Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99

An oral history project made possible by Volleyball Alberta, the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, and the Alberta Lottery Fund

By Joelle Reiniger

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Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99
Common Themes and Topics to Assist with Indexing

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS:

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Themes

Aboriginal participation in Alberta volleyball, Arctic Winter Games
- DJ, TM

Alberta achievements in volleyball, provincial identity
- DJ, GS, HH, TM, LG, HR, LS, RB

Athleticism, evolution of; Power Volleyball
- BW, EM, HH, TM, LG, JD, HR, LS, RB

Beach Volleyball
- GS, HR, LS

Coaches' reflections
- BW, CO, DJ, JD, HR, LS, RB

Club volleyball: evolution of, relationship to rec volleyball
- CO, DJ, EM, TM, HR, JD, LS

Culture of the sport, team spirit, collaborative nature of volleyball on and off the court
- BW, EM, DJ, CO, GS, HH, JP, LG, HR, RB

Demographic shift, provincial; impact on volleyball in Alberta
- DJ, MB
Early years
- JD, EM

Economic history: impact of oil and gas industry on volleyball, corporate sponsorship
- DJ, EM, GS, HH, HM, JP, LG, RB

Gender dynamics
- BW, CO, HH, TM, HR, RB, MB

Geographical challenges: cost of travel to competitions, etc.
- BW, DJ

Jasper Volleyball Camp
- EM, GS, HH, TM, HM, LG, HR, LS

Mass media: role in the development of volleyball
- HH, HM

Multiculturalism, intercultural relationships, foreign exchanges, international influences on volleyball in Alberta
- DJ, HH, HM, HR, JD, LS, RB, MB

Municipal pride, community identity, rivalries
- BW, DJ, TM, HH

National team: its time in Calgary, its evolution, legacy, influence on the development of volleyball in Alberta, key Alberta athletes
- DJ, HH, TM, HM, JP, LG, HR, BW, MB

Olympic Games: Impact on the development of volleyball locally and internationally; provincial and national achievements:
- BW, DJ, EM, GS, HH, JP

Officiating, development of; rule changes
- DJ, EM, HH, HM, JP, LG, JD, HR, LS, MB, RB, GS

Organization of sport/volleyball in Alberta, Volleyball Alberta (AVA) organizational history
- BW, CO, EM, GS, TM, LG, LS, RB, MB

Post-secondary volleyball:
- DJ, CO, EM, HH, TM, HM, JP, LG, HR, LS, RB

Prairie history, settlement, in-migration, immigration
- CO, HH, LS, JP

Relationship between basketball and volleyball, volleyball's niche among other sports

- CO, EM, TM, HM, JP, LG, HR, RB

Rural Alberta, development of volleyball in small communities, Volleyball on Wheels
- DJ, CO, GS, TM, HM, HR

Secondary school volleyball
- DJ, EM, HH, JD

Senior volleyball
- HH, TM, HM

Universiade 1983
- HH, HM

Western-Canadian identity, Western alienation, East-West dynamic in volleyball organization
- DJ, HH, TM, RB

Youth Volleyball, trend toward specialization at a young age
- DJ, CO, TM, HM, LS, RB, MB

Common Historical Themes Found in
***Voices of Alberta Volleyball* Interviews at Project Midpoint**

Joelle Reiniger, June 20, 2015

Athleticism in Volleyball: its evolution over time toward becoming a physically and technically demanding, highly competitive sport

Club and Rec Volleyball: perceived losses and gains in the development of club over time; perceived losses and gains in the development of rec volleyball over time; how developments in club volleyball have created opportunities and challenges for young players

Coaching Reflections: gathered from long-time Alberta volleyball coaches looking back on their careers; techniques and principles that contributed to success

Collaboration in Volleyball: both the collaborative nature of the sport itself and the collaborative culture within the volleyball community

Economic history: the influence of Alberta's oil and gas economy on financial support for volleyball at individual, corporate and government levels; the impact of urbanization and in-migration on trends in the sport

Ethnicity and Volleyball: intercultural understanding fostered by international exchanges and competition; ethnic makeup of volleyball participation; volleyball in indigenous communities

Gender and Volleyball: differences between boys' and girls' participation rates; ideas of masculinity and femininity reflected in the sport; struggles for gender equity in government funding; gender parity in coaching from the early years of the Jasper Volleyball Camp; the popularity of co-ed beach volleyball and the social nature of the sport

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Prairie History: Narratives of migration to Alberta and perceptions of Western Canada

Provincial Achievements and Identity: Accomplishments of individual Alberta athletes on the national and international stage; achievements of Alberta volleyball builders within and without the province; achievements of the provincial volleyball association

Relationship to Basketball and Other Sports: similarities and differences between volleyball and basketball; links between the two sports; comparisons between the development of volleyball and other sports

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School Volleyball: its presence in Phys. Ed. curricula; the development of coaching in schools; relationship to other school sports; the role of the Jasper Volleyball Camp in promoting school volleyball

Senior Volleyball: opportunities for volleyball to be a lifelong pursuit

Universiade: its impact on raising the sport's profile; its impact on the development of officials and other aspects of organized volleyball

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Interview with Robert and Marilyn Bratton

June 6th, 2014

Edmonton, Alberta

Preface

This is Joelle Reiniger on behalf of Volleyball Alberta recording an oral history interview of Robert and Marilyn Bratton for the project *Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99.*

This interview is being recorded on June 6th, 2014, in Calgary, Alberta.

Interview

Reiniger: Could I get each of you to spell your full name for me?

Robert: R-O-B-E-R-T, B-R-A-T-T-O-N.

Marilyn: M-A-R-I-L-Y-N, B-R-A-T-T-O-N.

Reiniger: Is there a maiden name?

Marilyn: Durham, D-U-R-H-A-M.

Reiniger: Your date of birth?

Marilyn: September 7th, 1936.

Robert: May 26th, 1935.

Reiniger: Your place of birth?

Marilyn: Manitoba, La Rivière.

Robert: Winnipeg.

Reiniger: The year you arrived in Alberta?

Marilyn: In 1961.

Robert: Same year.

Marilyn: It's important.

Robert: We came together.

Reiniger: I'm actually going to skip ahead a few questions and ask how the two of you met.

Robert: How did we meet? I picked her up at a volleyball clinic I was doing for teachers in Winnipeg. I was hard up and needed somebody, and she was a gorgeous, feminine, pulchritude, fabulous athlete. She lived in LaRivière, Manitoba, which was the ski capital of Manitoba. I had learned to ski while I was studying in Germany, so I took her to a party and she said, 'Okay.' I got her. [Chuckle]

Marilyn: Unfortunately, that is probably most of the truth.

Reiniger: What was your first contact with volleyball?

Marilyn: I played volleyball in high school, then as a teacher. I was teaching volleyball in the junior high/senior high schools.

Reiniger: High school. Was that your first exposure to the sport?

Marilyn: When I was going to high school, yes it was.

Robert: I never played any volleyball until I was 20 years of age. I went down to school in Chicago and my roommate was a volleyball player. I was too short to make the basketball team, so he said, 'Hey, well, come on ours. We're a little short of players.' So I came out as a short player, and we went on and won the silver medal in the U.S. collegiate championship. I was a bench warmer. I think the coach kept me around for comic relief.

Reiniger: That was also your first encounter with volleyball?

Robert: Oh yes.

Reiniger: I would also like to ask how and why you became involved with the Alberta Volleyball Association.

Robert: Well, it was a very interesting arrangement. A friend of mine – a fellow that I knew through the YMCA, was involved with volleyball a little bit – said, 'There's a volleyball association meeting. Why don't you come?' So Marilyn and I and another very good friend of ours, Bob Hansell, went to the meeting. We came out of the meeting, I think I was the president of the association, Marilyn was the secretary, and Bob Hansell was the treasurer. We took over the whole thing and decided that the association had to get out of the red, and we worked at it.

Reiniger: What motivated you to dive in so quickly?

Robert: I don't know. Just something to do.

Marilyn: In high school, when we were in Winnipeg, we were involved in volleyball. We participated in a western Canada tournament where I had six or seven of my students and myself, and we played in the western Canada tournaments. We were involved in volleyball in Winnipeg, and then when we came here, we continued on.

Robert: Actually, I was involved at that stage too. Teaching high school in Winnipeg and along with another colleague of mine from another school, we decided that we should get boys' volleyball going because the girls had played a lot of volleyball, but boys weren't playing. We got the first high school volleyball league going in Winnipeg.

Reiniger: How was it received?

Robert: They became phenomenal. Winnipeg really grew and grew and grew. The University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg, they were phenomenally competitive.

Reiniger: You also mentioned that you wanted to help get the organization out of the red at that time. That was 1960 or '61 I think, right?

Robert: Yeah. The first thing we found, Bob Hansell and I found, is that there was an outstanding bill for a great big trophy that had been purchased by George Burner, the previous, whatever he was, president or something like that, and he never paid the bill. Here we were looking after an organization that had to pay off some bills. So we worked hard, and within a year we paid of all the bills.

Reiniger: How did you meet that challenge?

Robert: [Chuckle] I don't know. We just made some money, ran some tournaments.

Reiniger: I would like also to hear a little bit more about the earlier years of the organization. Could you just describe what it was like to be part of the organization during the early 60s when you were involved?

Marilyn: During the early 60s I did some playing, but then we had a family, so it was more my family I had to look after. Then after that I got involved in refereeing, officiating. We ran tournaments. I'm not sure. Bob ...

Robert: In the early 60s, there were two camps of volleyball: one in Edmonton and one in Calgary. Each year we used to alternate. The executive would be from Edmonton, the executive [would be] from Calgary. Interestingly enough, every time it was from Calgary, there was a profit at the end of the year. Every time there was an Edmonton thing – Ex-football player Bob Dean, for example, was one of the guys involved and there were three or four others. Every time they turned it over, it was broke. This went on for about five or six years. We were all volunteers, I mean, we were players, let's make it work, that's all. We just did it and did some promoting as well at the time.

Reiniger: Why the difference between the two cities?

Robert: People.

Reiniger: A little more to do with organization than other factors, then?

Robert: People. Different perspective, different approach.

Reiniger: How would you describe the purpose of the Alberta Volleyball Association when you were first involved?

Robert: [The] purpose I think was to organize competitions, particularly provincial championships, but coordinate and do things. Then eventually we took the first team from Alberta to the Canadian championships in Toronto. Subsequently I think a few years later we hosted the Canadian championships and just said, 'Okay, let's do what we can.' What the association was basically doing was hosting tournaments and trying to liaise with the Canadian Volleyball Association. I mean, I was the vice president of the Canadian Volleyball Association in the early 60s as well, and we

were just trying to make it work. And it worked.

Reiniger: I remember hearing about kitchen table meetings. Do you remember those?

Robert: They were always that way. It was the only way you functioned. We didn't have an office, we didn't have secretaries. It was all volunteer work until ... I'm not sure when we hired somebody. In the late 60s or 70s or … When was it we hired?

Marilyn: It was in the late 70s. We hired someone to help with the volleyball association.

Robert: Part time.

Marilyn: Lynda Ward, wasn't it?

Robert: Yeah.

Reiniger: At this point, I'm going to zero in on Bob a little bit and ask you some questions about specific areas of your career. You just reminded us that you were vice president of the CVA at one point in time, so I would like your perspective on what place Alberta Volleyball occupied on the national volleyball scene during your time in that role.

Robert: I'm not sure that we were very relevant in the first stages because the Canadian Volleyball Association was primarily an eastern thing between Quebec and Ontario. Then we from the west, from Manitoba to Alberta, decided that maybe there's a different perspective that we can add, so we added a different perspective. We started volunteering to host tournaments, sending some players off to try out for the national team. At that particular stage, the Canadian Volleyball Association was the one that was trying to coordinate Canadian championships and trying to select some players for the Pan American Games. That was the only competition that we would ever work for. Yeah, so it was working.

Reiniger: You mentioned a different perspective coming from the prairie provinces. How would you describe the differences between the east and the west in volleyball at that time?

Robert: I think we were more aggressive in building the sport. Trying to make it work. [We were] open to change, open to different ideas, and just working hard.

There were a lot of people that came out of there. I can remember several people from Alberta that jumped in I think in terms of – Art Willms, for example, who coached the national team. I think of John Plantinga who worked hard doing, Duane Tritter worked hard with the coaching association trying to develop a technical program for volleyball. I think of Kit Lefroy who was one of our students from the University of Calgary that played basketball and converted to volleyball. [He] became a national team player, went to Ontario, did a phenomenal job of leadership there. He was pretty progressive. People just did the job. They worked hard, and we had a teamwork approach. Lots of cooperation and collaboration. Teamwork like you couldn't believe.

Reiniger: Marilyn, is there anything you would like to add to that?

Marilyn: No, he's covered it very well.

Robert: [Chuckle] Quote her on that.

Reiniger: Another thing I would like to pick up on is your history with Volleyball Canada, or the Canadian Volleyball Association. What motivated you to put that together?

Robert: I was doing a graduate course at the University of Illinois for my PhD program, and I needed to do a history project. So I opted to say, 'Okay. Let's do a history project.' I spent some time interviewing a substantial number of people and reviewing all of the literature we could find. Travelled up to Ontario and Ottawa and so forth and collected all that data. In my collaboration with the Volleyball Association and publications, et cetera, we decided that we'd publish it. I think we did about 300 copies or something like that, and it all ran out.

Reiniger: How [did] that research impact your approach to volleyball as an organizer?

Robert: Let's add a couple of points here: When I was involved with the Canadian Volleyball Association, starting from about 1963, we were looking at ways to make money. At one time an individual who was very involved, Anton Furlani, he was a printer and he typed up a little national volleyball magazine that was called *The Spiker*. We determined that we had to make some money. I was writing a book, which I have here, *Power Volleyball*. And between the two of us, we determined that we should develop the CVA publications and that any money that we make from this textbook would help support the Canadian Volleyball Association. What an excellent

way to make some money and sort of a good project. So we did, and I think we probably published about 5,000 copies, which – if it's sale by Canadian publications standards – would be a best seller. Subsequently we published three or four other books, and again made a fairly substantial amount of money over the years for the Canadian Volleyball Association. From that standpoint, that was a contribution that came from western Canada. I did another one with Kit Lefroy, and then I did one with Brad Kilb, and all of these were published with a view to servicing the volleyball community and making a small profit for the volleyball association. So there's a contribution from western Canada into Canadian volleyball. Looking at ways to pay the bills. Because of my contact with the people in the volleyball association, any time they were having an international tour coming across Canada, I'd get a phone call, 'Can you host it?' I looked at Marilyn and said, 'Can we host it?' She'd say, 'Oh yeah.' One of the first ones we did was in 1965 when the Soviet Union and the Americans toured across Canada, and they played here. Now, my buddy Bob Hansell and I had to go to the bank to guarantee a loan because we had to put up a couple thousand dollars, and both of us didn't have any money. Marilyn said, 'What are we going to eat on if they don't make it?' Well, we had a guarantee from the bank that could cover it and a thousand dollars each. We went out and pedalled like mad. Had people coming in from all over the province to come and see it, and that was a big, big promotion of volleyball in Alberta. It really was. We ended up slightly overfilling the place. The capacity was supposed to be 1,500 or 1,600 in the gym at the university, and I think we had what, 2,200?

Marilyn: 2,200, yes.

Robert: 2,200 people. They were sitting all over the place packed in. Tickets were cheap. I mean, I've just been at your international once here: 27 bucks. I think we charged 2 dollars. Difference in inflation, but our approach then was: try to sell the sport. Several people that were always on our committee in terms of… Every time I get a phone call saying, China's coming or this team's coming or that team's coming, I would say, 'Okay, we'll see.' First thing I do is check the gym; it's available. Then I would phone my two or three contacts like Myrna Empey, Bob Hansell, Reg Hendrickson. Reg was our chef and he would cook up anything that we needed, Bob and Myrna would just get out there and get it organized and do the things that [they] were doing, and Marilyn would feed all of the big shots in our house. Some of them would stay with us, and it was just fun. We just did it, and it was fun.

Reiniger: For that event – I'm glad you brought it up, the USA/USSR tour – how important was the political dynamic at the time in drawing people to that event?

Robert: I don't think there was any great political dynamic of USSR. The thing is that neither team could visit their own country, so we did it across Canada. We also got a grant from the government because it was a grant to promote volleyball. Marilyn can remember the RCMP coming to me and saying, 'Did you notice anything?' They said, 'So-and-so was really a spy for the Russians. Did [we] know?' I know when we fed them here, they were hungry as hell. We had a great big steak dinner for them, and they ate steaks like you couldn't believe, both the Americans and the Russians. By the end of the thing, because this was a co-ed tour, there was some fraternization going on as well among the teams. They really enjoyed themselves. It was good. We had a good time. I travelled with them as a representative and also referee, and I can remember doing the first game, in I think it was Regina, that I refereed. I asked the Soviet Coach, I said, 'Well I've never refereed an international match. What's going on?' He said, 'Doesn't matter. We give you three calls, and then we adjust.' I said, 'Okay.' That's the way it is for international volleyball, and away you go. Of course now we have a whole slew of top-notch internationally qualified referees in Canada, including a number from Alberta.

Reiniger: Who won? Going back to that question.

Marilyn: That's a good question.

Robert: I think the Soviets won.

Marilyn: I think the Soviets won, yes.

Robert: It was close. I mean the women… Yeah, it was a little bit more to one side, but the men, here they had one heck of a match, my gosh. I know that the hair was standing up on my shoulders. It was so exciting: such a full house, screaming and having like mad. It was phenomenal. Who won the game? Canada won, because we changed our rules and adopted international rules and that changed the nature of the game in Canada really. That was a term, power volley. I think, as I said [earlier], one of the things in promoting the game in volleyball was [that it was] named power volleyball. Nobody had ever seen men playing power volleyball. It changed dramatically.

Reiniger: So you saw a shift in the gender dynamic of the sport at that time?

Robert: Yes. Men got to play. Hard. Women were playing harder later.

Reiniger: Another item on your resume: taking the first Canadian – that U of C team

– taking the first university club team overseas for a tour. Could you tell me about what made that possible?

Robert: I had a few players on my team who were internationally capable players. One time at practice, I said, ‘Hey, you guys want to make the Olympic team in ’76? You’ve sort of got to get some international experience. Do you want to do that?’ I left it at that. A couple of weeks later, they came back, ‘Hey coach, were you BSing us? Do you think it’s possible?’ Well, I put my mouth where my foot was and decided to take them off to Europe. We had five players on the team who probably could have made the Olympic team, and we travelled. It took me 13 months to organize it at that particular stage because we didn’t have all the connections. We didn’t have the internet. The only thing was telephone or writing letters and so forth. We started off in France then moved to Germany and then moved to Holland and then came home. It took a month.

Half way through, I said, ‘What the hell am I doing over here babysitting other people’s kids, and my kids are at home and Marilyn’s looking after them.’ Now, I think you’ve got to give Marilyn all of the accolades that you can because she put up with this idiot that was willing to sacrifice his family to get these kids on the Olympic team. As we went over there – and you can make sure when you interview Howie Rasmussen later, because he was one of the players on that team – we had two players that made the Olympic team, one ripped his knee or he would have been on the team, one was the last cut from the team, and the fifth player really wasn’t quite at that calibre. So we had guys that could be international players. One of whom was Al Taylor, of course, [who] went on to provide a phenomenal amount of leadership to volleyball in Canada and Alberta, coaching and so forth. Another one was Brian Watson who became a national coach, an international coach, and did all of those things. Then Howie Rasmussen was another one that did leadership like you couldn’t believe in the high school system around the province. So I think it paid off in terms of contribution to the growth of volleyball in Canada. It’s been awfully good, and my wife stayed with me. Subsequently, we took teams… We had an invitation to be the first university team to be invited to Japan. Primarily because of Marilyn playing host to the Japanese teams, feeding the whole teams here in our house, hosting the big shots from the Japanese Volleyball Association. We had a great tour there, but that time I said, ‘I am taking my family.’ We went and had a great time. It was a phenomenal experience for us. Then a couple of years later, we an opportunity to go to Poland and arranged to take a team to Poland and play. But in those instances, our teams were not quite as strong as they had been when we went to Europe. But we competed, picked up a couple of other players to travel with us, and away we went.

Reiniger: I am going to zero in now on Marilyn for a little while and ask you a few questions about your career. Marilyn, could you describe to me how and why you became involved in officiating?

Marilyn: I was no longer playing. My husband was involved in volleyball, so I decided that I should get involved in volleyball. Officiating was the other side of the game to be part of.

Reiniger: What were your main goals as an Alberta volleyball official?

Marilyn: We're talking about goals, but I'm not convinced that we had goals. What we wanted to do was to get as many people refereeing as possible and to get as many qualified referees as possible. We did have a good crew. We recruited the younger high school players to come out and referee. As I think of some of them, Scott McLean was one that we recruited and is still around. There were a number of good, young referees that we got involved in the association.

Reiniger: I remember we spoke last year about your early years in officiating and you were telling me about what the climate was at the time for women officiating in volleyball and how you got to where you did.

Marilyn: In the early 60s, we did not have very many women refereeing. We had one lady out of Vancouver that was a regional [official]. I was the next regional in Canada as a female, but it was more of a man's game. Men to officiate, and the women slowly worked their way into the system. I'm not convinced there was resentment for it, but the women were just not encouraged to referee. It was more for the men to referee and officiate.

Reiniger: Before more men became involved in the sport competitively, as you described, how was officiating different at that time when it was sort of considered more of a lighter game that girls played?

Marilyn: The men were organizing the volleyball associations. The women were not very involved in the association, so as a result we had the men doing the officiating. The women slowly worked in, and I'm thinking of June Willms as one who got involved in the association. But it was a very gradual thing for the women to get involved. Like I said, it was not a thing for the females to do. The females were playing, the females did not even stand down as an umpire. But it was a gradual thing. Then towards the 70s we got more females involved in the association. As I

look back on the number of people that I had officiating out of the city, mainly male people were doing the officiating.

Reiniger: For as long as you can remember before that?

Marilyn: Yes. Well, there were a few. Lynda Ward was one out of Edmonton that I can think of, but it was not the thing for the females to do. I'm rather thinking that – as we look at our international referees and officials now – we still have the men on the stand.

Reiniger: You bring up international refereeing. Could you describe your experience officiating overseas?

Marilyn: I didn't officiate overseas, I was an umpire in Japan, but I was not on the stand in Japan and not in Poland, no.

Reiniger: Okay. I think I maybe misread your bio then.

Robert: Her official capacity travelling with my two university teams and so forth was referee. We had to give her a title. But in Japan, females refereeing? Forget it. I think you were umpired a couple of times –

Marilyn: I umpired a couple games in Japan and that was it.

Robert: They were being polite.

Marilyn: Yes.

Reiniger: I was going to ask: Was that controversial?

Robert: No.

Marilyn: No.

Robert: They were being polite.

Marilyn: Yeah.

Reiniger: I would also like to hear about your experience training and assigning officials for the 1979 NORCECA Championship.

Robert: [Chuckle]

Marilyn: Actually, it was the linesmen that I was more involved with –

Robert: And scorekeepers.

Marilyn: – and scorekeepers than the up and down officials. I can recall on one game where we had the head official overruling my linesman, and it got to the point where we had to almost threaten that we were going to take our linesman off if they were not being recognized on the line. The head officials seemed to want to control the game and make certain calls that we felt were not correct calls. After we threatened, we didn't have a problem after that.

Reiniger: What did you have to threaten?

Marilyn: 'If you don't recognize my linesman, you will not have any linesman on the court,' was my threat.

Reiniger: You also were very involved in hiring officials for the national team when it came to Calgary as well. Could you describe that experience?

Marilyn: When our national team came to Calgary, they were getting perhaps very little money as a national player. I approached the team and asked if they would like to referee and officiate. A couple of them did, and at a practice I handed out a cheque. One of the cheques was $200. Now, this does not sound like much money, but to the players it was unreal. The rest of the players looked at that $200 cheque and very quickly signed up to referee and officiate. This is how they added to their bank account, [it] was the officiating. And adding on to that, they refereed and officiated the high school games. [In] one of my finals matches, I had the two officials come out. They did not wear an official uniform, they wore the national uniform, so all the spectators recognized them as national players. The players realized and the spectators realized we had a national team in town, and the follow up is they were supported whenever they played in town. So that was the benefit for the national team.

Reniger: I know you have been very involved in officiating, but you've also been a coach and you've also been involved in the school system and you've also been a player. I would like to ask about your career overall; officiating or other areas of it that we haven't touched on yet. Could you tell me what were some of the most rewarding moments in your volleyball career?

Marilyn: Rewarding moments? That's a difficult one to answer.

Reiniger: Highlights?

Marilyn: We worked with the juvenile volleyball team, and the two boys, men now, played on that team. To be able to travel with them and have them play and watch them play at the level that they did play is probably the highlight of the volleyball [work] that we did.

Reiniger: When you say 'two boys', do you mean your sons?

Marilyn: Yes.

Reiniger: [Any] other really positive memories you would like to share?

Marilyn: Both trips were very positive, a great experience. Also because we had the two sons with us. In Japan, [it] probably was more rewarding because we would go to the gym an hour ahead [and] the volleyball players, one or two of them, would take our boys off to the side and play for an hour with them … And to see that they were accepted by the Japanese and that they would take time out to help the boys play. I can recall one match where the captain of the team came over and played with one of our sons, which showed that that was more important to him than to be leading his team.

Reiniger: What about disappointing moments in your experience with volleyball?

Marilyn: I can't say that I had any disappointing moments in volleyball.

Robert: How about Greg not making the national junior team?

Marilyn: Well possibly, but that was a political thing. Greg was a setter, but only at 5'8" was not tall enough to be recognized as a top setter. Unfortunately, the coach could only see from 6' up. As a result, he picked a team of 12 players and no setter. He also had to train someone for the NORCECA's to be a setter. I found that rather difficult to accept, but that goes back to the coaching style. Height was very, very important, and they could not recognize [the] ability of the smaller player. Perhaps that was the big disappointment, that he did not make it. Even though I felt he had the ability – And perhaps I was a bit biased on it, but he still could have participated very well with that team and did not make it.

Reniger: Is there any point that the two of you remember in your careers when that emphasis on height became more important? Has it always been that way or did that change?

Robert: I'm a midget! 5'6". I remember when I was on a committee selecting a Pan American team in the 60s and sitting around the table. There were two setters from Toronto that were pretty good, and we're looking around, and well, we need another setter. One of the committee members said to me, 'Bob, we need a setter, and you're it.' Sure, I was a very good setter, but I'm a midget! I can't block my way out of a paper bag. I can't spike, what the… 'This is stupid, you guys. Don't you understand? You've got to have height.' Well, obviously I didn't have it. Marilyn on the other hand probably could have made the national team in the early 60s, but I kept getting her pregnant. [Chuckle] So I'm to blame for that.

Reiniger: How many times did happen?

Robert: Three.

Reiniger: So you have two sons and…

Marilyn: One daughter. We went into the 70s and that's when the volleyball started improving and that's when the height became more important for the volleyball association. The juvenile team that we had, height was important with them, and that was in '75 to '80, '81, '82.

Reiniger: Heading back to my previous line of questioning; getting you to look back on your career. Are there any funny moments that stand out in your mind that you would like to share?

Robert: We don't tell stories.

Marilyn: [Chuckle] That's a good one. We did have an incident here where we had [Yasutaka] Matsudaira, the Japanese volleyball coach, and the Canadian Volleyball Association members. They were here for a luncheon. This was after Calgary had the Grey Cup and the lady streaked all the way around the field. The discussion came up at the table, and Matsudaira sat here and said, 'Oh, perhaps tonight at volleyball to have a streaker.' And my good son, who could say anything, said 'Oh? You wish?' Unfortunately, we did not have the streaker that night, but to us that was kind of one of the moments that stood out.

Robert: [The] volleyball association said, 'Oh Christ.'

Marilyn: The volleyball people were trying to put their best foot forward. My son could say anything, and Matsudaira was the kind of guy that enjoyed that kind of thing.

Reiniger: What about the most stressful times?

Marilyn: I'm not sure that we associated it with stressful. I can recall having a volleyball tournament here, and we had 44 teams with seven courts, were there not?

Robert: Mm-hm.

Marilyn: Yes, and it was a three-day tournament. You had to keep things moving then, but at that time we didn't relate to it as being stressful. You organized it and you ran it.

Robert: Just got it done.

Reiniger: Bob, I am just going to ask you a few general questions about your career overall. I am going to use the terminology that the AVA used for the award and describe you as a 'builder of Alberta volleyball.' When you think of yourself in that way, what were your main goals as an Alberta volleyball builder?

Robert: I guess my goal was to get as many people playing as they could possibly get playing. Interestingly enough, in my approach when I first came to the University of Calgary, I volunteered to coach some volleyball. I coached cross country and I ran the campus recreation program and I also coached curling. When I came I taught – because I had done some gymnastics – I was teaching gymnastics. Our job at the University was to prepare physical education teachers for the entire province, or the world as it is. I had coached soccer, and I was coaching soccer in the community with our sons, so I did a lot of coaching there. Track and field because my wife had been a top competitor in track and field. We got involved initially in running some twilight meets then with two or three other people. We organized the school cross country races. In fact, the first day that we ran one of those races we said, 'If we get 50 or more people, we'll run a second one.' Well, we got 65. Five years later we backed out of it because other people had moved in, and there were 5,000 kids coming out to participate in the school cross country races. That was very, very important as far as I was concerned. So volleyball was part of my professional

involvement, as a professional educator, a professional physical educator. I just got involved in trying to help promote volleyball in the province or in Canada, and I got a big kick out of it. We did a lot of things, traveled a lot, met a whole pile of people and really enjoyed it.

Reiniger: What helped in achieving that goal of getting as many people to play as possible?

Robert: Marilyn. She raised the kids, and I spent my time promoting sport. As I said, I wasn't just involved in volleyball, I was involved in a number of other things as well.

Reiniger: What were the greatest obstacles to achieving those goals?

Robert: The greatest obstacle was a certain amount of prejudice or bias by some individuals that said volleyball wasn't a sport, it was a ladies' game, itchy-bitchy scene. They didn't promote it as power volleyball. But it was a true attitude, that it wasn't a power game. Subsequently, when we started showing that there was a lot of power involved, people got involved.

Reiniger: Do you have a specific example of a time where maybe it was written off based on that argument?

Robert: No. I think in the 50s and 60s that was an attitude across Canada. It was played at the YMCAs as a game. There were a few people who played it competitively, but [for] most players, it was just a recreational game. Itsy-poo-poo, let's hit the ball and play. No real power. Then the power came, as I said, in '65 when we toured Canada with the Russians and Americans. Suddenly people could see the power game and the excitement of the game, and it just grew from there. An awful lot of people learned how to play it.

Reiniger: Your book *Power Volleyball* that sold so well, that came out after the USSR/USA tour?

Robert: Yes, 1967.

Reiniger: So it goes back again to that tour being a catalyst for having people see volleyball in a new light?

Robert: I believe so. But remember, at the same time we had people in British Columbia, Vancouver, some limited in Saskatchewan, Manitoba for sure. There were

a few people that were starting to really realize what the game was about. Ontario and Quebec, yeah to some degree, and then there were a few people who got into [it] in the Maritimes. But, really, across Canada you had three or four or five or six people who started to promote the game, and then it became one dozen, two dozen, three dozen, four people, a little bit of community here, a teacher here, a coach there, clinics here. It just grew all across Canada, and a very dedicated effort by whole bunch of people to make sure the game would go.

We started with camps. I remember being involved with Marilyn and the camp in Winfield, British Columbia: one of the first ever volleyball camps in Canada. We were together with a fellow from B.C. I sort of organized for Alberta, and he organized for B.C. He did most of the work. So we went into Winfield, and we had this camp. We brought Japanese coaches over and had a great time. I think our approach was to train a whole bunch of coaches in volleyball across Canada, [and] that's what happened. We trained a whole slew of coaches and leaders. Then we had camps for kids, so the kids became better. … I was always somewhat critical of basketball at the time; they weren't really reaching out to the community and doing things. Now they are. They've learned from watching what volleyball has done, and they're doing a great job.

Reiniger: When you reflect on your volleyball career, what were some of the most rewarding moments?

Robert: Well, I'm not sure that I would call it a volleyball career. My career was as a professor at the University of Calgary, and I did a heck of a lot more things than just volleyball. But volleyball specifically, I think some of the rewarding things, first of all, was to see my books reach the bestsellers category. That was good, and as an academic at the university, 'publish or perish' is very crucial. I found that people were buying my book. The articles that I was publishing with regard to my research, maybe 30 or 40 people would read it and it had a 'big impact'. As opposed to volleyball. They were paying for it. … So, I think the satisfaction of seeing that grow. Then seeing many of our players go on and become fairly competent. I've helped coach my grandkids. Our one granddaughter, she was on the Dino team in Grade 10, and they won the national championships. That was very rewarding, as I was also helping my son coach. My son is a coach; he's been coaching for a long time, and he's still playing. He went down to play in the U.S. nationals just a couple of weeks ago, and that's great. My other son, Rod, he was a top-notch volleyball player. Could have gone on, but he was also a top-notch soccer player, and he's still playing. He went over to play Italy in the world championships at the 50-plus age bracket. So I've got other things besides volleyball that are important. I guess if you

take the things that I'm most proud of, in 1980 thereabouts when I sort of dropped out of volleyball, I got involved with what we called the Lindsay Park Sport Centre, now the Talisman Centre. I happened to be sitting at a meeting of Minor Sport Calgary, and the provincial government said, 'Submit your proposals, and we'll give you some money to build these particular proposals.' Well, I'm sitting around the table, and we had been fighting, the booster club and so forth, for years. We needed a field house, really needed a field house, and not getting anywhere for 15, 20 years. I happened to be sitting at the table at the right time at the right place and said, 'We're going to put in this as a proposal,' and I said, 'But if we're going to do it, we're going to do it right.' Minor volleyball anted up 400 bucks for us to get the model and the report to put it in and submit it, and it was approved. We asked for $4 million, they gave us five. That started out with the Lindsay Park Sports Centre, then they added the aquatic complex to it. Subsequently, I was the first president of the society. The city came to me and he said, 'Can you set up a society to run it? We don't want to run it.' Fantastic. Get the city out of this. We don't want the government involved. Everybody was happy with that idea. They said, 'Well, set up a society.' I was able to hand pick at least a half a dozen people who were just absolutely outstanding people to sit on the board, and it's been so successful. We still go down there, as we've got lifetime memberships, and we go down there for swimming. Am I proud of that? You're damn right. But I was only one of a small committee of people. But we did it, and now thousands and thousands and thousands of people are benefitting from that little bit of five-year effort. Get on and go.

Reiniger: What about some of the most disappointing [moments], if there are any in your experiences with volleyball?

Robert: Well, disappointing but yet not so. I think as Marilyn indicated, when our son who wanted to make the national junior team… We just lived down the street from the high school. He was short, but by far – and I'm biased – but by far the best setter of his age in Canada. He deserved to be a setter on the national team. They didn't have a good setter when he wasn't picked. I understood the situation. I could have been coaching that team – I had been asked. I said no, 'I'm too busy with my other commitments at the university, et cetera' – and he didn't make the team. Every morning for the whole year, 7 o'clock in the morning, we're at the school, and I'm helping him develop his setting skills. He became so much better than I ever was. I mean, he was ten times better a setter and he still is. I think that was disappointing that he worked so hard and didn't make it because [of] genetic predisposition: he's a midget, although he's 'only' 5'8". Okay, that's fine. That's the only disappointment that I have in my career. I think a second disappointment I have is that once we were playing in the Canadian university championships with my university team, and I

opted to put a particular player in. I really wasn't aware of the social dynamics of that team, and had I used another player who was less experienced, I think we could have won the national championship. But it didn't work. I mean, you make mistakes; coaches, you make mistakes. You learn from your mistakes, and you move on from them. But otherwise, disappointments? Nah. It was fun. We enjoyed it.

Reiniger: Speaking of fun: the funniest moments?

Robert: We had several funny moments. Travelling, going down to Mexico with the high school kids. I neglected to get letters of permission from their parents; we just went. So we're lined up at the border to go into Mexico, and one of the kids says, 'What do we do?' Marilyn said, 'Well, you just go through and you say your dad's at the back.' Well, we had kids on that team who were 6'6" down. They were from – 17-18 was the oldest to 15 was the youngest. Names: MacGregor, whatever, you know. And we went through the border. 'Well, mom and dad are in the back.' 'These are our kids.' I think that was funny going through there. … Another time we're going off and touring with our team in Japan, and somebody forgot his medical thing and he needed … What was it?

Marilyn: It was packed in his suitcase.

Robert: It was packed in his suitcase. Well, I've got 12 guys going through the line. So I go up to the front, first one goes through. I borrow his thing, go to the guy in line and get his suitcase. We all went through. Funny kinds of things that you have to do. We had a lot of fun. A lot of funny things as you're going through. I think one of the other incidents that was really quite – when you're talking about stressful things – is as we were travelling with my team, again way back in '72, in France. I speak some French. I don't think in French, but I read and I understand French reasonably well. I had two guys on the team who were supposed to be my translators, Frenchmen. Well, as it turns out – we got to France – their French wasn't as good as mine. Ah well, we're in trouble. In the meantime, we divvy up. I'm with the big shots all the time, and the kids and players and my translators are off with the players all the time. So I'm having to communicate for ten days totally in French. By the time I got to the German border, I was just fatigued. I had a headache, I was really tired. Because that's tough, working completely in a language that you're not fluent in. After a day or two of German, what a relief, because I'm reasonably fluent in German. What a great relief that was. A lot less stress gone. And we went, we played, and came home.

Reiniger: I have got my last set of questions here, and these are directed completely to both of you. How has the popularity of volleyball in Alberta changed from the time

when your involvement in the sport began to this point?

Robert: I think it's grown enormously. Even when I was still coaching which was, what, 20 years ago?

Marilyn: 30.

Robert: 30 years ago with the juvenile kids and so forth. Now you go to tournaments, and there's hundreds of kids. When we see the national championship being played over at the university.

Marilyn: Corral.

Robert: No. I'm talking about the big national –

Marilyn: Oh, the national. Oh okay, yes.

Robert: – and Edmonton with the Go Centre [Saville Community Sports Centre] and so forth. We've seen facilities built like you couldn't believe. We've seen gymnasiums, school gymnasia have been built to the standard to handle volleyball with higher ceilings, et cetera. We've seen the qualifications of coaches have just jumped enormously. The volleyball referees' association, their qualifying... They're still short of referees. I think there's some leadership problems there. But the growth and the quality of refereeing has really jumped enormously; the whole number of clubs and volunteer coaches or even paid coaches and so forth that is going on. It's way, way, way beyond what it was when we were involved. ... That's due to a significant number of people, some professional people, the volleyball association hiring people that are running programs, national, provincial camps, tournaments all over the place. It's grown. It's grown enormously.

Reiniger: Marilyn, is there anything you wanted to add to that?

Marilyn: No, he's covered it. But we just have a larger population now. Looking back in the early 60s, we were 200,000 in the city. Now we're well over a million, so you have that many more people participating. It's more important now to participate in a sport for both boys and girls than it was back in the early 60s. That's why we have more people participating in the sport. We also have more facilities such as the two domes in [Calgary] and Edmonton, all over Alberta we have fantastic facilities for them to play, so that's why the sport has grown.

Reiniger: Could you expand on your point of, 'It's more important for people to be involved in sport now than it was in the 60s?'

Marilyn: As I grew up, in my 20s and 30s, I was one of very few people who participated in sport. For females it was not a thing to do. You went and played cards or had coffee more than went out for a run. That's, to me, [changed] as sport has changed for the girls. Again, he [Bob] mentioned I was involved in track and field. It was not for girls to run track and field. It was only the very good athletes who participated in it, whereas now we look at the soccer being played. How many girls are playing girls? How many are running cross country? How many are doing all different kinds of sports? There's not this hang up about females doing the sport, and that to me is why we have more people participating.

Reiniger: Going back to your earliest years in sport. What did inspire you to become involved when it wasn't necessarily common for girls at the time?

Marilyn: I grew up on a farm. You were active; you participated. I was encouraged by my family, my parents, to participate. I enjoyed the running and baseball and hockey and skating and curling, and it went on from that. I've always enjoyed being active. I'm not one that can sit around and do nothing, so that's where I got involved. Then of course, I was involved as a teacher in the physical education, and it's just continued on from there.

Robert: She's a mean golfer now too.

Marilyn: Oh, not quite, but...

Reiniger: Looking back at the significant changes to your Alberta volleyball – I know I'm using the word career loosely. I understand that it hasn't necessarily been your primary career, but I could say your involvement in volleyball. [What have been] the most significant changes in the area of the organization and structure of volleyball?

Robert: Paid. It's gone from volunteer kitchen stuff to paid. That's a very significant difference. For us who spent countless hours as volunteers, we look back and say, 'Is it any better if they're paid?' I think it is. There's no question about it, but a whole slew of volunteers prior to this time did a hell of a good job too. I was mentioning Hugh Hoyles. There's a volunteer cum laude. He gave up a year and went off to run the Olympics. What a phenomenal volunteer that guy was and is. Or Theresa Maxwell is another one that you're going to interview. Now there's a girl who just… She was a student of mine way back when she was younger and [now is a] very,

very good personal friend. Her husband was also a student of mine too. He doesn't admit to it though. But on the other hand she just totally dedicated herself to that sport, and she could have done any sport because she was an outstanding athlete.

Reiniger: The transition from volunteer to being paid. Again, would you go over what period of time that was? Which years roughly?

Marilyn: We got out of volleyball in 1983, so it was after that. Perhaps in the early 90s they would have started.

Robert: Well, they started paying referees, Marilyn. In the 60s, we didn't pay referees. We were all volunteering.

Marilyn: That's true.

Robert: Then we started paying referees, and when you were involved –

Marilyn: In the 70s.

Robert: With the national team in the 70s, then they started paying referees. That was the first thing, and then they started hiring. We hired a part time person for the volleyball association. I'm not sure what year she was hired, and then it went from there. If we take a look at coaches, the university coaches were hired and paid. Probably towards the end of my career coaching at the university, which was in 19 – When did I finish there, '77? By comparison, because it was a certain part of my load at the university, I was probably the highest paid coach in Canada, which wasn't a hell of a lot because it was only a part of my teaching career. Then universities went on to be hiring full-time coaches, not just part-time coaches, and the same thing. But in the school system, it's not so much that way. They don't hire extra people for coaching. It's part of their teaching load, part of their curriculum if you will. And a lot of it is volunteer stuff.

Reiniger: Since we're talking about money, how have you seen developments in Alberta's economy over time influence the sport here?

Marilyn: I'm not convinced that it has influenced the sport.

Robert: Well, yes it has, because the economy has been fairly good, and so we have a number of facilities having been built.

Marilyn: Oh, okay.

Robert: So therein lies the secret, like the Go Centre in Edmonton, the university facilities that are around, the leisure centres that are around. I can recall arguing with architects and so forth in the design of gymnasia plus other sport fields, et cetera. I was involved in, again, in designing the Lindsay Park Sports Centre, which was one of the first specifically designed centres that would accommodate volleyball, plus others, with the high ceiling and everything else. We've got now architects who are specifically interested in recreational facilities. In the 60s, we had architects, but they didn't know about sport facilities. We had to fight like heck across Canada to do that. I think that was the big thing.

Reiniger: The area of post secondary volleyball, I would like to ask you about that as well. Significant developments during the time of your involvement there.

Robert: Oh yeah. It grew, but since we dropped out, somebody got doing it, and doing it right. A few of us were coaching, I remember Costa Chrysanthou was a volunteer coach at the U of A and one of my fiercest competitors; at least I was one of his fiercest competitors. He was competitive like you couldn't believe. Then you've got Hugh Hoyles in there and other people that moved in. I think in the 80s, you saw a big movement toward hiring professional coaches so to speak, full-time coaches, at the universities and colleges and so forth. In addition, you saw the colleges expand and develop their athletic programs in some ways. Now the CIS and all the rest, they've really built it up to be a big national thing. It's on television now ... you've got outstanding players, you've got outstanding coaches, male and female, both. They're really going to town. That's developed in the 90s and [2000s]. Really [a] more recent development is that they've become very professional in their approach. Scholarships. We were astounded when our oldest granddaughter has just been accepted to UBCO [University of British Columbia, Okanagan], and she's got a soccer scholarship to play that. We didn't have scholarships in Canada. That was crazy. In fact, the first ever volleyball scholarship that was given in Canada was $200 to one of my players back in the 60s when I stepped up and said, 'Hey, you can't [just] give it to football and hockey and everything else. I've got a player, give it.' That was the first.

Reiniger: At the U of C?

Robert: Two hundred dollars at U of C. $200. [Chuckle] Not a heck of a lot at that stage, but we fought hell. [Chuckle] Whereas nowadays, it's common practice for volleyball players to have scholarships.

Reiniger: What about the area of coaching? Any significant developments in that area over time that you would like to discuss?

Robert: Yeah. I think the certification programs. Some of my players and I were involved in developing the coaching association programs for certified Level 1, 2, 3, and 4, 5, and the standards that were put in there. That's done tremendously for developing and qualifying coaches through CVA, and the Coaching Association of Canada; all of those programs have been good. I can't remember, I mean that was 35 years ago that I was involved in developing the curriculum for those things too. It's now working. Other people are making it work, and they're doing a great job.

Reiniger: I would like to spend a little bit of time on the area of officiating. You have both been very involved in that area, so I would like to really hear from you again on the important developments in that particular area of the sport in Alberta.

Robert: [Chuckle] Go ahead, [Marilyn].

Marilyn: The officiating has stayed – I mean, they're doing an excellent job with officiating. As Bob said earlier they are short of officials, but we also have more teams and more matches that they need officials for. It's a difficult situation to get someone to get out and do the officiating. When I was involved, I would aim at the high school boys, girls, and the university students to come out because it was an opportunity for them to make money. I'm not convinced now that they are directing their attention to the high school ones, the younger officiating. I know that our granddaughter became an official, but she was never encouraged to continue on as an official, which perhaps is the problem with the official group. But as far as officiating, the standards, they're still doing an excellent job.

Robert: I think here in Calgary there's a little clique of leadership at the top that could have a broader picture of the situation, but their quality is good. There's a lot of good people coming out there, but not the mass. I went back to refereeing volleyball because they were short as heck, and I said, 'Oh God,' At 75 I said, 'Come on, get some young blood in here.' This is silly just to have this old guy that can hardly climb up on the stand refereeing. I always went up on the stand and said, 'Okay. I've got glasses so I can see. My hearing is okay, I can hear. But if you ask me what I'd call, forget it. I've got Alzheimer's.' [Chuckle] I can't remember what I called. Forget it. But there's still some fairly volunteer-ish older people that are in their 50s and still volunteering. Well, they're making some money. Some of them are in it to make money, and that's the big thing that's happened for officiating is the money. You've

got to make it for money. Some of them had the opportunity to go play the game and understand what the calls meant, some don't. But generally speaking, their quality of referring is pretty good.

Reiniger: Because we're talking about officiating, we're talking about rules, and the rules of game have evolved since you first became involved. So tell me about the earlier years of your volleyball involvement before rules were internationalized and standardized here. What was that like?

Robert: We used to, up until '65, we used to play USVBA rules because they had a rule book, and we used the same thing, and then we simply reprinted it under a Canadian volleyball guide. After '65, we were debating whether we should adapt because we were suddenly getting into international play. We adopted international rules, and the change was [only] a little bit significant. The calls were basically the same except that now you could reach over the net to block and you could serve from anywhere behind the line. Some of the changes that were made then – the attack line was put in there. But the game's the game: bump, set, spike. Same thing. Smash, you know, hit the ball. It's the rules. Every once in a while they bring in a couple of stupid things.

Marilyn: As I remember back when I started, the only thing was to set. There was no bump with the ball. Bringing that in, to me, has changed the game because you can play a serve easier by taking it to the side … whereas before you had to do it with your hands and set only. As I look back on rule change, I think that was probably the most significant one. Of course the overhand serve and the spike serve and the jump serve now; it's added more power to it.

Reiniger: We spoke about this already, but the gender dynamic in volleyball. Is there anything else you would like to add about women in the sport, men in the sport, changes over time that you have not covered already?

Robert: Let me go back to my career as an educator at the university. At one stage we had women coming in to study physical education, but they were not necessarily experienced in team sports. I was teaching them soccer, I was teaching them volleyball; they weren't nearly as good, the girls. I remember some of the girls coming to me and saying, 'How come you're putting the same standards on us as you do on the men?' I said, 'I expect you to be able to demonstrate just as well. That's what you're there for, to teach. Don't give me this gender weakness crap. Get on and get it.' After a few years – In particular, I noticed in soccer towards the end of my teaching career there that some of the women coming in that had played club

soccer could run circles around the men because the men hadn't played much soccer. And I think – I've just been watching our grandchildren playing soccer, granddaughters playing soccer – they are phenomenal. They run better, they ... and I mean this is just in a 30, 40-year, 50-year observation. The women are far more active and better. The men, I mean they're catching up to the men. The men obviously are stronger and better in certain situations, but for me to see – and this is coming from a macho man, okay – to see the phenomenal development in women's activity in sport. Great to see. I mean I married a jock, and that's why I married a jock. [Chuckle] It's great to see these very active individuals going far. I think we in Canada are fortunate in that the gender situation. Sure, it still exists, but the freedom to develop and go where you want to go is not encumbered by culture and mores and norms.

Reiniger: Is there anything else either of you would like to add about significant developments you have seen in volleyball here over time in any area of the sport?

Robert: The only thing I can say is things happen because somebody makes them happen, and you are interviewing a lot of somebodies.

Reiniger: [Marilyn,] is there anything you would like to add?

Marilyn: I feel we've covered it quite well, yes. It's like I had said earlier, we just have more people participating. More people are active and that's why we have more people participating and more teams.

Reiniger: What makes Alberta volleyball different from volleyball in any other province or country?

Marilyn: I'm not convinced that we can answer that question. I think all the way across Canada the volleyball has improved. We went to a national tournament in Ottawa, and you had people from everywhere, teams all over. We know what is happening in Alberta, [but] we don't know the numbers in British Columbia. We don't know the numbers in Saskatchewan or Manitoba, and I'm sure they're the same as what we have here. The sport has grown, and it's probably grown all the way across Canada. Sorry to not promote Alberta but – [Bob], do you agree?

Robert: Mm-hm.

Reiniger: Yes. All right. Is there anything else either of you would like to add about

any important sort of Alberta achievements in volleyball that you have not mentioned already?

Robert: I think we've contributed our fair share of people to the national programs either in coaching, playing, administration, you name it. We've done our share.

Reiniger: We talked about the economy and the influence that that had on volleyball in the province, so I would also like to look at changes over time in Alberta's political or cultural climate, just other areas of Alberta society. Have you seen other larger trends in history of this province influence the sport here?

Robert: No. But if you want me to get into politics, watch out. We could be here for another five hours.

Marilyn: [Chuckle] We won't discuss that one.

Reiniger: Probably the most abstract question on the whole list, but over this larger period of time, did you see a sense of provincial Alberta identity expressed or cultivated in volleyball here?

Robert: Now you're talking about a phenomenon that I'd like to add something to. I was involved in the first Canada Games with the Alberta team going to the Canada Games. I was also involved at the same time with the national coaching development and so forth going on up in Canada. In Alberta we decided to send our team to the games, and we borrowed uniforms from the University of Alberta. We decided to get the provincial government to give the guys the touques and scarves and no fancy outfits or anything like that. The reason was because we were a bit of a wealthier province; we didn't want to embarrass any of the other provinces by going there well decked. When we got there, we had teams that had complete outfits and so forth. They had decked them out to the hills. These are poor provinces that had spent all this money trying to make their teams look good, and here we were in Alberta trying not to embarrass the rest of Canada. That kind of situation has changed dramatically. Now we provide uniforms and other things for our teams. In fact, again with our teams that are playing, all your club teams now have got at least two sets of uniforms. They've got bags every year, they've got all these other kinds of extremely expensive things that are being spent that have to go into the budget. We have a lot of very expensive fees being charged by volleyball teams. Again, I say the same thing in other sports as well – because you've got to have two sets of uniforms, and every year you've got to have new ones – we used to keep the uniforms for our teams year after year after year and wash them until they were worn

out and then throw them out and buy new ones. So it cost our kids diddly squat to play. Now you're looking at $2,000, $3,000 if you want play competitive volleyball or competitive soccer or any kind of [sport]. We've become a little bit disoriented from that standpoint. We've got to take our kids and travel. Like, I'm an idiot; I took my teams internationally. But they paid their own way. Now we've got 13 year olds who've got to go to Japan or Tokyo or other things, and mom and dad have to pick up the fees. We're so far screwed up it's not funny that only the wealthy can play. We're getting to that position that just wealthy can afford to play and other kids can't, and then we've got KidSport and other kinds of things that are picking up the books to help subsidize these kids. I know so many parents who've said, 'I can't afford to put my kids into hockey.' Now I know a lot of kids that can't afford to play club ball because it's too expensive. Even high school ball now, $400, $500 if you want to play volleyball for your school. They're just spending money on all kinds of [non] essential things. ... Enough of my pontificating. [Chuckle]

Reiniger: When did you see that shift?

Robert: When did I see that shift? After I quit.

Marilyn: We were not involved after 1983 until the oldest granddaughter started playing volleyball and club ball, and that's when we realized the change. That would have been what, 2000? After 2000 she started playing?

Robert: Yeah.

Marilyn: Yeah. So 2005 is when we perhaps became involved again in it, and that's...

Robert: Well, travel. You've got to travel, travel, travel.

Marilyn: Yeah.

Robert: That costs the coaches, too, but now the parents have to pick up the expenses for the coaches. I think the one year we went to Ottawa with our granddaughter cost me $5,000 to be the assistant coach with that team. $5,000. I'm an assistant coach volunteering. Because it's travel, travel, travel. Of course my assistant coach is going to come along with me all the time. But it was fun. We would have done it again, don't regret it.

Marilyn: Yeah.

Robert: But we could afford it.

Reiniger: One other area where we have seen a lot of change in the province over this period of time that I would like to address is the increase in cultural diversity here. How has that played into the sport?

Robert: We observe it. Actually, we observe it more in soccer and not quite so much into volleyball. We don't see too much cultural diversity. There's a substantial Caucasian area. I'm not sure that we see. I don't know. I don't know that I'm in a position to – I mean, I watch soccer because we're watching our kids playing, and there's a lot of cultural diversity there for sure. A lot of… And I think that's the unfortunate thing because I look at sport as being an opportunity for cultural integration, and we've become more ghetto-ized because of the cultural diversity that's happening in the province. Now you're talking to a sociologist now, okay? [Chuckle]

Marilyn: I think that also comes back to some of the cultures the females did not participate or they also have to wear a certain type of dress to participate, which makes it very difficult for them to play the volleyball sport or to play any sport. Perhaps that's one of the reasons why the other cultural people have not moved into the sport.

Robert: Males do, not so much females.

Marilyn: Yes, the males we notice are in there, but not the same with the females. Hopefully this will change, and I can see it changing with some [time], yes.

Reiniger: You brought up cultural integration in sport as an opportunity for that. One thing that does come to mind is the international influence in how the sport has developed in Alberta and things like the exchanges for the Jasper Volleyball Camp and other cultural exchanges. What are your thoughts on the interaction between different cultures there?

Marilyn: Well, we brought the Japanese volleyball coaches over because they were the ones who knew how to play volleyball, and we didn't. So you used them as a teacher. The participants learned very well from them, and they were well accepted.

Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99

An oral history project made possible by Volleyball Alberta,
the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation,
and the Alberta Lottery Fund

Interview with Brian Watson
May 9th, 2014
Calgary, Alberta

Preface

This is Joelle Reiniger, on behalf of Volleyball Alberta, recording an oral history interview of Brian Watson for the project *Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99.* This interview being recorded on May 9th, 2014, in Calgary, Alberta.

Interview

Reiniger: Could I get you to spell your full name for me?

Watson: It's Brian B-R-I-A-N, Mitchell M-I-T-C-H-E-L-L, and Watson W-A-T-S-O-N.

Reiniger: What is your date of birth?

Watson: November 27th, 1951.

Reiniger: Your place of birth?

Watson: Calgary.

Reiniger: What was your first contact with the sport of volleyball?

Watson: It would be in Grade 5 at Collingwood Elementary. [My] first introduction was nine-man volleyball.

Reiniger: Could you describe how you became involved in volleyball?

Watson: It was a game I liked. In Grade 6 we went to six-man [volleyball]. In junior high I had a great coach. In high school we played. I went on to U of C, played junior and then made varsity and then finished university and started working. But I've

always had a love for the game. It's one of my favourite games. Well, obviously, my favourite game.

Reiniger: Would you briefly summarize the years of your volleyball career in Alberta?

Watson: We started in 1961. I got transferred in 1973 to B.C., but I was continuing as a player only and as a referee; we all learned to be referees as a start. Then I got transferred back to Alberta. I started coaching in British Columbia, and then I moved back to Alberta on another big transfer in 1979 and joined up with the University of Alberta and Hugh Hoyles and took over from Hugh after he took a sabbatical. At the same time, [I] started working for Alberta Volleyball, as we'd call it back then, and as assistant coach with the national team in 1981 and went right through to '84 in the Los Angeles Olympics. I became head coach of the national team, which is based in Calgary, in 1985 and stayed as a coach until the Barcelona Olympics in 1992. I became the high performance director working out of Calgary for Volleyball Canada and running both the men's and the women's national teams. I stayed with them until 1995 … and then I went to Europe. [Chuckle]

Reiniger: What is it that you love most about volleyball?

Watson: It's a challenge. You really have to pay attention to detail, and I like working with athletes who aspire to excellence. I was very fortunate in my career [that] whichever group I was working with wanted to get better and to get as many victories as we could. It's a great social interaction – where I'm still the boss at the time – but there have also [been athletes who] ended up being long time friends.

Reiniger: I would like to go back to your experience coaching, specifically for the 1984 team out of Calgary. Would you tell me about that experience in a little more detail?

Watson: I was trying to actually coach a junior national team. They didn't have [a job opening], but they did have an opening in Calgary to help the team get ready for '84. At that time I was working for Alberta Volleyball in St. Albert … I got a sabbatical from Alberta Volleyball, so I would do four days in Calgary coaching and then a day and a half in [St. Albert] being the executive director. That went on for six months a year until '84. So a lot of driving; I know Highway 2 very well.

Reiniger: That 1984 team had been the best showing thus far of the Canadian

Olympic team in the sport of volleyball. What were some of the factors behind that success?

Watson: We have a very tough zone in NORCECA and the United States – [who] ended up being the Olympic champions – and Cuba were usually number one or two in the world as well. With the U.S. hosting, Cuba boycotted the Olympics, and then we had to go to Indianapolis for the Pan-Am games and that qualified us for 1984. We were a very strong team, very physical, a very big team. [The athletes had] been playing together for six years and all the training and all the hours and all the matches; it just came together. They were a really good group and were very strong.

Reiniger: I would like to expand on your work with the AVA, what was then the AVA [Alberta Volleyball Association]. Could you tell me about what led to your hiring as their first full-time staff member? I believe that was ‘81.

Watson: It would be late 1980, early 1981. It was only part time. We had a cubicle in the Alberta Sport office up in St. Albert, [which was] a little school. We had an electronic typewriter and a phone and that was where we started from. It became full time later because I had wanted to move up out of banking, and this was an opportunity to do something that you just love to do. It was great working with a lot of good volunteers in our referees, in our coaching, in the schools, in the clubs. There was a big club system in volleyball at that time. Because I was a Calgarian working in Edmonton, I was accepted in the north and accepted in the south. It worked out to be a great job to have.

Reiniger: Could you expand on that last point, that flexibility. You had to – if I understand correctly – be that ‘bridge’ between [northern and southern Alberta].

Watson: At the same time that I was with the AVA, I was also coaching the University of Alberta Golden Bears. I’m a former [University of Calgary] Dinosaur, so people in the south knew me from when I played down here and the people in the north knew me because I was coaching up there. They felt they were all being represented, and there wasn’t [a] north-against-south [dynamic] like there is in a lot of the sports in Alberta.

Reiniger: Have you seen a north-south rivalry in the sport of volleyball at any point in your career?

Watson: Almost always. [Chuckle] No. It's a fun rivalry … everyone gets along. But both teams always went out to win whether it was club volleyball or whether it was university volleyball. There's a rivalry and you want to win, but that's what makes the game good.

Reiniger: What impact would you say that had on player development?

Watson: One of the things the AVA did really well as it developed is the U15, U17, U19 teams, the junior program, the Alberta team in the Winter Games, and all the others. It would bring kids from all over the province together. They'd train together and go back to their teams and take that knowledge, and then come back together to go and compete. It's been going on for years, but it's really helped the development of volleyball here.

Reiniger: I would like to go back to the AVA as an organization during your early years with that organization. What made it possible for the AVA to take that step and begin hiring staff?

Watson: It was a leap at the time because I think in the 60s and 70s, basically they had an executive and a president, but it was a 'kitchen table' [operation] out of somebody's home. They finally had raised enough money to get a start, and they got some help from the Alberta government sport council and were able to open up a little office. Then it just kind of exploded from there into everything else it has developed into. It's a lot different now than it was when I started there.

Reiniger: I read in Theresa Maxwell's history,[1] and I am just paraphrasing, but I believe she mentioned that volleyball was one of the later sports to have its association hiring staff and taking that step. Is that correct?

Watson: I'm trying to go back to memory. Baseball had its own association, swimming, equestrian, basketball for sure. Of the team sports, we were probably one of the last to start and [get] the program going. I think everyone else saw that if we wanted to grow, we had to.

Reiniger: What did you do to raise money in the early years before you secured that government funding?

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[1] Theresa Maxwell, "Volleyball Introduction and Timeline," 2012, http://ashfm.ca/absportslibrary/team-sports/volleyball/introduction.

Watson: We would run all the provincial championships, and teams had to register with us and Volleyball Canada. That was the basic foundation of how almost all of the associations back then operated; applying for and getting some good grants; we also started to do casinos and that put a good amount of money into the bank. Alberta Volleyball also runs the Jasper Volleyball Camp, so it makes money from that. There's lots of little areas. It's expanded. When I was there, we built the beach courts at Sylvan Lake, helped Edmonton when they built their beach courts, and we got different grants to get these things going. It grew the sport, and then [there was] more registration.

Reiniger: I would like to look back on some of your memories of your volleyball career, not necessarily restricted to [those taking place in] Alberta. What were some of the most rewarding moments that stand out in your mind?

Watson: We went to three national finals in the men's open in the late 70s. [After] winning that first one in Regina … we would all fly back to Vancouver and watch it on TV ourselves. We had a lot of fun with that one. That was probably the first big one. Winning different Canadian championships at juniors and with the U of A were always great moments when you finally achieved it. Getting on the national team, and I still remember from the '84 Olympics, we were playing the last match versus Japan. If we won 3-0, we finished first in the pool. If we won 3-1, we were second. If we won 3-2 or lost, we were out. It took a little over two hours to win 3-nothing, so that was great to sit there and watch the guys play so well and get to do the medal run. Qualifying for the '92 Olympics – I mean, we lost in '88 in a heartbreaker. We qualified for Barcelona, [that] was a great moment and going there. Then a few accomplishments in the pro league before I stopped coaching. There's not any one [single memory], just a whole bunch [of] ones that I'm very happy to have happen.

Reiniger: What about some of the more disappointing moments?

Watson: I still have to go back to the '84 Olympics. We finished first in our pool, led in all three matches against the U.S. in the semi and lost, and then played Italy for the bronze and led in all three games, but lost. That was probably the biggest heartbreaker. We still remember what it felt like, and it wasn't great. That was probably the biggest disappointment.

Reiniger: What about some of the funniest memories in your career?

Watson: There [are] some interesting things as the game has evolved and changed

so much. [There were] some laughing moments where they'd had a party the night before, when we weren't very serious, and a guy serves and it hits a guy right in the glasses. There's some funny stuff. A guy goes up and makes a stupid mistake, and you just shake your head and go, 'I can't believe you did that.' There [are] lots of those that happen and that's just part of the game. We never really looked at it as fun, we were always trying to compete and win.

Reiniger: What about the most stressful times in your career?

Watson: Game preparation and trying to get a good game plan together for the team, especially when you're coming into a big match. You end up doing an awful lot of worrying when it really comes down to what the players are going to end up doing on the court. Spending the hours preparing the game plan, preparing the video for them was at times stressful. Some long, long, days, but that was my job.

Reiniger: What were your main goals as a volleyball coach?

Watson: I don't think they've really changed from when I started coaching. I was very inexperienced and had to learn and had a lot of people help me learn; I learned from a lot of people. But … the biggest thing that I enjoyed doing was welding a group of players together and having them have each other's back, and at the end of the year go back and do your exit meeting, go through it and go, 'Here's what we did' and plan for the next year. It was a continual process. It just was just the way I operated.

Reiniger: What were some of the things that assisted you in achieving your goals as a coach?

Watson: I was very fortunate to have a big influence from Japan. When I lived in Vancouver, a high-school coach came over and he worked with me showing us the Japanese way. A lot of the older coaches, than me at that time, across the country. Especially when I started the national team, and we started the Universiade program. I had coaches in all regions across the country giving me lists – Check this player out, who do I invite, brought them in. You not only compete against them, but when you all work together on the same team, you actually find out a lot of the things they do. Some you like and some you don't. I didn't stop learning. I think that's one of the things I was quite anxious to do was to keep learning and try to get better.

Reiniger: What were the greatest obstacles to achieving your goals as a coach?

Watson: The greatest wasn't necessarily for me or for the team. Money has always been an issue in this sport. Our budget when I was on the national team was a very limited budget to travel the world. Even back when we were coaching at the university level, the budgets were tight. You had to go out and raise money on the side or pay for what you wanted, but the guys were willing to do it. Trying to raise the money to travel and getting the arrangements so that you could travel and get the invitations. There was no 'general manager', so the head coach had to be general manager and almost do everything else.

Reiniger: Overall, what do you feel was your impact on volleyball in Alberta?

Watson: I think it was at many levels. As a player … Dr. [Robert] Bratton made us, all the players, become referees, so we'd do high school games to help them out. I worked with the referees, and they built a great organization in Alberta. I still think they do. They have some of the best referees in the country, and they have a program of development that covers all of the regions in Alberta. The coaching, I have to go back to Lorne Sawula and all of the development of Level 1 to Level 5. Implementing that program and getting the courses done across the province not just at Jasper [Volleyball Camp]. Trying to get the information and the training out to them. With the teams just doing the registration, helping them when they had to travel to nationals, and supporting them as best we could. I did have an investment in the future of Alberta volleyball at that time, and I think I did okay. But what they're doing now far outstretches anything [we did]. We didn't have the manpower to do what they're doing now, but we developed. It was just a step at a time. We developed what we could, so I'm very happy with what I did and very proud of it.

Reiniger: The next question I would like to ask you is if volleyball is more, equally, or less popular in Alberta than when your involvement began?

Watson: I think Alberta volleyball has expanded greatly. When I was executive director, the growth of the game came quite quickly. Now there's so many different categories. There's so much younger development, and I'm sure the sport has grown way bigger than when I was there.

Reiniger: What are some of the main reasons for this change?

Watson: I have to go back to when we became part time and then full time and got the association going and were able to spread across the province. Back in the early

days, it was only very few centres that had if you could call it ‘good’ volleyball, and the others were just high school. The development going out of high school and starting up of clubs – [athletes] played longer. They played six months a year instead of three months a year. That developed and the interest grew and the development of all the phases, the referees, the coaching, player training, and the rest just made it more interesting for a lot more people to join.

Reiniger: You mentioned the development of volleyball across Alberta. What were some of the major factors in the geographical spread of volleyball [throughout] the province?

Watson: I followed the Alberta Games format, and I believe at that time there were eight zones in the province. You’d have Alberta Games; you’d have Alberta Senior Games, so we followed that format. What we tried to do, as an example, the leader of the referees, he would get eight people. He would get somebody in each zone, and then he would travel and work with them and train them. Then they were able to train people in their zones. So geographically, it was better. In the coaching, very similar. Some zones are more [populated] than others, but you had more people. I think us being able to spread it across the province, or help facilitate the spread it across the province, really helped in the growth of volleyball.

Reiniger: What have been the most significant changes to Alberta volleyball coaching during your career?

Watson: Experience. A lot of coaches [started] very young and have used their own volleyball experience … and it just continues to grow. The game has changed too. Greatly from when I played and coached in the Olympics to what the game is now. It’s almost a totally different game. But it’s a faster game, more powerful game, and it uses different skill sets than we used to train for. There are a lot of really good coaches in Alberta, and I think [with] the adaptations they’ve made as they’re growing, they’ll continue to grow.

Reiniger: I would like to go back before the beginning of your coaching career, back to that first experience with volleyball that you had in school. Could you tell me about the most significant changes you experienced in the game from that early point?

Watson: I started in Grade 5, and it was just a classroom phys-ed thing. It was nine-person volleyball, and then the next year it was six. … We never had to move when it was nine-man volleyball; we were just bumping it back and forth. Well in six,

you had to move. We were going like, ‘What are you doing? What do you mean we have to move?’ When I got into junior high school, I had a really good coach, a good phys-ed teacher, and we had a really good team. Then you could see the speed of the game and the things you had to learn and the basic training that was done. I just enjoyed the game, and it just went on from there.

Reiniger: When you were in Grade 5, how common was it for volleyball to be played in Alberta schools, if you know?

Watson: I think the only experience I would have would be my own school. There was no league or anything else. You got five or six segments of volleyball in your phys-ed program, and that’s probably all it ever was back then.

Reiniger: Do you know if your instructor had any connection to the YMCA since [the YMCA was] quite involved in the development of volleyball?

Watson: … While I was involved, I know there were still [YMCA] club teams for older players that [were] still going on or just beginning to. Probably for me it was just a phys-ed teacher, and the next thing the manual said was you had to teach volleyball. Again, that’s where the learning and training and even coaching classes for teachers [come in], so they can do a better job in the school. It’s the development that’s happened over the last 40 years.

Reiniger: It sounds as though it was part of the curriculum at that time?

Watson: At that time, yes.

Reiniger: Was it equally popular amongst both boys and girls?

Watson: Yes. I would actually think it was probably more popular with the girls at that time, and it probably still is today. It’s probably more popular with the younger ladies and the teenagers, although there’s an awful lot of men’s teams around too.

Reiniger: Why do you think that is at this point?

Watson: Meaning the popularity? If you get the training and you’ve had someone who’s guiding you and you’re enjoying the game. We go to the U.S. for their open masters, and they have hundreds and hundreds of teams that come from all over the country to play. It’s become a very ground-root popular [sport]. National teams don’t

necessarily get a lot of recognition because we're travelling the world a lot, and we don't have a league. That's probably the one thing we need in Canada is to get a league, but geographically, it's very difficult.

Reiniger: Could you expand on that last sentence?

Watson: We've had discussions before, and I think if you took a look at lacrosse, that they finally established a league and got the owners and finances together to do that. Most of our players, after they finish university or playing with the national teams, go to Europe or go to Japan or go to China. They have their pro leagues there where they play with different pro teams. I think there's enough talent to have a small league, but then you would have to get it on television ... there are a whole bunch of things you need to make a league successful. The power centres for volleyball are so widespread across the country from Halifax all the way out to Vancouver. It's just the cost of travel is very prohibitive.

Reiniger: Switching gears slightly. What makes Alberta volleyball different from volleyball in any other province or country?

Watson: That's a difficult one to answer. From my experience in Europe, it's very club oriented. National teams [are] an afterthought, although they have good teams. In Japan, it's very organized right from when they're 10 years old; all the way up it's super organized. In the United States, there's a whole different club system than we [have] up here now. In the United States on the men's volleyball [side], they've almost cut it right out, out of university, with the equal pay for the girls. In Canada, I think most of the provinces are familiar with what each [other province] does, and I don't think there's a huge difference [between them]. Quebec had a different hierarchy and different set up back in my day. When we worked with Volleyball Canada at the time, and you'd go to the meetings and the rest, it really didn't seem to be a whole lot different in any of the provinces in the country.

Reiniger: During your career, how did Alberta Volleyball reflect and influence the development of an Alberta identity?

Watson: I still go back to the people: the different coaches that you played against and for. Even going back to Hugh Hoyles and John Paulson at Calgary when I competed against them or with them, you just decided that's the way we were going to do things. That was one of the nice parts [about] Alberta; it was a rivalry for playing, but we cooperated and worked together in all different aspects of the game.

Reiniger: How do you envision the future of Alberta volleyball?

Watson: It seems to continually grow. I know we have the World League coming back to Canada, and they're going to be playing in Calgary and Edmonton in May and June [2014]. That's great for the sport to get it back on the map. I would like to see more done that way. I think the continued growth is there, and I've seen it in different places. People will run into me or I get introduced and they'll go, 'Well, I'm just starting out as a volleyball coach, can you help me?' You can see it growing, at least I can. I hope it does.

Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99

An oral history project made possible by Volleyball Alberta,
the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation,
and the Alberta Lottery Fund

Interview with Cor Ouwerkerk

June 19th, 2014

Edmonton, Alberta

Preface

This is Joelle Reiniger on behalf of Volleyball Alberta recording an oral history interview of Cor Ouwerkerk for the project *Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99.* This interview being recorded on June 19th, 2014, in Calgary, Alberta.

Interview

Reiniger: Could I start with the spelling of your full name?

Ouwerkerk: You mean my last name?

Reiniger: First and last.

Ouwerkerk: It's Cor, C-O-R. My real name is Cornelius, but I just go by Cor. The last name is O-U-W-E-R-K-E-R-K, Ouwerkerk.

Reiniger: Your date of birth?

Ouwerkerk: March 10th, 1943.

Reiniger: Your place of birth?

Ouwerkerk: The old country, Holland. You didn't know that, eh?

Reiniger: No.

Ouwerkerk: Ha-ha, that's good; I should have kept it quiet. People always accuse me of being a Dutchman, and I say, 'No, I'm Canadian.'

Reiniger: When did you to move to [Canada]?

Ouwerkerk: In 1951.

Reiniger: What was the first place you lived in when you came to Canada?

Ouwerkerk: Picture Butte, that's where [my family] went.

Reiniger: What was the year of arrival to Alberta?

Ouwerkerk: 1951.

Reiniger: That was in 1951, okay.

Ouwerkerk: Yes, that was 1951. We went straight to Picture Butte and to the sugar beet fields.

Reiniger: What brought you to Alberta?

Ouwerkerk: The little bit that I know of – I was only eight years old at that time – was that my parents lived in Holland. During the Second World War, I think they decided there wasn't a job and room for all of us there, so they wanted to move to the United States because of the problems with the Second World War and the Nazi invasion of Holland. Somehow that went down the drain, and we ended up in Picture Butte because we had sponsors there on a sugar beet farm. So the first half a dozen years of my life, I spent going to school part time and [working] full time in the sugar beet fields more or less.

Reiniger: What was your first contact with volleyball?

Ouwerkerk: As far as I recall, my parents – my dad for sure – wanted me to continue working on the farm, but my mother said it was okay if I went to university. I went to university in 1962, U of C. Met up with Bob Bratton, who was our cross-country running coach, and I was on the cross-country running team. He was also the volleyball coach. So during my four years getting a degree, he kind of directed me into going into volleyball and said, because volleyball is going to be the next major sport in Alberta, 'If you want to get [teaching] job,' he said, 'Ouwerkerk, you've got to get a major sport that you have some excellence in, expertise and that.' He said, 'You're no good in basketball or hockey, so you better pick volleyball!' So that's when I went into volleyball. I taught for a year and then went to the University of Washington. Then we had teaching assistantship over there, and I actually taught

a number of volleyball courses at the University of Washington. There was a prof there who was also my thesis advisor. He was big into volleyball, so I got a lot of volleyball classes. Then after I graduated in 1968, I got a teaching job in Calgary for two years, and I coached the SAIT boys' team. That's how I got going.

Reiniger: If you could continue and describe, with specific years where possible, the trajectory of your Alberta volleyball career?

Ouwerkerk: At SAIT they needed referees, while I was teaching those two years in Calgary and I coached at SAIT. One of the first things that happened, just as a little sidelight: the SAIT men's team had finished last in the Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference the year before, they told me, and this year – my first year there – we finished second to the University of Lethbridge. We beat every other college team, so they were really excited about that. We also had a winter league involving SAIT, Mount Royal, and the University of Calgary. One of the first matches we had in the Calgary men's league was against the U of C. Lo and behold Bob Bratton was coaching that team, and my SAIT team beat them. I'm pretty sure, if I remember correctly, Bob didn't talk to me for two weeks after. [Chuckle] He was so surprised that I did so well with the SAIT boys' team and beat his team. After those two years in Calgary, I got a job at Red Deer College. Part of the responsibilities was to be the volleyball coach as well as teaching and doing some other responsibilities, and from there it just mushroomed. Within a few years Alberta Volleyball wanted me to get involved as an executive. I know we had some tournaments there with the college because I invited some of those teams down there to have a tournament. People like Errol Miller; there's one person who said, 'You know, you've got to get involved with volleyball.' Then Hugh Hoyles came along, and the next thing you know, I went to Jasper volleyball camps and it just grew and grew and grew. Somewhere in the mid 70's, I became president of the Alberta Volleyball Association and had a couple of friends that I knew from Calgary who were also involved in the executive. We had our annual general meeting – we wanted to raise the profile a little bit of the Alberta Volleyball Association; I was told that they just had meetings in basements and small little quarters and everything else – [and] one of the things that we decided as the executive was to have our annual general meeting at the Capri Hotel in Red Deer. We invited every member of the Alberta Volleyball Association to come and attend that meeting and get a free meal. Alberta Volleyball would pay for that meal, which they did. I know some people criticized us for that, but it really opened the eyes [of] a lot of people. There were a lot of people at that meeting compared to other meetings.

We were trying to raise the profile a little bit, and I think it worked. The only thing we didn't do at that particular time that I still don't feel too good about – I was still pretty young in those days and didn't have a lot of experience in the executive business and the association business – was we didn't involve the past president. I don't think at that particular point in time that everything was that refined in that respect to knowing exactly who should be on the executive. Hugh Hoyles would have been the past president, and he should have been there at those kinds of things because we needed [a better] transition from year to year ... I did my term there, and I'm not sure who took over after that; I was only involved in it directly as president for a year.

Reiniger: Which specific year was that?

Ouwerkerk: I'm thinking it was like '74-'75 somewhere in there, mid 70s.

Reiniger: I might be able to find it in my records as well. That was the year of the 'controversial AGM dinner', right?

Ouwerkerk: Yes.

Reiniger: What were some of the criticisms?

Ouwerkerk: Have you heard about that [event] before?

Reiniger: No I haven't, so I'm curious.

Ouwerkerk: It was kind of controversial because people like Mr. Bratton, they were worried about expenses and monies and things like that. But if you want to raise the profile and get more government grants and those kinds of things. … So we used some of the money that we had. We had an accountant on our executive who looked over the finances and … we just raised the entry fees and what have you a little bit and paid for the meals. We've got to get people to come out to these meetings; otherwise, the Alberta Volleyball Association is not going to be anything. We wanted it to be more like Alberta basketball or the Alberta amateur hockey association, you know? Get more people involved.

Reiniger: When did you go from being on sort of a shoestring budget to having a significant change in the finances of the organization?

Ouwerkerk: That I don't know because I was only president for one year. I don't recall ever going to the meetings as a vice-president or as a past president either. Somebody else took over after myself. I'm not sure if it was Hugh Hoyles again or not. Within a year or two, I know I was a regular at the Jasper Volleyball Camp, and at Jasper Volleyball Camp I raised quite a bit of money. I'm not sure what years, but in bits and pieces we got more and more money from the provincial government. Whenever we became fluid in finances, I don't know. I don't know if we still are or we ever were, but we're in good shape now compared to the infancy [stage] at that particular time anyway.

Reiniger: In your bio for the Volleyball Alberta Hall of Fame, there is a quote: 'Cor has been involved in coaching and developing volleyball from the grassroots right up to the post-secondary level.' What I am interested in hearing about from you at this point is [your] developing volleyball from the grassroots level.

Ouwerkerk: I assume that 'grassroots' means the little kids. I coached at the college level all my life, but having camps, we started our camps at Red Deer College a few years after Jasper volleyball camps. I was involved in the Jasper volleyball camps and a few other camps here and there for quite a number of years actually. That's what I think we mean when we talk about grassroots volleyball; right from the beginning.

Reiniger: I would like to talk about the [Red Deer College] Queens.

Ouwerkerk: Okay. Well that's what I know the most about.

Reiniger: Obviously an enormously successful team.[1] What do you think was the secret to their success?

Ouwerkerk: First of all, let me tell you how I got involved with the Queens. After I coached two years at SAIT, I went to Red Deer College, and I coached four years of the Kings volleyball. Then I went to Jasper Volleyball Camp, and I think it was my first volleyball camp. I came back from the volleyball camp – [pause] – One step back: when I went to Jasper, I was coaching men. We had too many male coaches, and they said to me – it was probably Hugh Hoyles – he said, 'Cor, do you want to coach girls?' I said 'Well, yeah, okay.' I thought that might be a nice change and

[1] Volleyball Alberta [formerly the Alberta Volleyball Association] inducted the Red Deer College Queens into its Alberta Volleyball Hall of Fame in 2007. Among other achievements, the Queens won 13 consecutive national championships beginning in the 1981/82 season.

everything else: coach high-school girls. I'll be happy to be coaching them. I was still a young guy then. So I coached those girls, and we had our little tournament at the end of the week, and my team won. Lo and behold – I didn't know about this – I came back and my boss, the dean, said, 'Hey, we hired another guy in your department and he wants to coach men's volleyball. So guess what? You're coaching the women's volleyball.' I said, 'Oh? Okay.' We went to our first tournament that year at U of C, and we finished last. When we were returning home, we were discussing this, and the girls said, 'We don't want to be last anymore.' I said, 'Well, in practices after that, do you want to train like the men?' 'Yeah, we do!' I said, 'Do you want to be competitive?' They said, 'Yeah we do!' I said, 'Do you want to win games?' 'Yeah, we do! We do!' It took a while, but our very first tournament that we had that year in the ACAC, the Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference – we had three tournaments – we hosted the first tournament, so I drew up the schedule. I made sure we started against the three weakest teams. We started by scoring 56 straight points without giving any up, so as we gave up our first point, two of my players got into a fight because they blamed each other for giving up that point. After that we just got better and better each tournament. We ended up losing in the final to Mount Royal, who was a really powerful team at that time. 15-12, 11 or 12, in the fifth game in the final. I had given my girls flowers before that playoff, and they played over their heads; it was unbelievable. The next year I was actually able to recruit one or two players that were [planning] to play basketball. We went undefeated, [and] won the Four West[2] championships in Winnipeg. The year after that, we got a couple more girls that were basketball players but ended up playing volleyball instead, so we started getting better and taller all the time. I think we went undefeated again until the last game of the Four West, then we lost to a B.C. college. I took a year off, and since that time until I retired from the Queens, we had every year – except maybe one – we had very strong and powerful teams. We won eight consecutive championships in one stretch. I always wanted to make sure that the kids worked hard, that they played as a team, tried different little things each year from a motivational perspective. Never the same thing over and over again because they get tired of hearing that. And never an enormous amount of positive motivation, just straight factual things because you can be too positive. Never try to motivate from a negative perspective; negative reinforcement just doesn't work. I had to explain that to them a whole number of times because if I said to somebody, 'Jan, that was an idiotic play,' after the game she would say, 'You called me an idiot!' I would say, 'No, no, no. You're a sweetheart. That was an idiotic play you made though.' See? So you had to make sure that you respected the girls and they respected you. The girls

[2] "Four West" refers to a competition between four western Canadian university volleyball teams, officially known as the Western Elite Championships.

made all the rules – I was just the enforcer – they controlled themselves. The supremacy they wanted to maintain year to year. We never said negative things about officials, never said negative things about the opposition or anything like that. One time we were in a practice and one of the girls that was on the provincial team, she said to somebody else, 'How come we never have music in practices?' My captain says, 'You want to go to a rock concert or do you want to play volleyball?' Well, nobody ever asked for music again because it was serious. As soon as you stepped into the gym, it was serious for two-hour practices. I guess those are some of the highlights. We did extra things. We did a lot of travelling. We went to Hawaii, we went to Japan four times, and Japan came to us five or six times. Every year we tried to do something different. Now, every once in a while there would be a girl who didn't fit in with the group, so unfortunately we said, 'If you want to use that exit over there in the gym, go ahead.' Not quite like that, but I did say that once when I was angry. We played as a team, and we wanted to excel each year.

Reiniger: You said the girls made all the rules. Could you expand on that?

Ouwerkerk: Each year what a lot of coaches have the tendency to do is they set goals for the teams. I didn't set goals for the team; the team set goals for themselves. The process we went through each year: After the team was picked, we'd go to a room. We'd sit around and I said, 'Well, what would you like to achieve this year?' We wrote things on the board and I said, 'Well then … we have our goals set, so now we have to commit ourselves to achieving this goal. If we want to commit ourselves to achieving this goal, there are certain patterns of behaviour we have to follow during the year. What do you think they are? What should they be?' They came up with all the rules like you can't drink the night before the game, you've got to warm up, when you come to warm up, you come here to warm up not talk about social things, and on and on and on. … We'd pick good captains each year. The way we picked captains helped a lot too. The players [had] 50 percent of the vote, the coaches [had] the other 50 percent, so we always knew we had a respectable individual who was a good leader. Between the leadership there and the coaches, and then the rules they made themselves, it was easy to keep them totally under control. I said, 'Well, you made that rule, so let's follow it. If you don't follow it, we're not going to achieve our goals.' That's all there is to it. I said, 'It's the commitment that you have to show to achieve our goals.' They all understood each year, and everything worked out pretty well except the odd year when we finished fourth at nationals one year. …

[brief off-camera discussion about international exchanges]

Reiniger: What I would like to ask you to expand on is the exchange with Japan. I am wondering why you initiated the exchange between Red Deer College and Hokkaido Women's College.

Ouwerkerk: If we go back to the Jasper Volleyball Camp – I think it was [at] one of the very first camps [that] Hugh Hoyles brought in a technical coach from Japan. I thought he was great. He gave us updated techniques and explained them very well. I thought they were much more appropriate for our girls' teams than some of the things that were in existence at that particular time in Alberta. We introduced those kinds of things to our team, and I really liked the [Japanese] approach for the way I could coach my girls. One of the things that started at that particular time, too, that was in the late 70s, early 80s, people were going on a trip each year to kind of attract people to their teams. We had gone to Holland – because I was born there, so we went there for a tournament – we had gone to Hawaii, and then I thought about, well, maybe we should go to Japan because some Japan cities had exchanges with cities in Alberta. I contacted the Japan Volleyball Association, this fellow from Hokkaido. He responded, and that's how it all started. First thing we knew, we were in Japan for three weeks the very first year. It was just an absolutely fantastic time. It just continued from there, and it's still going. Even though I'm retired, the relationship is still there between Hokkaido College and Red Deer College, so that was great.

Reiniger: On that note, what were some of the most rewarding moments in your volleyball career?

Ouwerkerk: In the entire career? Well first of all, the trips to Japan were a tremendous experience for both myself and the players; you'll never forget those kinds of things. Then all the years that we won the Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference championships. I'm not sure anymore, but I think it was about 15. Those were all highlights. The biggest highlight was beating Quebec that one year at national championships because Quebec had a different educational system and their top high school players had to go to CEGEP or college; they couldn't go straight to university. If you know the name Bonnie MacRae as an example. If she hadn't been able to go to the University of Calgary coming out of high school, I think she would have come to my team, Red Deer College, because I recruited her, and I was the only one who did. If we had people like that on our team, we would have won half a dozen national championships if not more. In Quebec they could keep those players, but in our case they went to university or they got a scholarship to go down to the States. When we won, beating a Quebec team in the finals in 1984, that was

really the highlight. Overall, after so many years of coaching, there are so many highlights. The other thing that I was really happy about within our college/academic policies was that Red Deer and my team was always one of the top teams academically. One of my philosophies was the more expertise [they] had in academics, the easier it was to coach them. The smarter they were, the more they're likely to win. If you have a student that's failing, they're probably not likely to do so well in the team concept either. We encouraged them to do well academically, and of course, we had the players who were motivated to do well athletically as well.

Reiniger: On the flip side of the coin, what were some of the most disappointing moments in your career?

Ouwerkerk: I really don't know; I've never thought about this. When I retired 15 years ago, you know what I said to some of my colleagues and my friends? I said, 'There's a lot of things I didn't like about Red Deer College, but I'm going to forget about all of those things and just remember the good things.' I think I kind of did because when you ask me this question, I'm not sure if I was really disappointed in anything. I mean, the odd issue came up every year when a player didn't fit in, and I'd be disappointed because I'd have to let them go. I didn't like that and that was disappointing. But a lot of those players, when I saw them in the future, they were happy again. So maybe it wasn't such a bad thing. At one time I was thinking of going further into volleyball maybe pursuing volleyball the way Lorne Sawula did, get associated with the national team and go in that direction. The problem was that the job at the Red Deer College was so good from a financial perspective – and I liked the area – that I didn't want to go downhill to start going uphill again from a salary perspective. I liked where I was, and I thought I'd stay there. I can't really think of any big-time disappointments. I think the last year I coached was a disappointment in this sense – maybe because it was my last year of coaching – but we were the top team in ACAC, and then we were ranked first in Canada. We went to the national championships – that was the second-last year – and that was a political ranking because we went to Quebec and Quebec had the top three teams in that tournament. They ranked us first, but we weren't first. At best [we were] third in the country. They set up the schedule so we played all the Quebec teams in a row. So we lost in the semifinals to the second Quebec team in the fifth game late at night. Then the next morning, we had to go through the back door to get to the bronze ... That was disappointing because the girls gave everything they had. If we had won that match, we would have won the silver medal. Now we have to go all the way back to try and get a bronze. It just didn't seem to make a lot of sense. It was so late at night they couldn't sleep. The next morning we had to play Grande Prairie and

they beat us, which I knew was going to happen because we'd beat them before the ACAC championships. They were two very close teams. That's the one I can remember that was somewhat disappointing.

Reiniger: You have already made some comparisons between volleyball in Alberta and the system in Quebec. Overall, what would you say has made the development of Alberta volleyball different from volleyball in any other province or country?

Ouwerkerk: We couldn't follow the Japanese style to a great extent, not in men's play, because our athletes were totally different. When I was coaching, the women in Quebec were more specialized, practiced way more than Albertans did. We had bigger people, bigger athletes for the most part. Stronger athletes, just not as refined in technique, and that's always what it came down to. As volleyball evolved in Alberta, I think in the end we opted for a more European style of play, which is basically – in my viewpoint – more power volleyball as opposed to the more refined technique and quick game because we have now much taller people involved in the game.

Reiniger: Going down to the micro level. Having had so much experience in volleyball in Red Deer, what would you say made the development of volleyball in Red Deer unique compared to the rest of the province?

Ouwerkerk: We were one of the first groups to start a volleyball club outside of the high school and college programs, and that was pretty successful. A lot of centres in Alberta [now] follow that. I'm sure there were one or two clubs before that in Edmonton and Calgary but not so much in the rural areas. Because we had these volleyball clubs, I think we keep people's interest a little bit longer. We still allow them to play other sports. As far as I'm concerned, that's what they should be doing anyway, playing as many sports as possible. But I think we got more people interested in volleyball by playing more people in club situations, different age groups. They didn't have to be great; they'd go to different levels and so on. I think that was probably the number-one thing that helped. We had a lot of people from Red Deer who played on the club teams, especially from the men's side, who went to the national team programs, and one or two of them stuck around. A lot of national team players came to our men's program, and in our case, most of our girls weren't quite tall enough to get to the national-team level. We had one or two who went to play professional, but we were still not as good as the universities that's for sure.

Reiniger: You mentioned Red Deer as one of the first communities to have a volleyball club outside of that school environment. Which year was that if you remember?

Ouwerkerk: I think it was in probably 1980 or ’81.

Reiniger: What was the name of the club?

Ouwerkerk: I think we called it Queens Volleyball Club.

Reiniger: I would like to look again at changes in volleyball in this province over time. Overall, what have been the most significant changes, in your view, to Alberta volleyball during your career?

Ouwerkerk: I think when we first started playing volleyball in the 60s, it was sort of a competitive recreation scenario, and by the time I retired, it was pretty competitive. It was a real competitive sport for the girls, and of course, the guys as well. I think the transition [took place] as more and more people got involved and got away from basketball and some of the other sports because they liked playing volleyball. I remember one of the reasons why the girls’ program is so successful is because a lot of the girls didn’t like the body contact in basketball, so they came to play volleyball. As we got more and more of those kinds of girls from other sports and so on, the competition aspect of it became more intense. That’s what I think the biggest change was. It went from sort of a quasi-recreational sport to a very competitive sport, and now it’s just as competitive as most sports in the world. It’s not quite like soccer or hockey in Canada, but for girls it’s really a good competitive game. One of the reasons we liked going to Japan was because it’s one of the number-one sports in Japan for women. … We’d practice three hours a week; they’d practice three hours a day. So it gave us a better idea, if you really want to excel, how much you have to work at it. In some cases, that’s what happens. People [worked] at it more and more and more and their level increased. Canada, in men’s volleyball, is one of the superpowers in the world. The women’s, I think they’re in a little bit of a tailspin, but they’ll probably come back.

Reiniger: So am I hearing that the exchange programs you did with Japan impacted the intensity of the –

Ouwerkerk: Yes, it sure did. It really did. Our girls were really surprised at the kinds of drills that they did and the pace that they did them at [as well as] their expertise at

the technical execution of the drills. We were able to introduce a lot of those drills into our practice subsequent to that, and it really helped.

Reiniger: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Ouwerkerk: All I can say is: When it really comes right down to it, I came into this country in 1951, got involved in volleyball just like my cross-country running coach Bob Bratton said that I should do, and the next thing you know, as you're interviewing me here, I am now a member of five halls of fame – or have been inducted into five different halls of fame – and it's all because of volleyball. People like Hugh Hoyles talked me into going to Jasper Volleyball Camp, raised my level of coaching and all of those things, and I thank volleyball for everything that's happened to me. It even allowed me to retire at age 55. I've done nothing but golf since and relaxed, which I think is great by the way.

Reiniger: The halls of the fame: There is the Alberta Volleyball Association Hall of Fame, the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame, and Volleyball Canada –

Ouwerkerk: Not Volleyball Canada. Actually, I was inducted twice into the Alberta Volleyball Hall of Fame, so I call that two. Once as a coach and the other one as part of that 18, 8-year winning streak, so that's two inductions. [There's also the] Alberta Sports Hall of Fame, and Red Deer College hall of fame, and the Alberta Colleges Hall of Fame. That just happened a month ago.

Reiniger: Congratulations.

Ouwerkerk: Thank you. I can't believe it. I talked to Hugh Hoyles, and he said, 'Yeah. Everybody who gets to be our age is going to be in a hall of fame sooner or later.' I thought to myself, 'I must be pretty old then, eh?' It's nice to be able to enjoy that kind of thing.

Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99

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Interview with David Johnson

May 29th, 2014

Edmonton, Alberta

Preface

This is an interview by Joelle Reiniger, on behalf of Volleyball Alberta, recording an oral history interview of David Johnson for the project *Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99.* This interview is taking place in Edmonton, Alberta on May 29th, 2014.

Interview

Reiniger: Could I get you to spell your full name for me?

Johnson: It's David Johnson. D-A-V-I-D, J-O-H-N-S-O-N.

Reiniger: Your date of birth?

Johnson: Date of birth is April 4, 1957.

Reiniger: Your place of birth?

Johnson: Edmonton, Alberta.

Reiniger: What was your first contact with volleyball?

Johnson: My first experience in volleyball was in [the] little town [of] Sexsmith, Alberta. My twin brother, Dan, and I would go watch the senior boys' volleyball team play, and that would have been back in 1966. Sexsmith at that point had a really good high school boys' team. Back then all the high schools played in one category, so they were competing with a high school of maybe 150 kids. They were competing against kids that would go to the big schools that had over 1,500 or 2,000. We went and watched them, and I remember distinctly, running home one night after a high school game looking at Danny and saying, 'You know, I think this may be a sport we would participate in and

really enjoy.' Don't ask me why I remember that. I was in Grade 4, but I remember it distinctly; I remember the road we were on. We played volleyball, and then played volleyball in high school and that's where the journey started.

Reiniger: Would you briefly describe, with years when you can, the trajectory of your volleyball career in Alberta?

Johnson: I played junior high and high school volleyball. I started officiating junior high and high school volleyball while I was in high school. I went on and played college ball at Briercrest Bible College for a couple years, and then came back to Grande Prairie Regional College and played for Leigh Goldie. I believe that was in 1978, and then took a couple years off from really participating in anything when I finished my degree at the U of A. Then went back to the city of Grande Prairie and started coaching again, because I had coached a little bit of college. When I went back to Grande Prairie, I had actually helped Leigh as an assistant for a year and continued with my officiating. So I worked through the ranks of local, provincial, regional, and eventually got my national badge and started coaching Club. The first year would have been around 1984 in Grande Prairie and – really – [I] tried to build the program at the Grande Prairie Composite High School starting in 1983.

Reiniger: What were your main goals as an Alberta volleyball coach?

Johnson: Initially when you start out, you have this idealistic perspective that you can win a provincial championship. When we first started in this small, rural community, there was no talk. There was nothing that would suggest that you were going to go on and win a national championship because that didn't really exist, so everything was about winning the provincial championship. But how to get there and what it entailed, nobody really had an idea. I just knew that if you competed against the best, eventually you could become the best. But it was going to take a lot of influences and a lot of other things to come together for that to happen. I think initially our goal was: let's be competitive provincially, and let's do well at the provincial championships at the high school level. Soon after, club seasons started, the club program started within Alberta, and then that presented the other opportunity of maybe you could win a provincial championship at the club level. That was pretty much it: let's win one championship.

Reiniger: You touched on this, but what assisted you in achieving your goals as a coach?

Johnson: I think the community of Grande Prairie was very unique back then because it's a very sports-minded city, and any of the sports that were initiated in that town had a lot of support from those who were organizing it. When we first started at the high school, they weren't very competitive. In fact, they were the largest high school in the area by a long shot and were losing to teams that were 25 percent of their size. There was just no discipline, there was no accountability with the players, and there wasn't a consistent vision cast. So you had to have a supportive administration from the school. You had to have supportive parents. You had to educate both on what it was going to take. They needed to see that this was a viable activity for kids to develop personally, not just [to] win championships, because at that point nobody even considered beating Edmonton or Calgary or even considered themselves in the same game as the 'big city schools.' We had a real deficit mentality that we had to go through. Soon after [Grande Prairie Club Volleyball] started, which I think was around in '84, '85, … we had the support of that group, which came out of the Grande Prairie Regional College. [This] helped our players at the high school level immensely because now they were playing a second season, which really gave them an even level with the big city schools because [those schools] were competing all year round. Our kids hadn't been, so now we very soon saw the benefit of [year-round competition]. I was married at that time, I had a young family. My wife basically said, 'I know this is what you're passionate about. I'm not going to stand in your way. Just do it.' There were times, because of the travelling involved, that I was away from home for a considerable amount. So there was that sacrifice … primarily to her and our kids, which maybe in hindsight I regret. But it was a decision we made. There was this synergistic effect of having a very supportive superintendent of schools, and his name was Derek Taylor. He is since deceased, but he wanted a winner. His supporting cast was a guy named Mr. Radbourne. He was an athlete himself, a hockey coach, so he understood the benefit of athletics, but he also understood the benefit of being very competitive. I had some good administrators. Because I was teaching, I was young, I was very idealistic, I wanted to beat the world. Sometimes they'd have to hold the reins back a little bit on my fervor, but by and large they allowed us to craft this program that later became one of the top programs in the province.

Reiniger: I would like to pick up on a few things that you mentioned. First, you mentioned Grande Prairie as having been a very sports-minded city. Could you expand on that?

Johnson: Grande Prairie is very unique in that there isn't really a metropolis close by. There is really nothing close by of a substantial size. It serves a population of about 200,000 if you go out around it by maybe 50 to 60 miles, but it's not like Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge. It's kind of on it's own. People there come and work hard, and they play hard. The city had really good minor sports programs. Their hockey was very good, the high school teams were very competitive in basketball, their curling, they – in the early years – had really good 9-man football teams that later became 12-man football teams. But because the community was so small, you played with the kids that came. There wasn't such a thing as an all-star team, because if you showed up, you played. So you got to know the community, you got to know the families, you got to know what precisely was expected of you when you first entered a sport because there was this tradition you had to follow. That city wanted to win, and they were constantly shooting for provincial championships up to whatever level they were participating in.

Reiniger: When you mention Grande Prairie not having a nearby metropolis and mention Edmonton, Calgary, was there a rivalry of any kind or –

Johnson: There was significantly at the high school level because of where the high school teams were aligned. ASAA [Alberta Schools' Athletic Association] surprisingly kept Calgary and Edmonton separate. But because of the number of 4A teams – because [those were] the highly populated schools – they had us in the same category as Red Deer. We initially would play with what is now considered Edmonton Metro, [and] we would be in the same regional play-offs with Fort McMurray, Lloydminster, and then the Edmonton Metro schools. Anybody that was on the Spruce Groves, the Stony Plains, the Sturgeons, all that; we'd have to come down and play for the regional level. There were two teams in Fort McMurray and us, who obviously had the longest way to travel. Then there was a realignment, and the realignment had the Edmonton Metro and the Edmonton city kind of separated. We were left with having to compete with Red Deer. It used to be one year [that] we would have to go down and the next year they would come up. But there was so much controversy over that, because if one particular school decided that they didn't want to compete because they weren't going to be competitive that year, they just decided, 'Oh, [we're] not going to come to Grande Prairie to compete. You go ahead and go to provincials.' But the following year if they decided that they were competitive, rather than coming up to us – which we would expect them to do – they would go by the calendar year and say, 'Oh, no go ahead, Grande Prairie, it's your turn; you need to come down to us.' That would mean we've

travelled two [times] in three years. That really bred – I would say a rivalry but [actually] – a downright hostility [between] Red Deer and us, which later got amended, because you've got to remember, all these young teachers were starting their careers. They were athletic and really wanted to make a name for themselves. More importantly there was a cost factor, and they just wanted to save their own kids' cost. We understood that, but it shouldn't have always been [at] Grande Prairie's cost. So then ASAA changed that and rightly made a central division where Grande Prairie was granted the right to go to provincials. Then the rivalry became [between] us and – Unquestionably Grande Prairie's biggest rivalry was with Harry Ainlay, and that wasn't always a pleasant rivalry. We … started our program really in '83, and by '87 we were in the 4A final. But in the years of '85, '86, and '87, it was just downright war with Harry Ainlay. They were probably the toughest school to beat. They recruited heavily. They had really good coaches. They had a really good program. They ran probably the best tournament in the province then and did for two or three decades for sure. They set the standard [for] what a program should be. But there was this animosity actually between the coaches that kind of spilled over into the players until some of the Grande Prairie guys were picked to play on the Canada Games teams. Then all of a sudden, the Grande Prairie boys weren't the villains. They were friends of these guys in Edmonton and Calgary, and when we went to the Canada Games in '93 in Kamloops, four of the six starters were from Grande Prairie. That changed the whole complexion about competition, at least from the rivalry they had between Edmonton and Calgary because these guys then became good friends. They started standing up for each other. Later on, [they] were at each other's weddings, and they realized that this animosity that had developed was really not necessary.

Reiniger: What was it that initially sparked that rivalry with Harry Ainlay? Was it just the relationship of the coaches or –

Johnson: I think it was Harry Ainlay had had such a bitter rivalry with Bonnie Doon, and those two guys really banged each other up to get out of there. Until the coaches ended up being placed at the same school, and then Bonnie Doon's program kind of started to diminish … Now there wasn't a rivalry with Bonnie Doon anymore because those two rival coaches were now part of Harry Ainlay. They just wanted to win everything – like any coach would – and would do anything and at all costs to do it. They just ran into somebody like myself who said, 'Well, there's a sense of entitlement here that I don't agree with, and I'm going to do what I can to do our best to beat you on the floor.' Was some of that rivalry unhealthy? Yeah, absolutely it was. I regret some of the things that

were maybe said and [done]. You never felt good about it but … there's a happy end to the story; the coaches became friends. We started inviting each other to each other's tournaments. We recognized that this wasn't about us, that it was about the kids and what's in the best interest of them. They realized that their [kids] and our kids, their students and our students, were friends. All of a sudden, our kids, our own kids started competing against each other. My son started playing and my daughter started playing. We were competing against the opposite coaches' sons and daughters, and there wasn't a need for this animosity that was being projected; let's just be good sports. In the end it turned out great, and we went through a couple decades of really fierce competition but in the right context.

Reiniger: You also mentioned a sense in Grande Prairie of being the underdogs. How did that impact the game?

Johnson: I mentioned earlier there was a deficit mentality that said that we didn't belong. The reason why we didn't belong was because every time we would come down to the city, we'd get shelved. I remember specifically, we would go to the U of A tournament and Harry Ainlay, in particular, played their bench against our starters ... We only scored eight points on them, but … we left on the long trip home thinking, 'Boy, we've arrived, we're getting close.' You won a game back then if you scored 15, so the [score was] 15-8. Fifteen-eight with their bench players beating us. Somehow we figured we'd arrived, and that was in 1983. Then I quickly realized that if we train as hard as they do and I work on their minds – Because they were equally as athletic, they just hadn't had the time and the contacts. We went from once or twice a week to practicing five times a week, [from] practicing maybe three hours a week to practicing fifteen hours a week. The dividends were immediate. All of a sudden, we're going to tournaments, and we purposely chose tournaments that were the best with the best teams. And yes, in '84 we won a few more tournaments, and I remember the highlights … By '87 we were the favourites, because back in '85 we decided to … choose a group of predominantly Grade 10 players, keep them all together for three years, and just train them like crazy. By the time those guys got to Grade 12, they were quite formidable.

Reiniger: At this point I would like to ask you: what were some of the greatest obstacles to achieving your goals?

Johnson: Over the course of my career, some of the greatest obstacles were

interference by Administration that had maybe not the same perspective or values [on the role] athletics played with students as I did. I was young and very idealistic, but it was really difficult [to work with their] decisions about how many trips we could take, how many tournaments we could be involved in. We had very quickly become contenders in the province, and then all of a sudden through a change of administration on a local [high school] level, our opportunities to compete were curtailed. I think that was the biggest thing. The other thing that was a considerable obstacle was the issue of cost. What normal high school teams would spend in an entire year as far as a budget, we would spend in one weekend because of our travel and our hotel costs. Where were we going to come up with this money? If we really wanted to compete against the best, they weren't coming to Grande Prairie. We had to go to Calgary and Red Deer and Edmonton. So we had to fundraise and we had to figure [it] out, and our budget soared. … Because of the support of community, parents started writing cheques and helping with fundraising, and we were able to [go]. But the obstacle then [was] the issue of travel; five hours one way, six hours, seven hours to Red Deer. That obstacle was always there, but we viewed it as a challenge. We didn't necessarily view it as an obstacle; it was part of this performance culture that we were trying to establish that had these kids together a very long time. It wasn't just a practice, it was 24 hours a day and some weeks three days a week, and that can really blend a group of personalities together very well.

Reiniger: You [said (off-camera) that you] forgot another rivalry?

Johnson: Yeah, there was another rivalry. There was also Scona here in Edmonton. They were primarily known as a track school, but they had a really strong, fervent, energetic coach that really battled Bonnie Doon and Harry Ainlay. Those three were the 'big bangers', as we used to call them. It's interesting how the top schools changed. I think when Terry Danyluk played for McNally, of course McNally was the big school … Edmonton really took the spotlight for some of the big schools. Even though we had schools like Western Canada and E.P. Scarlett from Calgary and they were winning their provincial championships, we didn't see them very much because they were limited to how many times they could get out of the city. So we didn't always see them until provincials, but within Alberta the heat and the competition was really [between] Scona, Ainlay, and ourselves. It was just pure war for about six, seven years.

Reiniger: Do you have any war stories you would like to share with me?

Johnson: When we were at provincials – we actually hosted one year in Grande Prairie, and in a semi-final match we were playing Harry Ainlay – they came out with targets painted on their hands like a dartboard. They wanted to distract our hitters. I remember we just went toe-to-toe with them, and it was a close-fought match. At the final point, this kid hit this ball, it rolled along the top of the net – pretty much all the way across the top of the net – and then fell over onto their side and gave us the 16-4 win. We were off to the final, and that did not go over well with anybody from Harry Ainlay. Then in subsequent years, we would trade winning and losing. I wouldn't say it was always healthy, but later on we kind of lost that [animosity], like I said, and we began to realize we can't win every year. We'll take our lumps, but then we'll give it [back] when we're at the top of the ladder again, [which] was always within one or two years – we were battling for [number] one or two. Scona had a really, really top notch program and some really good kids. Of course it's known as a real top academic school, so it had a lot of good things going for it.

Reiniger: You mentioned, when we were discussing the challenges in terms of achieving your goals as a coach, that the support for volleyball depended somewhat on who was in administration at the time. Did you see any trend over the course of your career in support for athletics?

Johnson: At the start in the early '80s, I'd really have to say there wasn't a lot of administration in the province that understood how valuable athletics were. It was very much an intramural perspective … They never took any sport seriously, even in season, and administrators just viewed it as – For instance, Grande Prairie would never travel out of the city to play their peers because it was never pushed or seen as being valuable until coaches showed up and said, 'Well, we're a school of 1,100, why are we only playing schools of 200? Then when we go to provincials, we're just getting our lunch handed to us when we play against our peers. We can sit around here and think that we're pretty good by beating up on the smaller schools, but that's really not what this is about. We need to be comparable to our peers.' So when there was a change in administration, we educated them saying, 'Listen. This is what's happening, this is what we want to do. We're willing to put in the time, and we're willing to raise the funds. Please, let us do it.' Sometimes they said yes, and then sometimes they said no. Because of the fact that we weren't given the opportunity then to compete as much as we would have liked, we suffered in the end. We weren't successful. But by and large over the last 30 years, we've had … less no's than yes's. The superintendent's position was so powerful, and if there was a question, we would always just go to the

superintendent and he says, ‘Nope. I want a winner, I want you guys to compete, I think it’s valuable for the kids to do so. You’ve got my support.’ Then everybody else fell in line.

Reiniger: What do you think drove the overall shift [among] school administrations from intramural sport to intercity competition?

Johnson: I think what drove that shift was the fact that there was this education, not only by the coaches. We started hosting tournaments where the biggest schools would come to Grande Prairie, and the administration saw firsthand the environment created in the gym when there was this significant rivalry against comparable peers instead of the shellacking that was taking place between a small school and a big school. This competition was healthy, and they saw the benefit of kids that were staying in school because of sports or only would come to school because of sports. We had a number of kids that managed to graduate primarily because they came for school athletics. I think across the province there was this movement to use athletics as a tool to keep kids and motivate kids to stay in school. I think there was a real change from being just a pastime to being a real effective tool to motivate kids, both academically strong ones but also the marginalized ones that were having trouble with school.

Reiniger: Is there anything you would like to add about the factors behind the success of the Grande Prairie volleyball teams, both secondary and postsecondary?

Johnson: There was a cooperative, collaborative climate between the college and the club program that they initiated there in the high schools. They bought into the fact that they needed us because they wanted our students to eventually come to them, and we bought in that this was a program [where] we could send our kids with the support of the college and provide the next steps for our kids to go play. They didn’t have to go to the Grant MacEwans and the U of As and the U of Cs and Red Deers. They could stay home and be equally competitive. When Grande Prairie was hosting national championships and they were in the national final winning silvers, and bronzes, and you name it, that was a product of an entire community saying, ‘We’re going to bring our kids together.’ The other thing that happened was the club program provided an amalgamation of kids as far north as – well, even further north, but for sure – Fort St. John, that Northern B.C. area, and then way up in the Northern Alberta area to come down and play on a club team. That shift of allowing those kids to do that further broadened this culture that we’re kind of all in it together. It was really a climate of,

‘Well, we’re in the North, nobody really wants to give us a chance. Let’s go down and show them that we’re equally capable.’ It was very soon … that we were winning provincial championships with our kids. Then the rest of the province took note, and they said, ‘What’s happening in Grande Prairie?’ Then we started seeing clubs develop in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. What was really cool is we saw clubs developing in the really, really small areas in Central Alberta where there were maybe 40 kids in the school total, let alone volleyball players. But they were going to form a club team, and there was this attitude that, ‘Let’s just help everybody form a club and get kids playing. It doesn’t matter, let’s have them play against their peers and give them a chance.’

Reiniger: It sounds like there was sort of a dotted line, then, between the Alberta and the B.C. border when it came to the dynamics of the sport.

Johnson: Yeah. B.C. is really different in that there’s the Lower Mainland, and then you have the Kelowna area, and then you have Prince George. But if you didn’t live in any of those three centres, it was really difficult for you to find an opportunity to play volleyball. Alberta volleyball was kind of ‘allowed’ because … did the kids from Fort St. John want to have to travel all the way to Kelowna on weekends to train? The answer was no, not possible. There weren’t club teams being formed in Prince George. We had this agreement with B.C. Volleyball that that area of B.C. could be considered part of our territory, so we had this amalgamation with Fort St. John high schools and Dawson Creek high schools for their kids to come and compete and train and try out for our [programs]. At that point [they] were called midget-juvenile programs, which later became U14, 15, 16, 17, and 18. There used to be a provincial boundary, but when that was removed, it allowed those kids to come in and, consequently, the college would really benefit because some tremendous athletes were coming from that Northern B.C. zone.

Reiniger: What were some of the most rewarding moments in your volleyball career?

Johnson: Unquestionably, the most rewarding was winning a provincial championship with my daughter, Nicole, in ’97, and in ’99, getting to the provincial final with my son, Brooks, and beginning to coach my kids. Winning with Nicole was really unexpected. We hadn’t won many tournaments, if any, all year long, but we put it all together the final weekend. We had won pretty much every tournament with Brooks, and unfortunately finished second with him. But these kids were on my bench from the time that they could crawl, so it was part of them and just being a family and continuing that

was awesome. Other rewarding experiences were seeing kids that I know for a fact would have been finding themselves in jail had we not hooked them into volleyball, because they just struggled so much in school. But they stayed in school, and they graduated … They just lived and breathed volleyball, and I said, 'Well, you don't have to be an honours student, but you gotta go to class if you're going to play for me.' That was enough of a carrot for them to stay in school. Some other rewarding experiences: kids that [said], once we started being really successful out there, … 'My brother or my sister played for these teams. Am I ever going to be good enough to play for them?' Then they get the chance, and they think they've made the World Series because they've made this team. They were just so appreciative of the opportunity. And of course, there [are] the individual successes. Kind of a cool story is back in '91 or '92, we won back-to-back provincial championships, and one of our power players, power hitters, was a guy named named Shawn Herman. Shawn was one of these kids that was having trouble taking school seriously, but he later on made the Alberta Summer Games team and was one of the four Grande Prairie players to star on the Alberta Games team in Kamloops. He won his first provincial championship in Lethbridge and his second provincial championship in Red Deer in '92. Well lo and behold, later on I get a chance to coach his son, Brook Sedore. Brook Sedore is presently in his third year at the University of Hawaii and considered one of the top players in North America. … Brook won back-to-back provincial titles on the same court in the same city as his dad did. Lethbridge the first year and Red Deer the second, back [in] '09 and '10, somewhere in there. So that was kind of cool because his dad was there, and he said, 'I remember playing on this very same court, but what are the chances that the schools are going to bid for the provincial championship and the father and son play in exactly the same city as each other and it all fits together?' I just had a premonition that … it was a foregone conclusion: Brook was going to do whatever he could to equal his dad's accomplishment. Those are a few cool things that I remember.

Reiniger: What about the most disappointing moments?

Johnson: When you first start coaching, your first losses are always the toughest. When we got to the provincial final in [1987] and were the favourite and ended up losing in the final, it probably took me three or four years to get over that one. Then we got to the provincial final in '89, and we lost again. But in that year, we weren't really favoured to win. It was maybe freaky that we got to the final. I'm a big believer now that sometimes you have to learn how to lose and figure out why you lost to train in a certain way later to get yourself over the hump. Because then in '91 and '92, we won

back-to-back, and I think it was because of our losses that we learned some lessons. Some other disappointments: I think that it's always disappointing when you get criticized for trying to do your best, and I think that every coach experiences that. I took, over the course of my career, tons of criticism for being maybe too idealistic and maybe too fervent and too aggressive when, really, I was just trying to do what I thought was best for the athletes. Sometimes you do lose friendships over that, so that's disappointing. I'll be happy to say that most of those friendships have come around. It's a story in the past, and it's not affecting our present relationship, which is good. I think some of the other disappointments [were], for instance, when we lost the national team in Alberta. They left Calgary, and since then we haven't had them back. Having the national men's program in Alberta was a tremendous asset as role models, as something for our kids right here to strive toward. When sponsorship and interest waned and they had to leave, for sure that was disappointing. Having them here, we got to see a lot of international matches that we haven't since because of the fact that their base wasn't in Calgary anymore.

Reiniger: What about some funny moments that stand out in your mind?

Johnson: [Laughter] .... One of these players that I mentioned, Brook Sedore. He was known by and large as the best player in the province when he was in high school, and he had a really cool relationship with officials. He had this habit: he would go up to the official, and he would fist-bump them at the start of every match. Initially, the officials just didn't know what to think of this guy, but then they realized that this kid is just a fun-loving guy. He can compete incredibly intensely, but he really didn't have an ego. He just wanted to have fun, and if he could just play 24 hours a day, he'd just play. He liked it that much. They got to appreciate him and then really respect him because of the way he played. And he's an amazing player. One time one of the officials had problems with his contact [lens] or something in his eye, and lo and behold, what does Brook do? He climbs the official's pole, and he's up there trying to help the official figure out what is in his eye. I'm just laughing my head off, and I said, 'Brook, what are you doing?' He comes down off the pole, and he comes up [and says], 'Oh, I was trying to help him find his contact or whatever was in his eye. I said, 'Seriously, Brook, just let him … No, no, no' – Then the coach and everybody were laughing, because here's Brook, he's 6'4, 6'5, but he's climbed this pole, and he's level with this official on his ladder, and he's helping him with whatever was in his eye. Things like that, you'll remember. Sometimes when we would go to a tournament, it was always on Halloween weekend, so teams would dress up in Halloween costumes for the Saturday. Everybody

brought a costume, so now you have two teams warming up in these most outrageous costumes. Then when warm up was over, you'd get back into your uniform. But for a good percentage of the day, it was like the who's who of Superman and cartoon characters. Kids were just being kids and having fun, and it was fun and humorous to watch these costumes come out every October.

Reiniger: And the most stressful moments?

Johnson: I felt that until you win a championship, getting over that hurdle is really stressful. Once you do, you realize that maybe that mountain isn't quite as big as you anticipated or you expected. But until you do, it seems pretty steep and pretty difficult. When you play and coach at an elite level, you have to expect that there's going to be a level of anxiety. It's part of sport. It's how you handle it, and I think that early in my career – You would finish weekends, you had run a marathon, because you jumped every jump and you hit every hit and your muscles would tense and relax and tense and relax, and you were just shot by the end of the weekend. After about 15 years of that, you learn to figure out how to relax and participate just by watching rather than getting yourself physically in there. Obviously some of the stressful things [were] when administration decided they were going to what I call 'interfere' and pull back on our opportunities to take kids to compete. That was really hard to handle because we had built the program up to be really successful, and we were very vigorous in our efforts to get into the best tournaments in the province. Then when the administration changes and comes back and they don't have the same vision, they don't see it the same way you do, all of a sudden they say, 'Well, we're going to limit how often we allow you to leave.' We went through about a five or six-year period where there was no hope that we were going to be competitive because we weren't able to compete against the best. You just can't train, train, train without competing [with] the best to improve your team. So the writing was on the wall, and we weren't very successful. Over time, there was a meeting of the minds and their position softened, and once again they jumped on board and were very supportive. Then we had a change in administration where the principal of the school had [an older] son who had gone through the program and seen the benefit of it, and he had a second son who was coming through. Now there was no question, and basically the gates were open: 'Take the kids where you want to take them.' There was a level of trust that we weren't going to do something that was a disadvantage to the kids academically. We got into tournaments and the restrictions were taken off and we were off to the races, and we enjoyed that particular environment for another decade or so.

Reiniger: One question regarding awards: you're in the Alberta Volleyball Hall of Fame, and I have your bio from that. Would it better ... instead of me asking you to list them, [for you] just to send me a copy of [the whole] list of awards that you have received?

Johnson: Yeah. I was recognized by the American Volleyball Coaches' Association for a number of wins. When I finished my career, I was over 1,200 wins. So that was nice. You really don't know how well you're doing until you get compared with those who are in a program like USC and UCLA and Pepperdine and Penn State. … I was given the award alongside the head coach of the women's [team] from USC and the head coach of the men's team from UCLA. And here I am, Dave Johnson from Grande Prairie … but they categorized me in the same vein as them. Let's be serious: I lucked out. I got put into a really good position. I worked hard for 30 years. I had everything come together: supportive people, supportive administration, parental groups that were willing to sacrifice, kids that were willing to sacrifice. I was involved in a time when volleyball was seen as the cool thing to do, and I was the coach. At the same time, I had great mentors like Leigh Goldie and Lee Carter and Andre Turgeon, and I had great assistants like Jason Weaver and Mat Snider and Andy Beal and people like that who I learned from. Let's not kid ourselves, I wasn't the smart one. I had a certain talent that I brought to the team, but I knew where my weaknesses were. I sought out people who were stronger than me, and they came on board as associate coaches, and together we won a ton. Those awards are really – My name's on the award, but realistically, it was a collaborative effort. One thing I know about volleyball is you can't win unless you're talking and listening; talking to people and listening to their answers. I picked up a ton of knowledge from so many coaches, and then brought it back and put it in play. The result speaks for itself.

Reiniger: How would you describe any changes in the popularity of volleyball in Alberta from the time that you began to now?

Johnson: When I first started … the national team was competing in the Montreal Olympics, and that was so foreign and so out there. Nobody knew that eventually you may be associated with some of the players who played in that program. It was just a foregone conclusion that that was never going to happen. Then when the national team came to Alberta and competed, that really became the catalyst for the popularity to rise. People started saying, 'Oh, this is a fun sport.' They saw Cuba come in and play the

national team, who were winning Olympic championships, and they [would] say, 'Man, can that guy jump.' We had our own guys who were able to compete with them and jump just as high. We had the Garth Pischkes and the Al Taylors and you name it. Then what happened was there was this concerted effort by ASAA to really have peer-size schools compete against peer-size schools. So we had 1A schools, the small schools, competing only against themselves and 2A and 3A and 4A. … Now it wasn't just the big schools that were playing to win; it was the small schools winning their own divisions. Then when club programs came in, you were competing by age, and the popularity grew even more, because maybe you were from a small community where there [weren't enough players] to form a team, but you could try out for another team in the neighbouring town and form one … So the volume of people began to rise, and when the volume of people began to rise, the popularity started to rise because it became fun. Volleyball is unique in the sense that it's very much a collaborative, cooperative, community-minded group of people that seemed to get involved in this sport. Alberta was really fortunate in that it had very high-level college programs that were fed by these high school kids and a lot of them. You go to any of the other provinces and there's nobody that has as many top-quality college programs in such close proximity that just [enable people] to experience it at that next level. Then of course, [there are several] universities in the province. So when you think of the building blocks that were put in place, the increase in popularity was led by the opportunities [available to] those who were participating in the sport.

Reiniger: What have been the most significant changes to Alberta volleyball in your career in the areas of – I have a number of different areas, as you have a varied career. Let's start with secondary school volleyball.

Johnson: … Having peer-sized schools competing with peer-sized schools was a huge change. No [longer] did you have … schools with 200 kids … competing with the 2,500s. The change of allowing the number of representatives to provincial championships [to increase] so that the cities had more – Because they were more highly populated … but still granting the rural areas their representation. … They really tried to increase the participation rate at that focal competition, namely the provincial championships. That was significant. Then the fact that schools themselves started taking responsibility for developing their players and supporting their coaches – who were then teachers – but also allowing people from the community to come in and coach high school, because the trend has gone where fewer and fewer teachers are coaching. We need the community members coming into the high school, so there's this

cooperation between the schools saying, ‘Yeah, we will allow these community guys to come in and work with our kids,’ which never used to be. It used to be if it wasn’t a teacher coaching, the program wasn’t offered. Those would be three big ones.

Reiniger: What about at the postsecondary level?

Johnson: Over the years I think the fact that there was a concerted effort to hire really good coaches and really good people at centres outside of Edmonton and Calgary … The Lethbridges and the Medicine Hats and the Red Deers and the Grande Prairies and Vermillion and people all over the province. ACAC did a really good job of promoting volleyball as one of their main sports along with basketball and hockey and wherever those programs existed. But volleyball became a real catalyst for ACAC, and kids [were] saying, ‘I can now move from high school and stay in my region.’ You've got to remember, for the longest time there was no college in Grande Prairie. If you were a high school kid, you went to university. If you weren't good enough, because you weren't seen, quite often it was just automatic: no sense in trying out, so after high school you were done. Now with the college circuit being formed, we started seeing kids saying, ‘I may not be good enough to play university, but I'm good enough to play college,’ and they did. The growth continued because of that opportunity presented at the postsecondary level.

Reiniger: Any significant changes in coaching overall?

Johnson: Sure. There [are] a lot of changes in the way kids were coached. I think there's a much more humane approach now to coaching than it used to be. Sometimes you coach kids the way you were coached, and sometimes we were not always coached in the right way. We were maybe too abusive; we were maybe too harsh. I think the biggest difference was just the knowledge. There's much more research put into how you properly train and coach kids in volleyball and that was disseminated through the NCCP [National Coaching Certification Program] but also through this collaboration between those who were researching at the university and college. They were passing that information down as ‘semi-mentors’ to programs that were feeding them. In the 60s you operated in isolation. It was pretty much unheard of that you would go to somebody else and say, ‘Would you help me coach this team?’ or ‘What am I doing wrong?’ There was nobody to ask. You didn't know anybody. If you were in the room there, you really didn't know anybody or you felt nobody – at the university or college levels when they started – was even approachable. They certainly were, but you didn't know that. So you started getting seminars and training opportunities that

said, ‘This is how you teach kids to pass. This is how you teach kids to set and serve, and this is how you teach kids how to play a defensive system and an offensive system.’ I think for the first six or seven years, all I did for two hours a day was beat balls at kids thinking that that was training them. It was a complete waste of my time – and the kids’ – but that's all we knew. There was no such thing as specialized training or game situational training, which has come so far. So a huge difference in how you coach. I think there's a much more psychological aspect to coaching. How do you motivate kids to psychologically stay in the game and deal with the stress and deal with injury. That's a huge one: getting kids mobile after injury. We used to tape them up and say, ‘If it hurts, don't worry about it. If you're in a lot of pain, grin and bear it.’ Now we don't do that. We know that long term that's going to be injurious to the kid’s health, and we just don't do it. But we didn't know better then. We didn't know how to properly address injuries or properly prevent them through correct training. Increased information generated throughout the province has changed how coaches deal with athletes.

Reiniger: I would like now to discuss the area of officiating. As a long time official, what significant changes have you seen in that area?

Johnson: I think you've got to go back to a guy named Harold Mori. Harold Mori came from Vegreville, and his focus was very much on allowing rural participants the opportunity to advance and be trained to a higher level. Prior to him coming in, there wasn't this initiative to allow people outside of Edmonton and Calgary to participate at higher levels in officiating. Now part of it was due to opportunity, but part of it was due to actually getting out there and beating the bushes and seeing who wants to be an official. There was generally one tournament in Calgary and one tournament in Edmonton at the higher level outside of high school that you would go to the first weekend in December if you were an official, and the opportunity was minimal. When club seasons were initiated, they needed more officials. When the Universiade Games came – I think back in 1983 – there was a huge push to get as many people involved in officiating as they could because they needed minor officials. If you had any interest at all, you signed up. Harold then took those people who had shown some interest and said, ‘I'm going to work with you and get you through your local badge and your provincial badge.’ That's the guy [who] brought me through local, provincial [levels], and stuck with me as this little kid from Grande Prairie along with my twin, Dan, who said, ‘You know what? We'd like to be regional officials.’ We were willing to make the sacrifice to drive to Edmonton, to be reviewed and critiqued. But it was this willing attitude on behalf of Harold to grant us that opportunity. Then he passed it on to a guy named Bill Zapisocky, and then after him was Dan Johnson, who became the ROC [Regional Officials Chairman]. Those guys really made it a point to grant anybody who showed

any interest the same opportunity to advance. The other thing that's changed in officiating is obviously the rules and the role of the officials, and the fact that we've now started getting minor officials who were ‘certified’, whereas before anybody you pulled in off the stands could do lines. That was no longer acceptable at the higher levels, so you had to train people. As the pool of people who were being trained increased, opportunities increased because of ACAC forming their league and competing against each other and [because of the] club season. So the demand for officials increased, and with that demand, the need for training. ... We started holding volleyball clinics, which never had happened before. They became the catalyst to get kids, people involved. Then there was the dividing of the province into zones and having a zone officials chairman in each of those official zones whose task was to handle the officiating core within the zone but also to train people so that they didn’t have to go outside their area to have [their] officiating needs met. …

Reiniger: How would you compare the pace of the development of officiating in Alberta volleyball compared to other sports in the province?

Johnson: Having some experience with basketball and some experience with hockey, I can only compare it to that. I would say that volleyball was at the forefront both in the speed at which they got people trained, but also the depth at which that training took place. There was a really strong, concerted emphasis on making sure that you didn't start somebody and then just let them die, especially if they were in a real small rural area. … You had zone officials coordinators in a certain area, who themselves were being trained on how to train others. There was this hierarchy that took place that provided an opportunity for some consistency: moving the person from local to provincial to regional, and national, which later became [levels] 1, 2, 3, and 4. I didn’t see that in the other levels. If you didn’t go to the city, you probably weren’t going to get trained as a Level 3 or Level 4 official, whereas our province said, ‘If you're prepared to make the sacrifice and commitment, it doesn't matter what corner of the province you come from, you will have an opportunity to get your Level 3 and Level 4 badges.’

Reiniger: Is there anything you would like to add about changes to the sport of volleyball in Alberta in general over the course of your career?

Johnson: I think the new scoring system really changed how the game was played. Personally, I think it’s kind of equalized the play where teams who maybe aren’t as equal remain equal a little bit longer because you're not having to play defence to score. Whereas before, you could serve and unless you were serving, you didn’t score a point. Now with every mistake a point is awarded. The game takes place a little bit quicker and

it keeps the average team with the above-average team a little bit [longer], so there's a little more equity. I think the rules have also changed in the sense [of] the specialization that has been allowed. Touching the net, violations, ball handling has significantly changed over the years all to increase play. Not blocking the serve, and I can go on and on and on. One of the things that is significant is that we have to be cautious in how much we allow the rules to detract from skill development. For instance, in the area of ball handling, we've gone from where we were incredibly tight, where if that ball was at all coming out of the hands, it was considered two hits. Now on first contact, it can spin like crazy, and unless you catch it and throw it, there's no whistle. So that's the opposite end of the spectrum. I think there's a happy medium where rules can facilitate the skill acquisition and skill development rather than deter it. I don't think either extreme is healthy, but as an official who has been in the business for over 35-40 years, I've seen that the rule changes do affect how the game is learned. We've got to be careful that we're not hurting kids' development for the sake of rules.

Reiniger: Overall, how do you feel about how you have seen the sport change over time?

Johnson: When I compare the changes of volleyball to the other sports that we've witnessed in Canada, I'm pretty proud of the direction volleyball has gone. It has really considered the opportunities given to kids who maybe come from disadvantaged situations because of their location and given them a pretty good opportunity to compete with those kids who are advantaged because they live in the big centres. There's less and less of this inequity based on where you live. I also like the fact that volleyball has really taken a strong stance on development. That elitism at the lowest level is being eliminated, and they really want to consider developing the broadest base possible for the youngest kids. And that we've taken initiative to come up with different forms of volleyball to give kids contacts right from the time that they're in Grade 1 on; I don't see that happening in other sports. I think volleyball is also great in that there has been a concerted effort – because we don't want kids to specialize early – to really cooperate with other sports in Canada to allow those kids to experience more than just volleyball. There hasn't been this emphasis that you should only play our sport. We want you to play our sport, we want you to play it at a very young age, but we want you to diversify too. I've seen that philosophical push come out really, really strongly lately. I'm a big supporter of it, and consequently, it's evident in our growth. Kids are starting younger, and they're staying in the sport longer. Also, we've recognized that kids should be competing against their age-peers, so we've changed [programming] to offer almost a year-by-year progression. You can compete as a 14 year old with 14 year olds, 15 with 15 year olds and on and on and on, whereas in the past that hasn't been the case.

I haven't seen that with other sports. Other sports are categorized in more groups of two and three-year segments. Well, there's a big difference between a 15 year old and a 12 year old, a 17 year old and a 14 year old. Volleyball has really tried to make sure that kids who want to play the sport and come into the sport at varying degrees of skill get the opportunity to compete with like-aged and like-skilled athletes, and that can only be positive.

Reiniger: What makes Alberta volleyball different than volleyball in any other province or country?

Johnson: Geographically, we have an advantage in that we have so many schools and colleges and universities in such close proximity to each other [that] are recognized as some of the best in their nation. That's an advantage. You can't have the volume of people who are participating in our province and not have a certain segment of those people being the very best in the world, and that only benefits everybody. I think that Alberta has really tried to attract the best minds in the area of volleyball to work in the province and develop [the sport], and it's pretty obvious. We're constantly at the forefront and very close to winning national championships. If we're not winning national championships, a good percentage of our athletes are making the national team. Again, a good percentage of our players are going and playing postsecondary. A high percentage of our volleyball athletes from high school do go and play college, because the opportunity is there, they can stay within their province and compete. So the culture in this province is so unique from other provinces. It's not just a Southern Alberta entity or southwestern entity like the Lower Mainland in B.C. or Central B.C. like Kelowna. We have it from the bottom of our province right up to Grande Prairie and over to the east with Fort McMurray, giving kids the opportunity everywhere in between to stay in their community and compete if they want to.

Reiniger: When it comes to national competition, I want to go back to something you said near the beginning of our interview and maybe this question could also apply to international [competition] as well. You mentioned one barrier [to success] in Grande Prairie was the cost and the time taken to travel. Is there a parallel to volleyball in Alberta [as] a Western Canadian province?

Johnson: For sure there was. Early [on], nationally, Quebec was the frontrunner, and unless you could travel to Quebec to play them – beat them – you weren't going to be in the same league. That's changed as the training and the opportunities and [the] coaching got better in Alberta. The other thing that happened was, as I [said], getting great minds and great administration within Alberta. Volleyball Alberta has had staff who

are visionaries and said, ‘We should run an elite series of tournaments. Maybe we should run an elite tournament.’ For instance, U14, U15, U16, which became our Midget Open. It became the largest tournament in the nation within our province. We took away the inhibiting factor of travel and cost for that group of kids by hosting this thing on a regular basis. We’d host [national] tours. Our particular association is recognized Canada-wide as being a very reputable organization that they could trust [and say], ‘If we brought the Canadian national team through your province, would you organize a tour and do it right?’ The answer is yes, and we’ve proven that over and over and over again. ‘Would you host world league matches in your province and do it right, and would you bid for them?’ Of course we would, and we have done that. We’ve had our colleges bid consistently for national championships, and when they’ve hosted them, the reports are that they were the best-hosted championships that teams have attended. There’s a standard that’s been set early of doing things in a very first-class, forward, visionary way, and that’s just been maintained because of the quality of people we have on staff and the quality of people that are involved in high school and college and postsecondary institutions. Yes, they compete and they all want to win, but there’s also this sense of collaboration that you can’t be too much out there on your own, because it will come back to bite you. Eventually you’re going to need us, so let’s be fair.

Reiniger: I would like to look … beyond changes within the sport to larger changes that have taken place in the province during your career. Things like political changes, changes in the economy, changes in the cultural makeup of Alberta. How have you seen some of those larger societal changes impact the sport?

Johnson: Volleyball was very centralized in the big cities because primarily outside of the big cities it was … an agrarian economy: farmers or foresters but primarily cattle ranchers and farmers. So you had a ton of small schools, kids from a farming community that would participate [only] if [volleyball] was offered. But then we had the oil and gas boom, and wealth started to flow into Alberta. We had a huge population increase throughout the province attracting workers from all over the world. [That brought] not only the wealth but this variance in perspectives and people who are wanting to try new things. For instance, if the opportunity to participate in volleyball became an expense thing, there was more money floating around to be able to pay for it, so it wasn’t as big an inhibiting factor. Communities [whose economies] were based on the oil and gas and forest industry had companies who were willing to sponsor teams and athletes to provide them with the opportunity. It was kind of a, ‘What came first, the chicken or the egg?’ I don’t know. The opportunity for volleyball and the money in the oil and gas [industries] – Was it the economic drivers that said, ‘Because we have the opportunity and the cash to do stuff, you can go ahead and participate’? I don't know. I

just know that it happened together and fairly close [to] the same time. So with that, you had this change of perspective from being very isolationist and that, 'I'm in my own little lonely world out here in northeastern Alberta or northwestern Alberta or southwestern Alberta or southeastern Alberta' … to 'Oh! We're seeing each other more regularly because now we have these five or six tournaments that Alberta Volleyball is promoting. Let's get on board and form our own club.' 'We're going to need some money for that. Let's go ask some of these companies that [are] making lots of money now if they would like to sponsor us, put their name on our jackets or on our sweaters or whatever, and throw us a little bit of money so we could go to tournaments.' Together it built this community from one end of province that really coincided with an economic upsurge. If you compare that [to] anywhere else in Canada where there was an economic downturn – and all we have to do is look at the Maritimes when the fishing quotas were cut. The participation in sports dropped significantly because people just couldn't afford to do anything extra let alone live at the standard they were accustomed to – that, fortunately for Alberta, did not take place. We've had a very robust and profitable economy for a very long time, and I think that the nature of our [sport] facilities – When you take a look at the [Olympic] Oval, I don't think that you can talk about volleyball without mentioning the [1988] Winter Olympics because of the facility that it provided us to be able to offer the Western Canada Open in the Oval in Calgary; or the development of the [1983] Universiade Games in Edmonton for the facilities that the U of A was able to [build]; or the expanse of the number of people coming into Alberta to allow colleges like Lethbridge and Medicine Hat and Grande Prairie to build the facilities that they've been building. And most recently, the changes in Mount Royal and Grant MacEwan [toward becoming universities] without the influx of people coming to Alberta driven by economics. They're all tied together and with that, athletics have been a benefactor.

Reiniger: I would like also to ask you about changes in the cultural makeup of the province. One theme that has come up in previous interviews is the international influences of the sport itself, international exchanges, and of course, the changing cultural makeup of the province. How did you see changes in intercultural dynamics play out in the game?

Johnson: That's a really good question, because we have become way more globally focused. There was no such thing as schools travelling internationally in the 60s and 70s. Didn't happen. As education's focus changed and students started to be given the opportunity to travel more, it wasn't just vacation travel, but it was athletic opportunities – with exchanges to Europe, exchanges to Hawaii, exchanges to Cuba, exchanges to South America – where there was this reciprocal agreement that we will train with you and you will train with us. There was also this reciprocal agreement with [foreign]

national teams coming to Canada and exchanging opportunities with the Canadian teams and us going back there. With the economic influx that we had, we've had a significant change in [Alberta's] ethnic diversity. We have so many more students who are not Caucasian who are coming from other parts of the country, other parts of the world, who are wanting to participate in the sport. You only have to take a look at the makeup of the high school teams, where you saw very, very few non-Caucasians participating in the 70s. Now, quite a bit of equity therein as far who's been given the chance and who's wanting to participate. I think that because of the respect that Canada has educationally through volleyball, there has been an opportunity granted to us to go and learn from the so-called 'best'. Whether it is going to Cuba or going of Brazil or going to France or going to Italy, our players are being given the opportunity to play for those club teams professionally and provide another level or another higher goal for our kids who wanted to go through high school, university, then play pro. Whereas back in the 70s, I don't know if there was an Italian league, I don't know if there was a European Cup league. There is now, and some of our Canadian guys have been very, very successful at the very highest leagues in Europe as a result.

Reiniger: You mentioned equity when it came to people of various backgrounds. Did you see any difference between the level of equity in volleyball compared with other sports or was it about the same?

Johnson: No. I think it is different. I think that there are some sports that are culturally more in tune to each other. I think that when you take a look at the students that are coming from European, Asian, Middle Eastern areas, they're very in tune to soccer because that's what they've kind of grown up with. It is still kind of an anomaly to see somebody from that area get into Canadian hockey, especially if they come to Canada late. They just aren't on skates early. But volleyball is a sport where it really doesn't matter at what age you come. If you want to participate, we have our different levels by age but also our different levels by skill that grant the kid opportunity to fit in where he's comfortable. He doesn't have to feel overshadowed because, 'I'm just learning the sport and I guess I don't fit in.' No, no, no. There's a whole lot of other kids who are uncomfortable and don't fit in right now too. You're all in this group, so let's just learn together and have fun. Our attitude has been that it's supposed to be fun for an awful long time before you really, really take it seriously. I think that's the advantage of participating in volleyball: that it allows the kid not to feel overwhelmed too early with their experience so that they would quit. That they maintain the fun level, and then when they decide that they want to specialize and take it seriously, they've been in it quite a while, and they now are able to spend extra time because it's something they know they can succeed at.

Reiniger: How would you say that participation in volleyball as a province has been impacted with how we view ourselves as Albertans. A collective sense of identity: Does that play out in the sport?

Johnson: I think it does. It most definitely plays out in the sport, primarily because of the level of success we've experienced as a province in the sport. I think that Alberta has set itself up [for success] by how we operate. Two things: I don't think it is only elitist; I think [there is] very much an inclusive attitude. I think when you're involved in our volleyball community – It's been a long time [since] I've heard someone really fervently say, 'I think it's just for a few.' It is standard procedure [that] if you want to participate with us, you get the opportunity to do so. But in the same sense, that doesn't mean that we water down the performance. There's this collective perspective, or philosophy, that we are the best. Not only are we the best because we say so, but because we've proven it. We prove it year in and year out that we strive to be in the top level for those kids who really want to specialize. So how we operate as an association, how we operate as a sport involves as many people as we can. But those who want to take it to the next level know that if you're involved in this province, there's a good chance you're going to be a national champion.

Reiniger: Is there a sense of Alberta exceptionalism in the sport?

Johnson: Versus other provinces or within the province?

Reiniger: Versus other provinces.

Johnson: I don't think so. Based on my experience administratively [with] interprovincial associations, I know provinces look to us to help them, and we've been more than willing to step out of our geographical area to assist not only other provinces but Volleyball Canada when it was struggling. I think we're very much in it for what's best for volleyball nationally. Yes, we're going to take care of ourselves, but we're not going to take care of ourselves at the exclusion of other provinces who may want to develop. A good example is our involvement with the Northwest Territories and Yukon. We've been very, very active in helping them develop their associations and the opportunities to participate for the Aboriginal population and those who are working up in the North. Likewise, Northern B.C.; likewise, southeastern B.C. Populated areas that didn't have the opportunity to participate, but because proximity-wise they're closer to us, we've worked in conjunction with B.C. Volleyball, and they've said 'If you're willing to take them in, go ahead and work with them.' If we were elitist, if we were very exclusionary,

we wouldn't have had any evidence of us saying, 'Let's help the Yukon. Let's help the Northwest Territory area or Iqaluit up there or the areas in B.C. or even Saskatchewan for that matter.' Another good example is allowing Saskatchewan colleges to participate in ACAC. If we were elitist and exclusionary, colleges like Briercrest wouldn't be part of ACAC. They'd say, 'Nope, you're not within our borders. Tough luck.' So I think [our] actions speak to the contrary, but because of the volume – and there is a ton of volleyball activity, a ton of effort to grant this opportunity to kids from every age and ethnicity and skill level – we're still really successful. I think that breeds an identity [of], 'We think we're doing it really well, and our results show that we're one of the best.'

Reiniger: I would like to bring two points out of that. First, you mentioned working together with geographical areas that are adjacent to Alberta such as the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan. So the natural question that follows is: How would you compare the relationship between organized volleyball in Western Canadian provinces as opposed to the relationship between Alberta, or this group of Western provinces, and Central [or] Eastern Canadian provinces?

Johnson: There's a big difference. I think there's a huge difference. The evidence of Ontario and Quebec stepping forward to help the West in any way, shape, or form is difficult to find. I'm not saying it doesn't exist, but I'm saying it's difficult to find. I think that for the longest time – Quebec had this extra year of CEGEP, which provided an incredible advantage [in] having older kids, students, participating in the ACAC level or the college level, and they were successful. Now we've caught up … but it's in part, because of the internal competition we have within our province, that we haven't had to go to Quebec or Ontario to compete. Are there some excellent coaches and student and programs in Ontario? Absolutely. Do they win national championships? Absolutely. For sure. But I don't think that it's in the same [collaborative vein] as us out West because, realistically, for the longest time even historically, we felt we'd been excluded. [The perception that] anything west of Ontario is really out there. That's been perpetrated by maybe federal political situations, and we've maybe bought into that a little bit on the athletic front. Having said that, that was never used as an excuse for us to take a second seat, and we worked pretty hard to ensure that we weren't playing a second status because of our geographical location. Because if nothing else, those guys now have to catch us. It's a tribute to those who have been working hard for two or three decades to ensure that we rise to the top level and do it in a respectful way but also win.

Reiniger: The second item, that came out during one of your previous comments, that I

would like to follow up on [is] the participation of Aboriginal Albertans in volleyball. How did you see that evolve over time, if you saw it evolve over time?

Johnson: For sure we saw it evolve over time. The Arctic Winter Games was a program that was initiated a couple decades ago [that] granted specifically athletes above a certain parallel the opportunity to go and compete – Kids who ... because of [their] geographical location, are at a disadvantage because of the cost to travel. So Alaska, Northwest Territories, and the Yukon, Iqaluit, New Far East, and then Northern Alberta, and sometimes even Northern Quebec all come every two years and compete in Aboriginal sports. But part of that was volleyball because it's played up in the North. Aboriginal involvement has been encouraged not only because of the Arctic Winter Games but[also] because of the fact that it was recognized very early that ethnicity is not a determinant of athletic ability. Some of these kids that live, say, up in Misstassiny, Northern Alberta, are great volleyball players. So … schools were providing tournament opportunities to invite them and bring them in. I know one of the largest tournaments for junior high kids in Canada was operated out of the Grande Prairie Composite High School. They'd have over a hundred teams – of just junior high teams – come together on one weekend, and a good number of them had a large percentage of participants on their teams being Aboriginal students. That was never the case in the 70s and 80s; you would never see that. They operated in isolation, their coaches weren't offered training. Not because they were [isolated], but because there just wasn't any training offered. The opportunities for those kids to come play at tournaments wasn't there because the tournaments weren't offered, so it was just lack of opportunity. But once that opportunity was there, Volleyball Alberta stepped up and said, 'We're going to provide an opportunity for these kids to try out for teams and participate in our programs.' So when the Yukon said, 'We want to bring our teams to certain club tournaments, will you allow us?' We said, 'Yes.' Same with the Northwest Territories. When they asked us to help develop their officials, we put officials in Twin Otters, and we flew them way out to Reykjavik out east. [They] specifically went out there and held clinics for their officials, and they were all Aboriginal officials. When people have called, we've answered the bell, and we impart what knowledge we have with them. They've been appreciative, and likewise, they've granted us a great cultural experience in being able to benefit [from] our association with them.

Reiniger: Finally, how do you envision the future of Alberta volleyball?

Johnson: Boy … trying to predict the future, hey? I see further development in regional sites. One of the biggest developments in Central Alberta now has been the Saville Centre, where we have a large facility dedicated to bringing kids to one site to be able to

compete. I see that trend continuing so that the ease at which tournaments can be offered continues to increase. Calgary desperately needs one, and I think there's a movement that's going to happen. … I think Medicine Hat and Lethbridge and those areas are going to get something similar. I think that Red Deer will have one, too, with the new facility that they're trying to design. I think there will be an expansion at the college in Grande Prairie in hopes that we can get maybe 10, 12 courts under one roof there in cooperation with the county up there to provide a big rec complex. Facility-wise, I think there's that movement. I think that there will be more organization at a younger level with mini-volleyball and offshoots of that program to allow the training and the experience of kids at a younger age to only increase. I envision the national team again being hosted in Alberta. I think that we will have a regular World League tour based every year in Alberta. I think that with the increase of universities in Alberta, national championships at the university level will be much more frequent within Alberta considering we have Grant MacEwan, Mount Royal, U of C, U of A, and whoever else gets university status and wants to participate in the CIS. I don't know, but I'm not totally convinced that there wouldn't be some movement south and some involvement with northern Montana and that area to do an international exchange. We're certainly doing it inter-provincially; there's no reason for us not to do it internationally, especially with the areas that are on our southern border. I think that internationally we've seen the trend, and I think it will only continue because of the quality of volleyball that's played within our province with having many more international kids in Alberta being trained in our academic institutions that are also really good volleyball players. I think we'll see a higher influx of kids coming from Australia and France and South America and other parts of Europe who say, 'You know what? They play a really good brand of volleyball, and so I want to go play but also get an education.' I think that will only increase.

Reiniger: Is there anything you would like to add?

Johnson: I started my interview off by saying, with my twin brother Dan, that we were running down this gravel road in a real isolated country community of Sexsmith and saying, 'You know what? I think this volleyball is a sport that we can be part of and enjoy.' I think we were right; I think we really have enjoyed it. I can't imagine being involved to this extent in any other sport for this long and having maintained interest and passion. … We're still passionate about the sport. We've given our lives, and we've been rewarded by the friendships that we've developed and the people that we've met. It's a super community of people. We've met and become friends with guys that, yes indeed, we watched at the Montreal Olympics. I coached with Al Taylor; he was the captain of the Montreal Olympic team. Never in a million years as a four-year-old did I think that Al Taylor would be my friend, but we coached together and went

head-to-head many, many times, and that was a dream for a young guy. Never in a million years did I think that I would be friends with university coaches or international coaches or great guys like Lorne Sawula, who is known all around the world for his volleyball knowledge. We're on first-name basis, and we know each other. I'm going, 'Volleyball is a sport that I would highly recommend to my grandkids … and people who are saying, 'If there was one sport that you stay in long-term, participate and coach and officiate, and then as an elderly gentleman or lady, continue to be involved in,' I'd say, 'Yeah, I'd choose volleyball,' because the association and the administration [are] so solid, the infrastructure is so solid, and the people are so good.

Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99

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Interview with Jim Day and Howard Rasmussen

June 19th, 2014
Edmonton, Alberta

Preface

This is Joelle Reiniger on behalf of Volleyball Alberta recording an oral history interview of Jim Day and Howard Rasmussen for the project Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99. This interview is being recorded on June 19th, 2014, in Calgary, Alberta.

Interview

Reiniger: Could I start with the spelling of your full name?

Day: My first name is J-I-M, and my last name is D-A-Y.

Reiniger: Jim is short for James?

Day: That's correct.

Reiniger: Is there a middle name?

Day: I have two middle names. James Albert Peter. That's me.

Reiniger: What is your date of birth?

Day: July the 24th, 1931.

Reiniger: What is your place of birth?

Day: I was born in Edmonton. The one in Alberta.

Reiniger: What was your first contact with volleyball?

Day: Probably at the Edmonton Y and in junior high school at McCauley Junior High in P.E. class.

Reiniger: At this point would you briefly describe, with dates where you can, the trajectory of your Alberta volleyball career?

Day: I was a high school teacher in Red Deer for three years and for two years at Victoria Composite in Edmonton and then five years at Ponoka High School. There were hints, especially during my two years back in Edmonton, that volleyball was going to become a serious interschool sport. We had occasional interschool – because I was a physical education teacher in case I haven't made that clear – we had occasional interschool volleyball activity, but nothing that was considered to be organized. In fact, we often had the teachers playing with the kids. But when I got to Ponoka in the fall of '58, one of the sports that was on the agenda for the Central-Western Alberta Schools Athletic Association was volleyball. I was truly a beginner even though I'd played a few dozen very bad games – what we used to call 'Sunday school picnic' type volleyball where everybody stands in a spot and if the ball happens to come to you, you bump it over if you can. I had to learn along with my students, and we had the advantage of some clinics in central Alberta by Bob Bratton. I know his name has come up many times and will continue to come up. 'Hello, Bob!' It happens that at Ponoka High School, which was a fairly small high school, I had to coach both the boys and the girls. I wasn't very good with the girls, or perhaps they just weren't as physically capable, but the boys won. For the five years I was at that school, the boys were the champions of that zone. But, of course, there was nothing beyond the zone at that time. So that's the real start for me; from '58 to '63. Two years later after graduate school, I went to Simon Fraser. I was part of the faculty there, and volleyball was definitely at a recreational level. I got involved a little bit as a player, but I also tried to do some coaching. That's how I ended up with a connection with the British Columbia Volleyball Association for the five years that I was at Simon. And one thing led to another. We at Simon Fraser hosted the provincial championship twice in the time that I was there. Then I came back to Alberta to the University of Lethbridge, and they looked at my CV and said, 'Well, you're the men's volleyball coach for Canada West,' or what became Canada West. I had five years of serious coaching experience, and I've got to say that the coach learned a lot and the players learned a lot. In the five years that I was there, we were playing better volleyball every year. But there were other Canada West teams that continued to get better, so we were the tail of the cow for those five years. During that time – and of course as a university faculty member, you're expected to be involved with the community – my involvement was with the sport of volleyball because that was my professional assignment. I was involved with… Well, we did a number of clinics. I started and carried on the volleyball officials of southern Alberta, so we saw to it that the high school volleyball program had the advantage of officials who thought their job was important and did a pretty good job, generally speaking. In

’84 … I finally stopped being a serious – Well, I had long since not been a coach, but I had stopped being an official as well by 1984. My son just – and I put that in my note that I sent you – my son became quite tall, and he was a really good high school volleyball player. He played for two years at UBC before he decided that his other responsibilities were too much, so he stopped being a university volleyball player. Howie [Rasmussen] was his coach in high school, so we have that connection. Although, Howie and I knew each other for a long time before that.

Reiniger: I am going to ask you about that when I am interviewing you together again.

Day: Sure.

Reiniger: It might be a little redundant, but one thing I would like to ask you about [is] with regard to the high school invitational tournament that you founded. Tell me a little about what the impetus for that was.

Day: It came out of the idea that we should be contributing to the community. The University of Lethbridge was evolving at the time. They didn’t have any buildings of their own when it first started to be a university in ’67. I arrived in ’70, and we were still using borrowed facilities, and that meant that we were teaching volleyball in a room that [had] probably a 20-foot ceiling. It wasn’t high enough for even badminton, but that was what we had to use in that era. When we got our own gym in the fall of ’72, we said to ourselves, ‘We’ve got to use this facility to get people in here and see what the facility looks like.’ Our responsibility was to make people aware of volleyball. During one of the years, we tried accepting all comers; anybody who wanted to [compete] let us know they’d like to be invited, we invited them. We soon learned that it’s hard to have a tournament on a weekend [with], counting boys and girls teams, 45 teams. Things like that. It just didn’t make sense after a while, so we had to restrict the number. But that tournament – even after I was no longer coaching or officiating the tournament – U of L Athletics carried on the tournament, again, for the usual good reasons. Some of that led up to a time when Howie joined the U of L coaching operation. I’m not sure – because I’ve been retired for a lot of years now – exactly how long that tournament lasted, but I think it was a serious contribution to volleyball south of Calgary.

Reiniger: I would also like to hear a little bit more about the volleyball officials of southern Alberta. Tell me about why you established that organization.

Day: There was a need for it. I was officiating regularly, even during the time when I was coaching. Of course, you have to factor in officiating experiences with your coaching experiences. After the volleyball program was eliminated, it was a little more easy to officiate on a regular basis. But somebody had to do it. We had the advantage of an office staff and that sort of thing **…** [it wasn't] quite so easy in those days getting things copied. Obviously they could be copied and circulated, and mail cost less in those days. So it made sense for us to do it, and we did a pretty good job, I think.

Reiniger: Would you spell your full name for me?

Rasmussen: Howard H-O-W-A-R-D, Rasmussen R-A-S-M-U-S-S-E-N.

Reiniger: Is there a middle name?

Rasmussen: Glenn, two N's.

Reiniger: Your date of birth?

Rasmussen: 16th of March, '51.

Reiniger: Your place of birth?

Rasmussen: Drumheller, Alberta.

Reiniger: What was your first contact with volleyball?

Rasmussen: In about Grade 6. I went to a two-room country school, and we got a new teacher from another part of Wheatland County. This teacher had some background, a little bit of background. Her daughter was a couple of grades older, and the daughter knew how to play a little bit of volleyball. We didn't have a gym; we had a community hall across the road. The 4-H club bought a net and a volleyball, and if the building was warm enough, we could go across the road and play volleyball. We had no idea how to play volleyball, but we played volleyball. We formed a junior high school team around 1963. I was in Grade 6, but I was the tallest kid in Grade 6, so I got to be on the junior high team because they didn't have enough players. So I started playing volleyball about age 12, and that was my first contact with volleyball.

Reiniger: You mentioned that you grew up in Wheatland County. Could you describe the early influences you had there?

Rasmussen: Wheatland County is an agricultural county out east of Calgary. If you think of towns like Strathmore, Standard, Hussar, Rockyford**,** I grew up on the far end of it near the Drumheller Valley. In the early 60s, that county was ahead of other counties in volleyball development and in coaching championships because a teacher had come to the little town of Cluny. His name was Art Willms, and he had a wife named June Willms who were both volleyball enthusiasts. The town of Cluny became a powerhouse in volleyball even though it was really just a village. Later on they left Alberta, and June was a national team player and Art became a national team coach. These were really important people in the development of volleyball in the area where I grew up. The result of it was I went to high school in Drumheller, which was not in Wheatland County but we'd play them in the zone. Even by 1968 and '69 when I was a senior player, the town of Cluny was still the dominant force. Even today Wheatland County is a strong volleyball area.

Reiniger: Could you describe, with specific years where possible, the trajectory of your volleyball career?

Rasmussen: As I said earlier, I was able to start at about age 12. I played in junior high school, which was really low-level volleyball. But in Drumheller High School, I was a team member for three years. I had a good coach, so I learned some skills, and I guess enough skills that I was able to make the team at the University of Calgary. First the junior team and then the B team. Eventually I had some time with the senior A team, the Dinos, coached by Bob Bratton. That allowed me a couple of exciting trips to Europe and to Japan, which really enhanced my volleyball knowledge and passion. I moved to Edmonton, and I got involved with the Edmonton Phoenix Volleyball Club. I started trying to be a player with the senior team, and Errol Miller asked me to be the coach. I don't know if that was just to get me to stop being a player or to start being a coach. [Laughter] But the result was I started being a coach, and I coached that Edmonton Phoenix AA men's team. We were successful, there were some very good players, and it just lit the fire for me to be a coach. I was also an education student, so I started – In fact, I started coaching before I had graduated. One year I coached my old high school team in Drumheller in 1972. I had taken a semester off from university, and we won the provincial championship at what was called the B Level at that time, which now would be 3-A, and that got my fire lit for coaching volleyball. In Edmonton I coached a high school team while I was finishing school, and then I became a teacher. I went back to my hometown, and I started coaching. I ended up coaching for 30 years. High school, club… I played for

many years as a club player; I coached the University of Lethbridge men's team; simultaneously, I coached the Calgary Volleyball Club Older but Wiser one year and won the national championship with that team. After 30 years of coaching, I retired and I was inducted into the Alberta [Volleyball] Hall of Fame.

Reiniger: In your bio for your Alberta Volleyball Association Hall of Fame induction, there is mention of your coaching at the post-secondary level and then going back to the high school level and doing some coaching there again. Tell me about why you moved back into the high school volleyball sphere.

Rasmussen: When I coached the University of Lethbridge Pronghorns, I was a teacher. I taught at a junior high school; I was never a faculty employee at the university. It was just really difficult to be a full time teacher and a full time volleyball coach and a husband and with two small children. It was just really a demanding time. After three years at the University of Lethbridge, I quit the job and went back to just being a family man and a teacher. I coached at the junior high level, but then I transferred to the high school Lethbridge Collegiate. I took up coaching again, and I coached the LCI Rams for ten years. It wasn't a choice of levels, it was just the job at the University of Lethbridge had just become too cumbersome for me in my life.

Reiniger: I would like to hear a little bit more detail on Lethbridge Collegiate Institute and your time there. Given that it had been dominated by other sports before you came to the institution, tell me about your experience recruiting students for volleyball.

Rasmussen: LCI was a famous school actually, and it had really a long history of sports, athletics excellence. They dominated in basketball and football, but their volleyball had never been very strong because it had just a rotating door of coaches, off campus coaches, and the graduate players. They had never really had a teacher who took on the job seriously and for any length of time. So when I got the job at LCI, I promised that I would do that. At the very beginning, I had to build my own volleyball storage box, I had to build my own carts, I had to paint things myself. It was really from the bottom up. It was a little bit hard to get good players at the beginning, although I had my own players from the junior high that I coached come 'with me' let's say. But over time volleyball got some status, and then there were kids interested in playing volleyball. We created a junior team and – You don't really recruit players in a high school setting, but if you develop a relationship with the junior high schools and create a junior varsity program, then you can develop a [high school] program, and we did that. I coached for ten years. We never won a provincial championship; that's one of my biggest regrets. We won two bronze medals in that

time and were fourth and fifth and sixth in the province. We hosted twice while I was the coach, and I had always hoped that while hosting we would win the gold medal at home, and it didn't happen. Those were the two times that we won bronze. That's kind of in a nutshell my experience at LCI with one exception: The LCI also has an exchange program to Japan. I took that exchange on two occasions, and I coached volleyball in Japan. I coached two different high school teams in Japan while I was on an exchange program from LCI, so that was a really exciting part of my 30-year career.

Reiniger: Would you compare your experience coaching in Japan with your experience coaching in Alberta.

Rasmussen: Extremely different. When I coached the girls' team at Hokkai High School – They have no season to play in Japan, so when students specialize in a sport, that's their sport. With no seasons to play, we practiced six days a week. I coached that team for 15 months, six days a week. We had Mondays off. [The] shortest practice: three hours, longest practice: six hours, and very intense, really fun. I was over there by myself. I had lots of free time, so I threw myself into that team and it was really exciting. So it's a different model. It's a very different model of sports in Japan, mostly because of the seasons of play, and there's a lot of status given to all school sports in the community and by the media. The Japan national championship is televised. Every game is on TV, nationally, nation-wide. We didn't make it that far, but if we had, we would have been coast to coast on NHK.

Reiniger: We will continue the interview with both of you [Rasmussen and Day] in the frame together for the rest of the questions. The reason, again, that we're interviewing the two of you together is because your careers have overlapped in that you have known each other for a long time, and you also have worked in the same region of Alberta. So what I would like to know first is: When did the paths of your careers first cross?

Day: Well, in my experience they crossed when the University of Lethbridge and the University of Calgary were in the same gym playing a tournament or matches. I remember Howie, [and] some of the things he said [in this interview] fit well with what I remember. He was often in the starting lineup, but not always. As I say, we had some very nice players at the University of Lethbridge, but most of them hadn't done volleyball in high school yet. I'm talking about between 1970 and '75. Even though they had lots of athletic skills, they didn't have volleyball skills yet. They had to learn them, unfortunately, from me. We were in contact because I knew of him as a player, and of course, he knew of me as a coach who occasionally got pointed at by

officials, ‘Sit down!’ or things like that. [Chuckle]

Rasmussen: Similar memory, and this also speaks to the development of volleyball. At that time, it was common in tournaments that players reffed, coaches reffed. Everyone took turns. People were second referees and linesmen. We looked after ourselves because most of the time we didn’t have a lot of paid referees available and maybe not even the budget for that. So we all did all of those tasks. In a given tournament, I may have played against Jim’s Pronghorns, and then I may have refereed a match involving his Pronghorns. He may have refereed a match involving my Dinos, and then we may have all been at the same social function after the tournament. So that’s the beginning; this was in the early 70s when we crossed paths.

Reiniger: Jim, you mentioned earlier that your son played volleyball and did quite well and –

Day: He was on one of those bronze medal teams, and we all know who to blame it on… It wasn’t the coach!

Reiniger: So who was his coach?

Day: His coach was Howie Rasmussen in high school in LCI. He finished high school in ’99, and Howie was there at the school for another few years before he moved on to –

Rasmussen: No, just a year after. It was the last team I coached. Once that good team involving Brooke Day – When they graduated, I retired until I went to Japan and started coaching all over again.

Reiniger: I would like to talk at this point about the history of volleyball in southern Alberta, and we’ll zero in on a couple of different communities where you’ve had some experience. I would like you to tell me a little bit more about the development of volleyball in Milk River, Alberta.

Rasmussen: Milk River, Alberta, was a bit of a volleyball anomaly in 1970. A pastor, I believe a United Church pastor, moved into town named Reverend Dave Howlett. He was a volleyball enthusiast. He took an otherwise basketball town, and he got some good players. They won the provincial championship, and it was sort of unheard of for southern Alberta. All of a sudden [players from] this little town were the Alberta B champions. Kerry Hawthorne was his star player. Kerry Hawthorne

went on to be a U of C Dino and a Calgary Volleyball Club mainstay player and he was a very strong player in Calgary for many, many years. Once Dave Howlett left Milk River, the program went down to pretty much nothing again. Just that little blip on the high school history scene there. I think Jim knew him better than I, so what do you know about him?

Day: My first meeting with Dave Howlett was – Before I came to Lethbridge, I was involved with the summer volleyball camp of the British Columbia Volleyball Association in the Okanagan. It was well organized, and I can tell you that kids from all over the province sent in their registrations and at a certain point they were told the door was shut and no more registrations were accepted. On the first day of the volleyball camp, a van showed up [with] five young men, teenagers, and an older man from Milk River Alberta and nobody had ever met them before. But he introduced himself, 'Hello, I'm Dave Howlett. I'm from Milk River, Alberta, and these are five of my very good volleyball players. We'd like to be part of the summer camp.' People looked at each other, the administrators of the camp looked at each other, and said, 'Ah, what the heck. They've brought their own sleeping bags. We can work them in somehow.' I always thought that that was a pretty good example – a United Church minister knew all about forgiveness, and sometimes forgiveness is easier to get than permission. That was a living example of that adage that many of us use. But there he was, and he really wanted to teach these kids volleyball. He knew that they would profit, and they did from the experience at B.C. Summer Volleyball Camp.

Rasmussen: In Winfield.

Day: At Winfield in the Okanagan Valley. About two years later is when I came to Lethbridge, and one of my assignments was to be the men's volleyball coach. I thought maybe we could get some of those players, but it didn't happen. They either didn't go to university or they went to U of C.

Reiniger: What would you say the legacy of Dave Howlett's work in southern Alberta volleyball was?

Day: Well, I think he probably left the legacy with his contribution to the community through the church. There are a dozen or more young men who were helped to grow up by the experience of working with him in a very inadequate gym. One of the things about the gym of that era, that gymnasium, was that the ceiling was very low. They played – Sometimes you work out a kind of a composite game where if the ball comes off the ceiling, it's still in play. But their rule from square one was if touches the ceiling, it's out, you lose the point. We know – because we saw them play, those

kids – that they had tremendous control of the ball when they were receiving the serve. They learned a lot of volleyball; the low roof was an actual plus for them. When they went to some other place, they out received all the teams they played against. As Howie said, they won the 4-A championship in about 1974 at a time when volleyball was emerging all over the province. That team was ready. Then when Dave Howlett moved on, volleyball died and basketball resumed its place at the top of the ladder.

Rasmussen: The other thing interesting about all of those gyms with low roofs all across the province: the teams that succeeded played quick attack and quick attack was evolving around the world at that time. In the early 70s, Japan was ruling the world in volleyball [by playing quick attack]. Just by the force of a small gym, you either had to go quick attack or die. So they could, and they did, win.

Reiniger: In some ways, did that give teams from rural communities an advantage compared with centres where there may have been different facilities?

Rasmussen: I think it could as long as they were coached well enough to play within their facilities instead of just recklessly banging it off the ceiling. The ones that were well coached, you saw that. Another area in southern Alberta with a lot of volleyball strength for a long time and still today is Taber. They also were towns with fairly small gyms at that time and had good coaches and nice ball control. I'm not really sure of the answer, but you could see those small schools doing very well.

Day: And, of course, the bigger schools. It goes without saying that they had more big kids to choose from, so that tends to – in some cases can – overcome the advantage of the small intimate little get togethers that made practices at a smaller school.

Reiniger: Another community you mentioned is the town of Taber, Alberta. Is there anything you would like to say about how volleyball developed there?

Rasmussen: I only learned about Taber in 1976 when I started teaching. I started teaching in Drumheller, and Taber was already strong. It was the first time I saw Taber teams. They hosted the provincial championship in 1976, which Drumheller boys won – I wasn't the coach. … Taber already by this time had a strong leader named Del Cleland, a teacher and coach. Del coached for many years with the W. R. Myers High School and across the way at St. Mary's School; they had also volleyball enthusiasts. Taber became a really strong volleyball town, and it continues to be. But again, pretty much when you look at the history of volleyball in these

centres, it seems to circulate around a person or just a few people. As long as those people are active, the programs are strong. When they retire or move away, it often doesn't have enough of a base to carry on. For some reason, Taber continues to be strong.

Reiniger: Looking at the region as a whole – and by that I mean southern Alberta not including Calgary – what has been unique about volleyball in that region as opposed to the rest of the province?

Day: I'm not sure that there's anything especially unique. I know that the coaching – let's face it, Howie – is getting better. The fact that kids are on club teams not just in Lethbridge, but in other communities in the south, that they're getting their start earlier. Then it really comes down to things like who's got the best tall kids and who's got the kids who are willing to work hard. The last couple of years one of the new high schools in Lethbridge, Chinook, has become very strong both on the boys' side and the girls' side. It's probably worth mentioning that the coach who took Howie's place at LCI when Chinook came into being, he moved to Chinook and took his good players with him. I'm not sure if you want to edit that out or not, but they've got some strong volleyball at Chinook.

Rasmussen: Yeah. I don't think it's unique to the south, but the way to be strong anywhere is the club system. In the 70s when the high school teams were not so strong in southern Alberta and basketball was certainly a dominant sport, there were very few clubs and very little club activity. I was in Drumheller, which you could consider south, I'm not sure, it's a bit north of Calgary. But I had clubs there, and we won. Some time in the 1990s, Lethbridge Volleyball Club formed. It wasn't formed by me, it was other people, parents. It's made all the difference, the club program. And it's not just the one club, there is more than one club. There must be two or three clubs in southern Alberta, and kids will travel from other towns to be in these clubs. Like any other part of Alberta, those club players are playing well into the spring and they're in summer camps and they're in provincial programs. So I think the clubs have levelled the playing field for the sport.

Reiniger: Were those clubs affiliated with the former Alberta Volleyball Association?

Rasmussen: Affiliated in the sense they'd play in their tournaments, and the coaches, therefore, would have to be certified. That was actually probably one of the bigger roles that I played in the south was I became a certified coaching instructor a long time ago and, therefore, I could all of these coaching courses. So all these [coaches] in southern Alberta, they could become certified so they could compete in

Volleyball Alberta tournaments. That probably promoted coaching. Probably that rule promoted coaching as much as anything. The fact that these people needed certification – They were hungry for it, I was able to provide it, and I think coaching improved.

Day: Before Howie came on the scene, I also was involved the National Coaching Certification Program both on the theory side and on the technical side with specifically volleyball. There's no doubt that those programs have made a difference. I think that one of the things that I'm proudest of is that some of the players that I have been involved with have made a difference so to speak. I can remember when Steve Wilson was a knobby-kneed Grade 8 [student] because he came to some of our clinics at the university, and then he went on to become the national women's coach some time later. So some of those kinds of experiences. I had another one of my strong players who recently retired as a general from the Canadian Army. … He credits some of his experience as a volleyball player [with] being able to work with teams effectively.

Reiniger: Is that military legacy, and also the YMCA legacy, is that something that you saw influence volleyball in southern Alberta during the early period of your career?

Rasmussen: I haven't seen it because I've gone to Calgary. When I was in Calgary at my first year, I was on the Dino junior team. We played in the Calgary league – because we didn't have a place to play – that was centred out of Harvey Hall, which was the Canadian Forces Base. I knew – and even from some of the pictures in the gymnasium, you could see – that the military had a big influence on early volleyball in Calgary and across the world. Of course, we know that from reading volleyball history around the world that the soldiers spread it as much as anything. When I moved to Lethbridge in 1983, I didn't see that. Jim was there before I was so… Did you see any military presence in the volleyball community?

Day: I think it's probably a coincidence that one of my strong players was committed to the military right from his cadet days and came to U of L for his degree and was a very strong player at the university level, but certainly I don't think that the military had any direct influence on that. I mentioned YMCA from my very young days, but I would say that at the Edmonton YMCA in the 40s, when I was going to the Y, volleyball was essentially a recreational activity. As I say, people just pushed the ball back over when they had the opportunity. The same applies to the volleyball that I saw at the Y in Lethbridge. They had volleyball experiences, but they were all very low level: church, Sunday school picnic kind of volleyball in the Y.

Rasmussen: I think it's fair to say that the University of Lethbridge was the focal point of volleyball in the south, not much doubt about that. There wasn't much good volleyball before 1970. Jim had a program called SAVAGE, Southern Alberta Volleyball Age Group –

Day: Experience.

Rasmussen: Experience! SAVAGE. I never took part in SAVAGE, but I heard about it. I know that a lot of young people got exposed to volleyball through SAVAGE. So I think when you look at the history of volleyball in southern Alberta, you're looking at the University of Lethbridge.

Reiniger: That acronym, SAVAGE, does that reflect a shift in volleyball at that time to what we have heard called power volleyball?

Day: [Chuckle] No. We wanted to say Southern Alberta Volleyball, and then we said, 'We can spin that out a little bit,' and that's the whole story. We got a logo that involved a cartoon bear from off of a cereal box.

Rasmussen: Not very savage.

Day: No, not very savage. More cuddly. We made a lot of people happy, that we played against.

Reiniger: Tell me about your involvement with the Jasper Volleyball Camp.

Rasmussen: Jasper Volleyball Camp started in 1974. I didn't go that year. I was still working in the summers. I started in 1975, I was a first year. I was a student there in the coaching class, and then I worked there for 11 years, mostly with coaches. There were a few times that I coached students' camps, but mostly I was teaching in the coaching school. Once I was a certified course conductor, then I was doing more probably than I wanted to because they needed people who could certify. So I was a pretty regular instructor on the coaching side. I don't know that they have the coaching side anymore, it might just be for players. But it was a wonderful experience for me. I love Jasper and the camp, and I crossed paths with Jim and Gaynel many times up at that camp.

Reiniger: Jim, you said you and your wife had been involved for the first three years of the camp?

Day: I think it was, but it might have been only the first two. The memory starts to fade a little bit. Part of the reason why I thought we were a little bit useful is that we'd had some experience in B.C. at the B.C. Volleyball Association summer camp situation. I told you about [the] Dave Howlett situation. So when Hugh Hoyles started to talk about putting on this camp in Alberta, we said we'd love to be part of that. We took part in some of the conversations about how this thing should happen, and I think we made some contributions that way, too, as well as having fun at the camp. We took our dog one summer and somebody – They always had a morning run, and in those days my knees were still functioning. We ran and ran and ran, and people before breakfast got up and ran for about three or four kilometres. Somebody, different people took the lead, somebody led to over this gosh darn – I'm trying to be careful with my language here – these monkey bars, kind of an upside-down bowl. You were expected to run up this one side and run down the other side. My dog was following us, and he ran up to the top of the thing and then he choked; he couldn't come down the other side. So somebody said, 'Somebody stop and get Jim Day's dog down!' That was one of those weird moments from the Jasper Volleyball Camp. We always had a Japanese guest instructor during my years there. On one occasion at least – there was more than one – we had some very outstanding guest people, and some very good young volleyball players were part of that operation.

Rasmussen: I think the Jasper Camp also was part of the levelling [of] the playing field in the province because kids who came from distant places, whether Medicine Hat or Milk River or Bow Island – coaches would come to the coaching camp from Bow Island, Taber, Magrath – they wanted to learn more about volleyball, and Jasper was the place to do that. I think if these clinics had only been held in the cities, the urban teams would have dominated or been the only strong teams. Somehow that Jasper Camp helped level the field. It helped spread the word of volleyball a lot better and allowed people to have a chance. In the summer teachers are on vacation, and it's being held in Jasper. What a better way to spend a week; it was just great.

Reiniger: This question is for both of you: … reflecting on your volleyball careers, what were your main goals as a leader in developing volleyball in Alberta?

Day: Well, I thought about that in the last few days, and certainly my goals were merely to do my job as well as I could. My job at the University of Lethbridge in the department of Physical Education and in the Athletic program was to take the university to the community, so that was how I could do it. I took volleyball to the community, and of course, invited people to come to the university. I think that for a

lot of young people who eventually attended the university, that may have been their first look at the U of L. So those kinds of interactions are what we were trying to do. I never thought of myself – when you sent us some questions to consider – I never thought of myself as being a leader in volleyball, but I think there have been ways in which my contribution was a real one. Things like the officiating. We did, I think, a pretty good job of organizing, teaching officials, and making sure that officials got to the appropriate place at the appropriate time, and a couple of other ways in which we made a difference.

Rasmussen: I think when I look at that question, the first part is just selfish. I wanted to win. I wanted to develop my coaching skills because I like to win. I tried really hard to become a good coach, because I just wanted to win championships for my town and my school and, of course, that would mean for myself. On the bigger level though, on the provincial level, because I did so much work with clinics and running those kinds of programs and I was a junior development chairman for the AVA – using that term Alberta Volleyball Association – back in the 70s. With those rules, it wasn't personal. It wasn't about winning, it was about the growth the volleyball. Part of that I think was I had been a volleyball player all through my teens into my 20s. By this time, and I never felt that we had enough respect. It wasn't a head on collision with basketball, it wasn't just saying, 'Well, I'm sick and tired of being overshadowed by basketball.' It wasn't quite that. It was maybe broader with hockey and any other sports. I always felt volleyball didn't have enough respect, and I wanted to make sure it did. I think all of us who had that passion were trying to push volleyball. I think we got it from Bob Bratton, and I think we got it from Hugh Hoyles and others. I got it from Bob Bratton: Let's get out there and work hard to bring volleyball up to a level of respect so that people can see that what we're doing is a real sport and these are real athletes and this is good stuff. That's kind of what my motivation was.

Reiniger: What assisted you in achieving your goals?

Day: You're first on that one, baby!

Rasmussen: What assisted me – First of all, I was really lucky when I played at U of C we were able to have a couple of trips that just opened my eyes: a trip to Europe – four-country tour of Europe in 1972. Wow. I saw volleyball like I'd never seen it. Then in '75, I was able to accompany the Dinosaurs to Japan, again, just to see volleyball at a level that I had never really experienced. So that was really something for me. The stuff I learned at Jasper Volleyball Camp and what I learned through this – I'm going to call it CAC – Coaching Association of Canada – it was the same [organization] that Jim had mentioned: the NCCP. So all of those programs were

available to me, and I was able to involve myself in those programs. That gave me knowledge, it gave me certification, and really that was it. It wasn't ever a big financial thing. You can't say that we were ever assisted by big money. But it was opportunity and support.

Day: Some of my volleyball experience just 'growed' as they say, just happened. But by the time I got to U of L, they said, 'Of all the people we have in our department, you're the person with the most volleyball skills,' and that was a scary thought. Most volleyball credentials. So I ended up being 'the guy', and there was a certain amount of support. We had decent uniforms, we had decent practice times, and in the last three years of my coaching tenure, a very nice gym. So there was [that] kind of support. However, of course, in my situation I had a sabbatical starting in '75. While I was away I was told that the volleyball program had been cancelled because there was a financial situation, so that was the end of my coaching experience. I honestly thought that I would resume coaching when I got back, but that didn't happen. But I made other contributions, as I've tried to make clear.

Rasmussen: If they cancelled in '75, they must have brought it back some time before 1980, or somewhere they must have resumed the program. Because I took over in '83 and it was going then.

Day: I've forgotten the details, but yeah. The early 80s, the program was reinstated. They felt they needed another program both for men and women, and then Howie – I think that was one of the wise things they did: persuade Howie to come and be the coach. ... A combination of factors caused it to die again at the university level, but I honestly think that the strong programs that are in the south in a lot of southern high schools had their roots back in the early 70s.

Rasmussen: Yeah. This is a point that has to be made. One of the big factors of the University of Lethbridge was that there were local people and, therefore, students playing on those Pronghorn teams. The University of Lethbridge is quite famous for its faculty of education, so these local people would be in the faculty of education and would be on the volleyball teams. When they graduated, they would have teaching jobs in the district and then they were coaching. So basically the University of Lethbridge was producing – and Jim was producing – coaches for the high school systems and the junior high systems. Once they killed the program in the mid 80s –I coached until '86, and the programs were dead by about '88 or '89 – Now your coaching core was drying up, and that has had an effect on some of the quality of volleyball in the south where we don't have quite the number of good coaches that we had who had been university players. That's a little bit of a problem down south

right now.

Reiniger: Speaking of challenges, what were some of the most significant obstacles in achieving your goals?

Rasmussen: Well for me, on the provincial level when I was doing programs and developing coaches and doing all of those clinics and certification, [the obstacles were] distance and time. Not money. They paid for themselves, [through] registrations. It was never a money issue, but distance and time. Because I was a high school teacher, and to be called out to a clinic in Oyen, a clinic in Brooks, wherever it would take me – So distance and time were a challenge for sure, to really get the word out. On the other side, as far as reaching goals, I suppose at the University of Lethbridge my challenge was that I wasn't on staff at the university, so it was harder to be an off campus coach. That was a frustration for me. I think we could have done better if I had been on campus. And once I was coaching at LCI, I knew I needed to have a club if I was going to compete with Harry Ainlay and Sir Winston Churchill and these other schools, and then it just became my own lack of energy. I didn't want to spend all my year with clubs and do all that work, so that grew on it's own. I kind of regret that I didn't stay coaching once the club system was in place because I think we could have done something with that. But by the time the club system was evolving, I was on my way out. So a little frustration there.

Day: I hadn't given a lot of thought to that kind of question, but I certainly echo some of the things you've been saying. I have to admit at a certain point my own energy was focused in other directions. … I had the invitations to participate at the club level as a coach or as an advisor and frankly turned it down on a couple of occasions, so perhaps I was my own obstacle.

Reiniger: What was the name of the co-ed volleyball team you played in?

Rasmussen: It's called Lethbridge Co-ed Volleyball League.

Reiniger: What, in your view, makes Alberta volleyball or has made Alberta volleyball different from volleyball in other provinces or parts of the world?

Rasmussen: The one thing that comes to my mind is the fact that for a number of years in the 80s and the 90s, the national men's team was centred at the University of Calgary, and it had a big impact. One year when I was coaching the University of Lethbridge, it was after the Los Angeles Olympics – it was 1984 – we were having our summer camp, and I just called up the national team coach, Ken Maeda. He was

just about ready to go to back to Japan because his job was over, and he came down as a guest instructor for the day at the University of Lethbridge summer camp and just wowed all of the kids with his knowledge. He had just come from the Olympics, and it was amazing. Then another time, Canada would play the U.S.A. at the U of L gym, and big crowds would come out to watch the [games]. Another time we were at the Lethbridge College and Canada was playing against I think it was Japan in that particular match. And there were others. So over the years when Calgary had the national team, they didn't ignore the south. We had them in Lethbridge, and it really helped. There was so much enthusiasm. People were wowed by it, and that had a big impact. Now they're not in Alberta, so now I suppose some other province is enjoying that. But we had it for a while.

Day: You asked some of our highlights in terms of the way things have gone in the last few years, and I have to say that one of the experiences that I had that I'll never forget was when my son, Brooke, who is 6'8" – I don't know if I mentioned that, but big kid. Howie used to have him playing on the right side, but when he played for the elite team, the Alberta elite team, they were playing in Montreal and we went to the matches that they played there. On one occasion, they played the team from Quebec, and my son had the best game of his career. They used him as a middle blocker, and I have to say that he was a dominant factor in that game. So the experiences he had at LCI were a huge part of that, and of course, it didn't hurt that both his mom and dad cared about the game that he really, he [did] a good job of developing his skills. So that was one of my highlights, and of course, I'm so proud – I guess I can say it – because I look back to the time when maybe I was helping with things that were at the very beginning, so to speak, of the skills I see these days in the high schools. I don't watch much university volleyball because we don't have any in Lethbridge, but when I see high school kids attacking from the back row routinely, it just amazes me that the game has come that far. Again, I'd like to think that some of the things that I did way back when were a part of that, and thank you for having us here today. It's nice to get some of this out.

Rasmussen: Highlights for me – I had so many highlights, but one for sure: the Calgary Volleyball Club when we went to Quebec City and won the national championships. I was on national TV with a microphone, and just for fun I would – while the camera was on me – I would tell our setter, Dave Jones, some phony play. In the middle of the game, I said, 'Run the old '57 Red Dog!' And he turns to the camera and said, 'What the eff is a '57 Red Dog?' It was all in fun. It was just so much fun to play at that level, [with] that kind of media attention, and then to win the whole thing, it was just – That's just one but … On the fun side, you had a question about [the] fun side. There was a – this has nothing to do with southern Alberta – but

Edmonton had a tournament at one point called the La Costa. It was named after a famous U of A volleyball coach.[1] It became a dress up costume tournament. Some others may have talked about this already, but that tournament was a highlight for many people. It was after the competitive season. Eventually, it stopped because we couldn't get the gyms anymore because it was too wild and they banned us from gyms. But, you know, when you're out there and you're spiking against a bumblebee and you're dressed up as a crow or whatever, any wacky costume – One time we went out dressed up as the band KISS, and we had glitter falling all over the court. Anyway, eventually the whole thing was banned, but for a few years it was the best tournament in Alberta.

Reiniger: It was banned?

Rasmussen: Banned.

Day: [Chuckle]

Reiniger: You have touched on certain areas with regard to how volleyball has changed over time already, but overall, is there anything else you would like to add in terms of changes you have seen in terms of how volleyball has evolved in this province and also how the popularity of volleyball has changed since you first became involved?

Day: I think there's no doubt that it's a 'real' high school sport now and the schools have made a lot of it. The teams are well supported by their schools. … I think that volleyball is now one of the elite sports at the high school level in Alberta. We have kids who say, 'I'm a volleyball player.' 'Oh, but you must also play basketball, you're tall.' 'Well, not really. I don't play basketball.' We hear that sort of thing. So there are kids for whom volleyball is their choice of sport, not just whatever's going on now, and later on I'll do the other thing.

Rasmussen: I think that any lack of respect we felt in 1970 in the world of athletics, that lack of respect is gone. I think volleyball [is] highly respected. I think the Olympics have lots to do with it. Beach volleyball, Olympic Beach Volleyball, has become one of the most sought after tickets. It's so popular on television. It's so sexy, everybody wants to watch it. It's so much fun. The music's blaring, you know. It's just made volleyball cool, and I think it's translated then into the indoor game as well. So I think anybody now involved in volleyball, they just feel that volleyball is highly respected sport, and they have extremely good athletes. They draw good

[1] Costa Crysanthou

athletes, and Canada is doing better in the world scene as well, besides our own province, and our province is contributing. When you look the rosters of our national teams – I've been watching world league – we're well represented. When you look at the university championships, college championships, Alberta has got some dynasties in it. Earlier you spoke with Cor Ouwerkerk, he had a dynasty in Red Deer. So across the country, Alberta is a strong, strong volleyball province, and the south has caught up. We're very happy with anything we may have contributed to that growth, and it's great to see.

Reiniger: Lastly, did you see changes in Alberta's economic history during this period of time? So late 60s to the end of the 20th century. Changes in politics, changes in the cultural makeup of Alberta, did you see any of those changes in society influence the development of volleyball in this province?

Day: We know that we're more of a melting pot culture than ever before. If I were to try to spin off that question, I'd say that it has had more of an effect in the sport of soccer than in the sport of volleyball. I think that volleyball – when we get outsiders to come and help with the volleyball program, it's usually on a kind of an ad hoc basis. They're here on a contract, like coming to a camp and being a guest coach, and that kind of thing. We take advantage of [the skills of] people from other cultures, and that goes back quite a few years. I'm not sure that has changed very much in the last few years, but it will always be a factor.

Rasmussen: I think the fact that Alberta has become very wealthy since I was a young volleyball player has helped in the sense that there's support for teams going to national championships. There is support for coaching programs, subsidies, there's money for the association, there's money through the coaching association, and there's money available for people who are working in volleyball. I don't know that that would happen necessarily in a poor province if we didn't have the kind of wealth we have, and I think probably there are some very well-to-do parents because of the wealth we have. Those well-to-do parents spend money on their children to have very good shoes and very good travel opportunities and can go to camps and specialize in things. It costs a fair amount of money now to be a club volleyball player now at the teenage level, so probably if Alberta were a poor province, we might not have that. ... I know way more money is spent on sport now than when I was a kid starting out in volleyball; we didn't even have a uniform. I mean, I played in blue jeans and a t-shirt with a school name on the t-shirt. It was that low level in 1963, and today it looks so professional even when you go even to a high school tournament. So I think wealth has got something to do with that. The multicultural side, I kind of agree with Jim. You do see some very multicultural high

school teams, for sure, but I think soccer probably benefitted a little bit more than volleyball. Maybe we need to recruit immigrants from taller countries, I'm not sure. [Chuckle] More Dutch people. But anyway, volleyball has grown as our province has grown, no doubt.

Reiniger: Is there anything else either of you would like to add on any topic with regard to the history of volleyball in Alberta?

Rasmussen: Gosh. I'm so out of it with volleyball in Alberta. My closest association was I watched some high school and I watched world league on TV. I don't do much in volleyball anymore.

Day: One thing that I wanted to work in at some point is that there were volleyball programs in southern Alberta schools before I showed up at the University of Lethbridge, so I don't want to make it sound as if I waved a magic wand and something good happened. There were at least two provincial championships teams in the south before the fall of 1970 when I appeared. One of those was at Vauxhall**,** and I'm fairly sure that one of the Taber high schools was a provincial champion in the late 60s as well. But again, don't take that to the bank. So to some extent we were taking advantage of those programs that had been successful earlier. But of course, the game changed, and everybody needed to be taught how to get it together.

Rasmussen: I think we covered that the club thing is the big thing, Maybe one observation: there's something special about volleyball. It's not the only sport, it's not unique in this way completely, but there's great equality between boys and girls, men and women, in the sport of volleyball. I've coached both. I've coached many girls' teams and many boys' teams, men's teams. I've played a lot of co-ed volleyball. There's a very strong – That's something that maybe hasn't been talked about. Lethbridge has a very strong and big co-ed adult volleyball league. It's been going for years. I played in it for close to 20 years, 15 at least. It continues today, and it was around long before I got there. So that is a real spin off from the excellent high school programs that we find. If there's no place to play, if there's no university place to play, and people are just working and they want to play [they can play co-ed]. So that's a wonderful thing in southern Alberta, the co-ed leagues. But all across from school to school, club to club, girls and boys, men and women are equal in the sport of volleyball. I've just never see any kind of discrimination in that regard. That's not unique to southern Alberta, but that's a comment about our sport.

Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99

An oral history project made possible by Volleyball Alberta,
the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation,
and the Alberta Lottery Fund

Interview with Gail Senkiw

May 29th, 2014

Edmonton, Alberta

Preface

This is Joelle Reiniger on behalf of Volleyball Alberta recording an oral history interview of Gail Senkiw for the project *Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99.* This interview being recorded on May 29th, 2014, in Edmonton, Alberta.

Interview

Reiniger: Would you start by spelling your full name for me?

Senkiw: G-A-I-L, S-E-N-K-I-W.

Reiniger: Any previous [surnames]?

Senkiw: Walmsley, W-A-L-M-S-L-E-Y.

Reiniger: Your date of birth?

Senkiw: December 27th, 1945.

Reiniger: Your place of birth?

Senkiw: Midland, Ontario.

Reiniger: Your year of arrival in Alberta?

Senkiw: September of 1971.

Reiniger: What was your first contact with volleyball?

Senkiw: I worked at the Percy Page Centre, the original one in St. Albert. [I] worked for Royal Life Saving Society, so I knew Brian Watson.[1] I left there after nine years of being employed, took eight months off, tried something else, [and] realized that I

[1] The first employee of Volleyball Alberta [then the Alberta Volleyball Association]

liked working for non-profit sports [organizations]. Volleyball had an opening, and I applied.

Reiniger: What was your first contact with volleyball as a player?

Senkiw: As a player, [it] would be in senior school – [that's] what we called it in Ontario. I was the captain of the girls' volleyball team, and as the guys like to bug me here at AVA that there were nine on a side when I played, and they [say], 'In the history of volleyball, you're old.' That was my playing experience; I only played in school.

Reiniger: When did you begin with the Alberta Volleyball Association?

Senkiw: I started with AVA in August of 1986.

Reiniger: … What were some of the important milestones during [your career]?

Senkiw: When I started there was only a technical director. I was hired, then a new executive director was hired. The following summer we hired a Jasper [Volleyball Camp] director. That Jasper Camp director, Ron Thomson, then became technical director. It seemed to go that way every year. You would hire for the camp, which would be a university student who had finished, usually graduated, and they would become full-time staff. Through the years the staff just grew that way, and it was fun. Everybody just came on board and was part of a big family. I think that's why I stayed so long; it became a family.

Reiniger: What were some of the most rewarding moments in your [AVA] career?

Senkiw: The last three years when they decided to go with iFathom [web development] and take on the new online registration system. I became part of that project with all the other office managers across Canada. We would go to Ottawa, we would sit with iFathom, and all of us girls – because it was all females – and sometimes the EDs [executive directors] would come, and we would go over stuff and try to get them to incorporate [it into] this program that we needed. They didn't have the same insight to what we actually needed as a registration system. They were a more data based company, so it was quite a challenge. We had an online registration system that worked because it was simple, but we all learned how to work around it and make it work. Going to this new system was very frustrating for everybody. It was frustrating for staff and for our members to get to used it.

Reiniger: So changes in technology over time.

Senkiw: Yeah. I mean going from paper to [an] online system was humongous. I used to put in mega hours. Clubs were really small then, but everything was paper. People would fill in their registration forms, they would fax them in or mail them in. In those days, and I had to input everybody's information into the computer. Luckily it was a lot smaller [then], because you would never be able to do that today. Beach volleyball was another big, big thing, and that would have been in about the 90s. Colin Young was responsible for kicking that off, creating and bringing beach volleyball as far as it [came] with Alberta volleyball. He got a lot of sponsors. The tournaments were huge. [There was the] building of the courts, and from there he got leagues and then camps. So it was huge. It was something that wasn't around for the first while that I worked.

Reiniger: What impact did beach volleyball, as you just described, have on volleyball more generally as a sport in those years and in subsequent years?

Senkiw: With beach volleyball, because our summers are so short, people want to be outside. They want to enjoy [the outdoors]. They don't want to be in a gym; they want to be outside. They liked volleyball, but then they had to learn how to play in grass and sand, because we did do grass at one time. From what I understand – I don't play – but it's a lot harder to play in sand. The kids just took off. It became very popular. I think the Olympics helped that, when they brought it in with the Olympics.

Reiniger: I am going to change gears and ask you [some reflective questions]. [What were some of the most humorous] moments in your career?

Senkiw: The guys. I was always the only female [and] older. I was never treated older, but they found out I have a big fear and they played that up. My fear is snakes. Anybody that knows me or the AVA, they know. I would come in in the morning, I would open my desk drawer, and there would be a snake in there. I would be screaming my head off. We were in a board meeting in a hotel downtown one time, and I went out to get lunch ready. [I] came back, pulled my chair out, and there's a cobra and his head's going … and it was just on and on and on. Staff retreat, they put a wooden snake down the arm of my jacket. I mean anything where they could get a reaction out of me, they did it. As afraid as I am of snakes, it was funny. We had a lot of good times. We always enjoyed ourselves. We worked hard in the office. When we were smaller, we had a lot more to do. As we grew, the work never went away; it just increased. Computers didn't make it simpler. Nothing did, but we always had laughs. We always had a good time – parties at the [Western Canadian] Open or staff retreats. We just had fun; I loved it.

Reiniger: How about the most stressful times?

Senkiw: I'd have to go back to that new online registration system. It was very stressful. I was nearing the end of my career – time for me to retire and get out – but I wanted to accomplish that. I wanted to see it through to the end, which I did. I just found it stressful because it was not working. Eventually it worked with a lot of changes, but it was stressful going through that. A lot of hours of work. … I think that would be the most stressful thing that I've ever gone through.

Reiniger: I would like to extrapolate and ask you about the association as a whole. During your 25 years with the AVA, what were some of the greatest achievements of the organization?

Senkiw: The greatest achievement, number one, would be going from paper to online registration. [Also] beach volleyball, just the impact and everything that came with that. The Open, the Open was something nobody else had done. Kevin Boyles introduced that. Volleyball Canada then started doing the same type of thing after that, but we started that here. We started the Open.

Reiniger: Which year was that?

Senkiw: I don't know. '94? I should have written down dates.

Reiniger: Could you tell me more about how the Open got started?

Senkiw: Kevin Boyles was coaching. He was down in the States, and they do that type of thing where they have a great, big 'super tournament', and bring all these teams in and do it all in a weekend or three days. He approached the board, because he was staff at that time, [and] wanted to do it here. If I remember the chain of events then, Volleyball Canada I believe had to approve it, and we took on the 15 and 16 age groups and ran the tournament.

Reiniger: If I am hearing you correctly, this was an area where the Alberta organization was the national leader?

Senkiw: Yes. We were the first to do a mega tournament like that, yes. But it had to have Volleyball Canada's approval to make it a national event. We only did the West; Volleyball Canada did the East. So we were Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and B.C. [They] would all come here.

Reiniger: When did the East have its first Open?

Senkiw: I don't know, [but] I am positive they started after us.

Reiniger: Is there anything else you would like to add as far as achievements of the organization?

Senkiw: Jasper Volleyball Camp was started before [the Open], and running. It just grew and grew. With beach volleyball, we added Sylvan Lake because it [had] more beach than Jasper [had]. At Jasper, the kids played on grass and [indoor] courts, Then they wanted more beach, so we had the beach. We then started Sylvan Lake Camp.

Reiniger: Do you remember the year for the Sylvan Lake Camp?

Senkiw: No.

Reiniger: Do you have a guess?

Senkiw: It would have been in the 90s, and I think the Open started in 20-something. Oh, that's bad. See, I should have looked all of this stuff up!

Reiniger: What were the greatest obstacles to the AVA achieving its goals?

Senkiw: Money, as in a lot of non-profit groups. There were times for quite a few years, every fall we had no money. Absolutely no money. We had no way of generating any funds. It would be before our government funding would come in. We'd have to go to the bank and plead our case to get us a loan for a few months just to pay staff salaries. That was a tough time.

Reiniger: Do you remember which years?

Senkiw: That would have been back in the 90s, because we had more staff at that time. What exact years now, I can't remember.

Reiniger: Was it that you had more staff to pay or were there other factors during that period of time that made it more challenging?

Senkiw: Well the more staff you have, the more you have to lay out. The problem [was] in the summer we'd have Jasper Volleyball Camp, so we would have those fees come in during the summer to pay part time staff, full time staff, and other things. Then come September you've got all the bills coming in from the camp, and you've got no money being generated because registration never took place until January. So no money, and our funding never came in until November. We had a

couple of rough months for quite a few years actually.

Reiniger: How consistent was funding from the government over time?

Senkiw: Pretty consistent because with the government. You've got to do all your paperwork every year, and you've got to make sure that you've checked all the boxes that are required to get your funding to the top limit of your funding. We were always able to have that. We were able to have the number of people that participated in Alberta, the area of the province that we covered, so we were able to check off all of those boxes and always got the top funding. But then depending – When the government changed, cabinets would change. You may get somebody in who's not so sport-oriented, and they would drop funding. So you would go down. Everybody went down across the board – all sport, recreation, parks, so it wasn't just you. But overall, we always stood up with the top of the associations to get funding.

Reiniger: What were the best times during your 25 years for sports organizations in Alberta and the worst times for sports organizations in Alberta? In other words, were there times that you remember as being particularly challenging?

Senkiw: No. It didn't affect us that much because it was only a few months there that we didn't generate the money, and that's when we would have to go to the bank to just see us through those few months. A couple of times, going back into earlier years, [at one point the government] offered funding for a coach, so we hired a coach. Then the funding was dropped, so we had to stop that position. It wasn't anything critical for us because we were big enough to begin with. I think that helped. We weren't one of the little tiny organizations that had maybe one full-time staff, and if their funding was cut too much, they'd have to go to somebody just working half time. We were way above that, so we didn't have to worry.

Reiniger: Where did volleyball sit in terms of the size of sports organizations in Alberta?

Senkiw: At the top because of the numbers. We were up there with soccer, probably football, skating, swimming.

Reiniger: Hockey?

Senkiw: I don't know much about hockey because hockey was never here. [The] hockey association has always been in Red Deer, I believe, so they've never been part of us. In the old Percy Page Centre, we were all tiny. We all had maybe one staff, two staff at the most. A lot of them were just half time. Everybody worked together. Those were the old, old days. We still had a print shop, newsletters –

everybody did a newsletter. In those days, you didn't have collating sheets and all of that stuff, so we would line the hallway with all the tables and everybody would come out and that would be coffee break. We'd do collating down the hallway, [and] everybody would help participate to get so-and-so's newsletter out. It wasn't just volleyball doing volleyball's, it was everybody doing it. We moved into this building and became very big. Everybody grew, so you stopped doing all of those manual little things together. So you're not a part of what's happening with each individual association. … You're not doing anything with them because you're too big. …

Reiniger: So there was a spirit of camaraderie between the sports organizations in the early years?

Senkiw: Big time, very close. Just coming into this building where you've got three floors of employees, you'd have social gatherings and Christmas parties and stuff like that. Even when I retired, there were a few people still around from when I started or after I started, because I was the longest [AVA employee] in the Percy Page Centre. Because everybody got bigger and busier, there's just isn't time to do that kind of stuff together.

Reiniger: Was there a tipping point when that happened or was it really just a smooth, gradual increase over time?

Senkiw: The tipping point of all the associations not working together was moving [from St. Albert] into the [Edmonton] Percy Page Centre in 1987.

Reiniger: Overall, how did the AVA impact volleyball in Alberta?

Senkiw: [The] Olympics helped. Back when I started, the men's national team was housed in Calgary at the U of C. We used to organize tours where they would travel around the province and play games. We'd bring in other teams to play against them in this tour that they would do. Promoting volleyball, getting kids to see it because – – Soccer, how many [kids] do you have that play soccer? Volleyball only started at a certain age. They don't take four and five year olds, so it's a different sport. They start a little later, so you want to capture those kids. By having these national team players out there and the kids seeing them, I think that really helped a lot. Volleyball on Wheels was another program … We would hire either two [people] in the north and two in the south when we first started it. So we'd have two people travel the whole northern part of the province introducing volleyball. They'd go into the schools, set it up with the teachers, and they'd spend half a day with the kids in certain schools and travel all around. We'd have two in the south doing the same thing.

Reiniger: Remind me when Volleyball on Wheels started.

Senkiw: Volleyball on Wheels would have started back in the 80s. I don't think it had started before I did. I'm guessing the late 80s because I started in '86, and I think it was after I started that that was introduced.

Reiniger: During that period of time, how often was it that Volleyball on Wheels led to a school's initial experience with volleyball, if it did at all?

Senkiw: I don't think it would have initiated it.

Reiniger: It would have been part of the curriculum, right?

Senkiw: Yes, because they would have had to have the balls and the nets already in the school systems. I think volleyball was part of the curriculum. This just showed kids a little more because that phys ed teacher may not have been a volleyball person. Phys ed guys and girls usually tend to have one of their own sports, either basketball or they're volleyball or they're whatever, right? If they weren't a real volleyball enthusiast, they weren't going to be pushing volleyball. That's what I've been told by the guys that worked [in Volleyball on Wheels]. If they went into the schools, the kids would get more exposure and then want to maybe try out for the school team, which then would take them into the club season.

Reiniger: Did you see school teams being created as a result of Volleyball on Wheels?

Senkiw: Yes. Then our numbers started to grow because we as an association did not do school volleyball. Alberta Schools Athletic Association runs all of the volleyball and all sports in the schools. We run tournaments for clubs, so the kids were coming out of school still wanting to play volleyball, getting involved in the club situation, which grew our registration, which grew our tournaments, and on and on.

Reiniger: Do you have an idea of how often volleyball on wheels resulted in that initial creation of [an extracurricular] team?

Senkiw: I don't. See, the club season grew, but to actually know exactly – I think it was just overall exposure with everything: national teams, Volleyball on Wheels, Olympics; I think all of that has an impact.

Reiniger: To what extent did you see the popularity of volleyball in Alberta change during your career?

Senkiw: It just kept growing, and I think beach volleyball was a big part of that

[growth] because indoor volleyball only happens during the winter. Once school's over, volleyball is over because the tournaments are all played during the school year. After school volleyball is over, the club season starts, and once that's over, school's out. Then there was nothing for the kids, so having beach volleyball kept them involved in that.

Reiniger: Is there anything else you would like to add about changes to Alberta volleyball during your time as an administrator?

Senkiw: No. It just grew and grew and grew.

Reiniger: How do you feel about the changes in Alberta volleyball over time?

Senkiw: How they played the game?

Reiniger: In terms of … the changes that occurred, either to the game or to the organization or to the participation or anything else: were they all positive changes? Were there negative changes?

Senkiw: I would say it's all positive. I could quote you a vendor we had at one of the earlier Opens in Calgary, because they used to be all in Calgary. One of the vendors told me one time, 'I love coming here because of the respect you get from the kids.' The kids are all respectful. Volleyball isn't a contact sport; it's a fun sport. It's a competitive sport, but it's not a contact sport. The kids were more respectful to everybody, whereas some sports are a little rougher. I think it's just a good, clean sport.

Reiniger: What makes Alberta volleyball different from volleyball in any other province or country?

Senkiw: AVA has always stepped out of the box. AVA didn't do everything like everybody else did. They started things that other provinces didn't. Sure there were a lot of times they stepped on Volleyball Canada's 'toes' and proceeded. They decided to do [something], and they [did] it and just made volleyball better. The Open was a big one. Beach volleyball: they didn't invent it here, and we sure aren't a beachy province, but we went a long way with it. They've done a lot of good.

Reiniger: Do you have any specific examples of 'toe stepping' as you described?

Senkiw: I think the Open was a little difficult. … Kevin Boyles, he went to the board with it, and the board then went to Volleyball Canada. If I recall my information

correctly, I think they weren't too sure that [it] should happen at the time. But we persisted, and look where it is today.

Reiniger: Do you remember what the reservations were?

Senkiw: We wanted to take on running the tournament ourselves. It was a national event, so [they thought] shouldn't have been run by us. They did have staff here, but we did it. Volleyball Canada didn't; AVA did it. That's what I remember about it.

Reiniger: Any other areas you would like to mention where the AVA moved on ahead of the national organization or other individual volleyball organizations in other provinces?

Senkiw: We're all part of Volleyball Canada, and provinces are all different sizes. I really don't know because every province ran things their own way. Some of them didn't have money [for online systems]. … We already had an online registration. When they decided to go [online], Volleyball Canada wanted everybody on this, so then when you registered with your province, you also could go in and register for national events. All the provinces didn't step up. Even though they wanted everybody buying it, it didn't happen because some people didn't have the funds or the staff.

Reiniger: You mentioned economic differences between provinces. How did the history of Alberta's economy during your time impact the way the sport developed here?

Senkiw: I think overall, we were one of the highest [performing] provinces. I mean you can't beat Ontario, but they ran [the sport] different than we did. Then you go down east to the East Coast. They're little tiny provinces with maybe a part-time staff person, so they just didn't have the programs. They didn't generate the funds, but we did because we kept introducing [programs] with beach volleyball, which started tournaments and camps. … In a small province, you don't have that because it all comes down to staff and money.

Reiniger: I would like to also ask you about cultural changes in Alberta over time. How did you see those interact with developments in volleyball in the province? The increase of multiculturalism in the province.

Senkiw: I didn't actually see it. Working in the office I don't experience that, so it's kind of hard to say. Volleyball on Wheels would go out into reservations and do a lot with the native kids and try to get them involved. Through that, we actually had quite a few of them come to Jasper Volleyball Camp. But other than that, that's the only ethnic group that I would know anything about making a difference or being involved.

Reiniger: That is one point I would like to expand on. Are you saying you saw an increase in Aboriginal participation in the sport in Alberta as a result of the Volleyball on Wheels program?

Senkiw: I believe that's where it came from because these kids – They would book Volleyball on Wheels, so through that they would learn about Jasper Volleyball camp. And then they went to camp. …

Reiniger: Has that been sustained over time?

Senkiw: No. That fell off. Volleyball on Wheels changed a lot also. We couldn't hire the staff … to actually get out there and travel the whole province like we could at one time. I think the biggest thing was [that] university kids were starting to make better money doing other jobs than what we could pay them, so we didn't have the people to promote.

Reiniger: When did you see that change take place, approximately?

Senkiw: I would say into the 2000s. We were into 2000, and it just sort of started to drop off.

Reiniger: During your career did you see the sport of volleyball in Alberta influence people's day-to-day lives here, and if so, how?

Senkiw: Being an administrator, you're in the office; you're not out in the field. I guess the only thing is you knew year by year that our numbers kept going up. So obviously more clubs and teams are starting. Within a club, a club might start up and have two teams; it would grow to ten, which made that many more athletes. That just grew the numbers, so that would change the sport in numbers and kids wanting to play volleyball and maybe go on. We've seen a lot of kids really grow and excel at beach volleyball to be national team players and travelling and a lot of people went abroad once they finished university to play.

Reiniger: How do you envision the future of Alberta volleyball?

Senkiw: I can see it just growing, and it's all got to do with staff. You've got to have the staff, you've got to have the positive attitude to get people out there and promote volleyball and just keep it a growing, great sport.

Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99

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and the Alberta Lottery Fund

Interview with Errol Miller
August 11th, 2014 and August 12th, 2014
Victoria, British Columbia

Preface

This is Joelle Reiniger on behalf of Volleyball Alberta recording an oral history interview of Errol Miller for the project *Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99.* This is a phone interview taking place between my location in Edmonton, Alberta, and Errol's location in Victoria, British Columbia, on August 11th and 12th, 2014.

Interview
Part 1

Reiniger: Could I get you to spell your full name for me?

Miller: E-R-R-O-L, M-I-L-L-E-R.

Reiniger: Is there a middle name?

Miller: Bruce. B-R-U-C-E.

Reiniger: Your date of birth?

Miller: May 21st, 1939.

Reiniger: Your place of birth?

Miller: Edmonton.

Reiniger: Could you expand on what you wrote [in your bio] about how you first became involved in volleyball? Your early beginning with the YMCA.

Miller: When I was in Grade 9, some friends and I, who were going to Jasper Place High School [and] were interested in sports and athletics, decided to go to the YMCA in Edmonton because our school didn't have a gymnasium or phys ed teacher or any kind of organized athletics for us. We went to the YMCA for four years: Grade 9 through

Grade 12. As well as basketball, handball, gymnastics, swimming, [and] various other sports, I first played volleyball.

Reiniger: Who approached you to play volleyball?

Miller: At the Y?

Reiniger: Yes.

Miller: It was just part of what we did. We were in the [Youth Leader Corps] there, which meant that we were not only taught sports, but ensuring we would teach the younger kids at the Y the same activities.

Reiniger: As you know, [volleyball was originally] geared toward players who were [seniors]. How much had the demographic of volleyball players changed between [its] first years and when you became involved?

Miller: Certainly at the Y it was just, for the most part, recreation. Although, I think they did have a men's volleyball team that played games against the few other teams that were in the city. My recollection, certainly at the Y, is we were just playing a fun, recreational game. It wasn't until I got to university that I was introduced to competitive volleyball.

Reiniger: At that point the YMCA and the YWCA would have been two totally separate entities, correct? In terms of the individuals involved.

Miller: That's right.

Reiniger: So it might be challenging to compare male to female participation at that time?

Miller: Yes. At the YMCA, certainly. I have no knowledge about the YW.

Reiniger: Were there a lot of younger players involved during the time you got started?

Miller: I would guess not. Certainly not at the high school level or at the school level for that matter. It may have been played in phys ed classes, but it was not really considered a competitive sport until much later.

Reiniger: What was the age range when you were playing with the Y?

Miller: We were high school age, so 14 to 18.

Reiniger: I would also like to ask you about a specific year there. What year would it have been when you first began with the YMCA?

Miller: It would have been 1954, I believe.

Reiniger: Okay. Now, one thing you mentioned, also in your bio, was how the sport was viewed as purely recreational. These days we are always having debates over whether this is a sport or that is a sport and, 'Should it be added to the Olympics?', and that sort of thing. The criteria for what makes an activity a sport as opposed to a game or a recreational pursuit: is that a debate that you saw unfold with volleyball?

Miller: Definitely at the high school level. When I graduated from university after playing with the Golden Bears, I volunteered to coach volleyball. What I found was that it was totally recreational after school. There was no attempt to get good athletes to play. There was very little practice involved, very little teaching or coaching involved. Pretty well anybody who came out, with interest in coming out, played. There was no city championship. There was no organized tournament among all of the schools. What we played, basically, were three or four very mini tournaments against other schools. No records were kept that I'm aware of of how the various schools were doing. Not many of the coaches – if any besides myself and perhaps one or two others – had any knowledge of or experience with playing volleyball.

Reiniger: I would like to move forward to your time with M.E. LaZerte. You had said that [the volleyball program benefitted because] the person who was in charge of athletics there had a background in swimming as opposed to football or what would have been considered the major sports. Could you tell me a bit about how common or how uncommon that was at the time where there was this view of volleyball was on equal footing as basketball or some of the [major] sports?

Miller: The most common situation was that – because volleyball and football were played at the same time in high school and because, generally, the phys ed staff were involved in coaching football – they tended to make sure that the best athletes played football. The [M.E. LaZerte] phys ed department head would attempt to get somebody to coach the volleyball teams. There would be a junior and a senior team, hopefully. Very often there wasn't anybody around who was really qualified, but they would try to get somebody to coach. What happened at M.E. LaZerte, as I said, was that for about four of my six years there, the department head made sure that volleyball and some of the other so-called minor sports got as much attention as football. Consequently, the football team wasn't doing very well, but because of that support I got a fair shot at the

athletes. When that department head left, a new department head was the head coach of the senior football team, and I noticed a change right away in the attitude toward volleyball and the athletes who were coming to try out for volleyball. More of the athletes were choosing football, and I think because their phys ed teachers were football coaches, they were encouraged that way. When I was at Ross Sheppard High School, the last high school I taught and coached at, it was the same situation there. As a matter of fact, at times I caught football coaches standing outside my volleyball practices talking to my volleyball players – the best volleyball players – as they came off the practice court. I heard from most players that the coach was trying to get them to play football. It was always a struggle.

Reiniger: How different was the relationship between the sports of basketball and volleyball?

Miller: My experience at LaZerte was a good one for about the first four years because the basketball coach and I got along very well. He saw that it'd be an advantage for his basketball players to play volleyball in the first part of the season – so that would be September to the end of November – and then the volleyball players who wanted to play basketball, they would go and play basketball. They'd be in good shape, and the training I did with them for jumping and flexibility, quickness, and that kind of thing would be very valuable for them as basketball players.

Reiniger: In general, we have seen a lot of people – especially people interviewed for this project – who have started in basketball and then moved into volleyball. How closely connected historically have those two sports been and how would you describe the relationship between the two sports?

Miller: A close relationship, I think. Both basketball and volleyball involve a lot of the same movements: quick movements, quick reaction. I think physically there's certainly a transference from one to the other. The fact that in volleyball you can't actually grab the ball makes quite a difference, but I think they're quite similar. I started playing basketball at university. I was on the Junior Bearcats and a friend of mine who was on the volleyball team convinced me to try out for volleyball the next year. I thought, well, maybe I can play volleyball and then basketball, but I decided to just stay with volleyball.

Reiniger: Did you ever see any competition between the two sports for players?

Miller: Not in high school because one followed the other. The only time there was really a competition was later on, maybe in the late 80s and 90s and beyond. As time went on there were more and more experienced coaches in high schools, and some of

them established volleyball clubs that would allow their high school players to continue playing after high school was over. Then they would be competing provincially, or at the city level and then provincially, and even nationally for age group championships. Because of that, those athletes would not be available for high school basketball.

Reiniger: I would like to ask you about your university years. Specifically, which year volleyball became a university sport at the U of A.

Miller: Oh, I don't know about that.

Reiniger: Okay. You also mentioned how there [was some variation in] how you played the game in Alberta for the University of Alberta due to how closely various universities across the country were following the U.S. and European techniques. How different was the game between universities? Did you have different sets of rules?

Miller: No, rules were the same. We followed the Canadian Volleyball Association rulebook. It was just the training techniques and some of the skills. As far as skills – particularly the underhand pass – it [went] through a lot of different changes [over] the years. We found that we were behind in that particularly, and just the training; some of the strategies we found different. I don't remember a lot of specifics, but we certainly recognized that other teams that we were playing were playing a slightly different game and were sort of better prepared than we were.

Reiniger: At what point did you begin to see a leveling between the technique and the calibre of play in Alberta compared with the more eastern regions of the country?

Miller: After I was on the national team and I was exposed to really modern volleyball and international volleyball, I was able to come back and pass a lot of that on to some of my fellow players. Through workshops and through my own coaching, I was able to introduce that. Then generally there [began] to be more competition, interprovincial competition, among clubs. I think at the university level, coaching was becoming a little bit better [as coaches were] more knowledgeable about what was going on. It was a subtle change over the years from volleyball as a nice, recreational sport: 'If you want to have some fun, get out there and play volleyball, but it's not a serious sport.' There was that gradual change to recognizing it as a serious sport.

Reiniger: If I had asked the high school version of you – if I had asked Errol Miller in 1954, 'Is volleyball a sport?' What would you have said?

Miller: 'No.' I would have said, 'No, it's just is a game.'

Reiniger: At what point would you have changed that answer?

Miller: I think in university. We, the Bears, had the opportunity to go down to Seattle to play in a tournament there. Partly against university teams but also against men's club teams. The level played there was much higher than our own, so that was kind of an eye-opener: both that the university would put the money out to fly us out to Seattle and then to see the caliber of play down there.

Reiniger: What were some of the factors behind the university's willingness to invest in that trip?

Miller: I suspect the coach, Costa Chrysanthou. He was an engineer with the City of Edmonton, and he was devoting his leisure time to come and coach after work. I think he probably said to the University Athletics, 'Listen. If we're going to get better. If we're going to be a real team, we have to compete against good teams.' He was a very forceful person as a coach, and [forceful] I'm sure when he talked to Athletics.

Reiniger: Because I cannot interview him for obvious reasons, how would you describe Costa's legacy in Alberta Volleyball?

Miller: Oh, I think – sorry. This is a bit emotional because he passed away when he was 46. He had stopped coaching, but I think he brought us from being just a recreational activity to being a sport. Eventually his techniques [and] his knowledge became outdated, but he certainly brought it up a notch as far as the university was concerned. With Bob Bratton down at the University of Calgary, I think competitively it improved quite a bit.

Reiniger: Regarding your years after university playing with the Edmonton Safeway Team [1963-1969], how common it was at that time to have a sport's team sponsored by a company in that way?

Miller: Pretty unusual, particularly a big company like Safeway. It was a personal connection between Bob Dean, who was a former Edmonton Eskimo football player, and somebody in the head office at Safeway in Edmonton. It was that close connection that created the sponsorship I'm sure.

Reiniger: You played a number of different types of teams. You played army teams, you played post-secondary teams. I would like to hear a little bit more about the presence of the military in the sport at that time.

Miller: I don't know specifically, but I know that the guys that we played who were on the army team were very good athletes in competition. They beat us as often as we beat them. I just had the impression that the army had volleyball teams, basketball teams, other athletic teams. Probably an important part of team building [and] conditioning.

Reiniger: Did you see any of that military involvement when you were with the YMCA?

Miller: No, I didn't.

Reiniger: You had written that Bob Dean had lost some interest in the Edmonton Safeway Team, and it did disband at that point.

Miller: Yes, that's right.

Reiniger: What do you think was the reason for that loss of interest?

Miller: I think the game was passing Bob by. In the early days of Safeway, he could play reasonably well, but by the time he gave it up, he no longer had the athletic ability to play the game as it was being played. He was just six feet – maybe a little bit over six feet – … and he didn't train. By that time players were taller, they were jumping higher, they were hitting harder. He played a setting position, and setters were much more mobile. They were going [toward] the system where the setter came from the backcourt and we had three hitters at the front, and he just wouldn't fit into that system. … I'm sure without Bob on the team, Safeway wasn't really that willing to sponsor.

Reiniger: Moving on to your involvement with the national team. You joined in 1969?

Miller: That's right.

Reiniger: Was that the only year that you played with the national team?

Miller: No. In 1969, there was a national team tryout camp. It was the first time that was done. Previously, if there was an international competition that Canada was sending a team to, it would be a team from probably Toronto, Toronto Balmy Beach,[1] or Hamilton YMCA would represent Canada. They would create an all-star team from players that were in the area. By 1969, we knew that Canada was going to be hosting the Olympics in '76. Being the host country, we would have a volleyball team. So beginning in '69 they were starting a program of selecting and training players for 1976. I was at the training camp in 1969 at the University of Waterloo, and then that year there was a

[1] Canada's first major beach volleyball club

NORCECA tournament in Mexico City to determine eligibility for the next Olympics. We competed there, and we didn't win. The next year there were two training camps: one down East and one in Vancouver, but there was no international competition. I was at the training camp, and then I decided that I was getting too old and too busy to really keep up training for the national team.

Part 2

Reiniger: I would like to talk with you little bit about the early years of the Alberta Volleyball Association. I am wondering if you were aware of the association when it first formed in 1957?

Miller: No. My first contact with it was when I graduated from university in 1963. At that time, I joined the Safeway Volleyball Club – and Bob Dean at that time, I'm not sure what position he had with the AVA, but I remember us talking about the AVA. At the same time, we had an Edmonton Volleyball Association. I'm a little fuzzy about the operation of that, but I know that Bob Dean was instrumental in that and pretty well the people on Safeway, myself included, were instrumental in doing what the AVA did at that time.

Reiniger: Just briefly, you mentioned the Edmonton Volleyball Association. Are you aware of which year that organization was founded?

Miller: No, I'm not. One of the problems in the early years of both the AVA and the EVA was record keeping. People were mostly volleyball players, and they were not thinking of themselves as administrators and not thinking in historical terms. I think the record keeping was not very good.

Reiniger: On that note, I have seen the limited records that there are from the early years of the Alberta Volleyball Association, but is there anything that you can less formally add to the record in terms of what was important to you as an organization at that time and the types of decisions that you were faced with?

Miller: I think the focus was mainly on providing for competition in the early days. Most competition was between Calgary and Edmonton teams at that time, so providing for that. There was a national championship, and the AVA was responsible for choosing an Alberta team to play in that tournament. Also, I think refereeing rules were always a concern, but at that stage I don't remember there being much concern with player development. That came a little bit later.

Reiniger: Theresa Maxwell was telling me about how earlier on the AVA was a 'kitchen table' organization. Were you meeting in people's homes at that time?

Miller: Good question. I remember my first meeting was actually in a meeting room at the YMCA, but I'm not clear if that was just the Edmonton Volleyball Association or if it was the Alberta Volleyball Association. But yes, I would agree with that. I can remember us having meetings after tournaments, and sometimes those meetings might have been in a bar as we were kind of cooling off after the competition. Since everybody was there from the province who was involved, it was the time we usually got together.

Reiniger: When you say, 'in a bar,' one thing that comes to mind is: During that period of time, I think that the liquor laws in Alberta still segregated men and women in bars; is that right –

Miller: [Chuckle]

Reiniger: – Because I am thinking it must have been an all-male group at that point in time. I do have the executive records, but –

Miller: Yeah. That's a good point. I think in those early years, it was pretty well [all] male. That did change gradually, but Bob Bratton and Bob Dean, Costa Chrysanthou and a couple of the other guys from Calgary pretty well constituted the AVA at that time.

Reiniger: You mentioned Bob Bratton. Was Marilyn Bratton part of the organization when you were involved?

Miller: Yes. I shouldn't leave Marilyn out because she was always very active – particularly with the refereeing end of things at that time – and I don't recall Marilyn Bratton ever being at an AVA meeting in the bar.

Reiniger: I have had the opportunity to speak with Marilyn about her history in the world of reffing, but I am wondering if there are any memories you would like to share about her leadership at that point in time.

Miller: Yes. She was probably the most knowledgeable about the refereeing, and she refereed most of the major tournaments at that time. She was a very effective head of refereeing for the AVA.

Reiniger: When you say major tournaments, provincials?

Miller: Yeah, provincial tournaments. Actually, the qualifying tournaments to go to the nationals were very important.

Reiniger: You mentioned the Edmonton Volleyball Association during this period. Was there a Calgary counterpart as well?

Miller: I believe so. It was necessary to have both because there was some organization to be done. Although, not a lot in those early days because there were so few teams, but there was still a concern about organizing a bit of a league.

Reiniger: Speaking of leagues, I would like to switch gears to the Phoenix Club. You had mentioned something about how it was founded in your bio. When you say, 'We founded Phoenix club,' are you referring to [yourself] and Hugh Hoyles?

Miller: No, Hugh wasn't involved in the organization at first. It was players from the Bears, graduates from the Bears. Peter Green, a graduate from the Bears, was very involved in that, and then some people who had actually moved into Edmonton and had played volleyball elsewhere. A fellow by the name of Larry Oliver, for example, had moved here from Winnipeg. He had played volleyball in Winnipeg, so he was really keen to get on the team here. He was very involved in the formation of Phoenix as well.

Reiniger: Could you paint a picture for me of the Phoenix Volleyball Club during its first year and the Phoenix Volleyball Club when it eventually dissolved?

Miller: At the beginning we had pretty advanced goals because we didn't just want to be a team. We thought of it as a club, so we thought there would be a women's team and junior teams as well so that we could develop players within a club who would advance to the senior teams. That poses big problems of organization but also money. If you're going to have teams, you're going to have to have uniforms, you're going to have to have balls, you're going to have to have money for travel. That kind of thing. Money raising was important, and then we thought, 'Well, if we're going to raise money, that it would be important that we incorporate under the Societies Act,' so we did that. We came up with the name Phoenix because of the idea that [the] Safeway [team] had kind of burned to the ground and this club was rising out of the ashes of that. One of guys on the team was a bit of an artist, and he developed a logo. We were able to get some stationery printed, some envelopes printed with the logo on it. We were really keen on making it a real club. Well-organized. The first uniforms we actually had were sewn by the wives of a number of the players, so these became the uniforms for the senior men's team and the junior men's team. I don't quite remember where the women's uniforms came from. Then the money raising: We did a lot of the brainstorming about

how could we raise enough money for the club not just for the men's team. That's when we hit on the idea of having a development camp at the U of A. We'd invite the junior high school, high school players, and coaches to this camp, and we would charge a fee. At this point Hugh [Hoyles] was in the club, and he was instrumental in arranging the U of A facilities for that. Basically what it was – I believe we had six courts set up in the gym at the U of A. In each half-court there would be an instructor with a number of players and there would be myself and somebody else at a microphone following the script. So in each half-court the coach, the Phoenix coach at that court, would be running its players through a drill or through an exercise or teaching a skill, and then in a separate room there was also an opportunity for the coaches to meet with one of us so we could give them an overview of what volleyball could be like in their schools.

Reiniger: When and why did the Phoenix Club years come to an end?

Miller: I retired from Phoenix and basically from organized volleyball because I'd been too involved in it over the years, and I thought it was time I quit playing. I just needed to get on with others things in my life, so I resigned. [I think] Jan Patterson was the president of Phoenix after I left. I'm not actually sure when the last year of Phoenix was because I just lost contact with the club after that.

Reiniger: I am just going to put my memorabilia collection hat on for a moment. You mentioned earlier that there were some handmade uniforms for the first years of the Phoenix Club. To your knowledge, do any of those still exist?

Miller: Yes. Several times I took things down the AVA offices at the Percy Page Centre and dropped things off, and I'm pretty sure that there was some Phoenix Club memorabilia there including at least one uniform jersey. In terms of the Phoenix stuff, anything that I had from the AVA, CVA, or EVA I've also taken that down to the Percy Page Centre, so I hope it hasn't been mislaid.

Reiniger: During your involvement with volleyball in Alberta, and even from your observations after [you] became less directly involved in volleyball, what are the most significant changes you have seen in club volleyball in this province?

Miller: I think the proliferation of clubs at the high school level. I know here in Victoria and the Victoria area, there are a number of clubs where the high school players, when the high school season is over, they just go on to the club teams. They have their own competitions, and I believe there are national competitions at those levels as well. I think that's the most significant thing and an important thing for the development of volleyball skills. Also, the college teams – not university, but the college teams – I know

the skill level there has been increasing greatly. I've noticed some of the college players go on to play university ball. They'll play two years of college, and then they'll go on. I know some who become first-string players on the university teams, so there's quite a broad base of volleyball in those levels. One of the problems volleyball has, of course, is the amount of equipment and the court that you need to play: the nets, the standards, that kind of thing, which maybe other sports don't need so much. The [educational] institutions certainly are a very important part of developing that base for volleyball. I was really surprised to learn that at some point in time, there was no longer a national championship for men's A-Ball because I participated in the nationals for so many years, then to find out it no longer exists. I guess [it was] supplanted by the university national championships and then national championships at the lower age levels.

Reiniger: Moving on to the Jasper Volleyball Camp, in a conversation [I had] with Hugh [Hoyles], he mentioned that the B.C. Volleyball Association had some involvement in the founding of the camp or the precursor to the camp. Is that something you could elaborate on for me?

Miller: Sorry, did you say B.C.?

Reiniger: B.C. Volleyball Association, I thought.

Miller: No.

Reiniger: Okay. They were not involved, then?

Miller: No. Hugh Hoyles was at the university. He was on the university staff and had been coaching the Bears. Jasper Volleyball Camp was his idea, and he set it up. It was pretty well labelled as the U of A, AVA, Jasper Volleyball Camp.

Reiniger: In general, was there any relationship between the AVA and the BCVA at that time?

Miller: No. I know there was the odd coach who came from B.C. for the coaching part of the camp, but no. The BCVA as far as I know was not involved at all.

Reiniger: Regarding the Jasper Volleyball Camp, is there anything you would like to elaborate on there in terms of the role of the camp in history of volleyball in this province?

Miller: I think it was very important because it drew coaches, particularly from all over the province and even out of the province. Most of the players were from north and

central Alberta. At the camp there was such a mixture. It drew staff coaches from pretty well all over Canada at one time or another. The Japanese coaches were very important, people were even coming from the Yukon, so it was such a mixture. Then you have the college coaches, high school coaches, junior high coaches. They're all there, and it was very inspirational. The setting itself was wonderful, to be able to go out on these outdoor courts, the mountains as a background, the elk and deer and other wildlife around. Chances to have lectures in a shady grove at the foot of a mountain plus lectures and audio-visual things inside and then socializing and sharing experiences afterwards. I think it was extremely important. It was so well organized; it just went off without a hitch. [Hugh Hoyles] was just marvellous in the way he had things organized and people working for him. He was a great organizer and a great people person.

Reiniger: One item regarding another topic here: officiating. You had mentioned in your bio that you at one point were self-reffing sort of on the honour system. What was that like?

Miller: At that time we felt really proud of this. Here is this sport where we didn't need a referee to tell us if we did something wrong. We just [would] put up our hand and say, 'I touched the net.' I guess it was bound not to last forever because there's always the temptation to not admit you did it. There was this one incident that everybody agreed [was dishonest]. Even the guy who didn't admit it during the game admitted it afterwards. It did make a big difference because it meant that Phoenix didn't qualify for the nationals that year.

Reiniger: Remind me what happened in that incident.

Miller: It was a net touch. On the honour system, if you were up blocking and you touched the net, when you came down, you'd just hold up your hand and say, 'I touched the net.' The referee would recognize that and then award the point or side out. It was actually a fairly obvious net touch, but the referee didn't call it because normally the player would call it. All I can remember is as the play ended, we all kind of looked at this guy waiting for him to say he touched the net, and he just walked away from the net. It was kind of a downer, but that was the end [of self-reffing]. We kind of recognized that unfortunately the sport had grown past the point where you could count on people's honesty.

Reiniger: I would like to switch gears again here and ask you a couple different types of questions. Looking at the development of volleyball in this province overall, how did

some of the changes you saw in the game over time reflect changes that we saw in Alberta society over that period of time? So, the 60s, 70s, 80s in particular.

Miller: I guess there was more money available. I think people had more money [as] individuals. Also, the provincial and federal governments were putting more money into sports. Certainly the federal government in the 70s because of the '76 Olympics was putting a lot more money into sports, particularly national competitions and international competitions. … I think beginning about 1971, you always had a national team that was formed from a competitive tryout camp, and there were always international competitions for that team, I believe. The provincial government always had been quite generous. My memory is that for us, the Phoenix Club, always benefited from provincial funding for competitions and support. Certainly the [establishment of the] Percy Page Centre,[2] which came after I was out of the picture, was a big step forward in provincial volleyball and organizing things provincially. The national coaching system that was set up where there was a certification for coaches was very important [as well as] national refereeing and national refereeing standards. Guys like Larry Lerbekmo and Dennis Johnson becoming nationally-rated officials was very important because they came back from their experiences and were able to pass those on to referees, building up a pool of very experienced officials.

Reiniger: Did you see [the organization of sport] unfold differently in Alberta than in other parts of the country?

Miller: Yeah. I don't know for sure, but I'm pretty sure that Alberta, being one of the wealthier provinces, was able to do that. Of course, because we had more institutions here and bigger populations than some of the other provinces, I think we probably had an edge. When I started playing volleyball was best organized in Ontario and perhaps a little bit later in B.C. and Quebec. Manitoba was quite well organized too. They had some people there who were very keen on volleyball and organizing it. Saskatchewan was not so well organized, and I think the Maritime Provinces not so well organized, but that gradually came in those areas as well.

Reiniger: Looking at Alberta specifically during your involvement with volleyball did you see the sport of volleyball in Alberta, how it was played and organized, reflect in any way a sense of provincial identity? How Albertans would define themselves as part of this province?

[2] A former Edmonton high school repurposed by the provincial government to house dozens of Alberta sport and recreation organizations

Miller: I don't know if I can say that. I know because of national competitions that we were always really proud of doing well. Phoenix did reasonably well, although our best placing was fourth in the national tournament. We were always conscious of representing the province and we were always proud to see Alberta players on the national team, players from both Calgary and Edmonton; Terry Danyluk for example. We were always very proud to see them on the national teams.

Reiniger: Is there anything else you would like to add on any topic related to the history of Alberta volleyball or your history with Alberta volleyball?

Miller: I was just thinking that when I was teaching at Victoria Composite and I was involved in volleyball, one of the phys ed staff there said, 'You know, Errol, you're really wasting your time with volleyball. It's never going to be a sport. Nobody's ever going to pay attention to it.' I disagreed with him then, but I kind of felt put down and that didn't feel very good. But as it certainly became more and more of a sport and more people paid attention to it, I always felt kind of vindicated and wished I could go and say, 'See? You were wrong.' That's one reflection. The other thing would be that volleyball always impressed me as being a sport that can be played recreationally. I've played at staff picnics, I've played volleyball 12-a-side with a beach ball and a net in between and [had] a great time. We've played in Hawrelak Park just [by] setting up a net there, and some of the guys that played volleyball whether A, B, or junior or just people who happened to be at the park could come and play. … I played at the very highest of competitive levels. … I think it's a good team sport where all the players have to have pretty well comparable skills. Of course there are the taller players, the jumpers who are the hitters and the blockers, there are setters with their specialized skills, the serve receivers. Now you have the libero, these defensive players. There are specialties, but it [is] a true team sport. … At the high school level and junior high level, I know kids really enjoy playing it.

Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99

by Joelle Reiniger

An oral history project made possible by Volleyball Alberta,
the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation,
and the Alberta Lottery Fund

Interview with Harold Mori

June 30th, 2014
Edmonton, Alberta

Preface

This is Joelle Reiniger on behalf of Volleyball Alberta recording an oral history interview of Harold Mori for the project *Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99.* This interview being recorded on June 30th, 2014, in Edmonton, Alberta.

Interview

Reiniger: Would you spell your full name for me?

Mori: H-A-R-O-L-D. Japanese name is H-A-R-U-O, and last name M-O-R-I, Mori.

Reiniger: Your date of birth?

Mori: April 30th, 1945.

Reiniger: Your place of birth?

Mori: New Denver, British Columbia.

Reiniger: The year you arrived in Alberta?

Mori: In the fall of 1963.

Reiniger: What brought you to Alberta?

Mori: I attended Mount Royal College in Calgary. I finished my high school diploma [there]. I had already finished high school in B.C. but then found out that Alberta standards are a little different, so I had to take their Grade 12 over again. By that time I couldn't go back into UBC because they already started, so then I started into Grade 12. I was going to take Radio and Television, but then after I finished the Grade 12 program, I decided to go into Phys Ed, the BPE program. I went from

Mount Royal to the University of Calgary and then to Edmonton and graduated out of Edmonton.

Reiniger: What was your first contact with volleyball?

Mori: Probably at Mount Royal College. I played one year of basketball, and the second year I didn't play. Then a friend of mine came up and said, 'They need some volleyball players and the coach wanted to know if you'd come out,' so I came out. I had no idea about volleyball until I went to that first volleyball practice. I started playing, and I thought, 'This is a game I could play.' So that just developed from there.

Reiniger: Which year was that?

Mori: 1965.

Reiniger: What drew you to the sport of volleyball?

Mori: … The speed of the game was okay, and I just loved every sport. Actually, that's why I went into Phys Ed: because I liked every sport, so volleyball was just another outlet. Basketball was my main love – baseball, played baseball during the summers and stuff like that, but volleyball seemed to be one more [opportunity]. Once I got into playing, we needed to get officials, and once I got into officiating, then that really turned me on [to volleyball] because of the officiating program. When I was coaching and once I got into teaching, we couldn't get officials. You had to be an official yourself, and I thought, 'Well, I want to get certified as an official because you just can't go out there [untrained] and start blowing the whistle.' I got certified in a number of different sports: basketball, volleyball, curling, fastball, soccer, gymnastics; and volleyball happened to be another venue. As I kept progressing, volleyball seemed to be drawing me into – seemed to be a lot more for me [than some other sports].

Reiniger: Would you describe the state of volleyball officiating when you first became involved in the sport as a player?

Mori: … The players needed to have officials, and there were very few officials out there. That's why I got more interested in it and started to pursue that. … I was certified in other sports to officiate but volleyball seemed to be more lacking in officials at that time, and that was in the early 70s.

Reiniger: If we could use basketball as an example, how would you compare [officiating in the two sports]?

Mori: With basketball, when we got into basketball officiating, they seemed to be much more organized, much more coordinated. When I went to referee basketball tournaments, it was all set up … Volleyball officiating, I went to a tournament there, [and] there didn't seem to be any organization. ... That's what got me more involved in volleyball officiating because I wanted to make sure that when our teams come to play, the officials are there and it's coordinated. ... Rather than going into a program that was already well established, I thought volleyball would be where I could probably do the best good or maybe the most help. So that's what got me into the area of volleyball officiating.

Reiniger: If you could describe, with years where you can, the trajectory of your Alberta volleyball career.

Mori: I think that probably started when I started my teaching career in 1970. That's when I started coaching at the junior high level and going to tournaments, and that's when I found out that there weren't enough officials. They weren't qualified, and that's what made me get my local and then my provincial [certification]. Once I started getting into my provincial [program], I thought, well, the next level if you want to [officiate] a high-calibre ball, you had to improve your quality of officiating. So that got me getting into my regional [certification] and so on and so forth. I never aimed to be the referee in chief of the province or anything like that, but it just sort of all fell into place once I started going through the program. When I took on the zone position … trying to just get the officials just in our area organized. I saw that throughout the province what the complaint seemed to be about officials was teams that go from – We came into the same problem that if you went to one area of the province to another to play tournaments or play games, the officiating was not consistent. To have consistency, you needed somebody to get involved in the program, so to become the referee in chief of the province, the ROC, you had more control over that. My goal was to have consistency throughout the province so coaches would not complain, 'We went out to this place here and the officials, they're making calls and they're doing stuff...' We need to have consistency, not only in officiating. We need to have consistency in dress, so standardization of dress. Standardization of hand signals, calls, so that coaches [and] players felt comfortable no matter where they went in the province of Alberta, they were going to have consistency. So my job when I became ROC, one of my main goals, was to travel to every part of the province to know every official that was going to be coming up or get officials that I knew had potential to get to the next level. That was one of the

reasons I wanted to get involved, to get that consistency, to go out to all of the areas of the province to find out what those officials are doing. The government came up with a program, because we were going to have the [1983] FISU games in Alberta. They were going to come up with three-year funding for officials, and that was a great help. Bob Bratton was a big help in this area; he helped out with this. We worked together to get the master officials program going in Alberta, and we thought [there was] no better place than Jasper [Volleyball Camp]. Every summer in Jasper they have the players come, they have the coaches come. We thought when the coaches meet, we will bring our officials at that time. We will bring two to three officials from each zone and have them become the trainers in their zone as master officials, and then we could work with the coaches. I think there was a great benefit because now the coaches could see the officials' part and the officials could see the coaches' side of it. I think that helped to bring the officials together … because now we're trying to work on the same thing for the betterment of volleyball in Alberta. That was one of the big projects that I thought was good for our program.

Reiniger: You described some of the things that assisted you in achieving the goals that you had mentioned, achieving consistency in officiating. What were some of the obstacles to achieving those goals?

Mori: I think some of the obstacles were getting the officials the time to come down to the major centres to see higher calibre volleyball, to be involved in that. Then probably the financial [challenges] to get them down there or to get higher calibre ball out to the smaller centres.

Reiniger: I would like to talk about your international experience in officiating and how you would compare your experience officiating here with the experience of officiating abroad.

Mori: I'm glad I prepared in Canada because being able to go to Alaska or the U.S. and observe and work in their areas and go to China and Japan – It really opened my eyes to see what they are doing there. To bring back some of the things that they are doing, to try and instill them, to bring them into our program back in Alberta. But I think our Alberta officials are very well trained, so they wouldn't take a back seat to any of those other officials. I'm glad that I was able to travel with different teams to go to those countries and to just observe that.

Reiniger: Did you see any differences in how officiating was done here as opposed to those other places?

Mori: I would think that Japan is probably one of the leaders in officials in how the officials are respected and how they're very professional over there. Everything is just done correctly, well, the way I would like to see it done. … I guess that's one of the countries [where I] really looked up to their officials; how things were done, how they were organized and trained.

Reiniger: Given that there were exchanges with Japanese coaches at the Jasper Volleyball Camp specifically, which you were a part of, how significant was the influence of these Japanese groups in officiating in this province, if it was significant?

Mori: I would say they had a tremendous impact on [officiating in Alberta] because I think of the [Japanese] coaches that were there, and as officials, what we observed from them, what we tried to bring back and instill in our officials. [I hoped], as the ROC, that would be something that we could filter down to our officials; the professional conduct of [Japanese] officials at the tournament. … I think [it] was very important for us to have observed that.

Reiniger: When I interviewed Hugh [Hoyles] on the Jasper Volleyball Camp, he spoke about the relationship between the Japanese group and the group here and some of the relationships that were formed during that time. Is there anything you would like to say about that?

Mori: One thing I liked about the Japanese is – even though I am Japanese [chuckle], not born in Japan but born in Canada, and I still have relatives over there – talking to some of the other officials, when your team is playing or your country is playing, they sort of like to give their edge to your team. But the Japanese I found, when I came to referee there, they were a little hesitant at first because they didn't know if I was going to make calls to help our team or not. For me, I like to make calls to be fair to both teams and probably be harder on my own team. I really respected that; that they called the game as it should be called. That's the way I like to see the game called and that's the way I liked to have my officials officiate the same way: not being biased, but being fair and officiating that way. I think the Japanese were very strong in that category, and I really respect that. I'll always remember that because when I did get to officiate there, they trusted me and let me referee the matches and felt comfortable with it, and that's the feeling that I had.

Reiniger: I am paraphrasing Hugh's comments now, but another thing he touched on was the cultural exchange aspect of it. To loosely sum up what he said, he felt it was important for people attending the camp to have that exposure to another culture and that that was a real highlight for people who were there. Is there anything

else you would like to comment on in that regard?

Mori: I agree totally with Hugh. I know he's done a lot of work for Volleyball Alberta, but having the Japanese coaches come to Jasper was a very strong point in forming how Alberta volleyball has gone today. I know Bob Bratton and other teams have gone – and I've gone with John Paulson – over to Japan, and that exchange has further helped our development. Having Ken Maeda come over and coach the national team, [those were] very strong influences. I'm really glad that Alberta volleyball was able to do that because I think that set the pace for us.

Reiniger: What were some of the most rewarding moments in your volleyball career?

Mori: I guess I'm going to step back a minute and just say, when I became the ROC … what I did was: To have credibility [with players] I went to [player] camps, [player] clinics … became certified in that. Then, I thought, to have credibility with the coaches, I would have to get certified as a coach. I took my coach's certification and I became a Level 3 course conductor … so when I'm going to these clinics, talking to the players, talking to the coaches, that they would say, 'He's not just a referee, he's one of us because he is certified in players' clinics, he's certified in coaching clinics, and he is certified as an official.' All three of those gave me the credibility of being able to go to the clinics and say, this is where the coaches are coming from, this is where the players are coming from, and here's where the officials are coming from. We're working together and to make volleyball a better sport in Alberta. That was a rewarding thing for me, to be able to go into those clinics and know that they knew that I was on their side in that aspect.

Reiniger: What were some of the most disappointing moments in your career?

Mori: I guess it would be trying to get those officials from the far reaches of our province, to get them to come into the major centres – the time commitment and the financial [commitment] to bring them in there so they could observe higher calibre matches to be able to officiate in them to make them a better referee. That was probably a big disappointment for me – [when I couldn't] get those potentially good officials to be able to do that.

Reiniger: What about the funniest moments?

Mori: It's funny that you say that because when I think about my career as a referee, I don't think about a lot of things as funny. I guess one of the funniest things is when

we went to the northern part of China in the Heilongjiang, Harbin exchange there. We were in there in the mid 80s. At that time, they had not seen blonde-haired white people, many of them. We had girls that were six feet, six-one, six-two, blonde haired. When we'd walk down the street, all the people would look and be watching them. What I said was, 'You know what? I can blend in with them. I'm just going to step back, and I'm going to see what they're watching when you guys walk down the street.' So I'd follow them and when the girls would stop, they'd all stop and they'd take a picture. They'd all look to see what they were doing when they bent over to put film in the camera. All the people were looking over their shoulders. I thought that was pretty funny, so that would probably be one of the funniest things that I saw in my travels.

Reiniger: What about some of the most stressful times in your career?

Mori: When you're an official, there are a lot of times when you're under a lot of stress. The higher the competition, the more stressful it becomes. For me, I think the most stressful was when I was going for my national rating. That national tournament that you went to, the junior nationals, you were under the microscope not for only officiating, for your conduct, for every move that you made. And not by only one person, but by a number of them because they were all watching to see what you were doing on your off time as well as what kind calls you're making. ... Your whole conduct was being considered, so I think that was probably the most stressful time, the most stressful weekend. I mean, there are [other times] in championship games when you're officiating that you get those moments, but it's not the whole weekend. … The whole weekend [of] your national certification [examination] you're under the microscope.

Reiniger: This is something you have touched on already, but overall, is there anything you would like to say about the most significant changes to volleyball officiating over the course of your career?

Mori: Well, if you're talking about rule changes … one thing about volleyball, and I think most sports, [is] they continually update the rules, change the rules. For volleyball, they changed drastically in the 80s and 90s. … I think [the changes were] beneficial: like taking out the serving line, adding the libero, the incidental net touches not being called, and increasing the number of substitutions, going to rally point. Those things all sped up the game … so it's a spectator sport now where more people are watching and … you can fit [the length of the game] into the TV programs. I think those things had a great impact on volleyball officiating and improving the game.

Reiniger: What about the game overall? Not just the game itself, but all the various aspects of this sport in this province. What are some of the most significant changes you saw over time?

Mori: The speed of the game has increased drastically and the size and quickness of the players. The calibre of play has improved a lot. Volleyball has just – I would say that [it's] one sport that has exploded in the 80s and 90s … and [the changes are] all for the better.

Reiniger: How have you seen the popularity of Alberta [volleyball] change since you became involved? Could you expand on that a little bit?

Mori: I think because there's better coaching out there, and the coaches are more dedicated. They seem to spend a lot more time. The support from Alberta Volleyball has really helped the game of volleyball [and increased its] popularity. There are more club teams; the schools are really involved in it. I think these [changes] have been really great for Alberta. I also think that people are playing volleyball later in their life. It's a leisure type of sport too. You can play it a lot longer, and you can play at your own speed now. So that's good.

Reiniger: I want to pick up on something you mentioned about the 80s and the 90s being a period of significant change in the game. What was happening the 80s and the 90s that led to this?

Mori: One of the first things is Alberta hosting the FISU games. Because of the FISU games coming, we were able to train minor officials right in Alberta. We trained around 50 of our own officials to work the minor officials program or be minor officials at the games. Also, having the national men's program at the University of Calgary was a big asset because now people could see the best [volleyball players] in the country right in our own province. ... I think that's part of the great explosion. Then when you see how our colleges and universities were doing in those years, just tremendous. It's still carrying on to this day, but I feel those two things impacted us greatly.

Reiniger: What makes Alberta volleyball different from volleyball in any other province or country?

Mori: I'm probably biased, and I've been involved in a lot of the other sports, but volleyball, the people that have been involved with Alberta Volleyball have been

people, qualified people, that are still there today. If you talk about Hugh Hoyles, Lorne Sawula, Leigh Goldie, Pierre Baudin, those people are still involved in the game. George Tokarsky, they are still involved in the game, still giving. I think because they have been doing so much, and like I said … Alberta Volleyball has been doing [so much] in the province. We are a tight-knit family. I still feel, whenever I come back and talk to people, it's just still an old home league. I think that has a great impact on how [well] Alberta Volleyball has done – what they have done for volleyball. It makes me feel gratified to see that, and it still continues. I think that's what makes us, the program in Alberta, very good.

Reiniger: Looking at some of the changes that took place in the province during the time of your involvement, the 70s, the 80s, the 90s, particularly. How did you see changes in politics, in economics, in the cultural makeup of this province, migration to the province, all of these different things that happened in Alberta society during this time. How did you see them impact the development of sport in this province?

Mori: When I was involved, myself, in the officials' program, I could see, looking at the funding that the [provincial] government was giving – I know most of the country feels Alberta has all of the money because of the oil and that – but I feel that they've put the money in where it was accessible for the sports program … I think they've got to keep doing that. If we are going to maintain our level or improve our level, we need to have that funding, that support from the government so that we can carry on with our programs. Hopefully this will continue, and hopefully volleyball will continue to develop and grow in Alberta.

Reiniger: You mentioned a number of positive changes that have taken place over time in terms of the popularity of the sport and the consistency in the rules of the game. Do you see any negative changes in how the sport has developed over time?

Mori: I guess because I played every sport when I was growing up, I think now, with the way sports are going, people feel that if they're going to be a professional – not even a professional player, a good player – they need to make a commitment to that sport. I think that's sort of unfair to the athlete because then they can't spend time in other sports. It's sort of like you're channeled into one sport only, and volleyball's not the only one. I mean, you look at hockey or any others – But that's what I feel about these kids growing up, coming up now, that they have to sort of make a decision as to what sport [to play]. It might be one or two, but it's not going to be every sport. I think they should be versatile … but that's not the way the world's going. If you're going to be a hockey player, you're going to do that from day one. If you're going to

be a volleyball player, it seems like you're going to have to do that. That's the downside of it all for me, I think.

Reiniger: Is there anything else you would like to add that we missed?

Mori: Probably at this time, when I had gone in to be the ROC, my school board was very supportive of what I did. In saying that, they supported me not only in giving me the time off, but they supported me financially because they covered the costs of my sub. They gave me many days during the year where I was able to go and do my job as the ROC. I really respect that, and I really appreciate what Alberta Volleyball has done and what they are still doing. I think those two things have made me feel great about being involved with the Alberta Volleyball Association.[1]

Reiniger: You had a lot of support from your school board. Why do you think that they were so accommodating or so enthusiastic to give you the time to develop this?

Mori: That's a good question. One of the reasons I feel that they did that [was] because they knew that I was going to put the time back into the program at the schools and get things going in the community … so they felt this was a good investment. And I did that. I spent a lot of time doing those things for the community, not only in volleyball, but in other areas.

[1] Known as Volleyball Alberta since 2013

Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99

An oral history project made possible by Volleyball Alberta,
the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation,
and the Alberta Lottery Fund

Interview with Hugh Hoyles
April 9th, 2014, and August 1st, 2014
Edmonton, Alberta

Preface

This is Joelle Reiniger on behalf of Volleyball Alberta recording an oral history interview of Hugh Hoyles for the project *Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99.* This interview is being recorded on April 9th, 2014, and August 1st, 2014, in Edmonton, Alberta.

Interview
Part 1

Reiniger: Would you state your name, including the spelling of your name, and your date of birth for the record.

Hoyles: My name is Hugh Hoyles. H-U-G-H, Hugh. Hoyles, H-O-Y-L-E-S. I was born on September 17th, 1939.

Reiniger: I am wondering if you would start by telling me where you were born and what brought you to Alberta.

Hoyles: I was born in a mining town in Northern Ontario [called Kirkland Lake]. I was a son of a geologist. When I was about two years old, I moved into the province of Quebec into another mining town. I ended up going to elementary school there, and then I went to a boys' school in Southern Ontario. When I finished high school, I thought, 'I better get out west' – to the Wild West – because I'd never been west of … Sudbury, [Ontario]. So I came out west in 1960, and I never went back east. I've been back many times visiting, but I've stayed out west because I love the West. I ended up working in a mining town in the interior of B.C. for almost three years and decided 'Hugh, you should go to university.' So I applied at UBC, University of Alberta, and University of Saskatchewan, and I chose Edmonton, U of A, for a number of reasons, not the least of which [was] it was nationally known as a good school for physical

education and recreation. They had a brand new dean, Maury Van Vliet, who was the guru of phys ed and recreation at the time, so I figured this is the place I'd like to be. I came in September 1963, and I just fell in love with the U of A and Edmonton and everything that was going on. It was a young, vibrant city. Although, I must say – I had an old car at the time, and I remember driving in. I didn't know a soul in Edmonton. I remember driving in and looking at the city, and I said, 'What am I doing here? I should be back working in the mines in B.C.' But I said, 'Aw, I'll give it a month. I'll give it a month at the U of A.' As I said, I just fell in love with the place. I made friends right away, and Edmonton was a very vibrant city, [a] young, up-and-coming city. That's how I ended up coming to the U of A.

Reiniger: What was it that drew you to the 'Wild West' as you were mentioning. Where did that idea start?

Hoyles: I think what I really noticed when I came here – Obviously Toronto is around that area where there was more history, but I liked what I call the homogeneity of the Edmonton area. There were no [class] barriers. Everybody was treated with respect, and I just loved the way people worked together and just the excitement of being out in the West.

Reiniger: Could you tell me how your involvement in volleyball began?

Hoyles: I got involved with volleyball in an interesting way. Being in Physical Education and Recreation, I always loved sport. A bunch of us got together – this would be '63, the summer of '64 – and we made up a softball team. Lo and behold, one of the players on the softball team was a guy named Errol Miller. Errol and I were outfielders for our team, and one day he approached me and said, 'Hugh, I am looking after a club volleyball team called the Edmonton Phoenix Volleyball Club. I've been kind of a player coach, I've had some success, I've been on the national team, and we have a really good club. Would you come out and help me out as a manager?' I said, 'Well, Errol, I don't know a thing about volleyball.' Errol said, 'That does not matter. You obviously love sport, and I know – because you're at the U of A – that you are learning a lot about the administration of sport. Come on out.' So I did, and I right away was taken. I had some preconceived ideas of what volleyball was all about. 'Volleyball?' I was raised in Northern Quebec where we never saw a volleyball court. There was hockey, curling, and baseball, and that was about it. I really liked the athleticism of volleyball. There's a lot to it: good, hard hitting. There was a lot of [opportunity] to play an aggressive game.

It wasn't the passive game that I had a preconceived idea about. I liked that, but I also liked the team aspect of volleyball where – because a spiker can't spike a ball unless he gets a good set from the setter, and the setter can't get a good set for the spiker from the person who forgets the first pass from the serve – it's a very much a team sport. There's always three touches, usually on each side of the net. I was really impressed with the athleticism and the ability [of] some of these guys to hit the ball really hard, but also I really liked the idea of the 'team-ness', the working together. Those were the two major things that I was really impressed with. We got into a few tournaments and so on and so forth, and that was really good because I could see we had a certain element of success. I think we won the provincial championships that year, and we went to – I think it was – Quebec City for the national championships. In any event, I got onto volleyball, and I stayed with Edmonton Phoenix for a few years.

Reiniger: Early in your career at the University of Alberta, you took a leave of absence to work in Montreal. Would you tell me about this chapter in your career?

Hoyles: That was all about the 1976 Olympic Games. I had coached, as I said, the Edmonton Phoenix Volleyball Club. But when the fellow who was coaching [the U of A Golden Bears], Lorne Sawula, decided to take a job in Windsor, Ontario … the athletic director asked me to move over to coach the Golden Bears volleyball team. So I did; I said, 'Yes, I'll do that.' As it turned out, we had a lot of international experiences with teams coming to Edmonton, and I got to know the national association staff out of Ottawa quite well. In 1975 they were looking for somebody to be the director of the volleyball competition for the Olympic Games. I was approached by the Canadian Volleyball Association and they said, 'Would you be interested?' I said, 'Sure'. So they said, 'Well, we don't actually make the decision, but we're going to recommend you to the Olympic organizing committee,' COJO. C-O-J-O, the Comités d'Organisation des Jeux Olympiques. I had taken the Bears to Laval University in Quebec City that spring, and we got the silver medal. On the way back [to Edmonton], I stopped off at Dorval Airport in Montreal and had an interview – It was a very interesting interview – After the interview I headed back to Edmonton, and two weeks later I got offered the job. Then I had to go to the dean, Dean Maury Van Vliet, and I said, 'I have a chance to go to Montreal, but I have to go there in '75. I have to go there for at least a year' – actually, it turned out to be almost 18 months, but at least a year – 'so I'm going to need to leave my position here at the U of A, but I don't know if I really want to.' He said, 'Hugh, you go. You take that job. It's not only good for your career, it's good for the faculty of Phys Ed and Recreation. You've done a lot of work for volleyball, and it'd be great to have

you down as our representative, so to speak, in Montreal.' So I accepted. … I went down in April '75, just at the end of classes, and I didn't come back until September 1976. In that time we ran a big tournament in the summer of '75, which was like a dress rehearsal for the Olympics … and then we ran the big show, the Olympics and volleyball in the Olympics. There were 21 sports in the Olympics, and at that time there were five team sports, volleyball being one. There was volleyball, basketball, field hockey, soccer and team handball, and all the rest were either individual sports like track and field or wrestling, things like that. That was a wonderful experience. There were many things that transpired there. Because I was from the West and had been involved with the Canadian Volleyball Association for a few years, I was able to get people from all different parts of Canada to come, because we had to recruit people. We had referees from Edmonton and statisticians from Calgary and people from Saskatchewan and people from St. John's, Newfoundland all involved, which was really great. The volleyball competition went extremely well. We had the preliminaries in an arena called the Paul Sauvé Arena, which is still standing. That worked for the preliminary matches, and then in the finals we went to the old Montreal Forum where we had the centre court and everything. The place was packed. At that time I think the Montreal Forum held 16,000 people. It was packed for the final. I still remember it was between Poland and U.S.S.R., and it was a great match. The technical part and the administrative part went very, very well because it was a real team effort. There were a couple of the fringe benefits that I enjoyed. The Montreal Olympics organizing committee was asked the by Queen of England if she could come and see some of the activities. She chose a few, one of which was volleyball. I had the chance to look after them when they came to the volleyball venue and was able to sit beside Prince Phillip and explain the game to him a little bit. They quite enjoyed it. As a follow-up to that, we got an invitation to go aboard the Royal Yacht Britannia. That was really fun. ... It's no longer in use as the Royals' floating hotel, but that was fun. Then not two or three days later, Pierre Elliott Trudeau came to Montreal. He, of course, was just up the road in Ottawa. He came and he did a tour of a lot of the sports, but he came to volleyball as well. He sat down and … I said a couple of words in French, and he said, 'With a name like Hugh Hoyles, that doesn't sound too French. And you're from Alberta?' I said, 'Oh, yeah!' – I was kidding – and I said, 'Most of us in Alberta speak French.' I didn't tell him about … my early childhood in a [Quebec] mining town. Anyway, we had a chuckle and the game went on and he left. It was those two experiences that were kind of interesting, and I look back on those experiences with fond memories.

Reiniger: I would like to hear about your work with the Jasper Volleyball Camp. I know you had to leave a year in – after founding the Jasper Volleyball Camp – to go to

Montreal. Is that right?

Hoyles: Yes. Jasper Volleyball Camp started in 1974, in August. I got the idea originally after having worked with Edmonton Phoenix. I had just been so green in coming into coaching way back in the early 60s. I went to a camp out in British Columbia called the Winfield Volleyball Camp. It was put on by the BCVA, the British Columbia Volleyball Association. They had some guest coaches there, but I wanted to bone up on volleyball so when I came to help Errol Miller and the Phoenix the next year, I wanted to be a little more technically qualified. It was great. I said, 'You know what? We need something like that in Alberta.' So everything fell together, and just about at that time in early 1974, a company called the O'Keefe Brewing Company came out with a program called the O'Keefe Sports Foundation. To make a long story short, they put money towards amateur sport to either send people away to other countries to bone up on a particular sport or to bring in coaches. Well, because we had a few connections with Japan – there had been some [Japanese] coaches at the Winfield Camp in B.C. – we were able to land a fellow named Hiroshi Toyoda. Hiroshi Toyoda was 'Mr. Volleyball' in Japan. We invited him, and we got enough financing from O'Keefe to look after him for eight months. He came to Canada in January, the coldest month of the year, and stayed right through until August. He did clinics across Canada; he did a lot of work in volleyball. As a matter of fact, he stayed at my house for three weeks, but then right at the very end of his tour, he went all the way to the Maritimes. He came back, and we had it set up so he would be at the Jasper Volleyball Camp, which was critical because we wanted to have not only a Jasper Camp for young players – junior high and senior high age – but we wanted to get the coaches involved. At that time there were lots and lots of people coaching volleyball at the school level. [The camp] was popular at junior high and senior high [levels] at that time, but when we announced that [Toyoda] was going to be there to help with the coaches' clinic for one of the three weeks of the camp, we just filled the camp. I think we had close to 120 coaches, and [the] tradition continued after that. The fact that we were able to get them exposed to a Japanese international coach was good because the Japanese, as we all know, are very meticulous when it comes to sport. They still have the best fundamentals in the world; they're very keen on fundamentals. This was perfect for high school and junior high teachers who wanted to be volleyball coaches, so they could learn things they never thought about like footwork or how you move toward a ball or just hit the ball. It was great. People were madly taking notes and that was a great thing. In '74 we decided that we'd have the camp [again] in '75. … I wrote it into my contract [with the Olympics] that I could come back in the summer of '75 for the three weeks of the Jasper Camp. It was actually in 1976, the year that the

Montreal Olympics was held, that we didn't have the Jasper Volleyball Camp. Simply because a lot of the people that would be at the camp were helping out with us down in Montreal, so that was kind of a year's sabbatical from the camp. But it continued on, and I was associated with it for about ten years – [until] 1984. Nine years I guess, because of that one year off. It still goes, and there's still the opportunity for young players to improve their skills technically, [and] there's still a camp for the coaches. If nothing else, I think it really helped the development of volleyball in Alberta because we had people who came out there who didn't know anything about volleyball. I can remember two or three coming up every year and saying, 'You know, Hugh? … I've been asked to coach the volleyball team at X junior high school, and now I figure I can do a fairly decent job.' As I say, the camp still goes to this day, and the format is still basically the same.

Reiniger: You mentioned the year that Hiroshi Toyoda came you had a very high attendance among coaches. Which year was that again?

Hoyles: That would be 1974, the very first year, because we wanted to dovetail the fact that he was with this O'Keefe Sports Foundation. It was a perfect situation to have a person of that stature who [had been] a teacher many years ago. He was such a good teacher and could put things across so well. Like I said earlier, I can still remember people madly taking notes about this drill and that drill. Then of course, we socialized and he met other coaches. It was a wonderful experience.

Reiniger: I would also like to ask how your experience in Montreal at the Olympics affected your work with the Jasper Volleyball Camp in the years after you returned.

Hoyles: Good question. Having been involved on the international scene, I got to know the president of the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball, F-I-V-B … and of course, lots of other people. I remember Sinan Erdem[1] from Turkey. I can't remember the fellow's name from England – I met a lot of international people. I met a few Eastern European coaches, and one was the head coach of the women's volleyball team for Bulgaria. Dmitrov was his name. Anyway, out of the blue, I got to know these people in Montreal … and I got them come as guest coaches to the Volleyball Camp. What I liked about being able to make those contacts was that, [although] the Japanese influence was big – they had won the gold medal in the men's in 1972 in Mexico City – we wanted

[1] Sinan Erdem was a Turkish volleyball player who led the FIVB from 1792 to 1984 and served as chairman of the Turkish National Olympic Committee from 1989 until his death in 2003.

to get some of the European influence as well. So we did have a fellow from Bulgaria, we had a fellow from Holland, and in subsequent years we had a couple of coaches from the USA, plus our own national team coach at that time, Bill Neville. [He was] an American, but he was on our Canadian team. They all came out to Jasper in the succeeding years. So the coaches – the high school coaches and the club coaches and the junior high coaches – had a good experiences because even though [the instruction] was at an international level, they got all caught up in it and were really wanting to learn more. One of the nice things one year was – again because of Hiroshi Toyoda – Yuko Arakida. Yuko played on the [Olympic Japanese women's team]. [They] won the gold medal in Montreal in '76, and Toyoda made sure that she came. I think it was in '77 or '78 … She came and was a guest coach. Of course, everybody was just gaga over her because she was an Olympic volleyball player and spoke really good English. She was really good. You asked about the experience in Montreal. It exposed me to more people internationally, but not to forget our own Canadian people who were there from Québec and all over helping run [the Games]. I got to know a lot of people, and we got a few coaches from Québec to come out one summer to the camp. The word about Jasper being a fairly decent camp got around, so we were always able to not just have Alberta coaches but Saskatchewan coaches and Manitoba coaches and Ontario coaches. So that was great.

Reiniger: I would like to jump ahead on that and ask you how the international influences that you have been describing impacted the development of volleyball in Alberta in general, beyond the Jasper Volleyball Camp. I know there were also exchanges and other aspects of the international development of the game that interacted with it in Alberta, so would you describe that process to me. How did international influences impact the development of volleyball in Alberta?

Hoyles: The international experience that I was able to garner at the Montreal Olympics … impacted the development of volleyball in Alberta by not only getting coaches at the Jasper Volleyball Camp – because there were lots of things going on in Alberta other than the Jasper Volleyball Camp; there was a club season, a school season – but I think it was the ability for Alberta to attract visiting teams to the province. I know we had a German team come to Alberta and do a tour. The German team, they were just a wonderful bunch of guys. I can still remember playing up in St. Paul, Alberta, and they packed the gym there [in] a game between the Edmonton Phoenix and Düren, a little town near Cologne, … with a whole bunch of young kids from the St. Paul area watching. It was a great game too. We were very evenly matched and said, 'Hey, here

[are] some guys from Germany [who are] playing a high calibre of volleyball, we can play too!' So that kind of thing really was a spin-off of the international experience. One thing I completely forgot about is officiating. Officiating we didn't have in the 70s and maybe early 80s. We only had about two internationally certified officials, and because of these international competitions, there was the odd time we had to bring in an outside official. We developed the officials group of the Canadian Volleyball Association. The provincial association really worked on it, and we were able to get more officials. Officiating, as in any sport, was really important, so that was a really good offshoot of the international experience. Then of course, the cultural exchange too; it goes part and parcel with the athletic part. We all know that the Japanese people are very gracious hosts when you go there, but when they travel they always take the time to give everybody a little gift. I can remember so many wide-eyed young people at Jasper and at games when they were played in Calgary and Edmonton and Red Deer and so on when they gave little gifts to people. … That cultural exchange was important too.

Reiniger: I am hoping you can expand on the cultural exchange aspect of it. Specifically, how would you describe the legacy of the Jasper Volleyball Camp as it relates to the development of multiculturalism in Alberta?

Hoyles: Again, to repeat a bit, we had Hiroshi Toyoda here, and that was our initial connection with the outside world of volleyball in getting people here. ... We made an agreement that if we could pay all of the in-Canada expenses of the coaches – their meals and their accommodations and transportation – the Japan Volleyball Association would pay to get them here by air and take them back home. We were able to get those coaches each year. So when they came – of course, I can still remember at the kids' camp – it was really, really interesting because all these little Canadian kids at the camp had never been exposed [to Japanese culture]. They heard about Japan winning the gold medal, and they were going to be coached by a Japanese coach? A majority of these coaches were all from junior and senior high schools in Japan, so they were great teachers, but they were [also] real ambassadors for Japan. They were polite, they were respectful and, as usual, they had a little gift for every player there. … One of the favourite things was for people to get their name written in Japanese script. So everybody had to get whomever it was, Mr. Ota or Mr. Toyoda, to write their name in Japanese script. They were pretty proud of it. It broke down so many barriers. The kids just – I don't know what it was about the Japanese coaches, but they're very good with young people, very good with kids. … They treated us well. The other thing was, [before their visit] I never knew what sukiyaki was like! The camps went for three weeks, but we

always had most of the weekend off. During the weekend off … they took the bull by the horns, and they wanted to cook sukiyaki and tempura for a Japanese meal. That was really fun. A lot of people had never tasted Japanese [food]. I'm a real Japanese food fan now. Also, they had us all try sake; you had to try sake with your tempura and sukiyaki. ... When we brought in Dmitrov from Bulgaria and we had a fellow from Argentina, we always had these exchanges of food, and so on. … There were some years when we had Japanese coaches and an American coach and an Argentinian coach all teaching volleyball. It was fun to see them at meal times exchanging ideas, because [volleyball is] a very international game, so the cultural part comes along with that. But the game of volleyball is played the same in downtown Tokyo or downtown Antwerp in Belgium or downtown Edmonton or Calgary or at the Jasper Volleyball Camp. It's exactly the same, so it [is] a truly international sport and a team sport. It's very easy to get this kind of thing rolling, this cultural exchange bit.

Reiniger: I would like to move on to another aspect of the Jasper Volleyball Camp that you mentioned in earlier conversations and that was with respect to gender.

Hoyles: Oh, yeah.

Reiniger: Could you describe the gender dynamic at the camp?

Hoyles: That's a really interesting question because when I first got involved with volleyball, it didn't strike me right away, but I noticed that when all the tournaments – the club tournaments and the university leagues and the high school leagues – had their provincial championships, [they always had] the men's and women's championships together. [They weren't] in different locations. It didn't strike me right away, but then we had the Jasper Volleyball Camp. I don't know if we made a point [of it], but we when we got coaches to come to the Jasper Volleyball camp to sign up, it was almost a 50-50 split. The coaches were learning together, men and women, … and that worked out perfectly.

Reiniger: You described it as being inclusive in a unique way for the time. Is that correct?

Hoyles: Yeah.

Reiniger: You already touched on the impact of the Camp on volleyball in educational

institutions across the province. Is there anything else you would like to say about that? I am wondering about the legacy of the Jasper Volleyball Camp when it comes to volleyball in schools.

Hoyles: The interesting thing about volleyball development in Canada – and I noticed this because I had originally been from Eastern Canada: in Eastern Canada in the 40s, 50s, 60s, volleyball was a very continental game. Volleyball in England was a non-starter; they were into other things. [Due to immigration patterns], volleyball in Southern Ontario, in the East generally, was more developed in the club system [than the school system]. When I came out West, you found out that volleyball was in the schools. People were playing [club volleyball], but it developed more through the school system rather than the club system. That was very noticeable at national championships in the 60s. I can remember we hosted the national championships in Edmonton in 1972, and an outfit called the 'Hamilton Y', which was the Hamilton YMCA men's team, won the national championship. I think they played the Balmy Beach Tigers from Toronto. They were two club teams, but after that teams like the University of Calgary, University of Winnipeg actually started to win the championships. The Jasper Volleyball Camp was able to cultivate that. The club system was somewhat developed in western Canada, but when we wanted to get the game going, we thought we should focus it on the junior and senior high players, so we did. I think that was a good way to go because volleyball is very strong in the schools and that relationship between the schools and the [Alberta Volleyball] Association has [resulted in] there being a very strong junior high volleyball season in the fall and a strong club system in the winter term. …

Reiniger: Is there anything else you would like to say about the legacy of the camps?

Hoyles: There's one other thing: ... the fact [that] men and women [were] working together. If you look at volleyball, a lot of people had been introduced to it in the school system. But when you look at what's happened since, the recreational aspect has been emphasized. … Now, because it's been emphasized in the schools, a lot of young people have been exposed to the game. Right now in the Edmonton Volleyball Association alone, there's been a real swing. There used to be mostly men's teams and women's teams … but now co-rec volleyball has taken over and a lot of adults are now playing the game on a recreational basis. All of them, or at a lot of them you talk to, have had an experience at the junior or senior high level ... Co-rec volleyball is very, very popular right now. There are more co-rec volleyball teams in the Edmonton Volleyball Association than there are men's and women's. … It's very easy to set up.

First of all, there are six players: you can have three men and three women. It's quite impressive to see how popular that is. A lot of that social element, the co-rec, the co-ed part, is not unique to volleyball. [It's also seen in] things like curling and so on. But [in] volleyball, I think we owe a lot to the fact that it came through the school system, and people have been exposed to it [at a young age]. They're leading better, healthier lives because of getting involved with the sport.

Reiniger: I would like to move on the University Games in 1983. Could you describe your involvement in that event?

Hoyles: It was the first time the University Games had been held in Canada, for sure. The reason I got involved there: people thought that things had gone fairly well in Montreal, and they were looking for somebody just to help get the ball rolling. We were able to – the City of Edmonton and the University combined – bid for the University Games. We landed them, and volleyball, of course, was in it. There were a lot of sports. I can't remember how many sports. So that was excellent. … They asked me to be the Chair, but we had a lot of people who had been in Montreal and a lot of people who were involved with university sport, so it was really a team effort. The University Games were another chance for all of our officials and other people to be exposed to international volleyball, and it was a very successful venture. We had the matches down in the Kinsmen Sports Centre, [which] was really outfitted. It was a volleyball venue, and it went quite well. … We had no trouble getting volunteers because of all these people who had been exposed to volleyball. It was a good experience, much like the Olympics. We have a fellow from the province next door [Saskatchewan], a guy name Mark Tennant who, because of that experience, is very much involved with the FISU Games, the University Games, the volleyball component still to this day. It was thanks to people like him that made it very successful in Edmonton.

Reiniger: Is there anything else you would like to say about the Games and how they influenced the development of volleyball in Alberta?

Hoyles: Because of the University Games, all the players and teams, of course, being students from all across the world, it probably opened the door to more players … to be invited to play in other countries. I know there are a lot of fellows from the men's national team and so on who've gone and played professional volleyball in Europe. For example, the current coach of the Golden Bears, Terry Danyluk, went over to Japan for

a number of years and played pro-volleyball in Japan. The University Games continued to open up the doors to international experiences for players and coaches.

Reiniger: I would like to switch to a different genre of question now. We have been talking about a lot of significant events in the development of volleyball, but I would like to get your thoughts on how volleyball developed [alongside] the history of Alberta as a province more broadly. I know you were here for a time in the province's history when there were a lot of social changes, a lot of economic changes. Is there anything you would like to say about how these changes impacted the development of the sport in the province?

Hoyles: I probably neglected to say this earlier, but one of the things [that occurs] when you host these Games is you get better facilities. When we have more facilities, more people can enjoy the game. I know everybody always talks about the legacy of 'these' Games and the legacy of 'those' Games, but if people are forward-thinking enough – and Edmontonians have always been that way – one of legacies is more facilities. I think what hosting the Games did was it opened up more experiences and more chances for people to play, because now there are all sorts of age [categories] in the club seasons. There [were] only junior championships; now there's under-18 and under-16, and it's really expanded. And why? Because hosting these Games not only exposed people to the game but [it] also was the push to get better facilities.

Reiniger: Given the amount of change that occurred between the 70s and the 80s in Alberta, I am wondering if you saw the evolution of an Alberta identity manifest itself in the sport of volleyball over that period of time.

Hoyles: I think the number of people we had involved at the educational institution level in secondary and postsecondary have allowed the development of volleyball to occur. I think the fact that we had a pretty good province-wide association. We have to give a lot of credit to Calgary, University of Calgary, and people like Bob Bratton. The fact that the Jasper Volleyball Camp was established here. The fact that we had the national team moving into Calgary. The fact that Edmonton hosted the University Games. The fact that in 2005, we had the World Masters Games with a huge volleyball aspect. Now way back in the 60s, volleyball was going on in Alberta, but all of [these developments] put Alberta on the map in terms of not only international connections but also at the school level. Because of Alberta having a good name at the postsecondary level with the University of Alberta, Calgary, Lethbridge, at the college level, our profile is a lot higher

right now. Also, I think you just have to look at some of the high schools. There [are] all sorts of teams travelling around, going to the States, going to Europe and playing the game in other situations in other countries, as I mentioned earlier, with the same rules. … I think what's happened is we are looked toward as one of the leaders in Canadian volleyball, international volleyball for that matter.

Reiniger: Is there anything else you would like to add that I have not covered or that I have not asked you about?

Hoyles: [In] 1960s … we had facilities [with] floppy volleyball nets that weren't tightly strung across a gymnasium. We … literally had posts with sandbags on [them] so they wouldn't fall over holding the net up. [We then got] a farming guy outside of Edmonton to make some in his shop, some steel posts. Now because the equipment is available internationally, we all have very good playing facilities in most places. Good nets, top of the line volleyballs, and so on. That's been a very important development.

Reiniger: [One] the question that I would like to ask again, going back earlier in the interview. You were telling me what attracted you to, as you phrased it, 'the Wild West.'

Hoyles: What attracted me to the West was probably just a sense of adventure to begin with, and I wanted to see the rest of Canada. I mean now people go all over the world, but in those days [travelling] was a really big deal. You know, you're a little guy sitting in Eastern Canada, and you see pictures of combines on farm fields and the mountains. I had to go. I said, 'I have to go out there.' ... It had nothing to do with volleyball, absolutely nothing. I ended up working in a mine in B.C. I really enjoyed my time there, but after being there for close to three years, I decided [I'd] better go to university. ... I applied at the three: At UBC, U of Alberta, and Saskatchewan and chose Alberta. Why I loved the people out West: I guess, there [seemed] to be … no class distinctions. It was very good that way, and I really enjoyed that. I [enjoyed] the fact that I worked in the mines with people from all over the world. In those days, there were a lot of people from the Hungarian Revolution, a lot of Eastern Europeans. You learned a lot about respecting others. When I came to the province of Alberta … everybody accepted everybody for who they were, and it was wonderful. … This is where I wanted to be.

Reiniger: The next question I wanted to repeat was: What attracted you to the sport of volleyball?

Hoyles: Volleyball was not one of the sports I had ever played when I came out West, because I was raised in a mining town in Northern Quebec where there were very few sporting facilities. There was the hockey rink and softball and baseball diamonds and the curling rink, so I was always involved with those sports. Having [played] softball with a fellow named Errol Miller, I found that he had an interest in volleyball. He asked me to come out and help manage his club team, and I did. Right away my whole image – I guess you would say – of volleyball changed. I thought volleyball was this bat-it-over-the-net game that you played at summer picnics. You put a net up between two trees and played. I didn't realize there could be so much in terms of skill, athleticism, strategy, and setting up teams and matching up lineups and so on. It had everything, and it was the ultimate team sport as far as I was concerned. I mean all sports are good, but volleyball is very much a team sport. ... Errol Miller wanted me to continue on, and I decided I would. I went to clinics and boned up on my knowledge. I stayed with volleyball for a number of years. I still marvel at – when I go to see high school tournaments or junior high tournaments – how much of a team sport it is. The fact that people can play it at a fairly good level without too much coaching. In the final analysis, it's not batting a ball over a net at a summer picnic, it's also played at a high level. That's what volleyball's got. You can play it at a very high level, you can play it at a very low level and still be successful at both levels in terms of being able to execute some of the skills.

Part 2

Reiniger: Alberta's social, economic, and political fabric underwent significant changes during your career in sport and phys-ed in this province. For example: urbanization, increased multiculturalism, economic booms and busts, et cetera. How did these changes impact the development of volleyball in Alberta?

Hoyles: [You've] mentioned a number of changes in society, but I've got a few [more] that I can think of. I think in the early 1960s with television … there was much more awareness of international sport [through media]. [Another change was] the economic boom of the 1980s, which tied in, interestingly enough, with the fitness movement. The economic boom of the 80s made it easier for people to play sport, but the biggest change in sport and physical education and recreation was this whole idea of the fitness movement and getting more people involved in fitness, and women [involved] in sport. Then in the late '80s, early '90s, there was the big boom in mixed adult recreational

sport. There were times before that when [if] you went into a physical education complex or a gym, you'd never see any women working out. Now that's totally changed, and volleyball has had a role there. I think the last thing: in the early '90s, things really changed. We had the traditional school approach to volleyball and adult volleyball, [as well as] a whole bunch of age-group volleyball leagues who were under-18, under-16, and that was not around when I was first involved with volleyball.

Let me just elaborate on a few of those things. More awareness of international sport: … volleyball in the '60s was played in the schools. There were clubs for adults, but they were mainly populated by people from continental Europe. It wasn't very British to play volleyball. That little English Channel – there was a barrier, and people just didn't play volleyball. But with Canada being multicultural, there were people that came over from places like the former Czechoslovakia that played volleyball, and they had a good background. In the 1960s, if you look back, there were more foreign names, so to speak, involved. It was very definitely the continent of Europe that was kind of the hotbed of volleyball.

Then in 1964, again, talking about the media. The Japanese women's volleyball team won the gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics. They had been practicing in secret, [and] they introduced a game of quick sets and quick hits [that] totally threw off all of the other women's teams. They just dominated. That was very well televised for a number of reasons: one of which was that the coach was a very demanding coach – who was actually criticized later on because he would even, in some cases, smack a young female volleyball player if she wasn't playing correctly. It was really something. But their game was absolutely phenomenal, and that had a big effect on the international community. First of all, that volleyball wasn't just: throw the ball up, put it up high, and spike the ball. There was a lot more strategy and a lot more talent. I can remember, very clearly, people saying, 'Did you watch the women's volleyball gold medal match in Tokyo?'
The point is, because of communications, television, and so on, the world generally became more aware of the intricacies of volleyball and the fact that it would be played at a high level. … There used to be jokes around that volleyball was only played in nudist camps. [Chuckle] So [the media] made a big change. In 1972 when Japan men won the gold in Munich, the famous Munich Olympics, [that] showed some of the macho kind of guys in Canada in the U.S. and everywhere else that it was a highly technical sport and a power game. It had been sort of [viewed as] a 'patsy' game, just batting a ball back-and-forth over a net. That really had an effect on young guys who were athletic,

getting into volleyball. I can still remember a little story here. Because of our connections, which we had forged in the early 70s with Japan, we got the men's team to come to Edmonton for a match against the Canadian national men's team ... We were actually in a situation when that match began, or just before that match began, scalping tickets out in front of the main gym at the U of A for people to get in. It was packed: 3,000 people, [because of] the reputation of the Japanese team, the fact that they were playing against Canada, and it was just prior to the high school volleyball season. That exposure really helped.

The other thing which really sticks in my mind is in the 1980s – that's when there was the boom in Alberta and there was more money around. … Some [business] organizations started to fund volleyball. The O'Keefe Sport Foundation, which was the brainchild of somebody at the O'Keefe Breweries and head office in Toronto, was putting money into amateur sport. That's how we got some technical people from Japan to come over to help coach and teach coaches. There was a little more money around to support sport. As you look back, too, in the 90s after that, the provincial government of Alberta got into subsidizing or helping all the amateur sport governing bodies to get paid staff.

Tied in with that, as a person very interested in mass participation and recreation, the fitness movement hit right in the early 80s. That's when 'aerobics' was the big term. You know, 'You've got to do aerobics!' Now, of course, there's every kind of [activity]. Again, to repeat what I had said a little bit earlier: before the 80s, you would very rarely see a female in the weight room at the University of Alberta, where I worked. Very rarely. ... Now it's just normal. With people going to this aerobics thing, [the trend] kind of spilled over because of this movement to be fit and so on. People would do the aerobics thing, but also got interested in sport. They wanted to stay fit. There were more people getting into sports like volleyball, and the fact that the women were very much involved led to a situation where we had mixed leagues starting. We started doing co-rec volleyball and co-rec basketball, [which] were unheard of in the 60s and 70s at the University of Alberta. There were men's sports and women's sports, and never the twain shall meet. This movement, in conjunction with that economic boom, the fitness movement and this idea to get involved really contributed to mixed sport. One example: I haven't got the numbers off the top of my head, but the Edmonton Volleyball Association a few years ago had primarily men's teams and women's teams. Now there are more co-rec mixed teams – three men, three women volleyball teams than the other two combined. … The last thing that sticks out in my mind in the development of volleyball and how outside

factors helped it along was this whole business of getting into age-group teams. In the 60s and 70s, there was just a national senior championship; there was only one championship. Now there's under-18 and under-16, and that all has a lot to do with the fact that people who had played in rec leagues got into coaching and so on and so forth. Now a lot of young people are playing the game. Those are some of my thoughts about how the changes in society helped the sport of volleyball along to [becoming] a very high participation sport. The international aspect of volleyball was a very important thing: the fact that you can play volleyball in sunny downtown Edmonton and they're playing exactly the same game in Hong Kong, same rules and everything. That enabled a lot of interchanges between countries and so on.

Reiniger: I would also like to ask if you have seen any areas where volleyball specifically or sport more generally contributed to some of the social changes that you discussed or any or developments in Alberta society.

Hoyles: Yeah, I have a few thoughts on that. I think there are a number of things. One is volleyball has been very much an inclusive kind of sport. What I mean by that – I think I'm very safe in saying – is it is probably the sport, the initial sport, that really got involved with mixed leagues. I can remember [when] … the men's teams and the women's teams at national championships [began to work] together; whereas, prior to that, a lot of sports, volleyball included, had the men's championships at a certain place and the women's championship at a different place. I think volleyball has been very inclusive that way.

Another thing to mention is the internationalism of volleyball teams because of … the rules being the same and people realizing, 'Hey, we can go to Germany,' or 'Hey, we can go to Japan,' and play the same game. ... The other aspect [of] volleyball [that contributed] to some of these changes was the cultural experience: the gift exchanges when teams play an international sport, volleyball included. At the beginning of the match there's always an exchange of gifts ... I can remember when the Japanese came to the Alberta Volleyball Association Jasper Volleyball Camp, the Japanese people always brought little gifts ... These little things just really added to [the camp].

Another [way] volleyball contributed to some of these changes was the ability to play [at an] older age. It's not like a highly technical activity like gymnastics – and that's a great sport, but it's technically challenging. After you get to a certain age, it's pretty hard to do gymnastics. ... Same thing with track and field: very technical. Really, when you get

down to it, volleyball is not that difficult a sport. … A lot of older people play volleyball until they're at least 75, 80, 85. It's interesting to see the development of the Masters Games in volleyball. … You can play volleyball – I'll use the expression – 'womb to the tomb', you know? ... Whereas to be a top-notch gymnast, you're not going to be doing too many flips and things when you're 80-85.

I think volleyball was one of the first sports to really push to get international people to Alberta. There was a bid to get the University Games in 1983. In 1974 we had the Japanese Men's Olympic team come to Edmonton, and as I said earlier, we packed the gym. Then there was the World Masters Games in 2005. Volleyball really did make a push to get international events here. Those are some of my thoughts on how volleyball contributed to the changes in society.

Reiniger: My last question for you: how did the sport of volleyball reflect and/or contribute to an evolving sense of Albertan, or western-Canadian, identity over this period of time?

Hoyles: I think Alberta, the western provinces: Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and B.C. really took the lead – at least in my recollection – in hosting major tournaments. There [were] also national team centres in Winnipeg for the women, and the men were there for a period of years. And Calgary. Both cities did a wonderful job in hosting the major tournaments. ... The other thing that should be mentioned is … Western Canada has great community spirit. Being originally from the East and coming out to western Canada way back in the 60s, you can just sense the community spirit in the western cities, much different than Toronto or Montreal for example.

People in western Canada love to have visitors, so when they host a national championship or an international event, they really, really do a job on it. The whole community gets behind it. If you want to host a tournament, the western people will say, 'Just ask us; we'll do a hell of a job.' I could paraphrase what Pierre Trudeau said – remember when he said, 'Just watch me'? We can say, 'You want a volleyball tournament run properly? Just watch us in western Canada. We'll deliver.'

Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99

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Interview with John Paulsen

June 28th, 2014
Calgary, Alberta

Preface

This is Joelle Reiniger, on behalf of Volleyball Alberta, recording an oral history interview of John Paulsen for the project *Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99.* This interview being recorded on June 28th, 2014, in Edmonton, Alberta.

Interview

Reiniger: Would you start by spelling your full name.

Paulsen: My name is John Paulsen. It's J-O-H-N, last name is P-A-U-L-S-E-N.

Reiniger: Is there a middle name?

Paulsen: No, there's not.

Reiniger: Your date of birth?

Paulsen: The 22nd of May, 1951.

Reiniger: Your place of birth?

Paulsen: Copenhagen, Denmark.

Reiniger: Tell me about how you arrived in Canada and the first place you lived when you came to Canada.

Paulsen: My family decided to emigrate just after I was born. My dad was in the Danish Underground during the Second World War, and in 1951 they still didn't have a place to live. Canada had open immigration, and my dad was a master carpenter and he decided with a friend of his that they would come to Canada and start a new life. I came across the ocean in a freighter when I was about three or four months

old. We landed in Boston, and from there we took a train and went to Winnipeg. That's where I spent the first 25 years of my life, outside of a short stint in Regina.

Reiniger: Living in the city of Winnipeg?

Paulsen: Living in the city of Winnipeg, yes.

Reiniger: What was your first contact with volleyball?

Paulsen: [My] first contact with volleyball would have been when I was in junior high school, probably in Grade 9. Back then volleyball was played at the younger ages with nine players, and you would just rotate in what we called the 'Z'. It was very low level volleyball, but my first exposure was at junior high school.

Reiniger: Tell me about the 'Z' rotation.

Paulsen: You would have three lines of players, and then you would rotate in the same direction we do now. You would go from the back row to the middle row to the front row and then back to the back row.

Reiniger: Would you continue and describe, with specific years where you can, the trajectory of your involvement in volleyball from that point.

Paulsen: When I was younger, I played many different sports. [I] played basketball, played soccer, played volleyball in junior high. When I got to high school, I thought I would try as many different types of sports as I could. I tried out for the volleyball team in Grade 10 but didn't make it, so I was actually cut. It's the only team I was ever cut from I think in my whole life, [chuckle] but anyway. I came back the next year, so my first real exposure to volleyball would have been in Grade 11 in high school in Winnipeg. ... Probably my largest love in high school was basketball, actually. When I finished high school, I had some opportunities to play basketball at two different Canadian universities. So at that juncture, that's what I was going to do. Then my parents decided to move to Saskatoon. My dad had gotten a new job, so I decided to go there for a year and work, trying to get my head together also give them a hand to get settled in. They moved from Winnipeg to Saskatoon in the late 60s. [I] spent the year there working, and during that time I actually played basketball for Saskatchewan in the 1971 Canada Winter Games. I got two weeks off from the place I was working at that time, [which] was a packing house, and I took the second week – because we competed the first week – and hosted all my friends from Winnipeg. [They were] guys I knew from high school, [who] were all playing on the Manitoba volleyball team. I met some great coaches that were coaching the

Manitoba team, and to make a long story short, they convinced me that I should change sports and come back to the University of Winnipeg and play volleyball for them. I had had a couple of experiences with basketball. The sport was great, but just some of the people I was involved with, it wasn't my cup of tea. So I came back to Winnipeg and played at U of W, and the first year was awesome. We won the first of many national championships, and also that summer I was able to make the national team.

Reiniger: Tell me more about what persuaded you to move into volleyball, again.

Paulsen: Basketball was a sport that I really enjoyed playing. Unfortunately, the coaching philosophy of two or three coaches I played for in a row I had an issue [with] because their philosophy was you had to hate the opposition to beat them, and that's not really how I'm wired. I was a little frustrated with what was going on and the results that we were getting. I also felt at that juncture I wanted to go back to Winnipeg and spend some time with some of my friends that I had played with before because they were also in the university program. So I thought, 'It's only a year, I could try it out.' When I went back there, I started playing with a group of people that I felt very comfortable with. They were of like-mind. So I actually ended up in a sport that, for me, was not only physically but also mentally very comfortable to be in.

Reiniger: Those were some of the things that helped push you out of basketball, but fundamentally, what was it that pulled you into volleyball?

Paulsen: I believe that I saw the opportunity to become a much higher calibre volleyball player than being a much higher calibre basketball player. All of a sudden, I started to set my sights higher than just being a university level volleyball player. I continued to improve, and by virtue of that and making the national team, which was a goal for me when I started to play the sport. … And then there was a long-term goal that Canada was going to be hosting the Olympic Games. So the next thing was to try and make the national team each year because at the beginning, the national team was only run during the summer. It wasn't until 1974, when the Olympic team from Montreal was chosen, that they actually created and went to a full-time program. If you were chosen for the Olympic team, then you needed to move to Montreal and train with everybody else for two years. That was a great move because that made us that much stronger. Because Canada is so large, it's very difficult to get all of those individuals in a team sport environment together and then have them play as one when you're just getting together in the summer.

Reiniger: Tell me a little bit more about your history with the national team and how the team eventually came to be located in Alberta.

Paulsen: I played with the national team; we had a terrific experience in Montreal. The team was moved back to Winnipeg where it was set up as a full-time training centre, and that was where my home was. I found work there, so I continued to play after the Olympic Games on the national team, and I continued to improve. My next goal was to be able to compete in Moscow, which was the 1980 Olympics. I played for two years after the [1976] Olympic Games. Whether we would have qualified or not [I don't know]; we hadn't gone through the qualification tournaments or the zone play downs. I think it was February around that year, of 1978, that the United States boycotted the 1980 Moscow Games. Shortly after that Canada followed suit, and my goal was gone. So at that juncture, I left the national team program as a player.

Reiniger: Would you tell me about how you moved into a new role with the national team?

Paulsen: I actually stopped playing for a short time. I just needed a break. [I] was focusing on my career, and the coaching staff from the team asked if I would come and help them try and work on the whole administrative, organizational side of the program. They were having issues with places to train, the proper budgets, just generally administration and organizing, and so I said I'd be happy to do that. I was working for the Fitness and Amateur Sport branch in Manitoba, and we were in a pretty sizeable office that had a fair amount of vacant space. I went to the director there and asked him what the possibilities were of setting up a part-time employee in an office in the building to try and help the National Volleyball Team, and I got clearance for that, which was great. So we hired a gentleman, who was one of our senior officials in Manitoba, and his career was in real estate. We hired a gentleman by the name of Mark Finning. He used the office in the Fitness and Amateur Sport branch, and part of his responsibility there was to help myself, as a volunteer, to get the national team reorganized and get them back on track, and then he also ran his real estate from there. During the time that we were trying to get the national team a more stable home and a better environment for them to train in, we were doing a lot of work with the Canadian Volleyball Association. One of the thoughts we had was to put the national team training centre up for a bid. The initial thought with that was that we were hoping that the people in Manitoba would help strengthen the bid. The situation that the team found itself in – we had optimistically hoped that we would get two or three solid bids – as it turned out, I think we had somewhere between seven and nine, which was great because then we obviously had a Canada that wanted to take care of the team and host them. ... The Canadian Volleyball Association

selected people to look over the bids and narrowed the bids down to two places. I think there [were] two, it may have been three, but it was two for sure: Winnipeg and Calgary. They had asked me to go to Calgary, the University of Calgary, and meet with a gentleman by the name of Roger Jackson who used to be the head of Sport Canada and now is the dean of the Faculty of Physical Education at U of C. He was one of the main drivers along with the Alberta Volleyball Association, who had put the hosting package together. So I went and met with Roger at the university. I had known Roger through work and had also met him on several international trips when I was a player. I went through the whole bid that they put together and saw all the things that they were offering at the university, and then my job was to put a report together for the committee who would eventually make a decision. I was in Calgary for a day or two looking at that, and then I went up to Edmonton to meet with the Alberta Volleyball Association because they were the other part of the bid. Any time a national team is bid for, it has to have the support of whoever's going to be the host and certainly the provincial association. So I did a report on that, and while I was there Roger had said, 'Well, if you ever think about wanting to come to Alberta, talk to me because maybe you can find a job up here at the University of Calgary.' At that juncture I wasn't interested, but I went back with all of the information I had. To make a long story short, the national team decided that Calgary was the next place for the National Team training centre. That was in the summer of 1979 that that was decided – Or I guess that probably would have been maybe later winter. ... I did some more investigation with Roger's offer about working at University of Calgary, and he offered me a job as the head coach of the men's team teaching in their academic program and then actually being the national team coordinator. So I had a three-fold job. I spoke with my wife, Kathy, and we decided that was something we wanted to do. We actually coordinated the move physically for the team, and all of us drove out in cars and U-Hauls and vans and literally moved the entire program together on this convoy that came from Winnipeg all the way out to Calgary.

Reiniger: Would you tell me more about the factors behind the team's decision to move to Calgary?

Paulsen: The bid that came from Manitoba I think was very strong, and people had really made it a concerted effort to try and make the whole training situation and the environment better for the team. They were also in the process of building a building called the Kinsmen Reh-Fit Centre, and they had even committed to putting in the proper hardwood floor and create a training facility for the men's program. I think what changed their mind about leaving was it just had been a time frame where the team had not been happy. Part of that was an organizational issue as opposed to something that was happening or not happening in Winnipeg. I think there were just

some bad memories there, and the team decided that they needed a fresh start somewhere else. I think the other driving factor was – and I had mentioned before about – Roger Jackson, who was very committed to trying to help a national team program. He's a former Olympic athlete, gold medalist himself, [and] had some tremendous visions about the growth that was going to be happening at the University of Calgary. And all of those things came to fruition. In retrospect, it was the right move to come to Calgary, and I think [it] certainly created the strongest training centre that the national team program had had up until that point. We ended up getting the '88 Olympic bid and along with the '88 Olympic bid, we ended up with the Olympic speed skating oval. We ended up with a brand new, what's called the Kinesiology Complex, because they changed the name from Phys Ed to Kinesiology. They asked me to do the bulk of the technical design work to create the main gym into a volleyball venue that [met] international competition [standards], which I did, and then turned that over to the architects. They did an outstanding job of creating a first-class venue for our team to not only train in but also to compete in. The university also had all of the sport sciences. It had all of the physiotherapy, it had all of the sport physicians, and so it created a one-stop shopping centre where the national team could really have all of the things that they need and be taken care of while they were there. Also, in 1980 I worked with the national team as their coordinator for five years up until 1984. Some of my background had been in construction and finance, so the dean asked if I would take over and work with another gentleman in bringing the new buildings online. So I shifted my job at the University of Calgary: I stopped coaching in I think '85, stopped the national team after the '84 Olympics, and then went full time into facility management. For the next 20 years, I worked at the University of Calgary creating and managing the Kinesiology facilities. It also put me in a unique position because I could help the national team program out to make sure that they were able to get office space, they were able to get gym time, they were able to get access to a whole bunch of the resources that were available at the University of Calgary. So as far as the training centre goes for them, I think it worked really well.

Reiniger: I would like to go back to the subject of the Calgary Olympics: The national team moved in '79. When did Calgary officially find out that it would be hosting the Olympics?

Paulsen: That bid selection came I think in 1983, '84. There's always at least a four or five year time frame where the bid's announced so that the host city has an opportunity to do all of the things that they have to do from an infrastructure standpoint to host Olympic games. I wouldn't know. I'm sure that's [in the] historical record, but I know that I was asked in '84 to then start working and bringing the

Olympic Oval and the new Kinesiology building online. We had four years before the Olympic Games to build that portion of the Kinesiology Complex. There was also a large residence expansion because the residences at the University of Calgary were to be the Athletes' Village during the games. So that entire portion of the University of Calgary, with the Kinesiology building and the residence areas, was all fenced off and utilized for the Olympic Games with the Olympic Oval being one of the competition venues.

Reiniger: Did you see the movement of the national team to Calgary and any of the infrastructure or other developments surrounding that location of the team in Calgary impact the city's bid for the Olympic Games?

Paulsen: No, I don't think so. … I believe that the spirit of the people that were bidding for the games – [they] were all ex international athletes. I shouldn't say all, but lots of them were a lot of the drivers. Having the national volleyball team at the University of Calgary was just part of that creation of [an] environment with cross training where you have winter athletes, summer athletes. And that was the fruition of the transition that happened with '88 Olympics coming to Calgary and after. You had international athletes, speedskaters, and you had volleyball players that were there, and bobsleigh, other summer sport athletes. They were all training together and training as a unit and learning from each other. It created a terrific environment.

Reiniger: A terrific environment for the development of volleyball in the province?

Paulsen: No. I think it created a terrific environment for the international athletes to train and push each other. A lot of the cross training and all the support services that worked around that. But there's no question having the national team moved to Calgary helped volleyball in Alberta tremendously. First of all, because it was a full-time centre, all of the national team players moved here to live in Calgary. Many of them, once they finished their playing careers, decided to stay in Calgary. When you have some of your best athletes all hot-housed in one place, they will draw people to the University. The athletes themselves, when they decided to live in a centre, then put time back in when it came to playing in club programs, coaching. We're finding now, too, that many of the national team players that stayed in Alberta married other athletes, and then they eventually had children and many of those children are now playing in their age group programs. Many of these athletes were introduced to volleyball when they were just babies, so they've come up through a program now where both parents have been pushing them to play. … The national volleyball team being in Alberta really made a large, lasting impression on volleyball in Alberta. Even today, right now you have a national team player that was playing

with the national team, and he's the director for Alberta Volleyball.[1]

Reiniger: Terry Gagnon?

Paulsen: Terry Gagnon, that's right.

Reiniger: In a previous conversation, you mentioned to me some of the economic factors in the team's desire to relocate to Calgary.

Paulsen: When you look at the economic factors, there is no question that in 1979 Alberta was booming. By coming to Alberta, there was an environment where for the players there was a real opportunity. For example, for them to maybe find some part-time employment, to get education. There was also an opportunity for us to be able to procure different types of grants that would come through the province to look at local sponsorship with some of the corporations that were here. The potential in coming to Alberta for the national team program – just because Calgary was a place that was booming and growing and Winnipeg was pretty much staying at the same level – I think there was a real opportunity for the program to then be successful with some of their endeavours to try and get more finances to make the program even stronger. I think the biggest thing was that there was the tremendous opportunity for athlete support and for them to actually build themselves a life here, and that's the reason lots of them stay.

Reiniger: Is there anything else you would like to add about the athlete's support side of it?

Paulsen: When it comes to support for athletes, it doesn't have to be really visible or financial. A lot of it is we had a tremendous support group of volunteers and individuals that were around them to help them with everyday life. For example, we had dentists that would work with opticians that would work with sports psychologists. They ended up with a large following, so any time that we hosted an international event, you could count on X number of people coming out to watch it. It created I think for them a comfortable place to train in, and it also created a very comfortable place for them to call home because these athletes were from right across the country all the way from the Maritimes all the way to B.C. That's a long way when you're away from home, and sometimes when you're a young man, that's a big adjustment. To be successful as an athlete, you need to have some roots or comfort as to where you're living and where you're going and all of those if you're going to try and succeed on the international stage. I think Calgary was able to do

[1] The Alberta Volleyball Association, now Volleyball Alberta

that for a lot of them.

Reiniger: Is there anything else you would like to add about the national team or the history of the national team before we move on?

Paulsen: No, I don't think so. Not at this time.

Reiniger: Okay then, I just have a few questions left. First, during your time in volleyball in Alberta, I guess now that would be the past 35 years –

Paulsen: Since 1979.

Reiniger: What are the most significant changes you have seen in Alberta volleyball over time?

Paulsen: Certainly the growth: the number of people that are actually playing the sport, which is fantastic. Right now for the growth of our sport, part of it's only limited by the number of places that people have to play, and so we need to create more facilities for those people to play. The game has advanced so much in those years, again, with the rule changes. More than anything else is the whole popularity of the game. People are getting involved in the sport and finding it's a great place to be involved. Volleyball back when I started usually never got the best athletes; the best athletes would go and play other sports. I think that's really come full circle now that the younger people are choosing volleyball at an early age. They are working through all of the tremendous U-programs that are here. There are so many opportunities for our youth to play and to get exceptional coaching at a younger age. By the time they start getting into high school and getting into university, the level of our sport continues to rise and the quality of the individual athletes that we turn out continues to rise as well. That translates itself to what's happening now. Our national team right now is involved in playing in the World League. I watched a couple of matches recently, and it was a tremendous show. The guys are playing really, really well. What's really funny – because I was sitting and talking with a good friend of mine as we were watching the match – when I played, I was the second tallest person on the team. The person that was taller than I was, was taller than me by half an inch. I looked at the players that were on the floor – and I'm 6'5" – I would suspect that I would have been the second shortest person that was on the team. Just the physical size and the skill and the ability that the whole [of] volleyball has gone through, I think it's terrific. It's great to see. I think those are the biggest changes. The sport itself I think is second only to soccer in popularity now. It's

growing certainly countrywide. In Alberta it's becoming more and more popular, and it's just nice to see.

Reiniger: What makes Alberta volleyball different from volleyball in any other province or country? If you see any unique features of how it's developed in this province.

Paulsen: To talk about other countries, you and I could be here for a long time. But certainly for our country, I find that the volleyball in Alberta is particularly well managed. The Alberta Volleyball Association, they have many centres, but [there are] two major cities and the decision to make two offices, one north and one south. I thought was one of the things that really helped to look at the actual development of sport. It just made sense. Our population's still not huge, but I think that was a good move for the actual growth of Alberta Volleyball. The other thing … I find with living in Alberta, there's a spirit here. You can see it with the Stampede, you can see it with many things that get organized. There's that same spirit throughout: the volunteers that work for volleyball, the people that put time in to coach and referee, and on and on. I think Alberta is successful because of all of those types of people that put the time in to make it successful.

Reiniger: A spirit of...

Paulsen: A spirit of volunteerism. I think that's part and parcel of being involved in the game too. The game has given many people gifts when it comes to experiences and becoming part of a large volleyball family. Many people, voluntarily, want to put time back into helping with teams and making sure that we get people involved. I think having that spirit in Alberta is one of the things that helps make Alberta volleyball great.

Voices of Alberta Volleyball 1960-99

An oral history project made possible by Volleyball Alberta,
the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation,
and the Alberta Lottery Fund

Interview with Leigh Goldie

June 20th, 2014
Edmonton, Alberta

Preface

This is Joelle Reiniger on behalf of Volleyball Alberta recording an oral history interview of Leigh Goldie for the project *Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99.* This interview is being recorded on June 20th, 2014, in Edmonton, Alberta.

Interview

Reiniger: Could I get you to spell your full name for me?

Goldie: Leigh L-E-I-G-H, Goldie G-O-L-D-I-E.

Reiniger: Your date of birth?

Goldie: August 30th, 1951.

Reiniger: Also, I should have asked you if there was a middle name.

Goldie: No middle name.

Reiniger: Your place of birth?

Goldie: Place of birth, London, Ontario.

Reiniger: The year you arrived in Alberta?

Goldie: 1972.

Reiniger: What brought you to Alberta?

Goldie: I came to Alberta to go to school at the University of Alberta after finishing at Wilfrid Laurier University. I came out to go to the U of A to take my Phys Ed degree.

Reiniger: What was your first contact with volleyball?

Goldie: Going way back, my first contact with volleyball was in elementary school, and that's so long ago that they were playing nine-on-nine. Then in high school, we had a class – and you had to set with stiff fingers and that sort of thing – but nobody really thought much about volleyball back then. When I came to the University of Alberta, I actually took an activity class from Hugh Hoyles, who was coaching the Bears at that time, and I was playing basketball for the Bears. That was really the first time we had any real volleyball, but [I] didn't really pay much attention to it because I was a basketball player and that was just volleyball. … I went to work at Grande Prairie Regional College in 1975, and they said, 'Can you coach volleyball?' I said, 'Sure.' So all of a sudden, I was a volleyball coach of a college team with not much background. That's how it all got started for me.

Reiniger: I would also like to hear about how and why you became involved with the Alberta Volleyball Association.[1]

Goldie: I think my first contact with Alberta Volleyball was in 1975 when I got the job in Grande Prairie. Jasper Volleyball Camp was in its second year then, '74 was the first year, and I went in the summer to take Level 1 and Level 2 at the same time to try and find out something about this sport. So I got a little bit of a taste of Alberta Volleyball, and I went back the next year to take Level 3. Then I was talking to Barry Mitchelson, who was a professor at the University of Alberta, and said, 'You know, I'd like to help Hugh Hoyles somehow.' He said, 'Well, why don't you volunteer to be part of Alberta Volleyball?' So I did, and I think in 1978 I was on the board then as a coaching development coordinator. Here I was, just a young, pretty new coach, but that was my role. So that was my first involvement way back then just because somebody suggested, 'Well, you should help.' So I did.

Reiniger: I am going to backtrack a bit. If you could tie these things together and just give me a summary, with years if you can, of your Alberta volleyball career.

[1] Now known as Volleyball Alberta

Goldie: Okay. Well, with Alberta Volleyball in terms of being on the board and that sort of thing, I think ’78 – 1978 was the first year that I came on, and then I was in that position for a few years. I’d have to check. I know I was on the board from ’78 probably through to ’82 or ’83 or ’84, and then there [were] a few years off. Then I came back on I think around 1989 or ’90. I’m not sure on the years, but I’ve been involved with it ever since then in various capacities as a coaching development coordinator or – I don’t even remember some of the titles. … There was finance and administration and things like that. Then, finally, I think about six years ago, I became president and currently still have that role. So it’s been a pretty long association on the board, probably since 1978 with I think maybe four, five or six years off. But besides that, it’s been pretty continuous.

Reiniger: What about the trajectory of your volleyball involvement more generally?

Goldie: My volleyball involvement: I coached the college team in Grande Prairie for about 13 years, but then in 1984, we started the Wolves Volleyball Club in Grande Prairie with one Midget boys’ team, and then the next year we added a Midget girls’ team. Then over the years, we kept adding teams, and we built the Wolves Volleyball Club into one of the largest clubs in Canada. I think at our peak, we had pretty close to 25 teams as part of the club. So that was a big project for a number of years. [I’ve also] been involved with developing and hosting tournaments and clinics and that sort of thing. Then one of the big things that personally I was involved with, our college at Grande Prairie hosted five consecutive national championships from 1998 to 2002. The first three years were men’s college nationals and the last two years were the women’s. ... Then, also, from my own involvement: in 1992 I became the men’s volleyball convener for the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association, the CCAA. I did that until 2011, so that was another volleyball ‘hat’ that I wore, I guess.

Reiniger: When you said, ‘In 1984 we founded the Wolves Volleyball Club.’ When you say, ‘we’, [it was] you and who else?

Goldie: I was probably the primary person. For about 25 years I was the director of the club, and so when I say ‘we’, I guess we had whoever was coaching at the time and so forth. We’ve had lots of good helpers over the years, but I guess I gave the direction to the club.

Reiniger: Another thing you mentioned earlier is having been assigned the role of volleyball coach without yet having had a lot of experience in volleyball. What was that like?

Goldie: It was a pretty – well, a little bit intimidating, but back then in the mid 70s, there were actually a lot of people coming to coach in volleyball that didn't have much volleyball background. I was a basketball, baseball, hockey player; even a guy like Hugh Hoyes, his background, I think, was baseball and hockey. Many coaches coming in just didn't have much experience, and I would say probably a majority of coaches that started back then were in that boat. There weren't that many who played volleyball at any level, so it was pretty interesting, and it was fun, and you had to learn. My first Jasper Volleyball Camp that I went to – it's a very social time at Jasper, but when everybody was going out to the Legion at night for a few beers, I had my manuals in my bunk studying all these systems of volleyball because I had to learn something technically right away. You know, the sport part, like coaching a team and so forth, was fine; you can bring that from other sports, but the strategies and tactics and skills you had to learn [were new]. So that was fun.

Reiniger: I get the impression from this and other interviews that the volleyball coaching community during the time when you got involved was a very young group of people.

Goldie: I would say so, yeah. Especially looking back now, we were young. … One thing that, for me, is interesting … is the role of the Jasper Volleyball Camp in developing volleyball not only in Alberta, but in western Canada. Because when I started going there – and I went to several Jasper camps, first as a participant and then helping to instruct – we'd have coaches, probably about a hundred coaches, from all over Alberta and western Canada. They'd come and they'd get all fired up about volleyball and they'd get to know each other, which is a really neat thing about volleyball, I think, as opposed to other sports; the coaches really are good friends, a lot of them. So they'd to know each other and they'd get really motivated because of the camp, and then they'd go back to their high schools at that time and coach against each other. They were very competitive with each other, and they really wanted to be better coaches. They kept coming back to Jasper, sometimes two, three, four summers in a row, and they would spread [the popularity of] volleyball. So Jasper was probably I think the key event in developing volleyball to where it is in western Canada, which is very good. I think we've got to give Hugh Hoyles the main credit for that, actually.

Reiniger: You touched on this: the influence on volleyball not just on Alberta, but western Canada as a result of this camp. Could you expand on that point?

Goldie: I think at Jasper the majority of coaches there were from Alberta, but many came from B.C. and Saskatchewan as well. So they would, like the Alberta coaches, learn and they would get fired up and they'd go back to their communities and really get their programs going and probably, I think, inspire and motivate other people too. So Jasper had a pretty big reach [in] the four western provinces. We didn't get so many people from Manitoba, but certainly B.C. and Saskatchewan. You know, to this day I think western Canada continues to be the strongest part of the country for volleyball. It really does go back to Jasper I think, those roots.

Reiniger: I am going to move on to my next set of questions, but before I do, could you elaborate on one of the last comments that you made regarding the strength of western Canadian volleyball on the national scene?

Goldie: I think over the years – for whatever reason, I'm not sure – western Canada has been stronger. When we look at national championships at colleges and universities, and even our Volleyball Canada championships now, western Canada has won more than [its] share of championships. I think a big part of it is the coaching that we have here and the clubs. I think, also, our post-secondary institutions have been more involved with developing programs in the community, and that's led to that strength. Probably the other thing is I think – in Ontario for instance and maybe B.C. – basketball has been bigger for whatever reason. While basketball is big in Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba, I think volleyball has been the first choice for a lot of good athletes over basketball. It used to be that people who played volleyball were the people who got cut from basketball, but I think for a long time, in Alberta at least, people wanted to play volleyball first before basketball. It might be the nature of the sport; it's a little more social. But I think a lot of it is just the great coaches that we have. In their communities, they start volleyball programs and do a good job of it. Maybe those opportunities aren't there for other sports, so I think the coaching that we have is the main reason for it.

Reiniger: Moving on here. Reflecting on your career in volleyball, what were your main goals as a leader in developing volleyball in this province?

Goldie: My main goals, locally, were to provide a good program for the kids growing up, to give them an opportunity to play. I think that had two points: I think volleyball is a great game, and we wanted to give them the opportunity to develop skills for their life and to be active, which as a physical educator, I think is really important. We also wanted to provide opportunities for kids that had talent and work ethic to proceed and move on to higher levels of play. I think on a local level, those were probably the goals. Provincially, I think, through the involvement with Volleyball Alberta, to have a good organization that would really [provide opportunities] for the whole province. So I think the goals have been, in Volleyball Alberta, for us to have the best organization we can have when we compare it to other parts of Canada – to be right at the top. I think, by and large, we've done that. But that's when we grade ourselves. We feel happy with what we've done, but I'm sure we can always do better as well.

Reiniger: What assisted you in achieving these goals?

Goldie: It always comes down to the people that are involved. In volleyball, we've had great people that have stayed with it for a long time. We've been very fortunate to have people in the coaching system that have coached, some of them, for 30 years. We've had people on our board that have been involved, some like myself, for you know, 10, 15, 20, 30 years even. I think that consistency has really helped move us forward. The staff that we've hired – especially our current staff – are outstanding; we've made some good decisions there. So I think it comes down to the people, as it always does. I'm sure other organizations have good people, but we've been lucky and blessed in Alberta volleyball to have lots of really good people that are passionate and put the time in and they know what they're doing so it moves ahead.

Reiniger: What were some of the greatest obstacles to achieving your goals?

Goldie: From the provincial perspective, some of the obstacles always are funding, government funding, and it goes up and down. Although, it's been pretty consistent for us, but we've had times when the dollars have been hard to come by. The other thing is we did go through a period of time with Alberta Volleyball where we had a large turnover of staff, and we went through a number of executive directors. When you don't have that continuity, it's really hard to move ahead. We made a decision as a board a number of years ago that we would increase our pay grid and make all the positions attractive so that people would look at as a career rather than just a stepping stone, which is typical in sport organizations; people come for a year or two and then leave and go to the next

place. We want to maybe halt that a little bit by increasing our grid and trying to treat people well from an employment perspective. Once we had done that, that really helped stabilize our staff, and therefore, [moved] us ahead. I think when you stabilize your staff – if you have good [employees] – even though you might pay a little bit more, you end up generating more revenue because of the continuity and the programs that they develop and so forth. So I think that's been really good for us, but you know, I don't think we've had too many obstacles. I mean, we'd always like to have more funding, but we've been very successful at generating revenue within the organization. We've had good people, so I think it's been relatively smooth sailing.

Reiniger: Would you share some of the most rewarding moments in your volleyball career?

Goldie: Well, I think the most rewarding moments come down to the associations with people and the relationships that are made over the years, the friendships. I think that's what is most rewarding, for me anyway. I think that's been great both provincially and nationally and locally: [I] developed some great friendships and met some great people. For me, personally, I think also hosting some events like the nationals that we had in Grande Prairie. We had a vision for what it would be, and we put it together and pulled it off successfully as a group and a team. So that hosting of events was very rewarding, and then I think just building the club in Grande Prairie – starting small and, once again, having a vision of what it could be and over the years following up on that and finally achieving that. I think that's pretty satisfying too … But I think the bottom line for it all is just the friendships and relationships with other people.

Reiniger: On the flip side, what were some of the more disappointing moments in your career?

Goldie: That's a tough question. I don't think I've had many disappointments, which is nice. I think we usually try to put a spin on anything and make it positive, so I can't really think of too many disappointments. I think on the provincial level, it probably relates to people. Sometimes if you hire someone that you thought might do a good job, and it just doesn't work out, it's a little bit disappointing. But you just move on and go to the next person and try to do it better. So I can't say that we've had any really big disappointments over the years.

Reiniger: … What about the most stressful times?

Goldie: Well, once again, I don't think things have been super stressful. We've worked hard to get some events done, but I don't think there's been a lot of stress for me personally. That's my personality; [I] don't stress out too much. ... I think at Alberta Volleyball, it was probably somewhat stressful when we did have a lot of turnover in staff and stressful when our budget was not the best. We hosted one event, I think it was 1995, the NORCECA Championships, where the association lost a lot of money on it. That put our budget in a deficit, and that was sort of stressful because then you have to look to every line in the budget. But we made it through that and we came out much stronger with great experience. So I don't think we've had huge stresses, but there were little things like that.

Reiniger: How has the popularity of volleyball in Alberta changed since you first became involved?

Goldie: I think it's really grown. When I first became involved, it was a growing sport, and volleyball really wasn't – I think, [mentioned] in the everyday sport conversation, I'm not even sure that it is now in the media, but with people – kids, parents – volleyball is really widely respected now, and people want to play and be part of it. I think over the years, there's been a really steady growth of that, so that's been really good to see. Even today, I think this year in Volleyball Alberta we have record numbers. At the Canadian Opens, there's more people than ever, more teams that are playing. So we continue to grow, and I think we will continue to grow, too, because it's a great sport and people really enjoy it. With that growth comes some challenges in terms of getting coaches, officials, and facilities, but they're good problems to have.

Reiniger: Has the growth been steady over time or have there been any dips?

Goldie: I'd say it's been pretty steady from my experience. As it's grown, it's been pretty steady I think. When I look at tournaments that we host, every year there's usually another three or four teams. I don't think we've ever really had a big decline, so we've at at least held steady, and then gradually grown. So it's been pretty good that way.

Reiniger: What about peaks? Have there been any particular points in the history where you have seen a spike in involvement?

Goldie: You know, I don't think so. I think it's been pretty steady. I think we're reaching a peak right now. Like I say, we're [larger] than we've ever been. I think with some of the new programs that are coming in that's going to continue to grow. …

Reiniger: What are some of [the] numbers?

Goldie: Well, the numbers – it's pretty interesting. Nationally, when they're talking about this year's nationals, I think there was something like over 800 teams that entered. So that's huge. … There's probably that many teams again that haven't entered, so we've got huge numbers playing. In adult leagues, there are lots and lots of people playing. It's hard to get numbers because a lot of them don't register; they just play on their own. When we look at high schools and junior high schools here in Alberta, there's literally hundreds of schools. Every school has a volleyball program, right? It's one of the few sports that pretty much everybody has. So the numbers are big. One of our problems in volleyball is actually tracking the numbers because not everybody registers at every level, so we just have to give estimates. But I know, too, that worldwide, volleyball is around the first or second participation sport when we look at numbers throughout the world. Even the World Cup is on in soccer now, and I think volleyball rivals soccer in terms of numbers of people playing. So we're big that way.

Reiniger: Is there anything else you would like to add about what has made [the development of] Alberta volleyball, over time, different from the development of volleyball in other provinces or countries?

Goldie: Well, I think Alberta Volleyball has had some good people that have had good vision and good ideas. For instance, our premiere tournaments that we have here – I think we're one of the first associations to have those. In fact, many don't have them now, so we really control and direct the age group involvement through those premiere tournaments. That's been a big deal in terms of encouraging the growth, so I think a program like that has been great. Jasper Volleyball Camp over the years and then Sylvan [beach volleyball] camp have been, I think, somewhat unique to Alberta, so that's been fantastic in helping grow the sport. I think our provincial team system has also gone through many changes, and we're always experimenting to make it better. ... So I think in many different areas we've been good. And then our involvement with the Saville Sports Centre – having a facility like that is going to help us grow as well. So I think being keen to be involved with new projects has really held us in good stead and moved us forward more than some other provinces, maybe.

Reiniger: Do you see any connection between that and how we tend to define ourselves or see ourselves as Albertans?

Goldie: Well, that's a good question. I know Albertans like to think that we're entrepreneurial and willing to try new things. So, yeah, there's probably some of that in there. I think we've utilized the resources. We maybe do have more resources than other provinces, and we've taken advantage of that. Part of it is being able to access those from the government, but I think even in our association, we've been very entrepreneurial and created a lot of revenue for ourselves. So yeah, I guess we're good Albertans.

Reiniger: Looking back at some of the most significant changes to the sport of volleyball in your career, off camera you had mentioned the changes that had taken place in the sport shortly before your involvement began. Could you describe what it was like to come into the sport during that era?

Goldie: My particular involvement began in 1975, and it was just a few years previous that the rules of volleyball changed to make it a more dynamic sport. They started talking about power volleyball, and I think that really attracted more people. And then over the years, the rules have changed fairly significantly to make it even more attractive in terms of how strict you are with handling the ball. It used to be very restrictive as to what you could do with double hits and carries and all that sort of thing, but now in a sense almost anything goes. Not quite anything, but the rallies are longer, they're more exciting, you can keep the ball in play longer. I think over the years, the rules have changed to make it more exciting for players. It's sometimes frustrating for coaches because players might not have to be as "technically sound" if you want to say that, but it's made for a better game, more enjoyable probably to play and to watch. So I think going back to the late 60s and through the last 40 years there have been changes … pretty much always making it better from both points of view: playing and watching.

Reiniger: Looking back at developments in Alberta volleyball overall, what are the most significant changes that you have seen in the sport in terms of how the sport is organized and structured in this province?

Goldie: Well, that's a good question. I think the basic structure is still the same, but one of the big things that's changed is that many more people are starting to make a living from volleyball now, and that's a fairly recent phenomenon – people that are making money doing clinics and also making money from coaching. So I think as we're moving forward, the coaches are becoming more professionalized, and I think overall that's a good thing. It presents some challenges in that it makes the sport more expensive for

people. Volleyball has a long tradition of people volunteering their time as opposed to other sports like say swimming or gymnastics where the coaches have long been paid and paid pretty well. Volleyball's been moving towards that now, and I think that's increasing participation and maybe increasing the abilities of kids as they come through the system. There's better coaching, and it's probably becoming more of a year round sport, too, with the beach programs complementing the indoor programs. The beach [programs have] had a huge impact on volleyball, and beach is continuing to grow. It used to be just sort of a little subset of indoor volleyball, but now it's really moved to where beach is volleyball, but it's it own entity with coaches and players – some that are dedicated just to beach. They're not coming from indoor necessarily. So I think those sorts of things are really changing over the years, and that's changing the structure a little bit, too, in terms of governments and that sort of thing.

Reiniger: Is there anything else you would like to add to your previous comments on any significant developments in the Alberta Volleyball Association as an organization?

Goldie: I think over the years we've tried to professionalize ourselves a little bit in terms of governance, which makes a difference in how efficiently and effectively we operate. We've continued to move towards what we would call a "policy governance" model, where the board and the executives are looking at [the] bigger picture. I think for a number of years the board was looking at the really small details of operation, and we've moved away from that; we're able to because we've got such great staff now that take care of all of that. So I think in terms of governance, we can approach that quite differently and really focus on our strategic plan and moving towards accomplishing those plans. If programs aren't part of the plan, then we have to not run them, or make them part of the plan. I think it focuses us more sharply in terms of where we're going, so I think that's been a significant change over the years.

Reiniger: Now, I would like to zero in on a particular geographic area. Actually, you had mentioned geography earlier in our conversation; you alluded to it when you spoke about wanting to see volleyball grow across the province. What developments have you seen over time in what the geography of Alberta volleyball participation looks like?

Goldie: I think probably the biggest thing has been the growth of the popularity of volleyball in the south of the province, because that's always been a more basketball region, especially down around Lethbridge. They've had some great, great, basketball players and programs come from there, so volleyball was always second fiddle to that. I

think over the years, although basketball is still strong there, that volleyball's made some big inroads. In the north, I think that volleyball has for many years been more popular than basketball, and we've had better volleyball programs and players and coaches coming out of the north. In Edmonton, Central Alberta, Calgary, I think it's been pretty steady, so I'd say we're making inroads in the south in particular in terms of the growth of volleyball.

Reiniger: Now let's switch our focus to the north. What are some of the most significant developments you have seen in volleyball in northern Alberta?

Goldie: I think, and I alluded to that earlier, is the impact of the Jasper Volleyball Camp. I know when I was getting started in volleyball and going to Jasper, there was a number of high school coaches from the north that would come to the camp. We had a string of small towns north of Grande Prairie, between Grande Prairie and Peace River, like Falher and Donnelly and Wanham and Eaglesham**.** They were small schools, but they were producing really good volleyball players because of the coaching. I think that that has remained a really good area. I think in Grande Prairie, as we got the club going there and starting hosting tournaments and clinics, that really encouraged the growth of volleyball in that area because Grande Prairie is sort of the centre of that region, so people would come in and bring their teams into the tournaments. They'd come to the clinics, and we'd have coaching clinics as well. So I think over the years that really helped develop the north and Grande Prairie in particular, but I think it spread beyond that. We ended up with good high school programs there over the last 30 years. I think the Peace Region has won probably more than its share of provincial high school championships. One of our hall of fame members, Dave Johnson, who we recognize as a coach, his program at the Grande Prairie composite high school won a number of provincial championships at the highest level, which is pretty remarkable from a relatively small town in northern Alberta. We've had other schools, too, in the region at the 3-A, 2-A, and 1-A level that have all won provincial championships, so it's been really great there.

Reiniger: You began your coaching career at GPRC, Grande Prairie Regional College. Could you elaborate on the role of post-secondary in the development of volleyball in the Grande Prairie area?

Goldie: Sure. Well, I think at the college for myself and I think the people in Athletics there … we always felt that we had a bit of a responsibility to develop the sport and

provide some leadership there. So through our clinics and tournaments and so forth, I think we've been able to do that. We've always thought that's something that we should do and really needed to do as a post-secondary institution.

Reiniger: I will ask the same question about the Grande Prairie region that I asked about Alberta volleyball unique in the context of the rest of the country. What would you say makes volleyball in the Grande Prairie area – and if you want to also talk about northern Alberta in general – unique in the context of the whole province?

Goldie: Well, I think in Grande Prairie – and Grande Prairie, I mean, that's where my experience is, so I'll talk more about that – we've had really good coaches there that have been really committed to the development of volleyball, and I think it all starts with the coaching. We've been fortunate to have lots of good coaches. In fact, it's been interesting, from the college, from the players that have played on the teams there, many of them have gone on to coach not just in Grande Prairie but in other parts of the province. I think there was one year, I don't know how long ago it was, maybe in the late 90s, where the NAVC club from Edmonton – I think over half of their coaches came from Grande Prairie. They played college there or whatever. So I think, with the size of our club there, we were able to get a lot of our college-age players – even when they were in college – coaching the younger kids. They found out they liked coaching and that really spurred them on to continue when they came down to, say, go to university at U of A or U of C. They would get involved with the coaching there, but then many of them came back to the community as well. We've had, I think, a disproportionate number of people who coach who are good coaches, and that's really helped our development in Grande Prairie. I can say they've made significant contributions in other parts of the province, too, so I think that's been probably the key factor. Through the club, we sort of provided opportunities for kids in terms of teams and so forth, but then you have to have the coaching to really make that happen. It's been really great to see that whole thing come together over the years.

Reiniger: Stepping back again and looking at the provincial as a whole, if you were putting together a resume for volleyball in Alberta over time, what would you list as the most significant achievements?

Goldie: Well, that's a good question, thinking about it that way. From a provincial perspective, some of the achievements are that Volleyball Alberta – or the Alberta Volleyball Association as it was known until recently – has been a constant, has

provided leadership for the sport. I think that we have had a large number of really, really good coaches. For whatever reason, our coaching has been fantastic. I mean, when you look at even the University of Alberta with Laurie Eisler and Terry Danyluk, and people who have been at U of C, and Keith Hansen at Red Deer College, and Ron Thomson in Grande Prairie – I mean those are just a few, but there's really a large number of people that have been fantastic coaches from here. I think we've developed good coaches and as a result we've had good players. One thing we didn't mention earlier that I think really helped the development in Alberta, too, was hosting the men's national team for a number of years in Calgary. That really inspired people and gave people an opportunity to develop. What's interesting now is a number of those people who have played on the national teams who are based in Calgary – their kids are now competing at the provincial level and nationally, and many of those players are now coaching. So once again, they have tremendous background in their coaching. Now, the other thing in Alberta is that we've got great facilities compared to the rest of Canada. We've got some amazing facilities. Most of the post-secondary institutions have really good volleyball facilities. So facilities, coaching, organization, I think Alberta in a sense has it all. We can always do better, but we've done a good job at all those things.

Reiniger: Having come here in the 70s, looking back on some of the changes you have seen in the province, whether it be changes in migration to Alberta, migration within Alberta to urban centres, economic changes, political changes. As you think of those larger developments in the province's history, do you see where these factors have interacted with the development of volleyball for good or for ill?

Goldie: I think when you're looking at the bigger factors, I'd say Alberta has been a "have" province in terms of economics generally. We have been able to build fantastic facilities, and I think facilities have a direct impact on participation. People in Alberta – I'm not sure compared to the national average – but we probably do pretty well in terms of financial situations. People have been able to put their kids into sport and afford it. Although, there's lots that haven't been able to do that, but probably in general, we've got a large percentage who could that. So that's been great. Provincially, the government has provided funding for sport. It's never enough and we always want more, but there's been enough to allow us to operate and to grow and move forward with our programs. So I think those things have been key to Volleyball Alberta and volleyball in general to keep moving ahead. When we compare ourselves to other provinces, I think we've been very fortunate that way.

Reiniger: As you are mentioning the financial support from the Alberta government for sport in general and volleyball specifically, looking back to the 1990s during the period in the 1990s when there were a lot of cuts to various programs in the province, in what way did that affect Alberta Volleyball, if it affected Alberta Volleyball?

Goldie: I don't think it affected us too much, but it certainly made us more aware that we have to be entrepreneurial in generating our own revenue. I think that's the case today in terms of our total budget. We rely less on the government grants than many other associations. I think that's good because even if that grant was cut out, it would affect us, but I think we could continue to operate on some level. I think it probably made us aware that we have to be at that level and not rely so much on those grants. I'm not sure of the percentages, but I think of our total budget probably only 20 percent of our revenue comes from the government grant as opposed to some other sport organizations that are probably 80 or 90 percent dependent on the government funding. So that might be the lesson that we learned and the path that we've taken because of those cuts.

Reiniger: Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not covered?

Goldie: I think we've covered most of it. I think it comes down to, whether it's volleyball or anything we do, it's the people that we associate with. There [are] good quality people everywhere, but volleyball has been great for that. I think one of the things that's really helped volleyball is – even at the post-secondary level like in the ACAC: the coaches are good friends, they're really good friends. When the season is over, they visit each other in the summer, they coach at camps together. I think much more so than other sports that I've been involved with and I've seen. I think that really helps everybody in the sport. They compete hard when the season is there, but they like each other and they share information and they help each other. I think it's that attitude, that spirit, that sometimes sets volleyball apart from other sports, and [it's] why people are attracted to it. I'd say that's a real key factor in the volleyball scene in Alberta and probably nationally as well.

Reiniger: Any theory on where that spirit of cooperation comes from?

Goldie: I think part of it is the nature of the game. You're not pounding each other, there's a net separating the two sides. Although, it can get pretty heated and there is talk back and forth … it's not a contact sport, and the rules of the game don't allow

people to be, I'll say, idiots like some coaches are in other sports. You have to be respectful and if you're not, you're dealt with right away. So I think that lends [itself] to a better atmosphere.

Reiniger: So you are referring to rules not just governing players on the court, but also governing what is happening around the court?

Goldie: Yeah, and the conduct of the coaches. They have to be respectful and in some of the more physical sports like basketball and hockey, coaches are screaming at officials and throwing tantrums and all of that. That just doesn't happen in volleyball. I mean it might happen, but it's dealt with right away, and you're gone. We talk a lot about culture in different sports, and I think the culture of volleyball is a good one overall.

Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99

An oral history project made possible by Volleyball Alberta,
the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation,
and the Alberta Lottery Fund

Interview with Lorne Sawula

June 9th, 2014

Sherwood Park, Alberta

Preface

This is Joelle Reiniger, on behalf of Volleyball Alberta, recording an oral history interview of Lorne Sawula for the project *Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99.* This interview being recorded on June 9th, 2014, in Sherwood Park, Alberta.

Interview

Reiniger: Would you begin by spelling your full name for me please.

Sawula: L-O-R-N-E, S-A-W-U-L-A.

Reiniger: Your date of birth?

Sawula: February 19, 1947.

Reiniger: Your place of birth?

Sawula: Edmonton.

Reiniger: What was your first contact with volleyball?

Sawula: Probably in junior high school and then high school. Bonnie Doon Lancers as a player and city championships, things like that.

Reiniger: And you led into this question but, how and when did you become involved in volleyball? Would you like to expand on that?

Sawula: We had a bunch of guys that just went out for the volleyball team at Bonnie Doon high school. Johnny Bright was there at the time; he [became] a fullback for the [Edmonton] Eskimos. We played basketball, we played all the sports. He was a real neat character. Bill McLean was also there. Bill McLean was a teacher but later became an alderman for the City of Edmonton. He was our volleyball coach. The guys that we all played [with], we all sort of hung out together. We started out in

Grade 9 and in Grade 10 at Bonnie Doon, Grade 9 at Ritchie. [In grades] 10, 11, and 12, we won city championships all the time and got to play the University of Alberta [Golden] Bears. Even though only a few guys came over [to play], we ended up beating them in Grade 12. That was our highlight of the year for us. That was about 1961 – now that I think of it – when we first started knowing there was a game of volleyball that was out there.

Reiniger: You were in junior high at that time?

Sawula: Yes. We just started doing a little bit, but it was really [in] high school that [we] got going. Grade 10, 11, and 12. Because [in] 1964, [I] went to the University of Alberta and made what's called the Bearcats, the junior team, and again with some of the same guys that we played at Bonnie Doon with, and then on from there to the Bears and onward and upward.

Reiniger: Looking back over your career, what were your main goals as a leader in volleyball?

Sawula: First, you never knew you were going to be a leader. You just did the things that you thought had to be done and trying to help out the sport and the people that came around it. You go through phases as an individual. You're an athlete for a while, you become an administrator, a coach, sometimes even a referee. I used to always say you're an athlete until your knees go, and then when your knees go, you get glasses and you become a referee, and then after that you decide that it's better to be into coaching. I went into coaching quite early in the 70s feeling that my goal at that time was really to learn more about the game because it was a game that there wasn't much [information] out about it in North America and in Canada especially. … Then later the whole idea that drove me was the fact that there were things that you could do that allowed you satisfaction because of the people you met … because of the athletes that you met, especially as a coach, and that you were a part of [it]. I always said that as you got older, it was their energy that made you what you are because they keep you going. Especially, I can say that's true at this later part of my life where now it's a fact that there's a lot of players that I'm involved with that are involved, inspire, and keep me going, which is good. As I went along, the whole idea was to try to improve the game for Canadians in Canada. I was lucky because I was able to work through the universities I worked at across the country and sort of got to know the country, not just one local area as a lot of people have. Later that expanded to go beyond Canada and into the world, into international, and that was also interesting. Then my goals changed a little bit because I really wanted to bring back to Canada some of the things I was seeing that were happening overseas. I was lucky enough to be able to go to Munich Olympics as an Olympian junior athlete. From there, that [was] followed with being in Montreal to be a statistician and

then getting into the International Volleyball Federation as the coaches' committee and meeting people there. One thing led to another, to coaching with my teams that I had. … Before that, [I] was [with] Volleyball Canada as technical director, high performance director, things like that. All those things were there, and the thing that you always [wanted] was to help the game improve – to get the game out there to people and try to utilize the resources, which were [human] resources that were out there. I think the other thing I really feel happy about is throughout my career, I always tried to help or aid what I would call the female athlete, the female coach, the [female] administrator because at the time for a while there, it was very male-dominated. That started to change a little bit, and I hope I had something to do with that. For example, every time when I coached I had, always, a minimum of one coach, administrator, head of delegation, et cetera who was female ... when we traveled as a delegation, when we coached in the centres. I tried to help with people like Laurie Eisler coming into the game. Melanie Sanford, Kris Drakich, Erminia Rousseau, Diane Scott – all [of] those were former players of mine that went on into the game. I feel, in the end, that's one of the biggest satisfactions that I have because the people that I trained and worked with have gone on to become leaders in the sport and have done things that nobody … thought would have been possible. Maybe, through some of the things we did in our time together, [those things] helped them and gave them the initiative to move onward and upward in their fields in volleyball. They're some of the leaders in present day Volleyball Canada right now, so I think that's important.

Reiniger: Is there anything you would like to add about what assisted you in achieving your goals?

Sawula: Goals change every time. What assisted me? [shrug] Your parents, the people all around you – I really think it's the people in volleyball that assisted me to achieve my goals because all along there were some people that were driving you onward to do different things. The people that I met around the world in all the places I've coached, [it's] phenomenal just to still keep that friendship going. My training at the University of Alberta was important – undergraduate, masters, and PhD. ... I never was able to use it the way that you would think you'd use it, by teaching at a university. I could have done [it] that way, but I chose another route. In the end, probably the fact that – again I would use the word energy – other people's energy sort of spurred me on to do things. I always was afraid that I could never do enough, so it would drive me to keep on trying to be, call it a bit of a perfectionist in a different way, in the sense that I wanted to find answers and [find out] why things occurred the way they did and then try to pass that on in a way that the average person – I got tired, I guess, at the University in doing my PhD … reading scientific articles that were written in a language that were not translatable to what I would call the average people who would be out there … doing the job of volleyball. So in a way, maybe my

goal became, over the years, to translate that into what I call simple, understandable language so that the average person could actually benefit from what was going on. In a way I was paraphrasing the scientific lingo to something that would help the individual that was out there. That's the way I wrote; that's the way I tried to act. I've always believed that there's always a solution for everything. Every problem, every person, every athlete, every coach has a separate key. They all have sort of a different lock and each one of those locks have separate keys. You can't just treat everybody exactly the same way. You have to try to sort of negotiate that challenge and find the right key that all of a sudden turns that player or that person on to what you want or what you think there is. I was the type of person or coach that would always utilize the people around me in trying to get their ideas out as opposed to saying [a] robotic, 'do this' or 'here's X on the court' or whatever. Certain situations would change that, but then the challenge was to find out what would cause them to make that decision that I wanted them to make and how it would go about. Some people learn differently. Some learn from looking at things, some by analyzing, some by partly being told, some by doing it totally on their own. They all arise to those challenges, and you've got to discover what works for which people to make them a better – in my case – athlete most of the time. Later it was, what can you say or do that would reach coaches? I [will] always remember doing a clinic in Qatar and being translated into Arabic by this guy. I got all of these guys, about 150 people, sitting out there in front of me. Nobody's saying anything and just sort of looking at you. You're wondering, are you reaching home or not? I said, 'Sometimes training an athlete is like,' – I was thinking of taking a horse to water – I said, '...trying to take a camel to water, and you know camels can be really stubborn.' Then all of a sudden, they broke out laughing. I couldn't believe how all of a sudden the ambience was set, and then the rest was easy after that. … It was just interesting. There's always a solution, always a special key that each player, person has that you want to reach. How to try to find that is the challenge of what you're trying to do. I think the last thing: I always felt I [was] learning. I learn from everybody. Even now when I run my ASPIRE Training Centre, which is a little training centre for kids, I learned more about how to teach things to people than I did as a coach. … I've done different drills, different thoughts, thinking processes, than I've ever done before. It's interesting. It's challenging, and again it keeps you going. You're always thinking, 'What can I do? What can I do?'

Reiniger: What were the greatest obstacles to achieving your goals?

Sawula: Obstacles were battles within the same community. There's people in that community that thought their way was the right way. I was always the type of person who wanted to put it on the table and discuss it and find out a solution. There were a lot of people who just wanted to work behind your back. They would cause things to change or drag or try to convince people without the knowledge of what it is you're

trying to present. In some cases, they don't understand the thinking that even you as an individual are going through. The fact that [for] myself, I may speak quickly, but there's a lot going on behind the scenes. I'm processing a lot of information very quickly. In my experiences, I try to think [and] help in making those decisions and try to make the right decision for the time. I was never afraid of having to change that decision because of what I learned from somebody else. At times I think that very much was a battle, but that's maybe normal, I don't know. The other part is in the early days, financially, volleyball was really hurt, even though you could say that today. But things have become more expensive, athletes have changed. My athletes at the time – until we got to 1984-85 in Regina – they never got paid any money. All they got was eventually $400 a month or something like that that we could give them. They sacrificed everything to be a part of the program. Finances are always an issue, and you're always trying to battle that as you went along. Trying to get the necessary experiences for your athletes because [of] the new [theory] about the 10,000 hours that's needed in order to become an athlete. We knew you needed a lot of training, but to do that you also have to have a good organization. You have to be able to get the finances in order to carry a lot of that stuff out. We started much later. That was one of the hurdles or obstacles, that our athletes didn't start very young. They started probably 16 or 17, even some were later that came into the sport. That was a big, big issue in how do you improve when you start so late?

Reiniger: Did they start later than in other parts of the world?

Sawula: Yes, much later than in other parts of the world. Most other countries at least had – In Europe you have a mixture of athletes playing various sports when they are younger. But the clubs, you had a son playing with a father because the leagues were not age-orientated as Canada was. You could start playing at a young age, but you're playing with your dad or your mom or whomever it might be. In some other countries like Japan, [they're] starting when they're 8, 9, 10 years old. In our case, most of our athletes never really saw volleyball. Part of the biggest issue there – and I guess why I got into coaching, the technical part – is that coaching was so bad. There were not enough people with any kind of idea of what volleyball was all about and how you taught it. It was a difficult sport in that respect...

Reiniger: You were telling me why you got into coaching development.

Sawula: When I started, I wrote the technical manuals 1, 2, 3, and 4. There was a total knowledge gap. People didn't even know these things existed. I learned as I was going along, too, I was staying one step ahead of the crowd and learning that 'this' was important for volleyball [and] 'this' was important. One of the big things we decided very early: I looked at it – and this was before it was really common practice – that volleyball was more than volleyball. There was the psychology of volleyball,

there was the physiology of volleyball. There was the mental part, the goal setting, there was the tactical part, the technical part. We integrated that. I brought in the sciences very early into our sport and had a big run in with the Coaching Association of Canada. ... We were just supposed to stick with the technical components, but we tried to bring in the fact that technical and tactical are linked together. That means that basically when you learn a skill, you have to learn it in a tactical situation. Trying to get that across to coaches as we developed was always a bit of an issue. We started the whole Coaching Certification Program. There was nothing in Canada at the time. I sat with three or four other people in my house in Ottawa. We brought in food, and we stayed there and worked 24 hours a day for five days and came up with a whole step-by-step process for becoming a volleyball coach. Going from what we called Level 1 to Master Coach. We were ahead of even [the] CAC [Coaching Association of Canada] at that time. Later they caught up to us, and that's when the packages became more of the current system that operates today. Those were always issues I felt that we had to do a better job of in order to help improve coaches. I think the other issue we still tried to deal with was [first] to bring women into coaching and second how do we get people to stay in coaching and get good coaches for younger people? Usually what happened is we found some coaches – let's say for higher levels – eventually when the colleges and universities got more involved in volleyball in the 80s, that led to coaches that were coaching and teaching and doing all kinds of things at their universities. Some eventually got full-time jobs only doing volleyball. That's where the trend is today, where it's going for sport, not just volleyball. It's a full-time profession, and it's a big change from where we were back in the 70s and 80s. I think it had something to do with that development over the years. Right now it is improving, [but] we've still got to do a better job with the younger levels. I'm glad to see there are a lot more females involved in the sport. Probably the biggest thing that's been developed through that is the sport festivals Volleyball Canada adopted [that] were carried out by the various provincial associations. We have a lot more people playing the game. That was always a weakness in the early [years], where there were not enough people so that you could actually – when it came to the national program – choose [certain] kinds of athletes. I think nowadays there is a [much greater] number of athletes to choose from. Some of our sports festivals have 200, 250, 300 teams in it. They're amazing events that go on, and a lot of kids keep playing the sport. I am concerned now that we have a big drop off, which is normal I guess with anything because after about [age] 18, not everybody can continue to play the sport, [and] there is a lack of what I would call good, competitive over-21 leagues that exist in our country. ... Again this is the difference between Canada and Europe: [In] Europe a club goes from [age] 10 to 30, 10 to 60. Whatever it is, they have different levels all the way up. [In] Canada most of our clubs are age oriented. They go until about 18 and then there's not much else. Yes, there are people [who] in name call themselves a club, but there's not the kind of [club structure] that used to exist, even in Canada in the early 80s and 90s. That's

one of the things that I think has to be looked at if we want to maintain the sport going onward, because we do have a good co-ed kind of concept – recreational volleyball is probably as big as it's ever been – but we don't have what you would call a 'competitive league' in Canada, never mind the United States for that matter. After college or university finishes, there's not much out there for them. If the athletes want to play more, they either have to go to Europe or join the national programs if they want to continue to play a higher level of competitive volleyball.

Reiniger: You touched on the dynamic of women in the sport. I've heard, as you described, the sport being male dominated, yet you also hear volleyball being described as a 'girls' game' or transitioning from being known as a 'girls' game'.

Sawula: There are more female athletes than male athletes, for sure, playing volleyball right now. It's probably 60/40, at least that much overall. Due to cultural affairs or whatever you want to call it, again, the number of female coaches are limited. … But the nice part is there's a lot more of the former athletes turning to coaching and being able to help and develop that particular category overall. I think it's an attractive game to females because it's not the 'sock em, rock em, get in the trenches' football kind of game, yet it can be a very nasty game between females because they're very competitive too. You get some of the same issues. I remember internationally the first Japanese coach that won the gold medal in the '64 Olympics, when it was in Japan for the first time; he was quoted, and his comment was: 'I have to train my women to be like men.' What he meant by that [was] ... they had to work harder than anybody else, and they took no prisoners when they played the game. That attitude seemed for a while to be something that over the years has changed. Today, I don't think you could – You get a lot of coaches that think they can coach the female athlete. It's a big change from them having coached males and vice versa, yet we have some good female coaches that actually coach male athletes and they respond quite well to that situation as well. ... It has gone from being basically a female game at school to where the males have picked it up as a very competitive sport. You watch the physicality of the game now, it's phenomenal. The men that are jumping 360 [degrees] and the women at 310, 320. It's a phenomenal game. It's almost like any sport, I guess: the whole idea of bigger, higher, stronger. Eventually it catches up to you, so if the sport of volleyball wants to survive, it's got to find that middle ground. And I think it can because you can play volleyball outdoors, you can play it on the sand. … [Ruben] Acosta, the president [of the] FIVB, made a big decision years and years ago where he said instantaneously all sport federations in the world have to include beach volleyball. That prevented beach volleyball from becoming its own separate sport, which was a [possibility]. So … they pushed for it and eventually beach became an Olympic sport and indoor was an Olympic sport, which was really unusual because there's no basketball outdoor and indoor kind of stuff. Volleyball got a one-upmanship on most of the other sports. … That meant

doubling the money for the sport, and what's happened. Maybe it's changing a bit today, not by much, [but] the amount of money that went into volleyball has more or less stayed the same. If beach would have been separate from indoor, they would have each had to fight for their own dollars and maybe Sport Canada [or] groups like that who give the funding [would] have to fund them accordingly. ... The pot in the 80s and 90s [and] early 2000s never expanded, so some countries chose to go to beach or chose to stay in indoor because they couldn't do both. You could play beach recreationally, but to make it a competitive game, some of them actually chose to go that way in what they were doing. It's one of those things that it still is a very positive thing because it allows athletes to do cross training in the summertime that would help them in the indoor sport, even though they're slightly different games. It used to be [that] the best beach players came out of older athletes that had the skills. There's a lot of what we call 'skill execution' that's important in beach volleyball – control of the ball. So you had a lot of older players, Karch Kiraly from the U.S., for example, those kinds of players were all former indoor players. Now there's a new breed where many of them only played volleyball to high school and earned their spurs on the beach totally. [They] don't play much indoor volleyball. So you're getting that specialist coming out of the beach now.

Reiniger: Was there a lot of resistance to maintain the unification of beach volleyball and hard court?

Sawula: In the initial stages there was, internationally. But we had a dictatorial president, Ruben Acosta, who said, 'This is what's it's going to be.' Did it help volleyball? Some people would argue differently, but it probably did help volleyball by unifying it as a sport. In fact, what's happened now that's come around in the rules of both games is that they've tried to solidify the rules so they're very similar. Beach at one time had different rules and calls for different things and [it was the] same for indoor. ... They're trying to keep the rules similar. They might interpret them a little differently for each of the sports, but the basic rules of the game are there.

Reiniger: Going back to your history and your work with the sport, you wrote a number of books. Could you tell me about those?

Sawula: I don't even remember half of them; there's a list of them someplace. I think the manuals were the major part. I started the first volleyball technical journal. That would surprise people. At one time it had 1,500 subscribers, which was huge in the 70s and 80s for a magazine. We went around the world. Canada became known as the educational powerhouse of the world, meaning that a lot of federations learned what Canada was trying to do. I wrote another thing called the Volleyball Development Model, which we tried to get implemented in Canada. We got parts of it implemented, but the rest of the world jumped on that and they translated that into all

kinds of things. I'm just amazed [with] the way they have gone on. Basically the idea was to structure training, which is what we have now in what we call the Long Term Athlete Development plan [LTAD]. That was the Volleyball [Canada] Development Model [VCDM] that I started with Larry Kich and Terry Valeria in the late 70s, early 80s. The whole idea behind it was: What you did [to] train somebody who was eight years old, 10 years old, 12 years old? What were the things you did technically, mentally, tactically, physically in the game? When did you teach them and what formations, what systems? All that kind of stuff that you have to consider. In some ways, the special rules that come into different levels like under-16s, and 'women can't overhand pass the ball on service receive.' They were a carry over [from] this Volleyball Development Model, which was started in the 70s, and the Long-term Development Model, which they have now, is the 10,000 hours concept. … I wrote some other books on – I remember going to Moscow to watch the Moscow Olympics, and Theresa Maxwell and I wrote this book called *Soviet Gold*. About a year after the book came out, we had a great 'How-To: Block Serving' [as] a big part of it because we could block serve at that time; it was a new rule that came in. Then all of a sudden they changed that rule, so that outdated the book right away. During that same period, having written all of the manuals from 1 to 4 … that [got] the knowledge part going. Later [the application] became more of the challenge: to write articles on how you use [this] knowledge to put it into the game and to adapt it into the game as you went along. Most of the writing after that was in more or less that particular category overall. Those are the major, what I would call, technical things. I took basically what we did in Canada when I was a member of the International Coaches' Commission – I started that with the International Volleyball Federation, so their coaching certification program has our [Canadian] roots in it. We brought that forward and myself and Mark Tennant and others who were part of those committees went on and did the things that we thought would help. Volleyball around the world considered Canada an educational leader. If we would have had – I shouldn't say this but – some leadership above me in what I call 'the powers that be' both in volleyball and outside of volleyball, I could have easily seen Canada becoming a – You know sometimes you see 'Made in Canada' [on] a bag of wheat and it's exported to these other developing countries? Well, Canada could have been that in the world of sport in [a] way because we are [an] educational concept kind of people and the things that we were doing at the time in the 70s and 80s were actually ahead of the game. We were sort of the newer model of what was going on. I think we got bypassed very fast in the end, but still, some of the things that we tried to do were very important. For example in the '76 Olympics, Charles Cardinal and myself and some other people, we sat down, we came up with a statistical system for measuring the game of volleyball: the scales of zero, one, two, three, four, which were used for each individual skill. We used that to try to measure the teams that were performing in Montreal. After that, that became part of the norm for how teams started to [measure]: somebody's attacking this percentage or they're doing this. …

So you start taking statistics and using these statistics. We basically started a lot of that through that Olympic program in ’76. It went on from there and got taken up and has become basically the computer programs of today.

Reiniger: Just a point of clarification: The volleyball technical journal that you launched, that was a global first?

Sawula: It was global right from the very beginning because I started it wanting to have as many subscribers as possible. We [produced] it here. I was a member of the Coaching Commission for FIVB, but I didn’t start it for them. I started it in Canada because I was still the technical director [for Volleyball Canada] in ’77 to ’82. We had the Olympic Games just finishing, so the executive director, Ian Stoddart, and myself sat down and we thought, ‘Well why don’t we use this stuff? We’ve got all the score sheets, we’ve got all the data that we took from those games; let’s bring something out about the sport.’ That one issue became a second issue, which came out four times a year. I think we did about seven or eight years. They tried to follow it up after, but [it] eventually died a slow death after I left.

Reiniger: During your time in leadership nationally in the sport of volleyball, the CVA or otherwise, what was the place of Alberta volleyball in the national volleyball scene?

Sawula: Alberta was always a bit of a leader. Hugh Hoyles and I got Hiroshi Toyoda to come over here and we started the Jasper Volleyball Camp. Part of that was because at the University of Alberta we were running summer camps and volleyball was one of those. And then Hugh wanted to take it someplace else, and we were able to make a contact – Hugh knows better than I do – with a fellow in Jasper. Then all of a sudden, we’re going outdoors in Jasper. It became a focal point because Alberta has had a really instrumental role. It and Saskatchewan, I think. [Hugh Hoyles and I] brought in this Jasper Volleyball Camp and then Hiroshi Toyoda. Hugh followed up, and we got him to come to Canada. He went right across Canada, and a Czech, Jan Prsala, [toured] from the other end [of the country]. They sort of met in the middle, and that’s where the two different concepts of the games were played: One was an Asian concept, which came from Toyoda, and the other was a European concept, which more or less came from immigrants, but also from Jan Prsala. Alberta was able to, through the Jasper Volleyball Camp, bring in coaches. … Because of my contacts – I was now with Volleyball Canada, a national coach over the years, those kind of things – we were able to make contact with a lot of good coaches and bring them into Alberta. We brought them, [and] then worked with Mark Tennant to have a one-two stop. Mark was able to make good contacts because – It goes back to 1979. I was asked by Ed Zemrau from the University of Alberta, would I be interested in the chairmanship of the FISU games committee for volleyball, the

technical department? I said sure. In 1981 I went to Bucharest as that chairperson and ran the volleyball event. When I took over the national team in 1982, I realized I couldn't do that again because we were hosting it in 1983 in Edmonton. This was funny because this is only a one-year lead up, but I recommended to Ed that Mark Tennant take over the position, and he agreed. Mark got the position and ran it [from] 1981 to [today]. Because the two of us have had so much international contact, we were able to help both Canada [and] our provinces at the time. That led to I think a growth explosion in both places in volleyball that allowed the sport to begin to really grow. Also in the 1980s, what happened was that the universities started to become a dominant player in the game. They started to hire coaches to actually coach the sport and universities formed their own structure. The Canada West Association started and moved on from there. [It] eventually became the Canadian Universities Championships, or something like that. What that did is it actually maybe hurt the rest of volleyball for a while because they started to do things and schedule their own things at the time. All [the] colleges, universities, educational programs, clubs, competed together on weekend tournaments, and that was the nature of the beast. Eventually colleges and universities started to come in and compete by themselves. That meant that all of a sudden the facility that was the university was being used by universities and colleges. A lot of the clubs started to die off at that point in time because there weren't the venues that they needed in order to take part. One thing led to another, and I think Alberta itself – through the University of Calgary and Bob Bratton and [the University of] Alberta with Costa Chrysanthou at the beginning – did a lot of things to help. We used to run tournaments for high schools and we'd fill those things up. We'd run tournaments for club teams as well because that became a fundraiser for the university teams that were trying to operate. The Alberta Volleyball Association itself started to grow, coaching certification was becoming part of the process [and] referees, we needed referees. I think they started to realize they existed because there were athletes, there was player development going on, and so at that time technical directors, et cetera, became a new position within [the organization]. All of a sudden there was an administrative position, so you had administrators coming into the sport. It eventually grew, and again, it was a leader in how it grew across the country. It was one of the first provinces to have more than one [provincial organizer] involved in the sport, and that made a big difference. Then it just expanded itself from that. The international events that it started to do were strong. It promoted the sport through those educational aspects of it, and volleyball continued to evolve overall. I think a lot of it got its beginnings because of that one simple concept: the Jasper Volleyball Camp, which was very important in the early days. I remember going to Ottawa as the representative for the Alberta Volleyball Association when Volleyball Canada was formed, or Canadian Volleyball Association at the time, and Anton Furlani was the president. We were there at this particular meeting, and really at that point – that was in the 60s, early 70s [volleyball] started to evolve. In fact, I think Alberta Volleyball got some funds from the government to hire

– At first it was an administrator and then it became a technical person and then it became assistants, et cetera. Coaching certification got some money coming in. Even at that time the Canada Games itself was a big thing. It started in the 60s and went on ’64, ’67. ... That became a big [thing]. All of a sudden there was a venue where you could display your talents. Sports got funding … and got things together, they ran programs and one thing led to another overall.

Reiniger: You mentioned European influences and immigrants to the province. How did immigration to Alberta impact the development of the sport here?

Sawula: Right across the country. In the 60s, for example, the Czechs came in because of the bloodbath between Czechs and Russians. The whole European immigration concept of coming across from Europe and then moving from Ontario westward more or less. With that they brought their cultural differences, and the cultural differences led into certain sports. Volleyball was new in Canada at the time, especially in the 60s, and gradually evolved and one thing led to another. We used to have a lot of clubs that were ethnically based: the Poles or the Czechs or whomever it happened to be at that particular time. We didn’t get a lot of what I would call Asian volleyball activity. We had a lot of Asian influence in the sense of the style of the sport, the technical aspects of the sport, the training of sport, but we didn’t have a lot of Asian groups playing volleyball the way we had the Caucasians from Europe or whichever countries they might have been [from]. There were a lot of Eastern Bloc countries. There were a lot of those kinds of things, and of course because of the YMCA, the game spread across the world. It had its influence here, too. … A lot of those pockets still exist. You still have certain clubs that have a volleyball program, and they compete within that particular group.

Reiniger: Are you saying we still have ethnically-based volleyball clubs?

Sawula: I’m just trying to think now. I think there’s not as many as there used to be. It’s much more diverse because what happened is that when Canada took the route of going into an age-classification system for competitions and started to focus on the youth development aspects – it started first U16 and U17 and U18, and then it went down – it started going lower. We didn’t develop our clubs the way the Europeans developed their clubs where, in Europe, a club is not age based. They might have age competitions for three, four months of the year for younger kids, but they’re divisional play. Divisional play means you take your best people, whomever they are, doesn’t matter what age level, and you put them at the top level. You [begin in] second division, third division, [or] fourth division, and you work your way up through the systems. If you’re in fourth division and you win that year, you get a chance to move on and go to third vision, up the ladder so to speak. Canada adopted more of the model of – We tried a club development program. I started

something in the 70s to try to get clubs going and operating. At that time we wanted more youth, so we pushed the youth aspect. But as things evolved, after you left university there was no place to go to play. I would say before that, it was the ethnic groups that allowed that to continue. There were still some very competitive elements there, but that changed in itself. Canada doesn't have clubs. We have some clubs, but not the way that we think in Europe. We have clubs that are [for ages] 12-18, and after that it doesn't exist. ... Very few clubs would have an older age element of people taking part in the sport. One of the activities when George Tokarsky was a leader in Alberta Volleyball – this is going back 10, 15 years – George started to involve the masters, the older players, and he found venues in the States and other places where they could take part, and [this] has led to where the World Masters Games [had those players] taking part. And our 55[-plus] athletes are winning those games in the Worlds, as some of my female athletes [have] said, 'We finally beat the Russians!' [It] took a little while, but maybe that's where the sport was going.

Reiniger: So if I'm understanding correctly, there was a shift from ethnically-based teams to age class divisions?

Sawula: Yes. Totally. I think that affected why the club concept changed from one that was more older-athlete dominated to now where it's totally younger-age dominated. Maybe we eventually will go back to – it doesn't have to be cultural or ethnic – but to where the idea is that we'll develop athletes all the way through the system. Even after 30, our clubs will take part in the 'Recreational League of Edmonton' or whatever it might be. But we don't have that right now; there's not that affiliation. In Europe, they'll build a volleyball venue for [a] club. [If] you look around our country, there is no volleyball venue for any club. We rent space and do that kind of thing, but they actually build them for a volleyball club in Europe in many cases. So you get something that's a little bit different than what we have right here.

Reiniger: When did you see that shift from the ethnically based teams?

Sawula: [In the] early 80s it started to change. That's because the colleges and universities sort of started to go on their own [way]. Then [there was] the drying up of the space, the university space that was used for competition. The fact that the universities had their own league and their own competition meant they didn't compete anymore with the clubs themselves. So the clubs couldn't find this avenue because [it used to be] that European concept. There were kids from 18-30 playing in one unit, and now it doesn't happen that way. You've got to be in an age-specific [program]. You don't have the younger kids playing with older kids, so you have the older kids dying out and replaced by the younger ones. It's one of our problems we have with our athletes right now. I don't know if we could ever answer it because

even the United States, with its population and financial base, have never been able to bring out what they call an ‘elite league’ for older athletes like Europe does. [We] can’t seem to find the right mixture, supporters, whatever it needs in order to bring that out.

Reiniger: In the 70s and 80s, we saw a lot of immigration to Canada, migration to Alberta, and movement of people to cities in Alberta. How did those changing demographics interact with this shift to an age-class model, if they did?

Sawula: The shift sort of just came because of what I mentioned before: the colleges and universities sort of banding together to keep [them] out. Not deliberately, but it did end up keeping out the ethnic groups that were organized under a different system. Also as we were becoming more internationally involved – Canada had its first exposure to international volleyball in, well, we had the ’67 Pan American Games, but it was really the Montreal Olympics. We started our program in ’74 doing things that were serious. The women were more serious in Vancouver under Art Willms and Vic Lindal than the men were. Then we hired Bill Neville for the men and Moo Park for the women, and they took us to a different level. We were definitely learning about the sport but [on] a different level, and we realized we didn’t have enough players. That’s when I came in [with] coaching certification and, how do we move kids back because the idea was hockey could start at [ages] 10 and 11, but not volleyball. You waited until you got to high school to start volleyball. What was happening then as each sport started to develop, if you didn’t start a kid in that sport, then they may never play your sport. The model in Europe that worked was you played gymnastics, track and field, and football [soccer] and that gave you all your coordination and all the things that are necessary for you to become a good athlete. They started to realize, too, that that changed the game. If we didn’t start these kids in a little bit earlier, we may not get them in this sport. That was happening within Canada in volleyball, and we realized we needed more athletes. This led to age class competitions. I think the biggest input was in the 90s when we brought in the U.S. concept of sport festivals. I think Alberta was a leader at that time in that. Mark Eckert and people like that. Greg Ryan I thought was involved quite a bit – and the Alberta Volleyball Association. I can’t of the people off the top of my head, but the fellows that were the technical director and executive director for Alberta Volleyball were instrumental in bringing across the idea. We were trying to expand the season as we were going along. At first the seasons were sort of a winter season. It would go September to March. Well, then what do the kids do between March and September? Not very much. We had a national championship in Quebec City in the 70s and we got snowed out. The teams couldn’t get in, not very many. Ian Stoddart, who was the executive director, said, ‘This has got to change; we’re going to move the national championships back into April.’ Eventually it evolved where we ended up going into May for our national championships so we could extend the season. Every

time, we tried to make kids play volleyball longer. We had another conflict in Canada, which were the school programs in comparison to [what were] eventually called club programs. The school programs usually were in September to December, that period, [and] club programs went December to March. Then as we extended all of those seasons, we tried not to have a conflict with the schools' athletic associations [who control schools]. We tried to keep our clubs from not training as a club [so there is no conflict] in the September to end of November period. Then the clubs take over from December to May, more or less. Then you've got the other masters, you have your provincial programs, maybe a junior national program or youth national program, senior programs … so trying to bring all of that together. The extending of the seasons, which, again, we tried to get a better quality of player because we were finding out, as I said, in the 70s and 80s, we didn't have those players. I think that sport festival concept has totally revolutionized the sport. I think we've got to do the same to keep some kids going; maybe you don't have to train that much, but try to keep those 24, 25, 26, 27s, and 50s going somehow. The game has changed. ... High performance sport today takes dollars. If you don't have those resources, [it] doesn't matter what you think, it's going to be very, very difficult. It takes more resources [in] different ways. [With] the female [athlete], you're dealing with an athlete that might stop playing a little bit earlier than the male athlete would stop playing. So does that mean we should start doing things a little bit younger on the female side? I firmly believe we need what I call the junior, 18 and under, and the youth programs, 16 and under, for the female game. I started [those programs] in 2001 to 2005 with the national team [and even in the 80's we had a junior program run in the basement of my parent's house during the '83 FISU Games].[1] I felt it's really critical because it's the way that you have to get those 10,000 hours into the game for those athletes and give yourself a chance to be competitive on the international area. The male youth [program] isn't as important at under 16, but [should operate as] junior and what we call the 'B program' or the 'FISU program' [19 to 23 years]; the university program is important. I would love to see [more] leadership [from them in this area]. ... That has to happen from CIS [in that FISU-games, B-program leadership area]. Volleyball Canada is showing that they don't have the funding to be able to run those programs properly. Until we find that solution, we're falling farther behind rather than going forward. The men have shown that if you put the program together and you've got some decent developing blocks along the way and the funding to go with it, they're producing some good quality talent on the court.

Reiniger: What makes Alberta Volleyball different from volleyball in any other province or country?

[1] Parenthetical information in this paragraph as added by the interviewee in a clarifying email, Aug. 5, 2014.

Sawula: I guess they'd all say the same [thing]. Just recently with people like Terry Gagnon being in the position that he's in [executive director], [he] has done a real good job with trying to have a goal and a focus. ... The fact that Alberta has got a thing like the Saville Centre operating is really unique. It's the only province that has this kind of [facility] – I think the Richmond Oval in B.C. is another one that's coming along – ... You've got to pay for it, of course, but it gives you a chance to host all these competitions with a large number of teams coming in.

What amazes me is the number of parents that are following that system. I think that's another area that needs work: the parent and volleyball; never mind the coach and volleyball, the parents are following every step of the way of their youngster from the age of 14 onward to 18. It's the biggest growing phenomenon that's out there right now, so that's really critical.

Alberta has just been able to take some of the right steps. I think the Alberta Government has been able to fund and help the various sports associations to give them some seed money to get things going, and the rest has been the leaders that have come through. There have been some good presidents like Leigh Goldie and others that have done a heck of a job over the years in trying to get things in that were important. They've done a better job now with the committees and trying to understand how things develop and what some priorities should be. They're not doing everything. There was a thing to try to, let's say, should we bring the women's [national] program to Alberta because they're looking [for] potential site bidding and stuff like that, but I think they've got too much on their plate and [are] just trying to keep things going – the Saville Centre being one of those kind of things. Gradually, hopefully, they can continue to expand and increase their financial base, which then allows you to do other things.

It's been the people. That's been the biggest thing. It doesn't matter, even if it's right in the very beginning when you're working out of somebody's basement and you're having your meetings in the living room to now where it's [in] a boardroom. Things change gradually over time but the same things get discussed. I think for what the people did in the 60s and 70s was [comparable] to the same things that can be done with the people who are doing it in the 2010s and 2020s. You're still dependent on the volunteer and the person to bring that forward. Even though we have more paid employees or more interest in the sport than we've ever had, we're still facing some of the same uphill battles that we faced back in the 60s and 70s to make it better. 'Good, better, best. Never let it rest. Until your good is better and your better is best.'

... In the end things always can be better; it doesn't matter what it is. I think as long as we continue to learn and want to continue to grow, we have things that we can

still do. We're sometimes just keeping our heads up above water and not listening to what our people are telling us who are out there ... But generally, compared to the 70s and my 45 years of involvement – [I have] been fortunate because I can say I'm one of the only people who has done volleyball, and not in a sense [of] an educational setting, but volleyball from the point of view that it's been my job my whole life – the growth in the sport from the 60s onward has been huge. …

I think the provincial scene is way ahead of the national scene right now. That's a big change. [Whereas] before, it was all nationally driven and telling the provinces what to do. Now it's almost, the provinces are going to have to be telling the national association what to do because they have the resources. They have the expertise now. There's no knowledge gap, there's no expertise gap. … Right now it's just a matter of what you do, how you do it, and how well you do it.

Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99

An oral history project made possible by Volleyball Alberta,
the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation,
and the Alberta Lottery Fund

Interview with Theresa Maxwell

June 7th, 2014

Calgary, Alberta

Preface

This is Joelle Reiniger, on behalf of Volleyball Alberta, recording an oral history interview of Theresa Maxwell for the project *Voices of Alberta Volleyball: 1960-99.* This is interview being recorded on June 7th, 2014 in Calgary, Alberta.

Interview

Reiniger: Would you spell your full name for me?

Maxwell: T-H-E-R-E-S-A. Maxwell, M-A-X-W-E-L-L.

Reiniger: Is there a middle name?

Maxwell: Helen.

Reiniger: What about a maiden name?

Maxwell: Sekura, S-E-K-U-R-A.

Reiniger: Could I get your date of birth, please?

Maxwell: February 13th, 1944.

Reiniger: Your place of birth?

Maxwell: Taber, Alberta.

Reiniger: What was your first contact with volleyball?

Maxwell: My first contact with volleyball was actually in a university course. I was taking a Bachelor of Education degree with a major in Physical Education, minor in Math. Dr. Bob Bratton was our volleyball instructor.

It was a very different kind of game. I had been a basketball player, track athlete, played a lot of baseball – all of the southern Alberta kinds of games.

We were playing this game [volleyball], and at that time you could screen the server;[1] you could assist the girls in the serve because perhaps they were too weak to get it across. A lot of the time, it was an underhand serve. It was fairly unique. I thought this was kind of a wussy game given all of those rules. And then within [that time frame] – it was over a period of three years between taking that class and graduating – the rules had changed. You could no longer assist; there was no screening. [You] started playing specialized positions. That would have been about '64 to '66. All of a sudden the game went from being, 'Let's go out and slap this ball around,' to a pretty intense kind of competitive game, which suited my personality much more. In my last year, the year that I graduated, I decided – I and Marilyn Neil, who was a basketball player with me – that anybody could play this game. So we tried out for both the basketball and the volleyball team. The basketball team was the priority for both of us, but we thought we'd do this volleyball stuff. We actually made the team and played in some conference games, but, obviously, we missed every practice that conflicted with basketball. So the coach, and rightly so, didn't play us a whole lot. But it was a good introduction.

I learned to play and then left university and got a job teaching here in Calgary, and they[2] didn't have [women's] basketball recreationally. They did have volleyball recreationally, so we[3] started playing on a sort-of weekly basis and competing in the Canadian championships – or leading up to Canadian championships or provincial competitions. It was usually university-based tournaments that we started playing in. I played with Marilyn Bratton and a group of those [university] people. And then in about 1970-ish or '72, [I played with] the first FISU games team [players]: people like Debbie Norrie and Barb – Oh, I've just forgotten her last name – and Bev Edwards. They played together. And a number of other players [who] were graduating: Marilee Paterson, Debbie

[1] Preventing the receiving team from seeing the serving player or ball during a serve
[2] The City of Calgary adult leagues
[3] A group of teachers and grads from the University of Calgary

Watson, Mavis King – they were all playing; we played together. [We also played with] June Willms, Dale Gailbreath.[4]

We decided that, yeah, we could play. We formed a team fairly casually, but we made a point of being able to play in most of the tournaments including Saskatchewan Supervolley. We did well, so we started to play on a regular basis. Then we actually got a coach, and I was selected to play on the national team for a number of years. The national team during those days was very different. It was like, buy your own uniform, we'll have a three-week training, and then we'll go play international competition, which was always interesting. We did relatively well, I would say, given the lackadaisical kind of way we approached that whole competition. …

I went off to graduate school in Eugene, Oregon and came back and started playing a lot more intensely, and then teaching volleyball and coaching it. Dr. Bratton had moved into administration, so I became the volleyball instructor for the [university Phys Ed courses].

So, that was my introduction to volleyball. It's like anything else: you start sort of casually and then you realize … 'Ah, This could become intense.' We did pretty well in national competitions, our team. I've got more silver medals, I think, than most people have. We'd lose too. One year it was Manitoba, a number of years it was B.C., but we were – the Calgary Cals was the team that I played for – we were usually one of the dominant teams in the province. We always took the best athletes from the University of Calgary, and then we formed them with these other people that had been athletes in whatever sport and were probably teaching. Then we wound up playing the alumni from the U of A and other teams that had been created in other regions. We were pretty intense, this team. And it was good. I enjoyed it, developed great friendships … went to the U.S. to play in competitions, played across Canada. Saskatchewan Supervolley was sort of our domain because we made it a point to win that tournament as often as we could, and we did win a number of times.

I'll tell you a story about [Supervolley founder] Mark Tennant: One year we had Debbie Norrie and Bev Edwards, myself, the Watsons, et cetera [on the team]. Mark Tennant should have known better, but he basically made a comment that, 'Oh, the Calgary Cals are far too old to be a competitive force in volleyball, and they're probably going to come to Supervolley' – or something to that effect – 'but he would like to get more

[4] Ria Vandervalk, Wendy Carson, Gaylene Barry, were also part of that group.

competition.' Well, the Cals were not the kind of people who would take that lightly. … We wound up playing his team in the finals. They had some very good players: Mary Moore – we called her Mary Tyler Moore, and Val – I've forgotten Val's last name but big hitter, played on the Junior National Team, et cetera. So we just basically said, 'Okay. Here we go.' We had Gaylene Barry as our setter on that team; she was outstanding as a setter. Debbie Norrie and myself were middle along with Rhea Vanderwal, I think her last name was. It's changed; it's Whitehead now.

Hitters were Marilee Paterson and Debbie Watson; those were the predominant hitters. I got to play opposite Val, who was quite a bit taller, but I just said – Brad Kilb was our coach; that was the first year of his coaching us – 'Listen. I want you to flip the rotation so that I am against Val.' She used to cut the ball back quite a lot, and so I just didn't block her face-to-face; I was always about two feet over. And if I didn't block her, she'd try to cut the ball back the other way. Defensively, Gaylene was always there to pick it up, and if she tried tipping it, some of the others [would get it] – So we wound up beating that team that year quite handily, I think, by quite a wide margin. It was games to 15 [points] in those days. Mark was a little more subdued when we finished. [Laughs] Mark Tennant was a great competitor, great builder … but it wasn't smart on Mark's part to say to a group of women who were that competitive that we weren't going to do well or we were 'over the hill', I think he called it.

... We [also] went to nationals and played the Vancouver Chimos. That was one team that was an ongoing competition. They had actually taken one of our best players, June Willms[5]. We lost to them a number of years, usually in five [sets]. It was just a big battle back and forth. Tremendous competition, but good friends all the way around. There were some coaches that probably needed some coaching ethics, but other than that – [laughs]. The competitions at that time were always a big festival. Everyone got together and it was your chance once a year to meet people from Vancouver to Manitoba to wherever. We did that over a period of, I would say, close to ten years. It was a fun opportunity and we renewed friendships. It was still very competitive, and you were introduced to volleyball throughout the country doing that sort of thing.

Reiniger: There are a couple small points that I want to pick up on. You were a

[5] June Willms (1941-2007) was the first female Volleyball Canada Hall of Fame inductee. Willms represented Canada at international competitions for eight years and helped lead the Vancouver Chimos to four consecutive national victories, among other achievements. Born in the town Cardston on a Blood reserve, Willms was also the granddaughter of James Gladstone, the first Status Indian to be appointed to the Canadian senate.

founding member of the Calgary Cals; is that correct?

Maxwell: I think the group was [already] there – like Marilyn Bratton [for example]. I was one of the first people to come in – but I think the Cals as a group had been organized before that. I think, like a lot of situations, they were looking for players. I was not a super volleyball player at that time, but I was a competitive player, so they knew that I would probably play hard. I could jump, and I'd played basketball so [I] knew where to go position-wise. So, [I was] probably not a founding member; I don't recall that. I just recall sort of working with that first group of people: Mavis King, Carol Lane; Marilyn was there; June Willms was part of that group. I'm not even sure how it really started; it was a long time ago.

Reiniger: Having been involved from close to the inception of that team, what can you tell me about the impetus for founding the Calgary Cals?

Maxwell: I think at that time, the university teams were the primary places that teams were formed, or [the] YMCA recreational kinds of things. There were some players out of Calgary – predominantly, I would say, high school teachers – that were competitive. Some of them had been volleyball players, so they wanted to do something that was a recreational kind of thing after school to keep up the fitness level. Although [the fitness aspect] wasn't a big push at that time; it was more of a social, 'Yeah, let's do this,' practice, those kinds of things.

At that time, also, [there were] a number of visiting coaches coming through – or visiting experts coming through – so they would need people to demonstrate on or with. Generally, we were a group that was available and a group that was willing to try just about anything.

As I say to people sometimes, I learned to forearm pass about five different ways and, eventually, in my own head, decided that at the end of the day what was important was that you got the ball to the setter … and the technique was secondary. That was the sort of thing that went on, and the university teams didn't have that time because they were already training under a different sort of [regime]. That was the situation; that was a different kind of volleyball. You didn't train the same way they do now and you didn't have the intensity of practices the same way. I think we practiced twice a week for a couple of hours. Sometimes you had other conflicts, you had parent-teacher meetings and on and on and on, so you sort of made-do with what you could. It was a lot more

casual – I don't want to say 'casual' because you were still as competitive and intense, but it just wasn't that kind of, 'Okay, we're [practicing] five days a week and you're physically training and you're doing this and you're doing that.' We would play the university teams sometimes – the Cals would – and we were pretty even, I would say.

… It's surprising how smart you get when you get older and [don't have time to practice]. You begin to look a lot more; you begin to think strategically a lot more. We often laugh about it: how much smarter we got as we got slower and less able to do some of the things. … You knew where the ball was going to go, so you were there. … We didn't waste time going to practice and not being productive. We just didn't have it, and we were far too competitive not to want to win everything that we entered.

Reiniger: [When you played on the national team], where was that national team based?

Maxwell: There was no base, so what would happen is that through the Canadian national competition, depending on who the coach was – because the coach was selected maybe a month before the competition – you said, 'Maybe 'Joe Blow' is going to be the coach. At the nationals, he's looking for players to see how they are.' So – sometimes it was right at the national competition that there was a tryout. Sometimes you went home for a week and then came back, and you started training for those six weeks or four weeks or whatever it was. Usually the four weeks were pretty intense. You had two [practices] a day minimum, sometimes three a day … and then you went off to wherever the competition was – Mexico or the U.S. – and played. Did we do well? Uh, no. Not from a results perspective. Did we hold our own given those [factors]? Yes. We won some sets.

Mexico was training year round at that time. The U.S. was certainly training a lot longer than we did. I think those were some of the things when people [saw they] began to say, 'Yeah, you know what? If we're going to play at this league, we're going to have to change the structure of how we select teams and how much we train and what we do, et cetera.'

Reiniger: How many of you were from Alberta?

Maxwell: There were a considerable number of us from Alberta, depending on the year. There were probably four or five from Alberta one year and then B.C. dominated. Some

other times, we had a couple of people from Ontario. I really can't remember if there was anyone from the Maritimes … It depended on where your team and the power was. B.C. and Alberta tended to be good, and then they picked up a player or so from Manitoba. I think some of the other provinces did not have seniors' leagues to the same extent or [ones that were] as competitive. Our primary concern was having a good time and entering those competitions, not so much, 'Oh, we've got to make the national team.' That was not the objective. It's a very different kind of thing now.

And of course, part of it was that we played with the men. Mark Tennant was an outstanding setter for Saskatchewan and Lorne Sawula was a setter for U of A, UBC. … So you got to know people and who was doing what and the hitters and who they were.

Reiniger: As I listen to your stories and those of other people I am interviewing, I am hearing a lot of names of [early coaches and athletes] who are either still living … or have been until recently. I get the impression that it was quite a young volleyball community during those years. Is that correct?

Maxwell: Well, I have to say that Bob Bratton came and, I would say, fundamentally introduced the game in Calgary. So for us to have that class and to see that change in rules at the same time – He started the men's program at the University of Calgary. And the women's program at the University of Calgary at that time was – I'll be kind – certainly not intense because the people that made the volleyball team were those that didn't make the basketball or field hockey or some of the other teams. Volleyball was viewed as, 'Oh, you wore little skirts and that kind of stuff.' That's one of the reasons why it was just not very attractive to me and some of the other real competitive people. It wasn't until it became competitive that that group of people got involved. Wendy Carson, for instance, was an outstanding basketball player, outstanding field hockey player, and it wasn't until we started the Cals that she became part of [our group] and became a much more competitive volleyball player. By then the rules were pretty, you know, 'Let's get out there and hit the ball hard, play tough defence. We're playing specialized positions and not [wearing] little dresses and things that had been there.' I don't mean that, you know, but that's the attitude that was there: help them serve across the net; wear a little dress. That was not me, for sure, and a number of other people too.

Reiniger: Did the Cals have any rivals?

Maxwell: I think our rivals – our biggest competitions, were the university teams. [The University of Calgary] Dinos – at that time they were called the Dinnies – were one. We were just not going to let them beat us. Ever. But they did.

They were a good athletic team. [The University of] Alberta Pandas – Karen Walsh played at that time, and a few others. Again, we just weren't going to let them [win]. Now were there any other, I'll call them, senior teams? I don't like to use the word 'senior' because we weren't very much older than the university teams. We had probably just graduated and were within five years of graduation and playing at [their] level. ... Their advantage was the increased training hours. [Our advantage was] the experience aspect, and like I said before, the idea that you get a whole lot smarter when you don't have that training aspect and you're not as physically fit. … Those were the rivals, the primary ones. It was always … going to be the Cals, the Dinos, or the Pandas that went to nationals. A great majority of the time, the Cals won. It wound up being a contest between the Dinos and the Cals a lot of the time.

Reiniger: I would like to move on to Supervolley. Could you describe the early years of that event and your involvement in it?

Maxwell: Historically there were a number of competitions hosted by the [post-secondary] institutions. For instance, the University of Calgary always hosted a tournament the first week in January. We got a number of western teams, collegiate teams, as well as a few senior teams because they were open tournaments. That was a tournament that everybody made a point of going to. University of Saskatchewan had [a similar tournament], and [the] University of Alberta. There were traditional weekends that each tournament was held on, so you could actually plan your season to say, 'We're going to this [event].' Because there were no premiere leagues, there were no competitions. You found your competitions. Supervolley, as such – that name did not arrive until … probably the third or fourth year that we played at the University of Saskatchewan. … Supervolley had an advantage over Alberta competitions because it was a little more central, so Manitoba teams would go there, some Ontario teams. It was still not too far from B.C., so they actually had an opportunity to have a wider draw. It was an outstanding kind of competition, always well organized. Mark Tennant does a terrific job of doing that kind of stuff. [It was] one of the best tournaments in western Canada … and in some ways, when the University started being, I'll [say], really focused within themselves so [that] their schedule became so tight that they didn't have room for open competitions … those tournaments died. The University of Calgary's

died, the Alberta one died and Supervolley sort of died. I think they continued for a little bit longer, but then they just had the university teams [registered] and the university teams played each other anyway. … Whereas, when it was an open tournament and they had Winnipeg Wesmen, a couple of other [men's and women's] teams from Winnipeg, they had the Cals, the Chimos from B.C., and they had those club teams coming in and playing university as well – it was very competitive. It was like going to the nationals. It was like, this is someplace you went because you saw your friends and it was a chance to see how much you had improved or how competitive they were and, 'Could you beat them this year?' and on and on.

… I think Bob [Bratton] might have said the same kind of thing: that once the university started becoming, 'Here's their schedule, they're training really hard,' I think it was detrimental both ways because the club teams didn't have a place to play and university teams wound up coming very insular. So they didn't see these other kinds of less structured club teams who could beat them a lot of time. …

Reiniger: Could you attach a period of time to where that transition took place?

Maxwell: I would say, those tournaments when they started, they were probably in the early 70s to the mid-70s, and then toward the late 70s the University started becoming a little more insular, and I would say that by the mid-80s, those tournaments were losing their attraction because of restrictions. They certainly were gone by the end of the 80s, I would say. The university tournament, the University of Calgary one, I would say by the mid-70s, was no longer [an open tournament]. Supervolley lasted for probably ten years longer than the Alberta competitions did.

Reiniger: I would like to fast forward to your time with the CVA as vice president and president.

Maxwell: I'm going to back up to my time with the AVA [Alberta Volleyball Association, now Volleyball Alberta]. Al James had been the president and phoned me one day and basically asked if I would be the president. Now, I'd been involved in Alberta Volleyball before that, as I had been a rep coach for the Can Am [tournament]. I had been a player development coordinator; I think that was the title. … Al James phoned me and said, 'Listen, I can't do this presidency stuff. Would you take over for me?' I was supposed to be there for six months and I think I was there for about six years or something like that. Then at some point my job changed a little bit and I had a few children, so I actually

talked to one of the Johnsons and said, ‘Listen, we need a new president. I think you would do a great job. I have every confidence –’. …

Brad Kilb was involved in [the association], and Bob Bratton, and then Jan Patterson from Edmonton had been there sort of on an ongoing basis, I was there. … Howie Rasmussen got involved … Jim Day was contributing from Lethbridge. It was one of those things, ‘Jim, we need a southern Alberta rep. Can you do it or who would you recommend?’ So we got someone else who might be a good young person coming in, and they would come in and make a contribution. A lot of the time they stayed involved in a lot of different ways, maybe not actively in a position. After I was president of Alberta Volleyball, we used to have on that organization a CVA [Canadian Volleyball Association] rep, we called it, and that person would go [to the national organization] and present our position. That was about the time when Volleyball Alberta was starting to expand because we were able to get some resources. Eventually, that CVA rep we decided [should be] the president. So I went – a lot of time Jan Patterson came. … After you’re there for four years or so, [you see] some really interesting patterns developing. There were some regions in the country that had strength, but they also always felt that they were the only ones doing anything in that area, which was definitely not true. One of the things that motivated me to become involved at that national level was the fact that I just felt that [Alberta] had more to contribute, and maybe that was the way to do it then – that [CVA executive] position. Because, there was nothing more frustrating than to have [other provinces] insisting that they were the only ones that could do anything.

There were a lot of people from Ontario on the CVA executive so, of course, we always got that central-Ontario bias. We thought that Alberta was doing a whole bunch of really good things, and it was like, ‘No, not from there.’ Quebec was doing some great things, but that wasn’t happening. There were some real initiatives happening in the Maritimes, but big Ontario, that’s where the positions came from.

That was one of the reasons why I got involved at that national level as vice president. Again, you’ve got to think that at that time we had two, maybe three meetings a year and other than that it was phone call or fax communication. There was none of this Skype and instant email and all that. It was a very different kind of organization to try and coordinate, so things moved a little bit slower, but there were some good initiatives that were taken up. While I was president, World League came and we tried to get in [the competition]. We were qualifying for the Olympics and we wanted to make sure that

our national women's team had the same kind of opportunities that the national men's teams was having. I tend to be a little bit of that egalitarian; if there's going to be a program in volleyball, I felt that there should be opportunities for girls and boys and for boys and girls, whichever.

We had one instance [when I was] president of Alberta Volleyball. We were going to play in the Winter Games and the government really liked us to play in the Winter Games because Alaska was going to be there and Yukon and the Northwest Territories, and Alberta and Saskatchewan eventually became involved. … So eventually it became: North of 60, you had to be there. … The first time we were doing this, things were fine. We had a girls' and a boys' team, and when we went to that first Winter Games in Whitehorse, we made a volleyball a real spectacle. I was there as the volleyball rep and Steve Wilson was an official. We decided that for the medal matches, we were going to dress this up. We actually had a march-in and we had the officials being introduced. [We] made it a real ceremony. It was the first time that it happened there, and all of a sudden some of the others sports went, 'Ooh. We should do this.'

The second Winter Games that came along, the government decided that there wasn't enough interest in the girls' competition, that what we really wanted was some real strong boys' competition. So they sent us a little note and said they'd decided to restrict the volleyball competition to boys only.[6] I didn't even consult with the executive. It took me all of about five minutes to say, 'no thanks.' This was Dale Henwood [of Alberta Sport and Recreation]. So I get this phone call at the university, 'Mr. Henwood would like to meet with you in his office tomorrow.' Well, his office is in Edmonton, so I phoned him and said, 'I can't do it tomorrow. Well, what's this about?' 'Well, we just want to talk to you about volleyball.' I said, 'Fine.' So I went up there and he said something to the effect of, 'I understand that you're not going to send the boys' team to the Winter Games.' I said, 'No.' He said, 'Well, but we're giving you this sum of money' – which was fairly large to do this – and I said, 'You know what, Dale? We would like to think that this organization supports both boys and girls and if you don't want the girls in this competition, then the boys don't get to go. I'm sorry. That's the way it's going to be.' He said, 'Well, has this gone through your board?' I said, 'The buck stops with me, Dale. I'm telling you, there will not be a boys' team unless the girls go. We're prepared to forgo this amount of money because, in the end, the decision's going to be mine.'

[6] In clarifying email to the interviewer sent on June 19, 2015, Theresa Maxwell wrote: "… To be fair, I think that some areas i.e. Yukon, NWT were having a difficult time fielding a girls program, so this seemed like a logical choice. But then the whole purpose of the Games was to promote the development of various sports programs particularly in the Yukon, NWT and northern parts of the various provinces involved."

There was another week of flurry about what was happening, and would we do this? Well, of course, if Alberta's not going to be there with their boys' team, then Alaska doesn't want to go because there's not going to be not as much competition, and the Yukon really wanted that kind of competition … it was just a ripple effect. Within a week I think, some of the other areas were beginning to question whether they would go, and all of a sudden they said, 'Yeah, we'll have a girls and a boys competition.' And I said, 'Fine. We'll be there.'

I think [it] was a real accomplishment that we established fairly early that the opportunities were going to be there for [both] the girls and the boys. That doesn't mean we didn't have tournaments that were sort of 'girls' because they were more predominant or 'boys', but when it came to a big one like that or the Canada Games – If they had said, 'There's no women's competition in the Canada Games,' I would have said, 'No. There will be no boys' teams from Alberta going either.' We didn't have too many major issues with that; people sort of supported that. I thought that was a good kind of a thing: … that we were able to promote volleyball for everybody, for every sort of age group and for boys and girls. It always surprised me – well, it doesn't surprise me because it's so typical of society – that the boys play and the girls watch, right? Yet the numbers of participants we had on the girls' side was always higher than the number of participants on the boys' side, so here was one opportunity for us to actually level the playing field in sports, so to speak. … Most of the tournaments we go to now, you'll see there are a lot more female participants than male participants. I understand why; there are more opportunities in other sports for the boys. But it's an opportunity for girls to develop some really good skills. I think it's a great thing … a real positive thing from a volleyball perspective.

Reiniger: Which year was that discussion?

Maxwell: Oh, 19– I could go down and get my Winter Games jacket and tell you. I would say it was in the mid-80s that the Winter Games competition was in Whitehorse at that time.

... There were some times when they would try to put ties onto the money: 'Well, this [or that] is going for the boys …' And we needed money, so we would find some creative ways to equalize or make it appropriate for girls and boys to compete. ... Sometimes the girls spent more and sometimes the boys spent more but, on the whole, they had pretty

equal opportunities to play.

Reiniger: How did the participation that year of the Alberta girls' team in that event impact – if it did have an impact – on the number of girls' teams from other places that participated in the same event?

Maxwell: We got [an Alberta] girls' team, and there was a girls' team out of Alaska. I think the girls' competition had one fewer team. That could have been from the Territories because the boys' team from the Territories – this is mid-'80s, so I could be wrong – was centered a little bit more in the Yellowknife-Whitehorse area, so they could train. They didn't have that core of girls in one of those places, so the girls potentially were spread around throughout the Northwest Territories a little bit more.

I think, at the end, they wound up cancelling because they just couldn't get the girls together enough. But we had the teams from all the other [regions], so the competitions were still there. We had a very competitive boys' side, too, this time around; whereas we would not have had anything had they not let the girls play. [Because] the girls went, the boys' competition was better because there was the Alberta boys' team. We had some interesting participants at the first year at the games. We had a team from a First Nations community and they were doing some interesting things. They did some switching and they did some specialized positions. They did a lot of wonderful things. But, really, they didn't have the technical basis from the coach and they didn't have the technical basis as players, so they were playing some pretty – in basketball, you'd call it ratball, right? Streetball kind of stuff. They were playing streetball-volleyball. So they'd switch: if you and I were together on the front line, then maybe I would go into the middle, but if there was somebody else there, then they'd switch in the middle, and I'd go do something else. That kind of thing happened on an ongoing basis and one of the comments from one of the officials was, 'That is the most organized, unorganized team I've ever seen!' So it was good, and they did pretty well, … so it was good to see. It gave those kids a chance to play. It gave them something to look forward to because they were not going to be travelling a whole long distance. It was not like the Grande Prairie situation now. I think they might even have come from High Level. … I always appreciated the fact that those kids got a chance to play.

Reiniger: Is there anything else you would like to add about how having a CVA president from Alberta impacted the place that Alberta held on the national volleyball scene?

Maxwell: I think it wasn't so much the presidency. I was not there so much to promote just Alberta, I was there to promote the good programs in various parts of the country, which I didn't think was being done [adequately] by some of the previous kinds of administrative [practices]. We had some interesting personalities and that might have been more the issue. … The fact that the personalities came from that central kind of [area] meant that my major concern was that we actually maximized the programs … because there were some really good things happening. There were some issues as well: that Quebec had that junior-college [CEGEP], where it made it really tough for other people to compete against them because they had an extra two years of training … and the fact that the Maritimes didn't have the opportunities because of [their] population to develop the same kinds of things. We wanted to be able to promote programs that had been developed in other areas throughout … for instance, this 'Volley Van' thing. Volley Van was conceived one night because our volleyball [association] meetings were here in Calgary. Our executive director, which was Don Gordon at that time, and a couple of the others were at my house, and we were talking about a number of things: how we could promote volleyball, what we needed to do, how we needed to get into the schools, and how we needed to help [develop] this because there were no coaching development programs at that time which were inclusive – you either went to the University of Alberta and got some courses or you went to the University of Calgary and got some courses.

But it wasn't like you could go to the 'coaching institute.' That developed a little bit later or parallel [to it], but it wasn't [established]. So how could we get there? How could we help these people? … We were brainstorming and fooling around over pizza and beer and, 'Yeah! What we really should do is we should travel around the country and provide volleyball and we could hire a couple of people and give it some funky name like 'The Volley Van.'

And it stuck, so we tried it one year – the Volley Van. We tried it and we sent it out to the schools and said, 'Listen, these people are prepared to come.' … We hired some people and we got such a demand that, ultimately, there were two Volley Vans: one for southern Alberta, one for northern Alberta. And then we encouraged club development and those kinds of things. Those kinds of ideas we thought should be shared, so that was part of my motivation for getting involved at the national level. Part of the other thing was … the women's team had done well, but as we were talking [at the national level], the men's team was the big push. It always annoyed me. For instance, at one

point, the men's team went into a huge deficit position – enough of a deficit position that they thought of cancelling the women's program because we were just so far in the hole … and I just said, 'You know what? The men's team created this problem, we'll cancel the men's team. Let the women play.' Well, that was such a radical idea for so many people that they just couldn't believe it. So I don't believe that either team was cancelled. We cancelled some junior programs. To me that was [logical], and other people didn't see that. … People might have said, 'Oh, you're always dealing with the women's issue.' 'Hey, I'm not creating the woman's issue, but let's give them an opportunity. Why are we cancelling the women's program because the men don't know how to do their financial budgets? Give me a break.'

Reiniger: When was that conversation?

Maxwell: That conversation would have been in the 90s, whenever World League first started because one of my roles was to try and get Canada into the World League. ... It was the first World League or the second year of World League [that] we had run this huge deficit, but we wound up getting it back. The men's programs stayed, but that was a comment that CVA made [when I said] 'Well, the men did this, let's cancel their program': 'Oh, but we have to be in the World League.' I said, 'Yeah, but you have to be responsible.'

There were some other issues later when I left Volleyball Canada. … FIVB had all these standards that they wanted [us to meet]. They wanted us in Canada to be able to promote and show off volleyball the way the NHL is shown off. They used that example quite often and I just said, 'It's not going to happen.'

'Well, you should be able to do this, that, and the other thing.' I said, 'Hockey – it's grown and it's entrenched and there's teams across the country, and here we've got one [volleyball] team, and we're expected to do this? We can't.'

'Well, if you get competitions [with] someone in the area…'

'The nearest competition is the U.S. national team.'

'How close is that?'

‘Sometimes eight hours, sometimes 10. It’s not like flying for an hour and I’ve got another national team to play like you do in Europe.’

There were lots of things that I think [were] accomplished. [For example], when I was volleyball president in Canada, we got the World League. But I think that some of the [achievements] with Alberta Volleyball, to me, were more impactful because they allowed volleyball to grow here. Kids got a chance to play and clubs got started, and volleyball in the schools became a big kind of thing. We had some really fun times.

One of things that used to happen was the executive would meet at Jasper Volleyball Camp – the Jasper Volleyball Camp with Hugh [Hoyles]. Everyone would have their training and then we’d have our AGM there. After the AGM, or as we were having various committee meetings, we were always made honourary legion members, so ‘Night at the Legion’ was [an annual event]. We did a lot of planning at the legion, and some of the conversations and some of the things that went on – half the time it was facetious kind of thinking and facetious conversations … Everybody was joking around about what happened and why or what we should do, and, ‘Wouldn’t it be something if we could do X, Y, and Z?’ And then the next day or the next meeting [someone] would say, ‘Yeah! You know what? I was just thinking of that conversation! Well, maybe we could use that idea’ and do this or do that. It was great.

[At] Alberta Volleyball … there was a core of people that were so committed to making it better for kids.

Some of the significant changes in Alberta Volleyball during the time I was involved – So, I was involved probably from about the late 60s, so ’68, ’69. [I] got involved in Alberta volleyball officially as an administration kind of thing, probably early ‘70s, and was actively involved either that way or as a coach or as an official until about 15 years ago. Since then it’s been more casual, like organizing tournaments … or guest lectures, guest coach situations. … So [my involvement] would have been from about 70s to the 2000s, 2005.

The changes that have happened: volleyball went from being what we would have called a ‘kitchen table’ kind of thing … to being highly organized. That was due to a couple of things: first of all, that committed group of people who kept wanting to provide these opportunities; but secondly, we were able to hire some administrative staff. When we were able to hire staff – and that was because the government was prepared to

come in with some money to support sport-governing bodies – then we were able to hire some administrative staff. Now you have an office established, and once you got this office established, it took a considerable amount of pressure off the volunteers. It took that day-to-day functioning of the association of the volunteers, so the volunteers then could actually focus on what it is they were doing, whether that was coaching or whether they were going to be an official or whether they were looking at more all-encompassing policy or procedural programs. … The volunteers were able to be more productive in their own roles now that we had office staff.

The Government of Alberta also came in with a number of programs like Alberta Games and Canada Games. When they came in with those programs, it was a real impetus for making sure that our programs met those [standards], and that we, in fact, established programs, [in order] to take advantage of that. So we were able to say, 'Okay. It's Alberta games. We need a volleyball team. Alright, how are we going to do this? What's happening?' … And when Alberta Games came in, of course, you're representing the zones – there's eight zones – so that provided eight teams a chance to go through. And as Canada Games came along, all of a sudden, we're now looking at providing opportunities for elite kind of training by selecting people from the eight zones to represent the province. ...

The [new AVA] structure also meant that [there] wasn't such a time commitment for the volunteers because, you've got to remember, these volunteers all had jobs that were needed for supporting their families. A lot of the time most of these people were relatively recent graduates or starting their careers. …

After that first, I'll call it 'generation', of people … – If you look at some of them, they're still there in the 'Leigh Goldies' of the world who are still involved in volleyball, maybe not as actively as they were when they were younger, but still involved … But there's also another generation, and that generation of people resulted from some of our national team programs that were here in Alberta. We really benefitted from having that national [men's team] housed at the University of Calgary. ... A lot of those [athletes] made their homes here [and are still] here. I'll mention Terry Gagnon, who was a national team player and has stayed on and been so involved in volleyball. [He] has been an outstanding contributor in terms of setting a direction [as AVA executive director]. And you have people like Ron Walsh, who is still involved, and Dean Hitchcock and – the names keep going as you do this. Al Taylor, who was one of the early national team members and coached high school and is coaching at the

university, [is] still working in volleyball. We've got the first generation, so to speak, those people who did everything – including me – in terms of: you coached, you officiated, you organized tournaments, you worked at an elementary level, you name it; you worked at a senior level, you did rep teams, on and on and on. We now have a next generation of some of those young people who are coming back and contributing in a probably more focused way, not quite so spread out. ... Terry, as the executive director of the association, has been a very, very steady hand and is doing a tremendous job.

We also have that situation happening in the volunteer positions. That's been great – the ability to do some more fundraising, be that through government or actual fundraising. [It] has provided opportunities for expanding the number of programs. When we started, we had, let's say, $30,000 from the government, and that went to somebody's salary – first of all, [to] Brian Watson's because he became our first executive director, and there was a little bit left over. Other than that, the money that we got was very much program directed: 'We've got $5,000 to run this program, period.' Administration-wise, [when] you don't have money for paper and stuff; you have to find it somewhere else. Universities, I think, contributed a lot of that kind of stuff because we would do the [AVA volunteer] work wherever we worked. We'd copy things sometimes, and although you tried to compensate them, it probably [didn't cover the cost]. I know the University of Alberta probably made contributions, and then those places also contributed [by] providing facilities and office space.

We would meet in Red Deer [often] at the college. That was a minimal, minimal cost because Cor Ouwerkerk was there, so he was able to get these kinds of things. It was easier for people to go to the central part of the province [to meet]. What's happened is that the [organizational] development has become far more centralized around an office, which means that the volunteers can do all kinds of things, which has been a tremendous bonus in terms of being able to provide new programs. Post-secondary [institutions were] the home in the early development of volleyball. As we got those people going and more graduates coming out of there, and [as] those people [moved] into some of the more rural areas either as fitness or recreational directors or teachers … – then we got other little pockets of volleyball development in the various regions of the province. We'd get Taber with Pat Pine; he's developed a club there. We had Howie Rasmussen going to Drumheller and that replicated throughout the province.

All of a sudden, we [were] spreading the knowledge base of volleyball and its younger groups.

And then the structure of Alberta volleyball – although we tried to have regional representation in the early days, that was just about impossible. There were probably at most six, maybe eight of us on the 'executive.' We'd have a president and a vice president, and then we'd always try to deal with one person with coaching, one with athlete development, and then there was an official. We had those things, but we didn't always have representation from all areas of the province.

Eventually, we decided that we would have representation based on the Alberta Games [structure], which was its own situation. We tried to fit into whatever structures were in [its] zones. ... Those kinds of things really changed the face of volleyball by providing all kinds of opportunities.

The downside of some of those things is that we'd made quite a specific division between the post-secondary competition and the other kinds of competition. There are good sides to that, of course, because they're able to work to a higher level … – but it was really nice to be able to play against those [post-secondary] teams all the time as a club team, and recreationally as well. I think volleyball has an advantage in some ways from an organizational [perspective] in that it developed from the top down, unlike baseball, for instance, that had [multiple leagues]. Now they work and they probably have done a good job bringing those all together. [But] we always had a sort of overall structure and [then] we tried to move into those other areas, which meant they were always – I don't want to say under the control – but they were always under that one umbrella, so to speak. Again, hockey's another one that was: you've got the minor hockey here, you've got this hockey here, you've got that over here, then you've got recreation. Ultimately, it became Alberta major, junior, whatever. But the development happened in a different way than volleyball. Volleyball happened from, 'Here's a structure,' and we disseminated [programs] that way to a large extent, so it stayed within the umbrella. ... I think this allows a more unified [approach], and it provides a more balanced opportunity for athletes to get involved as well as to move up and down. …

Volleyball in Alberta is different from some of the other provinces because of the actual region. B.C. having the beaches, of course, they would develop [beach volleyball] to a large extent. In a lot of ways, Alberta has an artificial beach area. Not that there aren't some beaches, but it's just not the same as beach [volleyball] in, say, Ontario and B.C.

Alberta is far more rural in a lot of ways. We've got four major cities, and then other than that, it's sort of small town Alberta. In those major cities, they're organized [at] a real competitive level. … Rural Alberta tries hard to develop that same level. And they have. … Some of the other provinces are more centralized and aren't so concerned about that. B.C. has the problem of being just the lower mainland, so to speak, and then little pockets here and there.

Alberta volleyball, particularly for girls, [provides] this opportunity to play at a very competitive sport level.

Whether this is something that I agree with or not: a lot of girls are not into the [physical contact] of games like basketball. ... Volleyball is a sport for most girls where they can be highly competitive and physical, and yet not be confrontational. ... I was never one of those people that said, 'Oh, the girls are going to go and cheerlead.' No, let's get involved, and volleyball's a great game to do this because you don't have to worry about being physically in contact. Yeah, you have to be physically fit and everything like that, but it's not necessarily the strongest person physically who is going to win. It's going to be whoever is the smartest at the net. … It's a far more strategic game, which I think suits a lot of girls better. That's not to say the boys aren't strategic, but they bring a lot more physicality into it and theirs is much more a power game, which is great as well. From [a] cultural perspective, I think it's a great addition to have, to complement some of the other sports.

… If you check out any tournament, like the U16 that was here in May, I think two-thirds of the teams were female teams. … First of all, girls don't have as many other sports that they can get involved in at that level; and secondly, I think it's a game that suits girls in that a lot more girls … choose to do this. I'll give you an example: I was teaching [a volleyball player] in class … – and I was teaching her basketball. I was teaching her how to set a pick. We set a pick, and she just sat on her rear end and slid across the floor and her comment was, 'I don't like this game; I don't like the contact aspect of basketball.' That's what I mean when I say that for a lot of girls, volleyball allows them to be competitive and gentile, if that's the word.

I just think volleyball has a great future, especially with some of the young people that are taking over. How can you not be positive about the direction that they're taking it?

I have nothing but admiration for some of the [early volleyball leaders who] started and kept working, and – You know what? They didn't work – and I know that I, personally, didn't work to say, 'Oh my goodness. What can I do with volleyball?' It was never that. It was like, 'Oh, this is kind of fun!' and, 'We'll do this.' and, 'Yeah. This is a great game!' 'Let's bring some international people over.' … It was always, 'How can we make it better?' It certainly never was, 'Oh, I'm going to be a volleyball guru.' That was not ever the motivation.

I think as you talk to some of these other people, you'll have the same thing, right? Hugh [Hoyles], I don't think did it because he wanted to be 'the volleyball person', and Lorne [Sawula] for sure didn't start [thinking] that. It was just the love of the game and wanting to spread that opportunity around. …

The obstacles to achieving some of the goals: Again, I have to say that I didn't have the opportunity to have this overriding goal of what we wanted for volleyball. When I attend the meetings now, and certainly in the past, there's this sort of: 'Okay. This is what we want to see volleyball in Alberta look like.' We had that vision, and not that we didn't have vision statements, but it wasn't [as] encompassing [as it is now] and it probably wasn't so far reaching. Our vision was far more practical: 'We gotta raise more money because we want to do this.' 'So how can we do this? What can we do?' 'We need to have a broader base of participation.' So that kind of became a vision, 'How can we do that?' … Not that those are limited visions. But they are, in fact, confined because you didn't have the resources, you didn't have the personnel and you didn't have the opportunities to build this. We had a referees' coordinator, but you know what? We really couldn't go out and do the same kind of intensive referee development that they're having now. That just wasn't there. You got up, you were a coach, you knew the rules, you reffed. Our next goal would be to say, 'Okay, let's get more referees where they're not having to [also] be the coach,' – that type of goal rather than, 'Okay, let's get more referees at these high levels.' … Our obstacles were hugely financial: what [programs] cost the kids, what programs we could offer – because we did have relatively limited finances. How could we get the government – we were lobbying the government, and they've got strings attached to 90 percent of the funding – [to] do this? … I think there's far more flexibility [today] because the budgets are a little bit bigger, so you have more discretionary funding. Let's say you've got a budget of $5,000 – which we did have early on – and a program cost $4,000 to run. Well, you know what? There's not a whole lot you can do with that extra $1,000. Whereas, if you've got a budget of, let's say, $40,000 and a program cost $30,000 … you can do a lot more with [the

remaining $10,000]. Those kinds of changes have really impacted [the development of volleyball]. … I think the government has a role to play and needed to get more involved [in a supportive] role like they seem to be now. I can't speak totally, but, initially, they really did want to have their hand in it. Maybe they didn't trust us; maybe they didn't think we were mature enough to do some of those things. … Given [our] resources … we had some really creative people who were prepared to do 'unorthodox' kinds of things to try to get programs going. [One] example was that Volley Van because really that's what it was. It was a night of beer and pizza and just fooling around: 'Oh, we should do this!' …

Other than that, significant changes [to volleyball]: [it's] far more intense, [there are] far more competitive athletes, far more international aspects than what was there [in the early years]. We certainly had international teams come through. Our own level of play has improved tremendously, and not to take anything away from those athletes at that time, but there were fewer of those awesome athletes ... Now we've got a real group of athletes, again, because there's more people playing and better coaching and more competition. …

I feel really blessed to have been involved, and volleyball did a lot of things for me. … Volleyball has really evolved. [I] met lots of terrific people. Dedicated – I'm sure every sport has got that dedicated fan base.

Reiniger: In a previous conversation, you mentioned that there was an increase in sports funding from the Alberta government and that that was in the late 70s. Is that correct?

Maxwell: That's right. That's when the Alberta Government started to really fund sport, and I think they started to fund it because there was some pressure, also from the federal government, for some of these things like Alberta Games. … Participaction was starting; it was a big deal to get people active. These competitions were set in motion and the Alberta Government [said]: 'Oh, well, we've got to have a program here that will allow us to be competitive,' because it was a big deal to do well in Canada Games. ... So if you're going to do well there, you're going to have to find a way to [fund] this. So all of the sport bodies said, 'Well, all the funds we have at this point are dedicated to this and that.' ... A lot of time, they came and said, 'Okay, If you provide a team for this competition, here's $50,000,' or whatever it was over two years to develop this team. Long-term sport [funding for] things like a team going over two years [were] unheard of

when I was playing. [Our] national team [was] training for six weeks for international competition. That's a very different perspective [from]: 'Okay, Canada Games is two years from now; we want you in there. Here's money over that two-year time period to develop or get that team set up.' So all of a sudden, programs are not very quick and limited; they're now over a couple of years. And then, because they're over a couple of years, we're appointing coaches over a couple of years. As coaches get in there, we're starting to require coaching Level 2, 3, 4 to do that sort of thing. So everything sort of accumulated to help that happen.

Reiniger: During the 60s, 70s, 80s, even 90s, there were a number of significant changes in Alberta society at large: economic, the cultural makeup of the province, movement to the province, movement to cities, and so on. Is there anything you would like to say about how those types of societal changes impacted the development of volleyball in Alberta?

Maxwell: Well, a couple of things happened – from a personal perspective, of course. When I was playing and when I was going to university, you had a job [and] you had to work. You didn't have that kind of free time. Even while I was playing club, the people who could play were the ones who had financial resources to do that. And of course, it was limited play. You couldn't say, 'You know what? I'm going to take six months off and train for volleyball.' It just wasn't going to happen because the financial situation wasn't such on the parental side. … The second [reason] was that parents didn't put their kids into those kinds of programs to the same extent. There were other kinds of programs. They put them into camps, summer sports and [so on], but they didn't specialize them to [the same] extent as I would say even my [own grown] children, [who] got much more opportunities to be dedicated to an activity. Now parents are prepared to provide opportunities, financial support, and all of those kinds of things for children. Sometimes, I think, that's not a good thing. I think that you shouldn't be specializing to that extent that early.

I know that I disagree with a lot of other people. I think that you still have to raise kids with the idea that there should be multiple kinds of [activities]. I personally believe that, physically, they can gain more from participating in a wide range of sports than from concentrating solely on one, so I'm not a big advocate of volleyball only. On the other hand, the kinds of opportunities for those kids to train in volleyball are so much more specific and so much more available that, if people wanted their child to gain an advantage in a sport – volleyball, for instance – there are opportunities, whereas there

weren't before. ... So those things are good and bad. I'm one that believes that the kids should go out and play. A lot of times, a lot of parents and some of the coaches are now saying, 'Okay, now, if you're going to play on my team, three hours a night of this or three hours a week of practice and two of competition, and then we've got dry-land training and all this kind of stuff.' Personally, I think, until you get to a high level, that's overboard.

Reiniger: That reminds me of another comment you made in a previous conversation about, 'an increasing polarization between club volleyball and rec volleyball.'

Maxwell: When clubs first started, they started from the perspective that they would provide opportunities for kids to play. So, most of the clubs had age-class [groups], and they probably had a couple of teams [for each group] depending on how many kids they had and how large it was. So, if you got predominately 13-, 14-year-olds, you might have Team A and B or two equal teams. … Now, many of the clubs don't have that orientation; they are actually looking at selecting – and I will say 'poaching' – players from other clubs based on skill. So: 'I want to have the best club.' So it's now far more intense at the higher level and that pressure filters down in the club to the younger age [groups]. So what happens – and I think it's going to become a detriment – is for instance: '… We've got a U15 team, and we've got these U14 kids but not enough to form [their own team]. And, yeah, they're not that competitive, so we're just not going to have a team.' Then all of a sudden those kids, who might have wanted to participate, don't have that opportunity. We're sort of shortening the base and it's become: you've got the intense clubs and you've got these kids that can't play this intensely. So they might play rec, but [when] they play rec it's very 'rec' and there doesn't seem to be that [movement] from recreational to more competitive. For younger kids, there needs to be an opportunity to move. Once you get to be an adult, you can choose: 'Yeah, I want to play rec. I don't want all that stress and pressure,' or, 'You know what? I want to play competitive.' And there's probably opportunities for you to play as you're doing that kind of stuff. … [This] development has resulted in, [from] my perspective, some good things and some bad things. Maybe that's just a sign of growth, but I think one of the things we're going to have to go back to at some point is to really connect that bridge between the [low and] high level – Or we have to create a smoother path for development for kids to be able to move from one to the other.

Winning the Bantam Provincial Championship is not as big a deal as providing an opportunity for those kids to play. Now many of the coaches feel that it is a big deal and

coach that way. Again, it's a philosophical orientation, but it's one that I think we have to, as an association, perhaps take a look at. If we've got those coaches, it's all well and good, but then we need to get that middle program working again.