Interview of Donna Lopiano by Tracey Felcher for the Oral History Archive, Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame.

TRACEY FELCHER: The following is an interview of Dr. Donna A. Lopiano, athlete, coach, administrator, and prominent advocate for equal opportunity for girls and women in sport. Dr. Lopiano is considered an expert on Title IX and gender equity issues, and is currently the Chief Executive Officer of the Women's Sports Foundation.

This interview is being conducted in connection with the Oral History Archive at the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame. The mission of the Oral History Archive is to record and preserve the voices of women who had been inducted into the Hall of Fame. Dr. Lopiano was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1995.

The audiotape and transcript of this interview will become the property of the Hall of Fame, and will available to scholars, historians and others interested in the histories of Connecticut Women. I am Tracey Felcher, an intern with the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame, and it is my honor to have the opportunity to interview Dr. Lopiano.

Good afternoon, Dr. Lopiano. It is my sincere pleasure to meet with you today. Your incredible achievements as an athlete, coach, administrator, educator, scholar, and advocate clearly demonstrate why you are considered to be one of the most influential people in sport today. It is my intent in this interview to detail as much of your remarkable biography as possible. The interview questions have been grouped together based on the various roles you have played over your lifetime as athlete, coach, administrator, and advocate. However, if it is all right

with you, I'd like to begin by getting some of your basic biographical information into the record, as it is important to establish the background and context of your life. To begin, what was your full name at birth?

DONNA LOPIANO: Donna Jo Lopiano.

TF: Where and when were you born?

DL: Stamford, Connecticut, 1946, September 11th.

TF: Who were your parents?

DL: Josephine Sabia and Thomas Lopiano, Sabia being her maiden name.

TF: And when were they born?

DL: Good question. My mother was born in 1920, and my father in 19—probably 1917, around there.

TF: Okay. What were their occupations?

DL: They were the owners of a restaurant. In fact, they had two or three restaurants in their career.

TF: In Stamford?

DL: In Stamford, Connecticut.

TF: And what was the name of the restaurant?

DL: The first iteration of the restaurant was called the Casa Maria, and the second—I can't remember.

TF: Okay. Do you happen to know the highest level of education they were able to complete?

DL: Neither completed high school; they were children of the depression, and they had to go to work to help support their families.

TF: Okay. Who were your siblings?

DL: I have a brother who is ten years—five years younger, Thomas Junior, and a sister who is ten years younger, Cynthia Marie.

TF: And, when were they born?

DL: They were born in 1951, that's Thomas, and 1956, Cynthia.

TF: And what were their eventual occupations?

DL: My sister is a preschool teacher and has been all of her life. My brother now is a Civil War gun collector and expert in armaments, and the part-owner of a gun collector's business.

TF: Were or are any of your family members currently involved in sports, either as an athlete, coach, or otherwise?

DL: Neither of my parents were involved in sports. My sister was not involved in sports. My brother was a high school and college athlete, playing lacrosse and football.

TF: Although girls are not discouraged from playing sports as much as they were in the past, they are also not encouraged to play to the same extent as boys. Parents share part of the responsibility to encourage their daughters to participate in sports. How did your own parents encourage and support you as an athlete?

DL: I think my parents definitely did not express sex role stereotypes. They were first generation Italian Americans who felt that, you know, the American dream was a reality, that the key to it was a college education, and as long as their children went to school and got degrees, that they would support them in, you know, doing anything, you know, they wanted to do. And there was never a limitation of interest expressed by parents. No one ever said, "Girls shouldn't do this," or "Only boys do that." If I wanted to play football, great, you know, don't get hurt.

TF: Yeah. Did they give you sports gifts as a child?

DL: They did. I received a baseball glove for my first Holy Communion, which was not exactly the gift that other girls got, because that's what I wanted. And they thought that was fine.

TF: Great. Let's move on to talk a little bit about your childhood and adolescence. Can you tell us a little bit about your childhood?

DL: I grew up on a street with fifteen boys and one other girl. I'm sure I did not know I was a girl until I was about eleven, when they told me I couldn't play little league baseball. It was a dead-end street, which made it the perfect place to play sports if you didn't want to walk about a mile to go to a local park. And there was an age hierarchy on the street, where the older boys on the street were the conveners of sport teams, and chose teams and captains, and there was a league in every season, and a very well-organized but non-formal approach to sport from ever since I can remember.

So, as soon as you demonstrated any acumen in shooting a basketball, or pitching a baseball, that you got to play. And you got picked even if you were the youngest or the shortest person on the street. So I was very fortunate, I think, to grow up in that environment.

TF: Where did you live? What was the street name?

DL: Stamford, Connecticut, and I grew up on Finney Lane, F-I-N-N-E-Y.

TF: Who were your friends? Do you remember their names?

DL: Boy, you know. There were a lot of relatives that—one of the older leaders on the street was my cousin Jimmy Sabia, who eventually went to play in a little league baseball world series, was a baseball player, and played in college. Boy, remembering who was on my street! There was Danny Devito, and—who did I win baseball cards from? Richie Constantino, I think. I can't even remember. I really can't, it was so long ago.

TF: We can move on then.

DL: My brother would remember. He remembers everybody on the street.

TF: Yes, some people are like that, remembering names. What was it like growing up in Stamford during the 1950's?

DL: Well, it was great. You know, I can remember coming home from school every day, and immediately changing your clothes and going outside and playing. And you didn't come home until dinner or dark, whichever came first. And everybody on the street knew where every other kid was. There was this whole communications system, as was common in relatively small towns, where if you did anything wrong, your mother knew about it before you got back to the house.

And so there was enough parental control, but a tremendous amount of freedom to go out and explore whatever you wanted to do. You walked to school; there was no busing. And the school was a mile or two, or three miles away, and those distances increased as you got older and went from elementary to junior high and high school. You were in a safe environment, you know, your parents let you do things.

And I think it's that freedom of being able to explore choices, and to be trusted, and to have this natural progression of confidence and, you know, exploration of skill and talent, that ultimately results in self-esteem, and confidence, and all the things that make people better able to cope with, you know, the more difficult things that come in life.

TF: You've kind of already touched on this a little bit, but can you tell us a little bit more about how you would describe yourself as a young girl?

DL: I was a tomboy, lived in khaki pants and tee shirts and sneakers, and played sports every day, and hated dresses, and lipstick, and you know, all of those things, and just, you know, went from sport to sport, and loved it. I was an avid reader. I would read three or four books a day. If I came home, I would, you know, two star and three star and four star library books, and would just get engrossed in reading. I spent my life outdoors playing sports or indoors reading.

My mom was a stay-at-home mom up until I was about seven years old and they opened the restaurant business. And so there was a great deal of

exploring books with my mother, or going, you know, to places, and to libraries, or to museums, to all kinds of things. Books were very important in my family. I think they probably gave me a Britannica Encyclopedia Junior by the time I was three. There was always a value associated with books and education, and that, you know, clearly came through, in terms of choices of activities, and what have you. But it was neat to grow up on a street with a whole bunch of friends who played together every day.

TF: Was the token other female on your street also as interested in sports?

DL: No, she was my cousin Vida, and her nickname was Barrel belly. She was not interested in sports at all, and like one of her friends from another street, kind of took that doll route, and I didn't really play with her very much. We just didn't have common interests.

TF: Were there any activities other than athletics and reading that you were involved with, such as Girl Scouts?

DL: Nope, never was a Girl Scout. I think my family probably was a member of the Y, we'd go swimming at the Y. I might have learned to swim either at the Y or at the Jewish Community Center, or some recreational place. I went to summer camps in the summer, which were all sports and crafts, and things like that. Day camps, and some away camps as I got older. But, that was pretty much what we did.

TF: What, if any--?

DL: Snowball fights in the winter.

TF: That might be construed as sports as well. What if any leadership characteristics did you display as a child in activities with friends or your siblings?

DL: I think that one of the things that happens in sport is the better players get chosen as captains. So, when you're old enough, if you've demonstrated sport skill, there is an unwritten hierarchy of leadership that is based on skill. So, I had,

you know, opportunities all the time to be the captain of teams, because I was really a great athlete, and I would be either picked as a captain—the great athletes were picked and separated. If you had four teams of three, that's how kids split up, you know, made sure that the game was fair, that the four best players were the captains. So I think that probably started it all. I had a certain level of confidence, and a certain sense of, you know, how things should be done, you know. So it was, kind of, stuff that I started to do at a very early age.

TF: Do you think things would have been different if you weren't as gifted an athlete?

DL: Yeah, I think I probably wouldn't develop leadership skills as quickly, but I think, you know, I would have probably found some thing that I was good at. You know, I was always a good student, and I would have probably found something that I was good at, that created, you know, confidence. Confidence is a function of, you know, testing yourself and finding out that you're—you measure up to what your expectations are.

And I think that was an M.O., you know, a thing that permeated everything I did, whether it was seeing if you could cook a cake, or bake a cake, or draw something, or win at a game, or do a crossword puzzle. I think there was a real expectation of trying your best and taking pride in excellent performance. That was true in my family. It was never overly done. You know, no one ever got physically hit if you weren't good, and you were rewarded with praise and nickels, you know. There wasn't an absurd compulsion about it. But it was a very healthy expectation of trying to be as good as you could be, and taking pride in your work. My mother and father were just that way. They took pride in their restaurant business. They took pride in everything they did. And I'm sure it was just a matter of emulating who they were.

TF: Can you describe for us your first sports experience?

DL: You know, I can't remember what my first sports experience was. It seemed like I was just always playing. So, I don't think I can remember what age, or how far back it was, other than just growing up always doing sports. You know, it was probably hopscotch, or, you know, skating—racing on skates down the street, or running as fast as you can and having a race with someone else. It definitely wasn't organized sport, initially, because big kids don't let you play right away. So I'm sure it was just one of those sorts of games that made you test yourself, and all games are tests of some kind. It's more fun that way.

TF: You've talked on several occasions about how being denied the opportunity to play little league baseball because of your gender has greatly influenced your life. Can you please relate the events of that day, when you were told no girls are allowed as you stood in line for your uniform?

DL: Well, I think that the first right of passage in playing organized sports for boys, especially if your future aspirations are baseball-related, is playing little league. And we grew up on a street where all of our kids were baseball fans. We were either Red Sox fans or Yankee fans, and every kid on the street played baseball, and we were going to be professional baseball players, like: whoever our hero was. So, it was natural play, it was natural to aspire to play little league. You always, before you became of age, went down to the park and watched little league players play. You shagged balls, you, you know, tried to get broken bats. It was part of the culture of the street, or the neighborhood, at the time.

So, it was just matter of fact, you know, going out for little league. You looked forward to it, and it was on your schedule. You practiced to be better so that you could make the team. And on the day of tryouts, I was drafted number one, as the best player in the whatever—ten, eleven year old? Whatever you start little league at. And when we were lined up to receive our uniforms, obviously I was elated, and thought it an omen, that our uniforms were navy blue and white

pinstripe—Yankee colors, and our hat were real wool baseball hats that were—you had to know your head size in order to get your hat.

And, you know, it was very exciting, to get your first uniform. It's just a ritual of childhood, and a sports person's ritual, that ranks right up there with Holy Communion or Confirmation if you're a Catholic, and religion is your cultural institution, or winning public office if politics is your thing. The uniform is—or the uniform of an altar boy, or an altar girl. You know, uniforms are really terrifically important. So, it was a very exciting time, and it was really a tremendous downer when a father came up and said, "Guess what? Girls aren't allowed to play," and showed me the little league rule book, and, you know, kind of kicked me off the field. It was like—it was unbelievable.

So, I'm sure that was a life-changing moment. It was the first moment that I thought that I knew I was a girl, and that somehow being a girl meant that you got less, that you couldn't do things that boys did, or you couldn't do what you did best, or you couldn't pursue what your life-long dream was, because I was going to be a pitcher for the New York Yankees. I knew that in my blood, and to this day I think I could have been a pitcher for the New York Yankees, that there have been smaller people in stature, and people with lesser skill, who have been professional athletes. So, it was not a good time.

TF: Was there nothing, no avenue available, to challenge the rule?

DL: No, this was the 1950's. The first little girl to challenge little league baseball prohibitions against girls playing was in 1973. It was a time when it was not a litigious society; people didn't get lawyers. You followed the rules. If the rules said no girls, then it was no girls. And my parents' response to all of this was, we'll find you a team to play. It wasn't, let's fight this because it's wrong. It was not—those things were accepted at the time. There was a great respect for rule in society, and almost an absence of questioning rule or law. There

was just this faith in the system that it was okay. So my parents didn't questions the system, they said, well surely there must be opportunities for girls. And there weren't. When they tried to get industrial league teams, which were the primary opportunities for girls in those days, you know, a corporation having a softball team for their employees. When they tried to get me to be eligible for those tryouts I was told I was too young, I had to be of working age.

So it really wasn't until I was almost sixteen years old that organized leagues were possible outside of the school setting. I could have probably been a competitive swimmer at a younger age. I wasn't that enthralled with swimming. I liked playing outside. I liked baseball; I liked team sports.

TF: Were you ever deterred from playing sports as a child or a young woman due to cultural expectations concerning proper activities for girls, or stereotypes about female athletes?

DL: Only the situation I just described. I mean, when the culture was just the street, and not organized sport, the street has only one value, and that is, are you good enough to be on my team? And, I want to put the best team together. So if my street went to play football against another street, and they thought that having a girl might be a problem for them, you just stuck your hair under your helmet, and that was it. And you went on. So, it was not a dilemma at all.

TF: Who were the important influences in your early life, and what were their attitudes towards women's athletic, academic, and professional ambitions?

DL: Well, there's no question that my parents', and my immediate family's, acceptance of my interest in sport, and being a tomboy, was critical. I never had a negative reaction to my interest in sports. And the acceptance of all of the boys on my street was critical, in that I never thought it was the wrong thing to do. That I was just like them.

And it wasn't until I went outside those immediate influential groups that I even confronted discrimination, which by then, I'm sure, that I had developed enough confidence and resiliency that it didn't kill me to confront that barrier, where I would suspect that many people who experience that kind of negativity earlier would fold, you know, under the pressure, and just give it up, or be resentful. And I was always, you know—I was disappointed, and cried, and what have you—I was always very confident that my parents would find a team, that I would be able to do this, or somehow would be able to continue playing.

TF: Women of the 1950's are often portrayed in a domestic role as a housewife or homemaker. Is this how you remember women during this time period?

DL: I think that was true of all my aunts, and my grandmother. I loved to cook, too, but it wasn't ever portrayed as an either/or to me. Baking, or cooking, or doing whatever, going to dance class, ballroom dance class, or whatever, was not a sex role differentiated thing. So, it was a pretty healthy environment, I think.

TF: What about in the media?

DL: I never noticed the media. I can't remember ever being critical of *Weekly Readers*, or some of the early things that you would read, I'm sure that-- I remember being fascinated by women in the Olympics, knowing that during the fifties, when that first hit television, that that was something I had never seen before. But I'm not sure you're aware of—I know that children are simply not aware that this is a problem, when you only see one gender. That you kind of accept it. It's like, little kids nowadays will see, you know, Walt Disney cartoons, and not be upset at voluptuous breasts of Hayehwatha, which is not created for the little kid, but by some male cartoonist who thinks Dad is going to love this. It just doesn't occur to kids. I mean, that is a much more sophisticated level of thinking and observation that just doesn't happen until you're probably half way through high school, at best. Or in college, probably, before you even question it.

TF: How did you envision your own future? Did you see yourself growing up to become a traditional wife and mother, or did you see some other possibility?

DL: I don't think I ever thought about it. I can't ever remember saying, "I'm going to grow up and get married," or, "I'm going to grow up and not get married." I just never thought about it. I was always interested in—I was always very focused on what I was going to do next. And I knew I was going to be a teacher, because if I wanted to play sports, I could be a physical education teacher. It was that simple. I loved sports. If I wanted to stay associated with sports, the only thing that I saw where you could do that was to be a P.E. teacher. So as I grew older I kept going in the directions where women were allowed to stay close to sports. When I got into college and became a physical education teacher, I saw that, gosh! You can be a college coach.

I went to college to get my Master's Degree so I could be a college coach, and I saw, wow, you could hire coaches, and be the boss, and be an athletic director. So I went to get management degrees, and Ph.D., just to, you know, just to stay—and always with the sport, the sociology of sport, or sport management, or any of that stuff—it was just constantly gravitating toward new tests of one's competence that were related to sport. And even after playing, it was never an either/or, that I really felt that you could play, and you could study sport, and you could do lots of things that interested you. But the common feature of all of this was that you did things you were passionate about, that you liked doing, and you did them well because you liked being good at what you did.

TF: I'd like to move on to your athletic career. There's a couple of instances where there seemed to be a little bit of inconsistencies in what was documented, but I'd like to start by talking about the team that really opened the door for you in terms of developing your athletic ability, and exposing you to life outside of

Stamford, and that would be the Raybestos Brakettes. How was it that you came to try out for the Brakettes?

DL: My parents were on this hunt for this team for the longest time, and my father found out that his old army buddy, a guy named Sal Cagginello, who was a scout for the Pittsburgh Pirates, was best friends with another guy called Vincent Devitt, who was the head coach of the Raybestos Brakettes, this national championship women's softball team not thirty miles away from where I lived. And when my parents found this out, they invited Sal to the restaurant, plied him with a bottle of Chianti, and convinced him to take me sight unseen to try out for this team, to exercise his connection.

And true to his word, he came and picked me up, and this was '63, 1963, and drove me to tryouts, and kind of plopped me in the middle, introduced me to the coach, and left and went and sat in his car out in the outfield, way beyond the outfield fence. He didn't want to be embarrassed, because God forbid, you know, this kid didn't turn out to be very good, and here he is a scout for the Pittsburgh Pirates. He thought Wee, you know, Vincent Devitt would think him an idiot.

But as he saw that I could play, he got closer and closer to the field, and finally at the end was sitting next to the coach in the dugout, and the coach was swearing that he was the best baseball scout in the whole world. I was--it was an extraordinary opportunity, just totally extraordinary, in that there were no other teams like that around. It was professional quality in terms of facilities, in terms of financial support, chartered buses wherever you went, airplanes. Those things did not happen for women in any sport, except for little isolated havens around the United States. They had the Wayland Flying Queens in basketball, in Texas. Nashville Business College basketball in Tennessee. You know, you could name on two hands the places that somehow there was a tremendously popular and high-

level women's sport team that was the team in the community. That's what the Raybestos Brakettes were.

And it was great, because I was a little sixteen year old, and I was playing with women who were, you know, anywhere from four to twenty years older than I was, and they were role models. It was a class team. This was not any old pick-up team; they had a lot of really older all-American, very well respected and poised, mature leaders. And it enabled me to skip through probably the toughest part of puberty, for most kids, with tremendous role models. You know, I wasn't involved with a peer group that was anti-sport, or that wasn't, you know, incongruent with what I wanted to do. And I don't know many teenagers who get to do that.

So that was a tremendous experience for me, and I played for ten years. By the time—I would guess within a year of starting on that team, or two years, I forget when it was, we actually went around the world, with that team, and played in the world championships in Australia, and to at the age of seventeen, or whatever, to have been to the Taj Mahal, St. Peter's in Rome, or to have gone to East Germany, you know, across the Berlin Wall. It was just an extraordinary experience, and I don't know—you know, there are a hundred people in the world at that age of my economic stature who would have gotten a chance to do that. You know, right place, right time, right skill set. That was just fascinating, and what an education that was.

TF: What was the time frame and time commitment for a typical season with the Brakettes?

DL: Practice started like the first of April, and you went through the end of August, where you had national championships. You played—I would imagine we played Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday. Three or four times a week—I'd have to look at a schedule, probably—but played in an Eastern seaboard

league that always took two or three trips a year, that were Midwest, or West Coast, or even Canada. I remember getting on an airplane at age sixteen, and traveling to Toronto to play an international game. It's just—it's a tremendous opportunity.

I learned how to play black jack, and chess, and bridge. I mean, when you think about it, from gambling on the bus with the men's team, to learning a high level of bridge from the scorer, to playing chess with some other people—just a very healthy experience of extremes, in lots of ways. So I will always value that decade-long experience, because it really—and that team stayed together. After the softball season, we would play field hockey. After the field hockey season, we'd play basketball. After the basketball season, we'd play volleyball, or before the volleyball season, whatever—for the basketball season.

So, we stayed together and played sports because schools didn't have comprehensive sports programs. There were no state high school championships. There were no national championships in college for women. Everything was, you know, A.A.U. basketball, or U.S.V.B.A. volleyball, or U.S.F.H.A. field hockey. It was all these outside teams that were populated by older women who found a way to play the things that they wanted to play, usually self-supported or corporate supported, but certainly not school supported. So, it was great fun. I was very fortunate.

TF: What level of support and recognition did you receive as players?

DL: Oh, wow, you know, you were local heroes. The Bridgeport Post, which was the local newspaper for Stratford, covered the Raybestos Brakettes as if they were the New York Yankees. So, a tremendous amount of community support, there was anywhere from three to eight thousand fans per game. There was a tremendous level of reinforcement for being a female athlete in that geographical area associated with this team.

TF: Did playing for the Brakettes offset any of the sadness from not being able to play little league?

DL: Oh sure, definitely. You know, kids forget easily. This was the cat's meow. It was just as good, in my mind. You don't know any better. So, if you were good at something, it was just almost like baseball, if you had crowds and everything else. And it probably seemed like the New York Yankees—what did I know? Why would the New York Yankees be any better than this? Stadium a little bigger, maybe? But, this is fine, fine in my book.

TF: You joined the Brakettes when you were only sixteen. How did this affect your high school experience?

DL: It affected my high school experience in that I wasn't allowed to play on an outside team in softball in high school. But there was no choice there, I just chose to play for the Brakettes, and not for high school and not for college, because they only played six games or eight games, and eighty was better than eight [laughs]. So that was the primary—I had to make choices, on inside or outside teams. And the inside teams, the school teams, were so limited, and the skill level was so far below what I was playing on the outside, that it really wasn't a choice.

And what it did do was, and when I finished my classes, rather than play internally to school, I would take off and have to drive somewhere to play for my outside team, which probably limited my social activities, typical social activities were in the school, but what did I care? I was, you know, that was my world, my social world. So I thought that was kind of an advantage, more than anything else, because boy, it kept you out of trouble. You were always in the public eye, so you were indeed out of trouble all the time; you couldn't afford to misbehave or to do things like that. You would get a lot of grief.

TF: How was your team with the Brakettes able to be so successful? In your ten years with them, you had six national championships, and four runners-up. Was that a result of just pure talent, or is there other factors that contribute?

DL Well, where there's money, there's talent. I mean, that's true in a capitalist society, and the sponsor of the Raybestos Brakettes was the Raybestos Corporation, that made brake linings, ball bearings, had a big factory in Stratford, and had a C.E.O. who was just a nut about softball. He had a men's team and a women's team that competed at the highest levels, were national champions, both in their respective leagues, and he put a lot of money behind the team. And because the team was so well supported, everybody wanted to play for them, so players would come in from California and the Midwest, and they would work at the factory during the summer. I didn't have to do that, since I was so close. But you got all your equipment; it was just like playing for the New York Yankees. It was an easy team to choose.

TF: You've already mentioned that you had the opportunity to travel quite a bit with the team. What was it like to travel around the world as a female athlete in the 1960's?

DL: I'm not sure that you have perspective, as you're doing it, especially if you're young, you know, seventeen, eighteen. You don't look at—I don't think you focus on whether people like or dislike what you're doing, you focus on what you are doing. And it seemed that when we were competing, there were lots of people who came, and who cheered, and whatever, and this was fine. We were covered in the newspapers where we went.

So there was, I think, a great deal of positive reinforcement throughout that whole process. And it was a wonderful educational experience, because wherever we went, especially in countries that did not have any opportunities for women, we would always do clinics. I can remember being in a

courtyard in Calcutta, India. You know, a grass courtyard, and having young girls with saris and gold beads in their noses who would greet you by putting their hands together and saying namaste. And to put a glove on their hands for the first time, to teach them how to throw, something that they had never done before, and to see the joy of just throwing and catching a ball, something they had never done before—as a young person who did not normally teach, I'm sure that that is the reason why I went into teaching and coaching.

To give the gift of skill to somebody has tremendous reinforcement when it's happening. And you realize there aren't many people who have that gift, of being able to express what to do in such a way that people have immediate success, and will keep on trying harder because of that success. So, it was a great experience.

TF: Did you notice any similarities or differences between cultural attitudes toward female athletes, or women in general, in other countries, versus the United States?

DL: Not really. I felt throughout this whole process that at least the environments that the U.S. team found itself in were tremendously supportive, and were very much like the environments that we had back home, in that all these players wanted to be there, and the coaches wanted to learn, and the people that came to the games wanted to see you play.

So, if the societies at large were not as welcoming, I'm not sure we saw it, and I surely didn't sense it with the exception of, you know, India, or some places where it was obvious that they didn't play this sport called softball in that society. But you didn't think that, I wonder if there are other things they couldn't do, or, were they allowed to do sports in general? You never asked that question. All you knew was, you played softball, and you were going to teach softball, and

they didn't play softball. I can never remember asking whether they did other things.

TF: Your career with the Brakettes was relatively short, lasting only ten years. You were one of the top pitchers, led the team in hitting, earned M.V.P. honors in 1972, your last year. Why did you leave the team at such a young age, and at such an apparent high point in your athletic career?

DL: I can remember the minute I made that decision, which was after a national championship, after doing all those things, you know, M.V.P., all-American, winning the national championship, and feeling relieved that I did what you're expected to do. Not joyous—relieved. And I said, "What am I proving to somebody?" I mean, it's like, I knew how good I was, and been there, done that, and decided that there was a next thing to do. And by that time, you know, it was probably completing my Ph.D., or being a college professor, and just kind of wanting to do the next thing. I loved writing, loved research, loved coaching, and wanted to be an athletic director. I just started being an athletic director, assistant athletic director.

And it wasn't that I stopped playing, it's just that I stopped playing softball at that level, and played more recreationally, and dabbled in professional softball for three years after that, just doing it on weekends. But I did it not as a life work. I did it as a hobby on weekends, and on my own terms, and really did it to have fun. And I've always felt that the decision on the part of a champion female athlete, or any athlete, to leave the sport was always a very healthy one, because they probably were grown up enough to realize that, guess what? This activity that they repeated fifteen thousand times, or a hundred thousand times, in the number of years they played—that they figured out, after all that, what they could and couldn't do, and what they were capable of, and that there was more to the world than hitting a softball, or than keeping in that narrow bubble of sport.

And I've always been very grateful that always, simultaneously to sport, I've always explored other things in my life, so that there's never been that blind leap to the next thing. A lot of athletes will just do athletics. And then when they realize that they either can't or don't want to play anymore, they haven't simultaneously developed this next thing they're going to be good at, and they're insecure about taking this confidence and this skill, and applying it somewhere else. And I really feel that all my leaps in life have not been over really big canyons, that they've been little crevices. I might not have been good at the next thing yet, but I saw the way, or had the basic skills down, or the reason why I was able to make the leap is because I could see what I could become, and I think that's really healthy for people, to keep exploring other things that they might like doing.

TF: The professional softball team that you mentioned, that was the Connecticut Falcons?

DL: I never played for the Falcons. When that league started, we agreed that the top players should not be on the same team. And actually, I played under the condition that Joan Joyce, who was the other top softball player on Raybestos—top pitcher—and I would not be on the same team. And I played on three different teams: Chicago, California, and there was one more—I can't remember. Maybe Indianapolis, or something like that. And just would play on weekends, would go, would fly in from University of Texas, where I was, would fly in on a Friday night, pitch and play in a double-header, Friday night, Saturday night, Sunday night. Take the red-eye back.

It was great, just absolutely great, that someone would pay me to play [laughs]—you know, would pay my way to go someplace, would actually give me money to play a game, even if it was like—I think my contract was something like three hundred dollars a game? Or something ridiculous like that. I was just amazed. I would do this without any money [laughs]. So, it was pretty much fun.

And I can see how being a professional athlete would be a good life, you know, overall, if you were able to just make a living at doing it.

TF: I think most athletes, professional athletes—male anyway—can do that, these days. What impact did playing for the Brakettes have on you as a woman and as a female athlete?

DL: Well, I think I grew up with an extended family, with players who—and thank God they were older and wiser. I just grew up faster in that environment, and I became much more mature at an early age than I ever would have become, had I been playing with all other sixteen year olds. They would just slap me around if I was being arrogant, or I wasn't appreciative, or if I was getting a big head, or anything like that. They would just take care of me, because I was the youngest one there, and everybody was always watching out for me because I was the youngest one there.

So, I had a terrific bunch of role models. And I think I took a lot from everybody that I met. You know, I've always said that about mentoring: you never have a single mentor, you take the best of what you seen in people you would like to emulate. And there were an awful lot of those kind of people playing for Raybestos. There was Bertha Ragan Tickey, who was a grandmother and twice my age, probably, and had been playing for years, and just had this poise and depth of knowledge that was about this art called pitching that was pretty neat. You know, Joan Joyce, one of the most competitive people I've ever been with. Brenda Reilly, who was really funny, who was second baseman. You know, you saw everything. You saw the serious, the funny, the superstars, the not-so-superstars. Just a great environment of multi-aged people, multigenerational mix at the very highest level of a sport, who were pretty smart cookies. It was a very fortunate ten-year period. You know, kids would have fallen into worse, I'm sure.

TF: You were a member of the Brakettes during a very tumultuous time period in American history. The 1960's were witness to the civil rights movement, and the Vietnam anti-war movement, both of which helped spawn women's rights activities, and many legislative advances for women. I'd like to hear your reflections on this time period before we move on to talk about your college experience. What do you remember about the Vietnam War, and the anti-war movement? Were you or your family directly impacted?

DL: I had cousins that were in the army at that time, but I was in graduate school, and was part of the campus anti-war culture, on college campuses. And you know, I can remember attending faculty-led anti-war protests and marching while I was at the University of Southern Cal, so I was very much aware of that time and place.

I can honestly say that before then, the civil rights movement, for instance, the women's movement, was on the periphery. I'm not sure, other than Billy Jean versus Bobby Riggs—I'm not sure any of that stuff came into focus until my graduate years. And that's exactly when it happened. I had gotten out of graduate school, and in the early seventies I think I was definitely in the middle of, and a product of, the women's movement. But before that, no. I'm just trying to place the dates. I'm guessing—Vietnam must have been late sixties, '68, '69—around there, the peak of the—it's hard to figure out when those pieces were. And the civil rights movement was much earlier, so I'm not sure I was that aware of it.

TF: Were you aware at all of the cultural changes being brought about by the civil rights movement?

DL: I would say no. Not until the mid-seventies, when at the University of Texas there was—Texas was definitely an all-white institution up until the mid-sixties, and there was a—in the mid-seventies, when I first started there, there was a campus—there were a number of campus incidents, and there was a very widespread campus debate on the issue of racial diversity that I was involved in

heavily, just because I was very interested in it, along with women's rights. But, you know, the plight of women of color has always intersected with race discrimination, and so that was kind of a natural—and being involved in Title IX and athletics in the seventies—all of that all fit in. So there's no question that from '74 on, that I was very much in the middle of civil rights issues, of either race or gender.

TF: You said you didn't become aware of feminist issues until later on in the seventies. How were you involved in the second wave of feminism?

DL: Not in the sixties, it was like later, in the seventies. In the seventies, but not—I can't remember, really, anything in the sixties, except that latter, you know, Vietnam period, when I started grad school.

TF: How were you involved in the second wave of the feminist movement, in terms of either protests, or marches, or consciousness-raising groups, or whatever?

DL: I was always involved from an athletic perspective, that Title IX as an issue was just the hottest thing in the whole world, and from the day I was interviewed at the University of Texas, throughout that entire eighteen year period, I was always public speaking, I was always writing, I was always doing something related to gender equity in sport. It was just second nature. It was part of my job; it was part of, if you were an athletic director—if you were the Director of Athletics at the University of Texas, that was your whole job: to remedy years of past discrimination, to make the case for girls and women playing sports, to sensitize everybody to it. And it was just where I was.

TF: So was your involvement only specific to sport, or were there other areas of women's issues that you were involved in as well?

DL: It was only specific to sport, because the women's movement in the seventies did not embrace sport. They thought sport was—sport was out on its own. Women thought that sport—the women's movement thought that sport was a

way that men were taught to be militaristic, to learn to be violent, to learn how to dominate someone else. It was—sport was perceived as to be the value antithesis of the women's movement.

And it really wasn't until—boy, it wasn't until the eighties that the women's movement started to get it. So, no, sport was pretty much on its own. You know, Billy Jean was an exception, in that time and place. You know, that was not a tennis match; it was about women folding under pressure. But they never got it. They just didn't get it. And Billy was responsible for that, in that Billy was always a civil rights activist, not just sports woman. So, she was an exception to the rule.

Most women in sport were not involved in the women's movement, because there was no time. You know, when you think about the life of a coach, or the life of a player, you teach all day, or you go to school all day, and then you play, you travel, you coach, whatever. And then you come and you do your homework. And then you do it again. There is no time for external activism, and that's one of the dilemmas of sport participation, that the time factor of it results in an insulation from normal what's happening in the world, that most sports people are not renaissance people. They aren't aware of what goes on around them. Workload's too heavy. And that, and physically, sport is separate from academia. The gym is not next to the rest of campus; you aren't—the time that you're playing, you're not involved in typical student protest, or programs, or speeches on campus. In that way, sport participation is very, very unhealthy, in terms of development of breadth of interest of athletes.

TF: What do you remember about the passage of Title IX? At that time, did you understand the significance of the legislation?

DL: No one understood the significance of Title IX, when in passed in 1972, no one. No mention of athletics in it. It wasn't until 1974 that the N.C.A.A. even

asked whether Title IX applied to interscholastic sport, in extracurricular activities. And the brouhaha about Title IX and athletics didn't start until the seventies. And I just was in the right place at the right time to be in middle of the brouhaha.

I had just gone to the University of Texas. I wasn't there for about two weeks before John Tower submitted the Tower Amendment, which would have excluded football and basketball from Title IX coverage. And unbeknownst to me, the faculty athletic rep at Texas, and Darrell Royal, who was the head football coach at the time—the faculty athletic rep was a guy named J Neils Thompson, Engineering Prof, and Darrell was the President of the American Football Coaches Association. And then I come, and I'm head of the new Women's Athletics Department, which had nothing to do with men's athletics, and was an independent structure that reported to the President, just like Darrell reported to the President. He was also the Athletic Director.

And they, Darrell and J. Neils, put John Tower up to doing the amendment, but I didn't know that. I was just this naïve, twenty-nine year old Athletic Director, Director of Women's Athletics, who somebody called one day and said, "Hey, can you get the men's budget at the University of Texas?" And these were two lawyers for the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women, and I was a Board member there. And I said, "Oh, sure. I know Darrell Royal. I can just go ask him." And so I went and asked him, and he gave me his budget, and I went back, and I said, "Yes, I got it." "No!" They weren't able to get a budget from any school in the country. And all of a sudden I was delivering the smoking gun, that would kill the Tower Amendment. And I didn't know I was doing that.

So I just sent him the budget, and he called me a couple days later and said, "This is unbelievable. Where's your budget?" I said, "I can send you that. It's one page, seventy thousand dollars." And before I knew it, he called and said,

"Would you come and testify before Congress, the Senate Education Committee?" I called my mother and said, "Ma, you're going to be very proud," [laughs] not knowing what the stakes were. And I would not know until five or six years later than J. Neils Thompson and Darrell tried to get me fired over that. But it was because of the President of the University of Texas, who coincidentally happened to be a woman—the first woman to do that.

But Lorene Rogers and I talked before hand, and she just kind of warned me. She said, "Look, when you go there, I'm going to tell you how to keep your job. Make sure that you say you're an expert witness, and you're not representing the University of Texas. Make sure you put it in writing, when you submit your written testimony. And make sure you do a courtesy call on John Tower. Tell him you're delighted to meet him, and you're not representing the University of Texas." [Laughs] Which saved my life. But I did in only because somebody asked me to, and I was naïve, and I suppose, knowing who I was, I probably would have done it even if there were stakes, but it was pretty funny, you know, doing it and not realizing until five or six years later that it could have been a critical point in my career.

TF: You've mentioned a couple of times the Battle of the Sexes between Billy Jean King and Bobby Riggs. What are your recollections of this event, and the media attention it received?

DL: Well, I think, you know, throughout your lifetime you have these points that you remember as if they were yesterday, because they were so big in the media—the death of JFK, in my generation, Billy versus Bobby, which was just like Annika Sorenstam was this year. But, half the population of America was against it—was against her, instead of in Annika's case, only three or four idiot other golfers were against her. You know, we had progressed that far. Magic Johnson, with AIDS, you know, those points in history, everybody recognizes them as these

huge tests of a society's meddle, or a shaking of the pillars of culture, or a cultural institution. And that's what it was; that's exactly what it was. And so everybody heard about it in the newspaper every day, and listened to it on the radio, and saw it on television, this huge debate and huge to-do. That's just what it was.

TF: I'd like to move on to your college years. Can you give us a sense of how you selected Southern Connecticut State University for your undergraduate degree?

DL: It was close to the Raybestos Brakettes, it was a great P.E. school, and a lot of my teammates were going.

TF: Did you apply to any other schools?

DL: I did. I was accepted at Sargent College, which was B.U., Boston University, which was the other great P.E. school in the area. There was probably another one, too, but Southern was always my first choice, because it was so close. It would have been dumb to go to Boston.

TF: Did you play sports at S.C.S.U.?

DL: Yes, I just couldn't play softball. But I played basketball, I played badminton, I played field hockey. Volleyball was not—we had some play day volleyball experiences; it wasn't yet developed as a sport. I really didn't pick up volleyball until I went to California for graduate school, which was hilarious.

TF: Do tell.

DL: Well, anybody who played volleyball in the East was, like, it was a foreign sport on the East Coast. You know, volleyball was a West Coast sport, just like field hockey. Nobody could play field hockey on the West Coast. Field hockey was an East Coast sport, a New England sport, and the people who really knew how to play were Easterners. Volleyball--Easterners were just ugly volleyball players. I can remember being the ugly volleyball player, and the first day I was in Southern California, one of the other grad students was a woman named Nettie

Morrison, who I didn't know at the time was a U.S. team player. And she said, "Hey, we're going to play some volleyball down at Long Beach. Want to come?" "Yeah, I'll go." And the—if you can imagine volleyball, especially when you set the ball it's like a swish, swish—very controlling thing. If an Easterner did it, it was like ping, ping. It was like, you know, these rigid fingers. You had to look like a spastic, you know, compared to the smoothness and the suavity of Southern California volleyball players. There I was, ping, ping, and they were swish, swish. [Laughs] It must have been pretty funny.

But I eventually had—it made me play volleyball, in the sense that I wanted to do that, and it was just a whole new sport that was much fun. I can remember the first year I played on the Southern California team, they would not let me set the ball with my hands. My coach would—who was an all-American in his own right, Gene Selznick—he'd say, "Wooden hands, come over here. Don't you dare touch that ball with your hands." [Laughs] "I don't want to see you do it." And I would practice just so that one day—and I eventually became setter for that team, because I was going to do that.

So, but it was great fun, being naïve again, and thinking, "Well, why not?" [Laughs] And I think that's a gift that my parents really gave me: why not? Try it, for Pete's sakes! What bad can happen to you, trying something new? What can possibly happen? It's great to carry that through life.

TF: You said that was for—was that for S.C.U.—Southern California, that you played.

DL: U.S.C.? Yeah.

TF: U.S.C., sorry.

DL: University of Southern Cal.

TF: So you were able to play, because you didn't play at--?

DL: Well, actually, I played on an outside team, a U.S.V.B.A. team. But during my first year—my fifth—my first year at grad school, there was a rule in California under A.I.W. that if you were in a teacher education program, which was a five-year program in California, you would have five years of eligibility. And so, when I went there, my first years of courses counted as the fifth year requirement for—I don't know what the crazy thing was, but I had a fifth year of eligibility.

So I actually was the player-coach of the U.S.O.C. basketball team as a graduate student—you know, they didn't have a very developed athletic program at all. But, I coached basketball as my graduate assistant assignment, and played at the same time, if you can imagine that. Just unheard of. And I'm trying to think about whether I actually played volleyball—I coached volleyball at S.C.—imagine! An Easterner coaching volleyball. I coached, I know, because I went into Men's Athletics, I said, "Look, the volleyball team needs uniforms. We don't have any money. You guys cough up some money." And I was just, you know, a New Yorker that would do that. And the business manager, who I went in to see, just wrote me a check for five hundred dollars right there on the spot, and said, "Sure." And I went down and bought volleyball uniforms, the first volleyball uniforms that they ever had.

So, it was just—the intercollegiate sport was so undeveloped that graduate assistants were coaching. I was the head coach of the basketball team, and I was the Director of intramurals, when I was a graduate assistant.

TF: How difficult was it to balance your athletic responsibilities at S.C.S.U.—we're back to Southern Connecticut—and for the Brakettes, with your educational pursuits?

DL: It wasn't. School had always come easy to me, you know, in terms of academic subjects, and just was not hard at all. I just—you know, I think the only

thing that sport did was create a ritual in my life that I've kept all of my life, which was, I always go to bed early, and I always get up at three o'clock in the morning. I try to get in bed by nine o'clock, ten o'clock at night, and I get up at three, and I start working at three, because when I was an athlete at the college level, you would practice in the afternoon, right after your classes were over. You'd eat, and you'd be exhausted, and if you tried to study then, you were rereading pages, and you just couldn't keep—so I'd go to sleep. I'd go to sleep at seven thirty at night, rather than struggle with trying to read and stay awake.

And so I'd get up early, make myself a cup of coffee, you know, just do all my work in the morning, and that system I've really—has been responsible for my success, I think, because I probably do twice as much work as anybody else does who starts at six or seven. And to have two or three hours of no interruptions, really time when you can concentrate on thinking and projects, and stuff that you could never get done during a weekday—workday, that has always been, I've always been perceived as professionally having tremendous productivity. And it's simply because of that schedule. It's not that I spend any more time awake in life, it's that I'm awake between three and six, when nobody else is bothering you, so your efficiency level is incredible at that hour. You can get a whole day's work done in those three hours, because you aren't interrupted by anything.

TF: Given the cultural ideology of sports as male domain, was it difficult to be a physical education major?

DL: No, I never felt—I always felt I was doing exactly what I wanted to do in life. I've never felt otherwise. And I've always gotten along with the guys, you know, always played against them. Even when I was at the University of Texas as an athletic director, you know, every day I would play one on one with the guys, playing basketball, and it was just part of my life. I don't think I stopped playing

against guys until I stopped playing sports. It was just fun, and so I think there was a natural respect there.

There was never a separation in my life. I was never an angry feminist. I was always a feminist, and I was always a passionate feminist, and would argue a point until you died. But I was never angry about it. It was like, come on, you've got to be out of your mind here. And I think that attitude of being absolutely matter of fact, having the facts on your side, being passionate about it, you know, willing to kid with guys about anything from gender inequity to women's rights, or whatever, is a real advantage. You're always perceived as being very strong when you do that, because very few women do it. And growing up on a street with all boys probably was responsible for that.

TF: Can you give us a sense of how you selected the University of Southern California for your Master's and Doctoral degrees?

DL: Best P.E. school in the country at the time, and you could write your own Ph.D. program. And I had some real--I really wanted some flexibility in Master's programs, and Ph.D. programs, and you literally could write your programs. There was a lot of electives. And I did much of my work outside of physical education. School of Public Administration was really where I took the bulk of my—and the School of Educational Administration—was where I took the bulk of my courses for my Ph.D., which was very atypical at the time. I just had a great curiosity about lots of things, and did not want to be hung up with a very narrow program. So the idea that philosophy could count as one of your master's in sport management courses was very important.

I was like—I really wanted to do an interesting program, something I was interested in, not something that somebody else would tell me I had to do. So I loved that fact. In fact, my Ph.D. mentor was a former ambassador to Brazil, who—I remember that after my Ph.D. defense, I just bought him a case of

Portuguese olive oil, he was just such a renaissance guy, you know, this great thinker, who just taught me to see the world in a completely different way. So I really valued being outside this very narrow world of sport. You know, to have a professor like that say, "What makes you think that people who cannot read, and who just subsist on rice, that they would want to be in a democracy, or that would even understand what it was, or could read about the positions of two candidates? What makes you think that that is the optimum political structure for these people?" And I was like, "Duh." This is right in the middle of the Vietnam War, when were trying to democratize Vietnam. It's like, really? Wow.

So, I loved—I will go back. My last job will be to teach in higher education, because there is no time that you're more up to date, that you're more well read, that you—you know, you're just at the top of your intellectual game in that academic environment. That is the game, to just stretch your mind, and to—I would do that in a second, do it in a second. If I wasn't at this point in my career, that would be the next thing to do.

The reason why I'm here right now is because after so many years doing what you do, all of sudden you realize that you're at this position where because of a combination of experience, respect, platform, you know, the Women's Sport Foundation is a platform, that you can change the world. And that once you leave the platform, you're not in that position anymore. You're working for somebody else, or you're—such a shame, or I'd teach tomorrow, because I'd rather be there. But this is—it's much more—it would be a crime if I gave this up right now, just an absolute crime. Very few people get to that point, ever. And you get to realize that it's just a very special window of opportunity, and if you weren't in that place, chances are, you know, the next person might not be there, might not have the same credentials, the same everything, that there would be a learning curve, and you'd lose three or four years progress.

[tape off/on] – (Interview originally supposed to end at 2:00pm.)

DL: I have a two o'clock meeting but I can probably give you to 2:15 – 2:20.

TF: Okay, that would be great. Quickly then, can you just give me a breakdown of your degrees? You have a Bachelor's in Physical Education, Masters in--?

DL: They're all Physical Education, and then Ed. Ad., or Administration, or something like that. The specializations, I'll give you my CV. I'd have to look them up on my vita, that's how long ago they were [laughs].

TF: Let's move on to Brooklyn College. What events led to your employment there?

DL: I had gone straight through for my Ph.D., you know, right after graduate school I drove right out to Southern Cal and started my master's program. So my parents had funded me throughout my education; I didn't have a bill. And I felt it was time to, being from an Italian family, stay close to my family, and thank them.

And so I applied for about fifty or a hundred—just sent my resume to fifty or a hundred schools in the East, within a hundred miles of Connecticut, and Brooklyn College called, and said they had a job, and what did I know? So, it was my first job, I was assistant professor, and it was as good a place as any to start, and it had really no athletic program to speak of. And it was—I've always been, I think it's been a privilege to always be in a place where I was able to build something, rather than try to maintain something that somebody else built, which can be very boring. So, I always had—I always liked to build stuff.

TF: Now, what positions did you hold there?

DL: I was Assistant Professor of Physical Education, and that was—and Assistant Athletic Director, and I coached. I coached basketball, softball, volleyball. I don't think I ever coached field hockey there. I have to look it up on my vita. It was a long time ago. But I coached, and I taught. I taught

undergraduate courses, graduate courses. It was fun. It was fun for a first job. I stayed there for four years, five years, until Texas.

TF: And what brought you to the University of Texas?

DL: U.T.—I was looking for an Athletic Director job, and the University of Texas was looking for a Director of Women's Athletics, and Carol Oglesby, who was the President of A.I.W. at the time—and I had formerly played against her in softball—called me one day, and said, "You need to apply for this job." She said, "It's great. They never had an athletic program for women."

You know, so I did, and I got it, and didn't know until afterwards that I almost didn't get it, and that the search committee only recommended me as a candidate to Lorene Rogers, this woman, and she was insulted, that they think that they should think that they were selecting who the athletic director was, that they were obligated to give her a choice. And she went back and said, "I want three candidates, and I want to choose." And they came back to her and said, "No, no, no, this is the only choice," which is really fascinating for a twenty-nine year old.

I think I was one of the few candidates at the time who ever had that combination of a Ph.D., and international sport experience. And they were really looking for, kind of, Yankee aggressiveness, because they knew what it was going to be like at Texas. [Laughs] And I had dropped into their hands as having all the little pieces that they thought—it was almost as if they were a little group of elves, saying, "Oh my God, this is going to be unbelievable! Can you imagine starting a women's athletics program, Darrell Royal with the men's program, and he's president, or whatever. What kind of a person could ever do this?" And they were plotting and planning to get a Yankee in, which was not something that Southerners would do, which was pretty interesting.

TF: When you first started there, you kind of pressured Darrell Royal into making the women's athletic department part of the men's program? Is that true?

DL: Well, the biggest problem when I started was we didn't have any money. And so I just looked over—that's how naïve I was—I looked at Darrell, and I saw that Darrell had a lot of money. And so I asked for a meeting with Darrell and J. Neils Thompson. And I can remember going into his office and sitting down. I said, "Let me put my cards on the table. We don't have any money. You have money. Women's athletics needs money to grow. Why don't we merge the departments?" [Laughs] And that's how I really insured that the departments would be forever separate at the University of Texas [laughs].

TF: Was it unusual at that time to have separate athletics?

DL: Yeah, there were only nine programs in the country that had separate athletic departments.

TF: So was it kind of a blessing in disguise?

DL: It was. I didn't know any better. It was an accident of history that was something that subsequently I would have died if they had ever tried to put them together. But that's what made us successful. We were able to develop our own staff, have women's athletics as a priority, made our own money, made our own friends, never came under the thumb of men's athletics. We were never second to men's athletics, and we just took it and ran, you know, not out of any foresight, or vision, out of necessity. It's like, well, if you won't give me money, we got to work like dogs to get where we're going here, and get out of the way. [Laughs] We can do this.

TF: One of the roles , which you are most recognized for, is serving as the last sitting President of the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Woman. How were selected for that position?

DL: Well, they were elected positions, so I was the tenth or eleventh in a—A.I.A.W. was about a ten year old organization, so, it was an elected position. And

I didn't know it was going to—I wasn't elected to be the last President. I served a year as President-elect, so it was just—

TF: And is it correct that you would have served three years as President-elect, President, and then past President?

DL: Uh-huh.

TF: Who were some of the other instrumental women involved in governing women's athletics through their work with the A.I.A.W.?

DL: All of the former A.I.A.W. presidents were the leaders in women's sports. I cannot think of anyone that would be within that group—they would all be under that group. So, they were it, from Christine Grant to Judy Holland, to Carole Mushier, to Peg Burke and Lee Morrison, they were all—they were former presidents of the National Association for Girls and Women in Sport, or they were just the top athletic directors or women in sport at the time. So that's a good list to start with for any history of A.I.A.W., or women in sport during that period, college sport.

TF: What are your thoughts surrounding the dismantling, which has also been called merger in some sources, of the A.I.A.W.?

DL: Well, I think the lawsuit, the antitrust suit that was brought against the N.C.A.A., if you ever read that bit of history, was absolutely on point, that this was definitely a men's organization that was taking their profits in men's athletics and using it to buy the vote for women's sports. They were offering free national championship travel. And if you come here, you don't have to have that kind of a bill.

So, you know, it was the death of a great experiment, in that the women stayed the course on a sound educational sport strategy, they had an athlete's bill of rights, they had a rules and enforcements system that was sensible in that it was professionally based, as opposed to police-state law as minimum

standard based. It was really a very educationally defensible system, that while in its entirety has been lost to sport, brought a lot of the rules with it to the N.C.A.A., and all of the more flexible transfer rules, for instance, were since inserted into the N.C.A.A. system. So it's never a, you know, a men taking over the women. It's more like the clash of two cultures and the result being a little of each. So it was, you know, it was a good organization.

TF: 2002 marked the thirty-year anniversary of Title IX, but at the same time many people don't seem aware that this law has been on shaky ground since it was passed. The Bush Administration announced earlier this year that there would be no changes to Title IX, going against the recommendations of the Commission on Opportunity in Athletics, assigned to review the law. While this is cause for celebration, do you anticipate additional challenges to the legitimacy of Title IX in the future?

DL: You never say never in politics. I think, however, that there will not be another challenge until after the 2004 elections, that this was a politically motivated decision, that the reason why they did not stay the course was because we really got to the Republican National Committee, and to the people running the President's bid to be re-elected, and just gave them the data. And I don't think they'll touch it.

Now, will the President in his last term take it on again? I don't think they will. Unlike many of the other women's issues that affect smaller groups of women, you know, here's one where seventy percent of the American public, male, female, Republican, Democrat, believe their daughter should be treated equally. You don't play around with those kind of numbers. So of all the cultural institutions that they could have picked to try to unravel, sport was a bad choice. You know, they're better off going after choice, they're better off going after any

other women's issue except sport, and that they should start—if they even attempt it, it was suicide.

TF: That kind of leads me into my next question. Achievements made by women in sport often spur expansion of women's rights in other cultural institutions. Why do you think sport continues to be a crucial battleground for the progress of women in other areas?

DL: Well, the—sport has always been the crucible in which men have developed their competitive qualities. And in a capitalist society, sport participation, given that outcome, becomes essential. It's no accident that eighty percent of women in Fortune 500 companies self-identify as having played sports. It's clear in terms of the research that has been done that, heck, if you want strong, successful, healthy, confident women, who are going to challenge the status quo, give them sport. So, I would think that would be very threatening to guys in power.

And so, it's an interesting time, where dad wants his daughter to play, and loves to share his passion with his daughter, and as an individual will support that to his dying death, and that he's just the opposite when he becomes custodian of the status quo. But it is just that father-led, father mass, critical mass support, that has given Title IX its strength. Unlike any other part of the women's movement, this has been a father-led quest for equal rights. And man, you can't do any better than that. Most people don't realize that.

So it's going to be around a long time; it's going to be a flag bearer for women's rights for a long time because of that, and I think one of the things that people haven't seen yet, that is going to happen inevitably within the next five years is the rise of the female athlete political leader. That because of the insulation and isolation required when you're an active athlete, we haven't seen her yet. Just wait. Somebody's going to break out, and it might be Julie Foudy, it might be—I don't know who it's going to be, but the first Bill Bradley is going to

be stunning, and will probably have a better chance at being elected a President, or something close to that, than a traditional female, because of the respect of men. And that's going to be a very interesting thing to watch. To try to talk the White House project into shaping up, and identifying ten female athlete candidates to train now. One of them would get in, for Pete's sakes.

TF: I'd vote for Julie Foudy. Female athletes are significantly underrepresented in the media, and when they are portrayed, they are more likely to be presented off the playing field, out of uniform, in feminized roles. What are the consequences of the limited media coverage of women's sports, and what can be done to both increase media coverage and alter how female athletes are portrayed?

DL: There are two challenges that are going to be real stumbling blocks over the next twenty years, and it's going to take twenty years. One is the participation issue that we've been working on for thirty years. It's taken thirty years to, you know, kind of win that baby. Breaking the socioeconomic access barriers down is going to be huge and a harder fight. How do you get to share the money? That you run the team, that you're the Commissioner of Baseball, that you play in the heady world of money.

And the other piece is the media, because the coin of the realm in this culture is media. This is a media culture, and control of what people see and think is like the coinage of money. Access to both of those is going to take another twenty years. It's going to take a digital environment, which is much more—it gives you a chance. You know, there aren't a limited number of directions that you can go, so that's going to help. It's going to take an alliance with feminist men of power, and they are still ten years, fifteen years away, because the first generation of men and women to 'get it' under Title IX are still forty-five and under.

So in terms of holding money in their own right, holding positions of power, and being able to make a dent in both the media, which is a money based piece, power based piece, and equal purses, equal access to and distribution of power is at least ten to fifteen years away. To even start to make the dent. We're now looking at the media being the worst—the presence of women in the media journalists is ten to twelve percent. Among executives in the sport media industry it's like six percent. The lowest of any other—you look at professional sports, and you look at national sport governing bodies, and you look at all the other slices of who's in sport—and these are bad enough, they're like nine to twelve percent, with sport sponsorship, corporate slices of sport being the best. But the media is the worst, both in terms of gender and race. And it's a huge, huge barrier. Boy oh boy, the next battleground.

TF: Three more questions. How did the demands of your professional career influence your decisions with regard to family and interpersonal relationships?

DL: I don't think they've—I don't think influenced them. I don't think you can separate your family life, your work life, your personal life—I mean, they all intermingle in some way. I don't think my choices in terms of work have done anything but enhanced my family and interpersonal relationships. So I feel like, you know, I spend as much time with my family as I can. Would I want to spend more? Probably not. Probably not. I mean, I live close to my aging mother, and take my—I have the financial wherewithal because of my job to take them away for a couple of weeks every year to Turks and Caicos, and to make sure their lives are really easy. And that's because of my job, and being able to financially afford to do good things like that.

And my personal life has always been exactly what I've wanted it to be. I've never had any compunction at all about getting married. I just really appreciate people who have kids, but I don't think I could [laughs], it's not my gift

in life. I mean, the whole notion of carrying one, and then going through the pain of birth, and then being responsible for another individual for twenty years of your life—I'm saying, there must be somebody who wants to do this. I've just never had that aspiration, so I've been pretty pleased with life. And the older I get, the more pleased I am [laughs].

TF: Many women involved in sports, whether it be as athletes, coaches, administrators, or otherwise, experience pressure to actively present themselves at heterosexual because of the lesbian stigma surrounding women in sport. Have you experienced this pressure in any of your roles, and if so, how did you respond?

DL: You know, amazingly, the only pressure I've ever gotten in terms of, you know, pushing toward heterosexuality, is my grandmother, who always asks me, "When are you going to get married?" [Laughs] But nobody else ever has asked even, and I've never felt pressured in that regard. And neither have I wanted to go in that direction. So, I've—I just very seldom, and maybe it's my persona—I don't know what it is, but no one ever talks about my personal life, or asks me about it, or, you know, or doesn't accept it, or accepts it. It just isn't part of the equation. And I don't know what that is.

You know, a lot of people ask me, don't you ever—how do you deal with the fact that you're a lesbian in this business, or whatever, and I say, "Well, I don't ever have to deal with it. Nobody ever asks me that." And if somebody did, I would probably think twice before I even talked about it, unless they could demonstrate to me that this was something that would normally ask of a male athletic director, or C.E.O. of any organization. And like, I just, I get really a little miffed at the double standard, and people's motives behind those kinds of questions. I think I've been fortunate in that regard. They're probably scared of me [laughs].

TF: I have one final question but I just want to ask a question on what you just said. Have you ever felt that it was important to be a role model to the gay community?

DL: In what respect?

TF: As a female having achieved such a high position in sport?

DL: I don't think so. The reason why I say that is the surest form of successful action to remove discrimination is education. And it's speaking, it is designing and distributing educational programs, and making sure educational programs happen to educate people about the devastation reaped by discrimination in any form. And I think the personal, the more personal you make that argument, the less effective it becomes. And I've always believed that, that whether I'm arguing gender equity, or racial equality, or equality based on sexual orientation, what makes a difference in effective arguments are the facts, not what your personal circumstance is. So I've always leaned away from it. What people say about my ability to communicate is that I know more than anyone else, that I will beat you at the facts, and research, not at a thing that is an unsubstantive whim. And I think that's why I lean against the personal. I feel very strongly about it, as a matter of fact.

TF: Final question.

DL: Let me say one more thing on it. The personal becomes idiosyncratic. People will say, you got where you are because you're lucky, or oh, it's Ellen, or it's Billy Jean. That's not the point. It's that every human being has the right to be their own person.

TF: It is the spring of 2004, and an eleven-year-old girl with aspirations of pitching for the Yankees is drafted number one for little league. Where are we in terms of the ability of this little girl to realize her dream, provided she has the athletic ability?

DL: She might make it. Ten years from now, she'd have a better chance of making it. Baseball is the worst example. It doesn't even embrace baseball for girls. I mean, it still is promoting softball. So, it's a really bad example. It's like wrestling, or football, it just doesn't embrace it. If you asked me that in ice hockey, or a sport that is consistent in terms of expressing: I love ice hockey for boys or girls, I'd say she has a good chance, that there's always somebody who's going to rise to the level of being able to compete against guys, despite their physiological advantages—disadvantages. You know, strength and mass have a great deal to do with success in sport. Like, I would have been a pitcher for the Yankees not because of my intelligence, but because like Ron Guidry or Whitey Ford, I was at least five-ten, a hundred and ninety pounds, and had everything else I had. So, it really is effective at the highest levels of sport.

TF: Okay. I actually do have one other question.

DL: Oh.

TF: I know. It's just the closing. Is there anything that you think I should have asked you that I didn't ask?

DL: No, sounds good.

TF: Well, thank you then.

DL: You're very welcome.

End of Interview.