

Karen Langeland

January 17, 2001

Jeff Charnley and Fred Honhart,
interviewers

Charnley: Today is Wednesday, January 17, the year 2001. We are in Jenison Fieldhouse on campus in East Lansing. I'm Jeff Charnley, along with Dr. Fred Honhart, interviewing Assistant Athletic Director Karen Langeland for the MSU Oral History Project for the university's sesquicentennial that's coming up in the year 2005.

Ms. Langeland, you can see that we're tape recording. Would you give us permission to tape record today?

Langeland: I certainly do.

Charnley: I'd like to start with some questions about your educational background and personal background. Where did you grow up and where did you go to high school and to college?

Langeland: Grew up in the west side of the state in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and went to Grand Rapids Christian there and then to Calvin College.

Charnley: What year did you graduate with your B.A.?

Langeland: In 1970.

Charnley: And then did you do any graduate work?

Langeland: I taught for a while, for about five years in the Kentwood school system, and then started working on my master's degree when I first came to Michigan State and got that in about two years. So I think I got here '76-'77 season.

Charnley: Were you active in sports in high school?

Langeland: Yes. Very much.

Charnley: And in college, too?

Langeland: Actually, I should take that back. In high school, I was a little bit pre-women's sports. So for the most part, we didn't have a lot of programs in high school. So I participated like in an ASA softball program in the summer, a little bit of junior tennis, and then basketball my senior year in high school. That was about it. I participated in athletics more in junior high because the Christian school that I went to had programs for girls in a number of different sports, but then had this kind of blank period of time when I went to high school because there were no programs.

Charnley: How about at Calvin?

Langeland: Calvin, I participated in a number of sports, because it's a Division III school. It was basketball, volleyball, tennis. I played a year of field hockey. A lot of intermural programs. But I think that was basically it.

Charnley: What interested you in teaching?

Langeland: I love the combination of teaching, combining teaching and coaching, and so my degree was in physical education. I really consider myself a teacher more than a coach.

Charnley: Who were some of your early mentors?

Langeland: There weren't very many. I had a professor in physical education and my tennis coach at Calvin College by the name of Karen Timmer [phonetic], who was very important in my life. Then there was a senior at Calvin when I was a freshman that, I think, had a lot of influence and her name was Yvonne Bengore [phonetic]. I kind of followed her career in teaching and coaching.

Charnley: Did you maintain any contacts with them later?

Langeland: Not with Karen Timmer. I've lost contact with her. But Yvonne Bengore, yes. She's in the Boston area teaching.

Charnley: How was it that you came to Michigan State for your graduate work?

Langeland: Well, let's see. It's kind of a long story. But two reasons, really. One, I was working on my permanent teaching certificate, and the time the class I took--in fact, a number of classes I took were taught by Dr. Nell Jackson, who was the women's athletic director here at Michigan State at that time. She was teaching an extension course in Grand Rapids, and I took a number of classes from her. So I got to know her, and she eventually was the person that hired me as the women's basketball coach. But I also was kind of, I guess, maybe a little uneasy, maybe, teaching at the middle school. I just wanted something a little bit more, especially

coaching-wise. I wanted a little higher skill level. So I thought about just coming to Michigan State and getting my master's degree in athletic training.

One August I got a call from Dr. Nell Jackson. She said she needed a basketball coach and wondered if I'd be interested, and I said, "Absolutely." I had already applied to grad school here and had been accepted. So I came down for an interview and she hired me on the spot.

Charnley: How would you describe the program at that time? It hadn't been in existence very long, had it?

Langeland: No, but it was pretty successful. Nicki Baile [phonetic] had been coaching for a number of years, and she had left, and the year before I got here a gentleman by the name of Dominic Marino [phonetic] had coached. I think they were two and thirteen the season that he was here, and she was looking for a woman to take over the program. Because she knew me through those classes, and I also had a connection here with Dr. Analise Canoppers [phonetic], who was my volleyball coach at Calvin, was a professor here at that time at Michigan State, and was good friends with Dr. Nell Jackson. So she recommended me as well for the basketball position. So it was kind of a little complicated. But the program really wasn't in too bad a shape other than the year just before I came.

Charnley: In terms of wins and losses and that sort of thing.

Langeland: Right. Correct. Yes, not in terms of financial support. It was terrible.

Charnley: The league that MSU was in at that time, your opponents, who were they or how would you describe that?

Langeland: We were not in the Big Ten conference, and we were not under NCAA. We were under the AIAW, which is the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women. That organization's structure was state tournaments and then regional tournaments and then the national tournament. So, really, our opponents were all the schools in the state. We weren't divided by Division I, II, and III at that time; they were just AIAW. So Michigan State was competing against Calvin or Grand Valley or Oakland University or anybody that had a women's basketball program. On a give weekend, we had a state tournament. The winner of that went to regional, which was generally the Great Lakes area, and the winner of that tournament went to the national tournament in which there were the sixteen top teams.

We did play some Big Ten schools just because of our association with the men's program, so we did have some Big Ten competition. In fact, had a Big Ten tournament, just a once-a-year thing, but not necessarily a round robin or a double round robin against Big Ten opponents.

Charnley: Did you play Michigan at that point?

Langeland: Always. Always. From the beginning of time. [Laughter]

Charnley: Any special pressures on that?

Langeland: Not really. Not like there were in the last five years or so.

Charnley: Why do you think you wanted to be a coach?

Langeland: Because I love sports and I love teaching, and so if you combine the two, you've got yourself a coaching position. I mean, I really, because of my background and participating in

athletics, I just really enjoyed all sports. In fact, when I first started coaching, I coached everything because I was in a middle school. I was the only physical education teacher, so I coached track and soccer and softball and volleyball and basketball and tennis and just about everything, and never really specialized, if you want to call it that, in basketball until I came to Michigan State. But I really enjoyed teaching. I think I'm pretty organized. I like breaking things down and progressions. It just seemed to be a perfect fit.

Honhart: When you first started here, it was really different than what it is now. Let's just start with coaching philosophy and the game itself. How has that changed in the time you were coach?

Langeland: I honestly don't think that my coaching philosophy changed that much since I was here. There were a lot of things around me that changed. My philosophy was to get our athletes, the women athletes, to play up to their potential. I always loved the running game, so it was always if we had the personnel to do it, we were always a running team. And I'm kind of defensive-minded, so defense was always probably the number-one thing that I would really focus on. That was probably the only thing that didn't change over the course of the twenty-four years that I was here.

I took this job for six thousand dollars. I was a graduate assistant along with that. And in order to kind of make ends meet, I was also teaching physical education activity courses. So it went from that until my last year when I was making a hundred thousand plus, no teaching, no master's degree, no coursework, nothing. So that part of it really changed. I think the athletes.

My first year here, we had one scholarship for a women's basketball player. My last year we had fifteen full rides. The competition, we went from AIAW to NCAA. We went from playing state teams to being in the Big Ten playing Big Ten competition. We went from participating in our games in the IM Circle to playing in the Breslin Center, the IM Circle in front

of maybe twenty people, the Breslin Center in front of sometimes seven or eight thousand. We went from only from the pressure that I put on myself to win to pressure that the administration and the community and so forth puts on coaches now to win. And I think the athletes were very different, much more self-motivated, a greater work ethic, just kind of committed, I think, more to the team concept than what they are now.

Honhart: You've raised a whole series of interesting questions that we can go to. Let's just start with physical facilities. You said you first were playing over at the IM and then you moved to Jenison and then played here for a long time and then Breslin.

Langeland: Actually, there was a step in there where we were in the IM West.

Charnley: How would you describe the development of that? What impact did that have?

Langeland: I think a lot of it was, we kind of outgrew the IM Circle and there were a lot more physical education classes, so we had some problems in terms of scheduling games and that sort of thing. The IM West sports arena was a much bigger facility in comparison. I honestly don't remember how many years we were in each, but I do remember we had some problems in the IM West with the surface that we were playing on. We had a lot of stress fracture-type injuries because that floor is put on top of concrete, much different than how the floors are constructed now. That was one of the deciding factors for us to move over here to Jenison and share this facility with the men's basketball team.

Then, of course, when the Breslin Center was built, then it was a gender-equity issue. The plans were for us to go over there when the men went over and move into that facility, offices, locker rooms, as well as competing there.

Honhart: When you came here, to follow up on gender equity, Judd Heathcote came about the same time.

Langeland: He came exactly the same time.

Honhart: And you outlasted him.

Langeland: Yes, I did. That was always my goal. [Laughter]

Honhart: Could you sort of describe what the relationship was like with you two and the two programs? Because obviously they were at very different levels.

Langeland: Our relationship changed a lot over the number of years that we worked together. Initially, because I was in a totally different building, both my office and practice and our competition, I really didn't have much interaction with him at all other than in maybe departmental meetings or so forth. I think there was a respect of sorts, or probably I had much more respect for him than he did for me. I'm not sure when he first came that he was a real advocate of women athletes.

I think the biggest change occurred when we moved over to Breslin together, because I think he realized then that my staff and I and our athletes were putting in just as much time as he and his staff and his athletes. I think he kind of had a new respect for women's athletics, at least women's basketball, and what we were trying to do and that we were really trying to accomplish the same kinds of things that he was. Judd became our biggest supporter. Not only would he bring in these big cakes when we won a big game or something but, when we lost, he would be the first one in my office the next day, close the door and sit down and have a heart-to-heart chat.

So it was really a great relationship. In fact, I got a phone call from him about three days

ago wondering how my new job was going and what was happening. But, yes, it really developed over the course of the time that we were here together. He became a huge advocate for women's basketball and knew a lot of--Pat Head Summit from University of Tennessee--a lot of the really successful women's coaches primarily because of his involvement with the Pan Am games.

So he was a great mentor. I loved watching him coach, but I really loved being in press conferences with him on Monday listening to him describe the games that had just happened, what expected. I learned so much from him. And, of course, nobody has a sense of humor like Judd Heathcote.

Honhart: How about his successor? How is the relationship with the program since Tom took over?

Langeland: I worked with Tom for twelve years when Tom was Judd's assistant and probably worked even more closely with Tom than I did with Judd, because Judd a lot of times was kind of preoccupied with bigger things. So Tom and I would deal with kind of the facility scheduling and some issues that concerned both of us. And then, interestingly enough, when Tom got the head job, then all of a sudden I hardly ever worked with Tom any more. But that was pretty typical. Tom has always been very supportive of me and my program as well. He had a good teacher.

Honhart: Yes. Yes, he did. You mentioned one of the big changes, of course, was when women's programs went from the organization they were in, to becoming members of the NCAA. How did that affect you and how did it affect the game?

Langeland: It happened in 1982, and two things really happened simultaneously. One, the

NCAA took over the AIAW, and also at that time women's basketball became an official part of the Big Ten Conference. Being part of the Big Ten Conference probably was a bigger change in improvement for us than becoming part of the NCAA, because now suddenly the media and the fans and the community and athletes and recruits all could relate to the Big Ten because of the men. I mean, they knew what the Big Ten conference was. They knew how prestigious it was, especially in comparison to other conferences in the country. So all of a sudden it just made more sense. It didn't make sense for people prior to that that had any basketball knowledge why we were so up for playing Oakland University. It just didn't make sense to them. But now all of a sudden, if we're going to play Purdue, that has some meaning. So suddenly our crowds got bigger, the attendance, we had better media coverage. People just simply understood what a double round robin in the Big Ten meant and what it meant to finish first in the conference.

Honhart: Of course, the other big change was Title IX. What effect did that have on the program?

Langeland: My second year here, we had a lawsuit that my athletes initiated, and at the time they tried to get all the athletes from all the women's sports to be part of that lawsuit. There was a feeling amongst the women athletes that Michigan State was definitely treating its women athletes much differently than their male counterparts. Over a period of time, I think our women's basketball players were much more persistent and it became a women's basketball lawsuit as opposed to women's athletics here at Michigan State.

It's fairly easy to compare men's and women's basketball, because we have the same number of coaches, the same number of athletes, the same season, same number of games, you know, it's just very, very easy to compare. Then all of a sudden when everything's the same, but the budget is very different or the number of scholarships are very different or how athletes are treated--you know, when we'd go on road trips I remember that was one of the big things. We

were traveling to our games in station wagons and sleeping four to a room, getting one pair of shoes per year per season. The men, by comparison, at that time, were traveling by bus, sleeping two to a room, getting as many pairs of shoes as they wanted. So it became quite evident over a short period of time that there were a lot of inequities.

So the suit was settled out of court. Actually, there was an injunction, if I remember correctly, that forced the university to give us the necessary amount of money to have our travel similar to the men's. Then eventually it was settled out of court and things kind of took off from there.

Honhart: That must have put you in an interesting situation between your players and the administration.

Langeland: That was very interesting. And, of course, this is only my second year of coaching at this level, so I didn't know what I was doing to begin with. But the athletes did a really nice job of keeping me out of it. I mean, whatever they did, they were doing on their own and they were getting advice from other people, and they knew that my job would probably be in jeopardy if I was in any way connected to it.

I would hear bits and pieces every once in a while about what was going on, and obviously after a while I was having to give depositions and that sort of thing and being asked a lot of questions by the administration. But it was never a Karen Langeland suit; it became a class-action suit because, of course, the athletes that started it were getting set to graduate. So it became a class-action suit and it was the athletes against the athletic department. It was a little touch and go for a while.

Honhart: Did the president's office get involved in that at all that you remember?

Langeland: I don't remember the president's office getting involved. It was more the general counsel. I believe it was the provost's office at that time that was sort of involved, but not the president.

Honhart: Is my memory correct that Joe Kerney [phonetic] was the athletic director at that time?

Langeland: Yes. That's correct. Nell Jackson was the women's athletic director, so they were very kind of separate positions.

Honhart: Obviously one of the big changes has been recruiting. How has that changed from when you first came here? You said you had one scholarship.

Langeland: I had one scholarship and that scholarship had been given out by the previous coach. That probably has been the biggest change in twenty-four years is just, you know, as soon as scholarships came into the picture, then, of course, you needed to recruit for scholarships. It started out being quite enjoyable and a nice process where you're just finding kids to give money to that are good enough to, you think, help you win a Big Ten championship and progress to the point where it's a very difficult thing, because there's a lot of parents that get involved, a lot of high school coaches that get involved. There's a lot of distrust, some dishonesty, you know, with kids in terms of what they're telling you. And probably the biggest thing is it's so incredibly competitive with other schools. There's only a small group of very, very talented athletes that can play at this level and, of course, everybody wants those same athletes, so people are doing and saying things that maybe they don't have a lot of integrity trying to get kids to make the decision to come to their schools.

Honhart: You have a excellent record as far as students who stayed here for the time period and graduate. You want to comment on that?

Langeland: Actually, that's something that I'm very proud of. One of the things that we looked for when, we, being my staff and I looked for when we were recruiting high school athletes were people that were really serious about getting an education, and I think that paid off. We did everything we could to help them be successful here at Michigan State academically, and I think they fell in love with the place and I think they really enjoy the academic programs, and I think their academics were given priority. Many times if they had a class that conflicted with practice, then they needed to go to class. It was something that was a priority for them to get a degree. So because of that, everyone that finished their four years at Michigan State graduated. There were a couple of kids that maybe stayed for a year and transferred. We probably had half a dozen over a period of twenty-four years that just weren't cut out for it or a lot times they quit because they decided they weren't going to get enough playing time and that sort of thing. But, yes, we were pretty successful academically.

Honhart: You mentioned when you were playing over at, I believe you said, IM West that you ran into a problem with floors and stress fractures. Have you seen a lot of injuries over the years? Has there been any change with the game becoming more athletic and more physical with injuries?

Langeland: I don't think we've had more injuries, because I think we've also at the same time become more sophisticated in our training, and we're both more sophisticated and spending more time in the off season getting into condition. But the one injury that I've seen since the day I got here is anterior cruciate [phonetic] ligaments that are torn by women athletes. That probably is the most frustrating injury because it's season-ending. In a couple of cases it's been career-ending

injuries. It requires surgery, a long rehab process, and it's just something that not enough research has been done up to this point to try and alleviate the problem. So I don't know that the injury thing has gotten worse, because I think we've gotten better at training as well.

Honhart: Do you have any players in particular that stand out in your mind over the twenty-four years you've coached?

Langeland: That's a lot of players. Yes, probably one in particular that pops into my head is a woman by the name of Kathy Debor [phonetic], who is currently the Senior Associate Athletic Director at the University of Kentucky. Kathy was here my first two years, helped us go to the national championship, helped us win a couple of state championships. She was a very interesting person to coach, very intelligent, great athlete, had a mind of her own, but just a challenge because she wanted to know why things needed to be done the way I was asking them to do it, but someone who graduated from Michigan State and has just been so successful, in my mind, since graduation. Has been back at Michigan State and received a number of graduate awards here at Michigan State and has been back many times since to speak at our academic gala that we have in the spring. She's coming back to do a leadership conference for the Michigan High School Athletic Association in a couple of weeks. After she had graduated, for a period of time she became a very good friend of mine. So she probably is one of those people that stands out.

I have a number of people, a number of athletes who were criminal justice majors because of our program here at Michigan State who are doing really well. A couple of them in particular are with the L.A.P.D. Brenda Jazowski [phonetic], Mary Kay Ittenier [phonetic], who are both very successful there. There's a number of my former athletes that are coaching today at very successful schools. Gail Valley [phonetic] is an assistant coach at Duke University. They're number three in the country right now. There's a number of other ones. I think you have a

tendency to remember the most recent ones. Maxanne Reese [phonetic], Kristen Rasmussen [phonetic], both great athletes. Kristen playing professional basketball with the Miami Soul right now. Maxanne playing overseas in Israel. Both great athletes. Others. There's so many.

Charnley: Is there anyone that maybe that came in as a freshman that by the time they were a senior just increased your expectations, the most improved? I know it's hard because of the number.

Langeland: I think there's two things there. One, you've got maybe most improved in terms of ability, you know, that maybe I didn't realize when they came how much potential they actually had. And the other thing is as people, when they came in as freshman at a certain maturity level and where they were when they left, it was like night and day. So I can probably put most of those athletes in one of those two categories.

I think maybe Kesha Kelly [phonetic] would probably be one who came from a real small high school in the Detroit area and didn't play AU basketball like most of the kids did. She didn't play against real good competition, and she became one of our all-time leading scorers and just an incredible athlete. She's probably one of those that also fits in the other category where matured tremendously. As an athlete I remember after her first semester her freshman year she was homesick. She's from Detroit. Homesick and wanted to go back home. We talked her into staying at least one semester, you know, sticking it out, and she ended up staying for four years and really being a huge part of our success.

Honhart: You've also had considerable success with some of your assistant coaches going on to jobs. One that comes to my mind most recently is your assistant who went over to Michigan is now over there. You want to comment on that at all?

Langeland: Sue Gabaro [phonetic] was an assistant coach of mine for ten years and left here one day to become the head coach of Michigan--that was about four years ago--and took over a program that was in shambles and had been for a long period of time, and she has really done an outstanding job of reviving that program. Of course, the problem with that is, she is now our biggest competition. I told her she was the one that drove me out of coaching, because the games with Michigan the last three years were very, very difficult, both emotionally and--

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

Charnley: When the tape ended, you were talking about our record of the women's basketball against Michigan.

Langeland: Yes. And then all of a sudden Sue went to Michigan and things changed, and I think it was pretty even these last three years. But she's done a great job there, and I'm very proud of what she's accomplished, even if it is at Michigan.

Charnley: Over the last several decades, especially during your tenure as head coach, the administration of the athletic department has been in the news a great deal with the wide variety and the large number of different athletic directors. How did that affect the operation of women's basketball program and your coaching?

Langeland: Remarkably, not as much as people would think. I mean, every athletic director that we had had a different management style, and so as soon as someone new came in, we'd all kind of have to change the process that we went through to get things done or our approach to things. But as far as basketball specifically, I think as long as I was consistent with the athletes, there wasn't that big of change or they'd probably never noticed the change.

There was some differences philosophically. We had Doug Weaver, who I believe had his longest tenure while I was here. I think that's probably true, because Joe Kerney was only here for about my first three or four years. He took care of men's basketball, hockey, and football, and really his philosophy was to hire the best young coaches he could and get the most out of them and then knowing that they would move on to better paying jobs and better jobs, and I think I was one of those people that he just thought would be moving on in a short period of time. But, you know, I kind of stuck it out and things got better as time went on.

I think Mary Lee Baker was a big change. I think she came in with very high expectations for the other, at that time, non-revenue sports. Interestingly enough, in my opinion, it was high expectations without compensating coaches to do what they needed to do to win. And then, obviously, George Perles, who had his own way of doing things, and now Clarence Underwood. So it's been an interesting transition for me personally, but I don't think it had that big of an effect on basketball other than, more importantly, when Title IX came into effect or we went into the Big Ten conference or the whole gender-equity issues, those things had a bigger impact on the basketball program than the changes in athletic directors.

Charnley: Those were external to the university.

Langeland: Right.

Charnley: I'm interested, because obviously in your role as assistant AD now, you're looking at it from the other side of the desk. How would you describe your work with those athletic directors in your experiences as coach? What was the interaction, the main interaction, that you had with the various ADs?

Langeland: Coaches have, or most of the time that I've been here, a lot of autonomy to just kind

of do their own thing and run their program. The most interaction was probably just over major budget issues, you know, if we felt we needed an additional assistant coach or we needed more recruiting money in the budget or we needed another scholarship. That's where the interaction usually occurred with the athletic director. It didn't seem to me that there were huge policy issue changes, or at least not that were trickled down to us, us as coaches. So, again, it just depended on if you were the athletic director, you probably were going to get a "no" to every budget issue you had, although now that I think about it, I think every athletic director had that first response.

Charnley: On your budgets and budgeting, what were some of the major factors that entered in? Was it travel?

Langeland: Team travel was always huge. Once we went from playing in-state schools to playing a Big Ten conference schedule, that obviously is a big transition. Even once we added Penn State to the conference, that made a big difference in terms of travel. Just getting to State College is not an easy feat, by any means. That was additional money. So team travel was probably the biggest line item. Recruiting money became a big issue. As I said, when I first started, you're only looking for one or two athletes and they were usually around this area, certainly around Michigan. After a while, we had to broaden our scope to a kind of regional base, and then even did some national and internationals. We had a couple of international players, one from Norway, one from Denmark, a couple of Canadian kids on our team. So that line item got bigger and bigger every year as well. Those were probably the two biggest things.

Charnley: Were there any board of trustees members who particularly supported women's athletics over the years that you can think of?

Langeland: I would say probably Bob [Robert E.] Weiss in the last few years was more

supportive of women's basketball than any other board of trustee member. He actually went with us to the NCAA tournament when we played at Connecticut in '91. That's the first and only time we've ever had a board of trustee member traveling with us. But otherwise they're pretty much preoccupied with men's basketball. Roger Wilkinson and his wife, Laura, were huge women's basketball fans. Dr. [Gordon] Guyer and his wife were huge women's basketball fans. Very supportive.

Charnley: Did the Adamses attend?

Langeland: No. No. He was too busy with men's basketball.

Charnley: How did you work with Gwen Morrell [phonetic]?

Langeland: She was wonderful. I mean, obviously she was our faculty rep here for a very long period of time and had a lot of interaction with her, obviously, over academic issues and stuff, and just always seemed to be very fair, very concerned about the welfare of our student athletes, would always take time to explain things in detail to you or report what was going on in the Big Ten. Just a wonderful, wonderful person and a great advocate for Michigan State athletics.

Charnley: The timing of her appointment seems to be quite interesting. Maybe the right person at the right time.

Langeland: Yes.

Charnley: You talked a little bit about it before in terms of the academics, that balance, that tension, between academics and athletics. Obviously your high graduation rate speaks very well

to that. Was there any strategy that you took in terms of your actual dealing with the athletes and talking with them about their classes and about their course work or did you intervene when it was obvious someone was having some difficulty?

Langeland: Yes, I did some intervening. I think we always had academic counselors, and for a while when there was a transition of athletic directors, there was also a huge transition in academic counselors. So we were going through one or two a year, it seemed like, for a while there for a five-year period of time, before we had the Smith Center built. But I think they can just do so much. The one thing that we, as coaches, have is playing time that's the athletes want. So a lot of times you just have to remind them that if they don't go to class, there will be consequences. I had some strategies where the initial thing was they weren't allowed in practice, and then after a while they'd be suspended from a game or they wouldn't be able to start, or there were different things that were pretty effective that kept them in class and motivated.

Also, the university really helped us out. I think it was about six years ago when our Big Ten schedule seemed so difficult that we were given the money to charter so that we could get home after games. For example, we played Sunday afternoon, and a lot of times if we were in Minnesota, Minneapolis, on a Sunday afternoon, to get a commercial flight out was nearly impossible. We'd have to wait till Monday morning. So then we'd miss classes on Monday. And the same thing at the other end. If we played, let's say, on a Friday night, we'd have to miss classes all day Thursday. Whereas, with a charter we could go to classes all day Thursday, practice, and then leave. So the money for the charters was really helpful in terms of making sure that our athletes missed as little class time as possible. I thought that was a big step for the athletic department.

Charnley: When did that start?

Langeland: I think it was about six years ago. I think men's basketball had been doing it for a little bit longer. But, you know, and again that was another gender-equity issue. If we're doing that for the men, why aren't we doing it for the women? But the bottom line is, I think we were very fortunate that we had people that were committed to getting a degree. They would do what they needed to do to get that degree, and I think the proof of their commitment is how successful they all are now since graduation.

Charnley: How would you assess the role of President [M. Peter] McPherson regard the sports program here at Michigan State in general and also support for women's athletics, in your experience?

Langeland: That's a pretty heavy question. My experience is that he's very concerned about the athletic department, but his concerns are primarily in regard to men's basketball and football, and there is very little concern about any of the other sports. I wouldn't pick women's athletics out of there. I would say any of what we now call the Olympic sports. My sense is that it's really not that important, our success.

Honhart: When you decided to change jobs and step down, what were your reasons for doing that?

Langeland: Probably the most important was my dislike for recruiting. I'm one of these people that just want to be honest with the athletes I'm recruiting. I want them to be honest with me. There's a lot of game-playing that goes on. I'm not a sales person, and that's what recruiting is. I'm a teacher. And I just didn't like the sales. I mean, we have a great product to sell, and I always felt very comfortable selling Michigan State, our campus, our athletic programs, our academic programs. But after a while when an athlete makes a decision to go to a school

because of the school colors, you know, it bothers me a little bit.

My best recruiting story was a young lady from Ontario. This was a long time ago. She had two top priorities in what school she chose. One was being close to home and the other was the academic program. And she decided to go to UNLV. She was pre-med. And I struggled with that one, you know. But that's just kind of typical of what recruiting is like. I disliked it more and more, and it's very difficult to do something well that you dislike. So I felt that I could coach and I had that strength, but I wasn't real pleased with how I was recruiting and the kinds of kids that I was getting after a while. So that was one reason.

Travel after twenty-four years was just really starting to get to me. It was every weekend. All year long, really, because if we weren't in season then I was recruiting. I'd spend the month of July on the road in hotels and gyms and that sort of thing.

But, probably, if I were to be really honest, the biggest reason was the change in student athletes, and that gets into a whole other topic. But just briefly I just didn't feel that they had the commitment anymore. It's like they were kind of a "me" generation and, you know, it's like, "What have you done for me lately?" not, "What do I need to do to help this program win?" Really did not take much responsibility on their own for their poor performances; it was always some else's fault. It was just really difficult to interact with them after a while. It started to become a job and not something that I love to do. And it's been nice not having the pressure of winning and being able to watch a basketball game. I mean, I want Michigan State to win, but I don't go home sick to my stomach when we lose either.

So there were a number of reasons. I think it was just time for me to step down. I want this program to do well, and I just didn't feel that I was doing as good a job as maybe I needed to do or I wasn't keeping up any more with what was happening in recruiting. I don't think I had a problem keeping up with the basketball portion of it, but the recruiting piece really started getting--when I first came here, the age difference between myself and my athletes was about four or five years. Well, now it's significantly greater than that, particularly with the kids that

you recruit. Now, all of a sudden I'm talking to seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds about who they're dating and what's happening in chemistry or something, and I have no desire to even know. [Laughter] Anyway, those were probably the biggest reasons.

Honhart: How do you see the program going now with the new coach? It's very early on, obviously.

Langeland: Yes, it's real early, and I've really tried to respect her and, you know, in all honesty, stay away from the program. Because it's hard. It's hard to take over a program, especially for somebody that's been there that long but also when that person's still here in the department. So I think physically it's a good thing that she's in Breslin and I'm here. I mean, all of the athletes with the exception of one on this year's team were recruited or coached by me. So I know them very well. So I'm at every game, and I really am certainly supportive. But I'm also trying very hard not to interfere with the program and just kind of sit back and let her do her thing.

Honhart: How do you like your new job?

Langeland: I love my new job. One of the aspects of coaching at this level that you do is there's a lot of administrative work that is part of coaching, you know, with a quarter of a million dollar budget and just, I mean, a staff of five. I mean, there's a lot of things, unfortunately and fortunately, sometimes I can go into coaching besides the Xs and Os.

The administrative part was one of the things that I really liked. I disliked recruiting. I really liked the administrative part. So this kind of fell into place. I was able to stay here at Michigan State, which I love. I was able to work for Dr. Underwood, which I really enjoy. I've known him since he was first at Michigan State. So I have a lot of respect for him. I like having most nights and weekends free. I didn't even know what weekends were until last April, and then

I found out, because we spend the whole month of July recruiting and were on the road all time when I'm coaching, I found out that there was a holiday in July. It's like called the Fourth of July. And people cook out and things like that. I discovered that this year and had some time off at Christmas. Usually I have about two days and I actually had a week off.

One of the things that I wanted very badly to do if I were to take this position was to be able to work with the coaches. I am a sports supervisor for ten of our olympic sports, and I really enjoy that piece. I'm also the camp administrator. We have a summer camp here for high school, junior high and high school kids. Last summer we ran camps in sixteen different sports and had 8,500 kids. So I oversee all of that. I don't run specific camps, but I do enrollment and registration and work with housing and food services, because they're overnight camps, most of them. So I enjoy that part as well. I had been running my own basketball camps for twenty-four years, so it was kind of a natural progression for me.

Charnley: Was there any point in your coaching career that you can look back on and say is the pinnacle or the peak?

Langeland: There were a few, obviously, real noteworthy games, but I think winning a Big Ten championship in '97 was probably--I mean, that was something that was my goal ever since I came here or ever since we were in the Big Ten. So to be able to do that. And not only did we do it, but it was with just a very unique group of individuals. We had senior leadership on that team that was just outstanding, and I've never seen it since. Just quality people who gave everything they had, and that's one of the reasons why we won the championship. So that was a real highlight.

Probably one of my most memorable games was in the NCAA tournament. We were supposed to play the first round here at Michigan State at the Breslin Center, but because of a previously scheduled Ice Capades we were forced to play at Oklahoma State. We went there.

Lost, actually, in triple overtime, which was the first time I had been involved in a triple overtime game. It was just an incredible game. As a side note, I had found out I had had mono for about four months prior to that game, and so I was very, very ill during that game, and I wasn't sure I was going to last till the end of it. One of our team physicians traveled with us at that point. Nobody ever came out and said it, but I think he was there just to make sure that I didn't, you know, pass out or something on them on the sideline. So that was a very, very memorable game.

Charnley: When you started here, did you anticipate that you'd spend your entire career?

Langeland: When I started here, I thought I would be here until I finished my master's degree. So I thought I'd be here for two, maybe three years. I fell in love with the job. I fell in love with Michigan State. It just kind of kept going from there.

Charnley: I want to thank you on behalf of the program for sharing your insights in the time that we've spent.

Langeland: No problem. I hope it's helpful.

Honhart: It will be very good.

Langeland: All right.

Charnley: Thank you.

[End of interview]

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