interviewed [them], you know, I was the interviewer for all these positions, and selecting it and making the recommendation as to who we should have. I interviewed Cathy Rush, who at that time, was the national champion coach. Her team had won the national title. Cathy Rush was the coach at Immaculata. She was Theresa Grentz's college coach. She had established summer camps throughout the Pocono area and was by far the leader in women's basketball camps in the country, and had numerous, I mean, she had hundreds of young students coming to her camps. So, she was *the* person, and proven to be a coach, a successful coach and a national championship coach, and she applied for the job. ... I interviewed her and, after interviewing other people, too, she was the first choice I had and recommendation, and Fred would not approve that, and so, I tried. I kept her on the string for thirty days, trying to get him to change, and it wasn't a matter of money, it was just his not wanting to have, in my opinion, somebody that strong and that successful, because of two things: one, he may not be able to control that basketball coach; two, he would definitely have a very envious men's basketball coach. ... Maybe the biggest thing was that he would have to deal with all the critics, "Why isn't the men's program as good as the women's? Why is the women's program better?" and he just couldn't deal with that, and, later, it proved that out. ... When I talked with her about her being our head coach and told her, you know, [I] wanted her for the job and, salary wise, I was only given, I think it was, maybe, sixteen thousand, or eighteen thousand, dollars for the head coaching position, ... or maybe twenty at the most, and she wanted as her assistant coach her former point guard, Marianne [Crawford] Stanley. ... So, she said that she knew Marianne and [that she] didn't have any other job and that she, you know, would need, you know, at least seven thousand dollars, I think it was, for her to live here, and so, [I] could not get Fred to approve that much money for a head coach and the assistant coach. So, ... Cathy Rush wanted to be our coach. She saw the potential for Rutgers, she knew what this was going to be, and she would move from a small Catholic college to a front with a major university, because, now, the entire country was going to be going basketball with women. ... So, she said, "Look, you can take it out of my salary for my assistant's, but, you know, I'd have to have [her]." So, it was going to be, like, twenty-one or twenty-two thousand dollars total, for the two of them, and no matter what, Fred would not. ... I had found out, later, that the lowest man on the men's coaching staff, who was just a graduate and in his apprenticeship, more or less, in his first, second year, maybe, was making twenty-four thousand. ... So, I, you know, wasn't permitted to have the top person in the country for our women's basketball program and Marianne Stanley as her assistant. So, Theresa was coaching at St. Joe's in Pennsylvania. She had success there, two years, and I had watched her, as an opponent and also on the sidelines, and so, drawing upon that, ... you know, I interviewed her, and so, she too was, you know, academics priority and knew what it would take. So, Theresa then accepted the position. You know, we offered that ... full-time job to her, and then, she commuted on the train every day from Philadelphia for quite awhile before they got a house here. ... Cathy Rush continued with her camps, very, very successfully. Marianne Stanley was hired by Old Dominion University and they went on to win three national titles, and then, from there, she's gone on, you know, to Long Beach, then, she was in the pros, and she was on our bench for, you know, a year or so, and, now, she's back with the pros. So, I think we would have done very well, sooner, because of the experience, the notoriety,



the ability to recruit that Cathy Rush's name provided, and, of course, that would have been immediate and it was going to be definitely too much success for the men to handle, sadly. They felt so threatened by it.

SH: After Dr. Bloustein dies, how does that impact you as the women's AD?

RT: Nothing changed. When they brought in Dr. [Francis L.] Lawrence, it was the same. I had to report through Fred. I never had a direct line to the President, or to the Vice-President who was over the Athletic Department.

TF: ... I was just going to back up, but it was interesting when you mentioned that. ... [When] Theresa was hired, what year was it?

RT: '76, '77?

TF: ... So, that was around the same time that the men were actually, the last time that they were actually ...

RT: Oh, it was in '74, I think it was, or '76?

TF: Well, '76, they were undefeated.

RT: Okay, '76, when they were undefeated and went to the Final Four.

TF: Right.

RT: Yes, ... but I had heard from various staffers that, you know, the men's basketball coach, who lunched downtown at the same restaurant, would be chided quite harshly for the women's success. "When is he going to do that?" So, you know, unfortunately, people tease and, you know, he wasn't liking that at all. So, he didn't, he couldn't, respond to that well enough or change his fate here. So, you know, they did not want anybody to outshine them.

TF: [laughter] So, when the women became as successful as they did in the late '70s and, obviously, in the early '80s, is that when the AD decided that he was going to become in charge?

RT: Yes, yes, after the women's basketball, we won that national title then.

TF: That was in '82.

RT: Oh, yes, yes.

TF: Yes, that was, "That will be my domain now."

RT: Then, he could see, you know, that this was, you know, a nice gold mine and he wanted all the credit. He did not want any of that going to me or any other women.

TF: So, you just continued to have responsibilities for the women's teams in other ways.

RT: Oh, I had day-to-day operations. I still did everything, it's just I wasn't doing women's basketball now, and then, ... when we brought in women's soccer, we had fifteen sports. ... Let's see, I'm trying to remember, I can't remember the exact year, but it was when we were going to be evaluated; I don't know if it was the NCAA evaluation. Every ten years, you had to go through an evaluation. I'm sorry, I may be getting this confused with the Title IX [evaluation].

KT: Women's soccer, I think, was 1984.

RT: Okay.

KT: I do not know if that is what you are looking for.

RT: But, what I'm trying to recall is what was the catalyst for, one day in the fall, Bud and I were called into Fred's office, and, suddenly, now, we had fifteen sports for women, but I was given additional responsibilities. So, I had wrestling, and what was the other one? So, suddenly, Bud, who had fewer sports to do, he now had seventeen and I had the fewer number, and he now had women's soccer and something [else]. ... It was because, the next day, we were going to be evaluated, I think it was the Title IX evaluation, as to responsibilities and who did what, because, besides doing the day-to-day operations for the women's programs, and some men's, I did all the awards for all the sports. Previously, it had been Bud's ... office was doing the men's and I did all the women's, and then, I got all of the sports, all thirty sports, and then, I was also given the responsibility for insurance for all our student-athletes. ... Nobody had had that before, other than the trainers, say. So, I was given the task of having five years of backlog cases for insurance to pay for athletic treatments, injury treatments, and straighten that all out, and then, make sure that we had insurance coverage for our student-athletes that was appropriate and affordable. ... So, I worked with the insurance risk department on that and with the Vice-President's office. I can't remember his name, Kozack?

TF: Oh, Ed.

RT: Ed Kozack, [Associate Vice-President for Auxiliary Services], right, ... and so, I straightened out the problem with the bill collectors [going] after the parents because various doctors' bills hadn't been paid. At that time, I had to deal with three different states, and attorney generals in those states, and with the subsidiaries of various insurance companies, in order to get all of them to pay what they owed on these doctor's bills, and then, take it forward from there and manage to isolate a part-time worker to just handle our athlete's insurance, and then, make sure that we had our insurance in place. ... We had a very fine insurance program for our student-athletes, because it covered them through the summer as well and it had a five-year "tail" on it, as they referred to it, so that, from the date of entry, our insurance would cover them for five years, so that if a junior got their knee blown out, or injured, and they thought, "I don't think I want surgery. I think I can manage with rehab," and then, in their senior year, they needed it, or, after they graduated, they needed it, our insurance still would cover them. ... Then, we also had

the, you know, catastrophic insurance to cover them, when that was provided by the NCAA. Prior to that, you know, we did not have it. So, I had a variety [of responsibilities], and I was also in charge of personnel. I was the one who initiated contracts for our part-time coaches, men and women. They were usually just given a letter, and it came out at any time the Athletic Director wanted. So, he would, maybe, give it to them after the [start of the season], two weeks into the season, you know, that sort of thing. So, there was a lot of complaining about that and the coaches would come to me about it. So, for stability, continuity, for the benefit of the program as well as everybody's happiness, I then got Fred to agree to a contract. So, I drew up the contract and put the design on it, the wording, everything, so that he would sign on these and get these out to these people, so that they knew, before the end of this [season], you know, in May, that they were going to be coming back as our coach and what their salary would be. ... Then, I got him to establish a salary guideline, because there wasn't one. It would just be whatever he wanted it to be, and he would not increase it, so that after you were there, say, two, three years, you would leave, because you just couldn't afford this, and he was counting on that, a high turnover in part-time positions. Well, that didn't help our program, any program, but that's what was there all the time. So, I got him to agree to a salary scale and what the increase would be, yes, and then, I was also in charge of trainers, and, when Dick Anderson was hired as the football coach [in 1984], then, ... because Dick Anderson ... was used to two full-time medical professionals, doctors, at Penn State, we had to then have at least one. So, we then created a full-time position for that. So, I had to write up that job description, and I learned then what medical journals there were to post it in [laughter] and do all that. So, then, we got that onboard, and then, I was responsible for the trainers, and it was important to have trainers, and most of them were part-time. So, we got a full-time trainer position for women's athletics, because the men already had full-time trainers, and so, we got that for women and, eventually, you know, added another one, that sort of thing, but it was commonplace, then, for these full-time positions ... [to] get siphoned off to support men's programs as well. ... That was just the way that the operation would go here and, you know, it was difficult, always, but, after you knew the ground rules, then, you'd learn to play by them. ... So, I think we were extremely successful, considering the environment. ... So, going to full-time coaches, and their pay, was a delight, and I think it was pretty well documented about Theresa and her salary, because, when *USA Today* did their "sunshine report" on men's and women's basketball coaches nationwide and their salaries, and their benefits, their additions to their salaries, they put it all up in the paper, and, of course, with any paper, you can only believe half of what you read. So, in there, it listed Theresa's salary and she was the top one paid in the country, at sixty thousand dollars. She was [earning] more than anybody else in the country, as far as positions for women's basketball, and then, she got to see what Craig Littlepage, our head basketball coach, was getting and he was at eighty thousand. Now, Theresa had more experience and much greater success. Theresa had her teams ranked in the top twenty, year in, year out, she had All-Americans, she had championship titles, she'd gone to the nationals. Craig Littlepage had won the Ivy League Conference. So, the next day, Theresa and her attorney were in Fred's office. So, Title IX has been a wonderful thing in many ways, and it revealed a lot of imbalances and disparities, and I'm sure there are many more like that today.

SH: Did you have an assistant? Did you have a secretary? Did you have any kind of support?

RT: When I started, with the all part-[time coaching staff], all, you know, seven sports and all part-time coaches, part-time positions, I had one full-time secretary, was assigned, Mary Recine. She was wonderful, and she and I shared the office and she had the office furniture. [laughter] I didn't have any furniture in my office.

SH: Okay, this is unbelievable.

KT: Cannot catch a break.

RT: So, Mary had a desk and a chair and a typewriter and phone, and they put the phone in for me, but it sat on the floor. ... When Fred brought me into my office, they were renovating it, and so, it was a nice sized room, it had a terrazzo floor, and the workman was there with a jackhammer, drilling holes in it, because they were going to put up a partition to cut this room into four, or into three pieces. So, they had one partition going the lengthwise, and then, one that was going to go cut the other half in half, so that I would have a quarter, and then, my conference table would be on the other side, but there was no furniture, there was no conference table or anything. So, I said, "I don't think that's necessary. I'd rather have that open. I don't need to have a dividing wall." So, they stopped work on that and they did not put up that divide there, but I had this partition on my left side that prevented me from seeing the doorway entrance. ... Then, it had a support thing that went over the top, and then, we had another divider from the secretary's area to that conference area, and then, they had thrown out, ... well, they had moved the baseball coach from that office and moved him upstairs, and so, his old desk was sitting out in the hall, and chair. So, I just grabbed it and, I mean, it took [some effort]. It was a heavy wooden desk and we drug that in, and then, I had something of a desk, and then, this chair had only three or four wheels on it. So, I ruined a lot of pantyhose on that, but I didn't fall off, [laughter] and then, I managed to get a hold of another old desk that had several drawers in it, because, then, each head coach had a drawer. So, women's basketball had a drawer, gymnastics had a drawer, because they were all coming from different places and had no place to work or anything like that. So, I had that. ...

TF: This was all at the College Ave Gym, right?

RT: Yes, yes. ... I had great support from the women on this campus, the coaches, the women administrators, the women staffers, faculty, Nancy Mitchell, Janet Koontz, had Jan Meehan. When she got here, she was a big support. ... I started the Booster Club, ... which became the Cagers Club, and I started buses for away games. ... I went to Fred and I asked him if we could provide buses, because I'd learned that they had provided free buses for students to go to the Meadowlands to watch the football team. So, I said, "Well, can we have a bus to go, you know, to another [event], you know, to women's basketball? We're going to Maryland. ... You know, how are we going to do this, and go to Immaculata, we're going to go here, play all these teams?" but he said, "No," and so, I said, "Well;" like, at that point, I had [learned], you know, you grubstaked different things, but I said, "Well, if I charge admission on the bus, you know, ... can we have a bus?" So, [he said], "Okay." So, we'd have a bus come here at College Avenue and I would stand there and either collect two dollars; it was whatever the cost of the bus was, we would divide that, then, by forty-nine, and that's how we sold the tickets, so [that] it would be as

affordable as possible. We weren't trying to make any money on this, just cover [costs]. So, [we] had fan buses, then, that went to the games, Penn State, Maryland, you know, and Connecticut, all that stuff. So, it was, you know, one way of doing it and we got it done. So, I would then have a trusty student, who [was] a member of the tennis team, and she would get everybody's money and keep track of it all. [laughter] Now, I mean, I would delegate those responsibilities out, because, you know, it was important that everybody be involved, because I couldn't do this by myself, no way, you know, and it took a lot of people. ... I was, you know, a mouthpiece in some respects, I was a facilitator, I was the token female at thousands of things, and just tried my best to represent the University in the best light, and always putting the spotlight on our student-athletes, because they were the whole reason we were there. You know, it's just wonderful. You just get that energy from them, you know, and every time you'd see them compete and they were so happy when they were doing that and the team spirit they had and everything, that it just made you work all the more, you know, harder and everything. ... My big goal, also, was to keep the student-athletes out of the politics, and so, I felt I did that. ... I mean, it would have been easy to have played a trump card and said, "Okay, let's expose these things. Let's have these kids complain, let them complain to the point where there will be a suit, and those kids will, you know, burn bridges and pay consequences of that, but maybe it'd be worth that for the following generations to reap all the benefits." So, [in] hindsight, I think I should have done that.

SH: Really?

RT: But, I didn't. [laughter] ...

SH: You always took the high road, it sounds like.

TF: Yes, you kept them out of it and I think that's something that's [admirable]. ...

RT: ... I just tried, and so, yes, you'd like to do things over, and certainly do it in a better way and, hopefully, [have] more success, but it was a great experience for everybody. ... For instance, Patty Delehanty, who was a member of our national championship women's basketball team, New Jersey resident, when she graduated, she got the job as the women's basketball coach at William Paterson College. ... So, of course, I was at all our games, all our women's games and, in one of the games in March, Patty was there, because their season had ended, and I don't know if it was in March or when, but, anyway, she came up to me and just said, "You know, I need to ask you some questions and I need your help." ... I had no idea what was coming, but she said, "I'm now the women's basketball coach at William Paterson and, because I was a women's basketball player here on a full scholarship, I did not have to do any fundraising. I did not have to go out, you know, and find ways to support our program, and, now, as a coach, I don't know where to start, because we need everything. So, where do I start?" and that made me realize that we really do shortchange our basketball players and our football players, because, when they get out on their own, no matter what position or what they're going to do in the community, they have not had that opportunity or that experience. They lack these experiences to contribute in a way that they would be very successful at, and probably enjoy, because gymnastics, field hockey, lacrosse, softball, they have all had to go out and sell raffle tickets,

they've had to do bake sales, they had to do fundraisers galore, they had to go out and ask people for donations, so that they could have an auction on it, so that they could, you know, get some money in there, so that they would be able to have a spring trip for them to go and learn to gel as a team on an away trip where they didn't go to classes for a few days in a row, ... you know, on spring break, and compete, where they could take the various opportunities that we provided and enjoy them. So, like, it was very eye-opening, and I felt, you know, to this day, we still don't provide much of an opportunity for all of them. ... They're role models, and some of them, you know, don't realize it until later, but Patty had enough smarts to inquire and start to learn, you know. Not all of them would do that, but, you know, there is so much to be said for what athletics can provide, and, yet, we need to treat them all alike and give them the best we can, but always make it a reasonable thing, instead of them expecting it all to be given to them on a silver platter without them having to do much. ... You know, nobody can make it in society like that.

TF: Do you feel that's the way that it is now with the student-athletes, that everything's given to them?

RT: Yes, and they come to expect that.

TF: Expect it, yes.

KT: If they do not get it here, they will get it somewhere else.

RT: Right. Well, it was hard for us when, each year, we were able to get a little more; so, like, one year, we got travel bags for the teams, you know, "Yay!" [laughter] and the next year, you know, we were able to get socks for everybody on the team, you know. So, the following year, the kids that come in, you know, they're like, "So? You know, I should be getting that, you know. I expect it." So, it was hard on the upper class people when the freshman didn't have that respect or appreciation for the gains that we had made, and it's not possible. I find that it's just not a possibility until you experience it. So, I would tell the seniors, you know, "Be patient, you know, these are things [they will learn]," but Kay Lionakis, our equipment manager, was absolutely incredible. She herself was an accomplished athlete. She played in the professional women's baseball league and she is in the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, and she worked over here at the library, in the graduate library, Alexander [Library], and she was just fabulous. So, her organizational skills, her peripheral vision, ... the way she could lay things out, is in play right today, because she then taught the men's equipment manager, Jack Grund, her system. ... She established the system with our equipment whereby, ... you needed three sets of practice gear, and she would have the shelves, and they're marked right now, if you went over to the equipment room, and so, they're labeled with that player's name, you know, "Kristy, Number 22," and they would have, up there, your practice uniform. The other practice uniform is hanging in your locker and one is in the laundry. So, you had to have three, and that's how you rotated it, and they do that system and they have that identification system and your uniform's right up there, everything. ... When I came in, we were, you know, hurting for uniforms, towels, you know, that sort of thing. So, we made sure that nobody stole our towels, you know, they returned them. So, we would issue everybody their standard equipment, and then, they would check off, you know, [that] they got all these things. Then, they had to return them at the end of

the season, and so, for you to receive your award, because, like, it was not enforceable, the guys said, "Oh, you can't make that happen," and so, I would say, "Well, they wouldn't be able to get their award." "So, what are you going to do, bring them up there?" So, what would happen [is, the] field hockey banquet comes along and, you know, it's in December and the parents come to it, and you tell what everybody's achieved and the letter winners come up, and some only got a handshake. ... The coach would say, "Well, she hasn't returned all her equipment yet. If you see the equipment manager and turn in all that's missing, you will get your award," and they would do that. So, the first year, ... I don't know if we were missing anything, maybe it was the first two years or so, maybe six towels, which, then, came back to us, and that's how it went. There was a sock missing, a warm-up pant, a top, your uniform top, and the reason I wanted to be that specific and that forceful with it was because I talked to the business manager and the men would lose ten thousand dollars in equipment every year. ... I thought, "That's ridiculous. Why?"

SH: Your budget was barely that.

RT: So, we were able to do this.

TF: ... They weren't responsible.

RT: Right, they were not held accountable for it.

TF: Expected it and it was theirs.

RT: So, I mean, what does this teach people? and so, this was a lesson, and our equipment manger helped [you], you know, to respect your equipment. One day, one of the basketball players came in and, after her practice, she brought her gear up to the window to be laundered and, you know, just piled it up there. The socks were all rolled up, everything. She'd just peeled stuff off, and the equipment manager always had everything folded, neat stack, for them to come and get to go put on that day. ... So, after a couple weeks of this, the equipment manager said, "I'm changing this." So, the young lady comes up to get her gear and it's exactly like she left it, but it's clean, socks are in a wad, shirts all tangled up, and the kid says, "What's this?" and Kay says, "Well, what do you mean?" She says, "My clothes," ... she said, "they're a mess," she says, "what are you doing?" and Kay says, "Oh, I thought that you like it that way," and she says, "I don't like it that way," and she says, "Well, that's how you always give it to me." [laughter]

TF: That's great. ...

KT: It worked; I am sure it worked.

RT: It was marvelous, you know, and the word spread, ... but that was it. You know, you treat everything with respect, ... but, anyway, it was a learning experience every day. So, I mean, I could go on and on and on. ...

SH: Okay, this ends this session. We look forward to talking with Rita Kay Thomas again in the near future. Thank you.

RT: You're welcome.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Jessica Ondusko 2/10/10  
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 6/17/10  
Reviewed by Kathleen Wurster 3/18/2016  
Reviewed by Molly Graham 4/1/2016