

Mary Fossum

June 26, 2001

Jeff Charnley and Fred Honhart,
interviewers

Charnley: Today is June 26, 2001. I'm Jeff Charnley, along with Mary Fossum. This interview is part of a series for the sesquicentennial commemoration of Michigan State University, coming up in the year 2005.

Do you give us permission to tape-record?

Fossum: Yes, I do.

Charnley: I'd like to start first with some general educational and personal information about you, some questions on how maybe that affected your career. Where did you grow up and go to high school?

Fossum: I was born and raised in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and met Bruce [Fossum] over there, my husband. We came over to Michigan State in 1959 and he was assistant basketball coach at that time.

Charnley: Did you play sports in high school?

Fossum: Well, to the extent that they had them. I do remember, even in fifth grade, we had a softball team, which I think, back in those days, was kind of unheard of. [Tape interruption]

. . . for elementary school, but in high school they didn't have a golf team, but we played

the usual basketball, softball, badminton, tennis, ran, played, had fun. But that was very usual, I think, for that era. Since I'm dating myself, I have to go back to the forties, but that was very usual. They didn't have a golf team, but my dad was a very avid golfer and I was interested in whatever he was interested in. So it was golf.

Charnley: Did you have siblings?

Fossum: Yes, I had one sister. I still have her, thank goodness.

Charnley: When did you starting learning to play ball?

Fossum: When did I start? When I was six years old. I used to just trail along with my father and get treats and roam the golf course with him. I really got started at a very early age. So for as long as I've been playing, you'd think I'd play it a little better right now. [Laughter]

Charnley: Then you didn't play competitively?

Fossum: Yes, I did. I played, like in the Wisconsin State [unclear] tournaments. They had northeastern Wisconsin and they had local tournaments, so I became competitive probably when I was seventeen, that summer after I graduated from high school. So then I played in some national tournaments and just had a really good time.

Charnley: How would characterize women's golf at that time?

Fossum: It was very competitive. There was not a professional group at that time. There were women pros that were teaching and playing, but they didn't have an organization, of course, like

they do now. But they just celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the LPGA, and some of the people that were involved in that were some that I had played against and knew, and know, but don't get to see them very much now. The one I think I'm probably closest to is Patty Berg. She and I have been good friends for probably fifty years. It's hard to say that when you think about friendships and everything, but she's been a very good friend. She's probably my idol. I always thought she did more for women's golf than anybody else. A lot of people will say that Babe Saharias was the number one person in golf because of her talent, but I think that probably Patty did more because of her interest in junior golf and trying to help everybody. Though I have to say, I did beat Babe at one time. I think that's my one claim to glory. In a tournament.

Charnley: What happened then?

Fossum: It was in the semi-finals of the Women's Western Tournament in Cleveland, and I was just a rather young, naive girl, and here was "the Babe." It was pretty exciting, but I did beat her two and one, and then lost in the finals, to Louise Suggs. I ran out of steam, and on the golf shots, too. [Laughter] I think my putter failed me.

Charnley: You played a good round that day?

Fossum: Oh, yes. It was a pretty exciting tournament. Then I played in some other national tournaments after that. Oh, I'd get to the quarter finals of something, but probably in Wisconsin, I won the State [unclear] three times in a row. So I finally went into their Hall of Fame. It took a while, though. It was another one of those long, delayed things.

Charnley: What was the best part of your game at that time?

Fossum: Probably my putting, my short game. I was fairly accurate. I wasn't very long on the tee, but I think probably my short game saved me more than anything else.

Charnley: Did you have school beyond--

Fossum: No. As a matter of fact, I enrolled in an extension, in Green Bay, on the University of Wisconsin. That didn't last because I went down to Florida to work, so I could try and play golf a little bit more, so I had a seasonal job. Well, first, actually, I worked at--what was it called? I can't even think of it right now, but I did go down and work for Bordo Products Company in Winterhaven, Florida, and then I got to play a little bit more golf. I was a big baby; I didn't like to go away from home. But it worked out fine. I did that. Then our family arrived after Bruce and I got married. We have four children.

Charnley: How did you meet your husband?

Fossum: On the golf course. Because he loves to play golf, too.

Charnley: How was it that you came to Michigan State?

Fossum: Bruce came over as assistant basketball coach, at the request of Forddy Anderson. I think probably the connection was that Lance Olson had played at West High School, basketball, and he came to Michigan State. I don't know if the name Charlie Phillips [phonetic], who's passed away, but we got acquainted with him, so that kind of evolved. We came over here for an interview and decided to make the move.

Charnley: What were some your early impressions of the university?

Fossum: Well, it was really funny. I just hated the thought of leaving Green Bay. I'd lived there all my life, and to go someplace else, that far away, and my mother and dad were still living. I really didn't want to go. Once we got over here, I couldn't imagine a better place to be. Fortunately, we'd just made some really good friends in the athletic department, and we just loved it, just loved it. It was a good decision, but at the time it was like, I don't know. Different atmosphere, but I think there can be nothing greater than a university atmosphere, having your children grow up here. I think we've been very lucky.

Charnley: How was it that you became the coach of the women's golf team?

Fossum: The conversation started in 1972, in the fall, and [Clarence L.] "Biggie" Munn, who was our athletic director at that time, cornered Bruce one day, and at that time Bruce had become the men's golf coach, in 1966. So he said, "Bruce, do you think that 'Mare' would like to start a women's golf team?"

And he said, "I don't know. Why don't you ask her?"

So he said, "Well, just feel her out a little bit and see what she'll say."

So I said, well, I really hadn't thought about it, because we had two small boys at home. The girls were a little older, but I really hadn't thought that much about leaving the nest. So I did talk to Biggie, and he directed me over to the women's I.M.. I can't think of Carol's last time at the time, but she was more or less in charge of physical education at the university at that time. So we kind of talked about it and talked about what the possibilities would be and how maybe we could arrange it, get some competition for the spring of '73. So that was kind of the first process.

After I came home, then Bruce and I talked about it, too, because I thought, well, he can kind of steer me in the right direction as far as, you know, papers to fill out, forms to do, travel,

how to do this, and when to do that. With his help then I thought, well, I think that would be kind of an exciting adventure. So it was like, okay, I'll do this, I can do this.

So I got home and Bruce and I are talking about it and he said, "Well, how much are they going to pay you?"

I said, "I forgot to ask." [Laughter]

So anyway, it wasn't all that much, as you can well imagine. That was the beginning of just a wonderful time in our lives, though, with both of us coaching. There weren't too many husbands and wives that were teamed up at any university, and so we really enjoyed it. When I look back on that time, I wonder how did we do it. You know, the grandmothers would come and we had friends. The girls were a little older. We worked it out so that we could be gone, but I basically did my work from the house as much as I could, without having to do into an office every day.

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

Fossum: Why? Well, I felt I had a lot of knowledge and I think at that time there weren't a lot of women at the university that had maybe the time or the skill to teach golf. It wasn't that I was completely a teacher--I had to be a coordinator as well--but I knew enough about the game and had given clinics and things like that, but I was still considered an amateur, and I was not a professional. They just wanted somebody that had a reputation of being a good golfer, just to get things started. So getting that lasted twenty-five years.

But I think that the more I got into it, I really love being around the young people. They're so energetic, willing to learn. It was good for me because then I got out and I got to see a lot of old friends whom I had played, that were coaching different places. So I just thought it was a great experience, but I think that just the fact that loving the game as much as I always did, and Bruce did, and our kids, it was a very good experience for us. But I think I just got started

just because maybe being in the right place at the right time, because they didn't have anybody else and they did want to get started because of Title IX.

Honhart: What do you think has changed from the time you started till when you retired, as far as how you coached?

Fossum: Things have changed, of course. We started out with just a bare budget, and we traveled, and we did go to a lot of tournaments. We went to a lot of national tournaments, and in those days, it was AIAW. We were not a part of the NCAA. But we joined the NCAA and the Big Ten in 1982. Well, by that time, there were a lot of developing programs that were really on the rise, and it was interesting to see the interest that there was.

I'd have to say that being associated with men's golf so much for so many years before, this was a new experience for me, too, as far as dedication, interest, numbers. That was a big thing. You could go to a junior tournament and there might be a hundred young men there, young boys, and you might have ten girls. But that was because, you know, athletics maybe wasn't the thing to do for young ladies. They had other things to do. So it was really interesting to see how the interest with young people grew over that span of time.

Of course, now, I mean, it's off the wall. It's so popular. And how welcome it is, because women make great athletes, and they aren't to be compared to men. They just are good athletes in their own right. It was just fun to see that develop.

You asked about the difference. You just had more people to work with. Sometimes I'd have seventeen on the team. I don't know if you're aware of how--you know, you have to have numbers, which I hate to think of that in those terms. I think interest should be better than numbers. If somebody is interested in it, they should have the opportunity, but not to go out and get them just to build up your numbers, that kind of thing.

We traveled a lot. I think at first we used to drive the van all the time. I remember

driving all night and then I would get the word that, "Well, you can't do that because it might be dangerous." [Laughter] Well, but we want to get there and we're all excited, and rather than waste another day and have the expense of another hotel and all that kind of stuff, let's just get there.

But we just had wonderful experiences at different golf courses, and I think the girls were--I shouldn't say "girls," I should say "women," but it was hard for me to say that, and it was usually, "Hey, guys, let's go. Time to go and eat, time to do this, get up," all that kind of stuff.

The skill level was so much better, too, as I look back on some of the scores, even in this media guide, and when we won the Big Ten, things like that, at an early stage, how much higher the scores are than they are right now. It is amazing to me to watch some of these young people now. Stacy Slobodnik-Stoll is our coach, as you well know. She just finished her fourth year, I think. Those young people, I mean, they're shooting in the sixties and low seventies. We used to be happy if we were shooting in the seventies, or had maybe two scores in the seventies and then low eighties. Anytime we were under 320 for four scores, for eighteen holes, we thought we were making good progress. Only twice did we ever shoot below 300. They do it all the time now. They're shooting at 292, 294, 287.

I mean, it's amazing to me, and I think probably the equipment might have a lot to do with it. Maybe the dedication is greater. I know that Stacy has a tremendous amount of energy and she works them hard. I thought I worked the kids hard, but it's amazing to see how these young people have developed.

Honhart: Who were some of the more memorable players, from your experience?

Fossum: The first year that we got started, back in '72-'73, our best player was Bonnie Lauer, and Bonnie had already established herself as a fine player. We actually had twelve girls that came out for that first meeting, so we were pretty enthused. I think it was like ten. A couple of

the girls that wanted to be there and had a conflict and couldn't come to that first meeting. But we practiced, we got started. We'd go out to the old Parmore [phonetic] and slush around in the mud a little bit. Art Pryor [phonetic] was the owner. He said, "You can come out as long as you pick up the golf balls." Well, you can imagine what it would be like in the spring. But we didn't have a spring trip in those days.

Our first competition was down in Indiana, I believe in the first part of April. We went down there, won the tournament. Bonnie was medalist, and she went on that year to be the AIAW medalist, so she was the national champion. So she was very memorable. Some of the girls in that first group--two, in particular--M_____ Beamer [phonetic]. She came to Michigan State because she knew Duffy [Dougherty]. She was from Hawaii, and I think Duffy was a friend of her mother's and father's. She knew the name, and so she thought she would come here and finish her education. And then Jill Peterson, who was a young lady from Lansing. Those two, if they didn't spoil me. Oh, my goodness. "Mare, you can't pack the van. We'll pack it. We'll get the clubs in. We'll do this, we'll do that. Bruce showed us how to do it."

It was like Bruce would tell the kids, "This is how you pack."

At first we had a station wagon. We didn't have a van. We had a station wagon. They would do everything, so I was pretty spoiled. But wonderful young people, and we still stay in touch. But those three in particular.

Then, let's see, the next group. I don't know if you're familiar with Joan Garety, but Joan played for four years here, and when she graduated in '79, she was number one in her class. She won a wonderful award, it was an NCAA Rolex Award, for outstanding achievement outside of golf, just a year and a half ago. I think her picture, actually, is in here. So she has done well as a treasurer and vice president over at Meijer. She still plays. She has won the state [unclear]. She's still playing golf well and doing a wonderful job with her career. She was good.

Then Sue Ertl was a very fine golfer, and an all-American. She didn't win any national titles, but she went on to be a LPGA professional, as did Bonnie. Bonnie wasn't really our first

one. Actually, it was Joyce Kazmierski, who played in the late sixties, was also a national champion. They called it something different. It wasn't AIAW in those days. It was, I think, just the national collegiate champion. She won that in, I think, '67, so she was really our first champion, but she was not on one of the teams that I had coached. But she still is a wonderful supporter of our program, and we hear from her on a regular basis. So she was really the first that went on to the LPGA, and then Bonnie did, and Sue Erdle.

Then after that, I think it was Barb Mucha, and Barb's still playing on the tour. She's a wonderful player. She just played in the McDonald championship this last weekend. So she's playing. She's kind of cutting back on her schedule a little bit. Planning on being married this next year. So there's a lot of excitement ahead for her.

Then let's see who else. Lisa Marino was a fine, fine player and she tried the tour, but she was too nervous. It was hard for her to kind of settle down, but she played such good golf in college, and was an all-American.

Syd Wells, from Menominee, was an all-American player for us. So we did really have some fine golfers. More recently probably is Jen Kangas. Her married name is Brody, and she's playing on the Futures right now, but she had qualified for the LPGA and did play one year, but didn't make enough money to keep her card, and so she had to go back to qualifying school, Q School, as they hate to say, and did not qualify, so she went back on the Futures tour, which is kind of a development tour for the young ladies. She is probably our finest golfer, to the that point.

Now, Stacy has some young people. One that just graduated is Kasey Gant, and Kasey has won all kinds of honors, so you'll probably be reading about her and about Emily [unclear], Stacy Snider. We have a Kasey and a Stacy. Nothing like getting mixed up half the time.

I know I've missed out on some of the really fine players and people. We just have such great people, and I think those are the great memories, and the fact that you stay in touch with them. I think that's what I like, too. They all go their own ways and different professions. There

are a lot of them that have gone in as assistant pros and teaching pros, or working for Titlist, golf clubs. But they're all just fine young people.

Honhart: What would you say would be the highlight of your coaching career?

Fossum: Well, that's kind of a hard one. I think the most exciting ones were when we won the Big Ten, when it was unofficial Big Ten, because Big Ten didn't recognize us. We won four in a row. Those were really exciting times, and the other teams were getting better. I think probably the first year or two we were a little head and shoulders above. We won most of the tournaments that we participated in. But then all of a sudden, the other programs--Ohio State, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, all of them. And some of them didn't really have teams right away. I think the first Big Ten we played in only had five or six. But those were exciting times because that was laying the foundation for the golf program.

We joined the Big Ten in '82, and we won that championship, up at Minnesota. And that was a thrill, because that was the first really official one. But I like to think to myself that official or unofficial, we still won five Big Ten titles, and it was just a question of our timing. It wasn't that we didn't want to be in the Big Ten. It was just not to be at that time. But then in '82, when the NCAA wanted men and women under one umbrella, that's when everything kind of happened in a bigger way.

But I think probably those early championships were as much of a highlight. I had so many that--I mean, that's the great thing. There were so many wonderful experiences with the kids. We had some that had a hole-in-one in the tournament. Oh, my goodness, that's good. We still have some that are on our LPGA and I didn't mention Becky Iverson, but she played well this last weekend. She played for us.

Honhart: How has the game changed over time?

Fossum: You probably have kids starting at a younger age, so they have more knowledge. The equipment is a big factor. You've probably read something about that. I mean, they talk about it all the time. The equipment, the new golf balls, like the Nike ball. It just goes further. I think the golf courses are maybe set up--I mean, they're in better shape, I think, golf courses right now, that the women are playing on.

There are probably different factors, but I think they're starting at a different age and there's a little more of an incentive. Especially with golf. There aren't too many sports that young women can play, that they can go on and possibly be successful, as a profession. Now, of course, basketball has opened up, and tennis. But as far as a professional track person. I mean, just thinking about it, golf has always been something that you could go on and make a good living. And probably even better instruction. I know they have so many of these academies now where, if people have the money to do it, they can go a lot of different places and have some specialized training.

I think that's one of the reasons I admire Tiger Woods so much, is that he does something with the money that he has to try to help the inner-city people, young boys and girls, and so he really puts a lot of effort into that. I think probably there are numerous people that are doing that nowadays, to get young people started. Well, this might be just kind of the beginning, but I think now they do start a little bit earlier.

Honhart: What was the effect of Title IX on the program?

Fossum: I think that the fact that it had to be done. There probably is a comment I'd like to make off the record, and not on, if you don't mind my saying this. [Tape recorder turned off.] But you know, that's just something that maybe people don't like to hear, but it's a fact.

Honhart: Actually, you should put it on the record so it's in there.

Fossum: I don't want to rub anybody the wrong way, because everybody here has been really good to me. But at the same time, that's how it was. It's just like, in the beginning, the coaches were part-time. We weren't considered full time, so we didn't have the benefits, which didn't bother me because I was on Bruce's plan anyway, as far as some of the things like that. But the thing that was hard to accept is that I put in twenty-five years and they only recognized it as like twenty-one, because we were part-time. Though we worked full time, we just weren't paid.

So those little differences like that, I think, you know, when you look at a certificate and you know that you coached for twenty-five years, but then it's like twenty-one, then the certificate kind of loses its meaning. But it was interesting. It was good.

Good bunch of coaches that we started out with. Michael Kasavano was the gymnastics coach. I don't know whether he was the first one, but he did take over. Nell Jackson was like our administrator. She was a wonderful lady. So we had really good relationships, the coaches, and got along fine. I can't say for sure, but I'm sure that the men resented a little bit of what happened, because it was a fact and they didn't win championships after that.

Honhart: How would say Forest Akers compares to the other courses in the Big Ten?

Fossum: Oh, it's wonderful. I think it's the best. They used to say that Ohio State had the best golf course. I think ours was in better shape, really. And our east course is also in wonderful shape. They do a great job on both of those golf courses. I can't imagine. When Arthur Hills [phonetic] came in and made some changes and worked very hard with the groundspeople, and I think did a wonderful job. I think the thing we lacked was, oh, maybe a more impressive pro shop. It was the same building as when we came, so I think it was the same structure as when the course was built in, what, 1956, I think it was, something like that. It was just a few years

old when we got here. But then they'd add a porch or they put partitions in and had a women's locker room, but originally it was just one big room, and it wasn't all that impressive. But now that they've got the new structure going, and the pro shop's going to be--they're going to--what do I want to say? Not reassign, but--

Honhart: Relocate.

Fossum: Relocate the hole. In other words, number fifteen as it is now is going to be number one, and number six is going to be number ten, and then the pro shop will be over in that area by the U. Club. So I think it's going to be very impressive, and when teams come here, that they can stay right there and be so close to the golf course. I think it's going to be very, very impressive. So I think they've done a wonderful job. And then of course, the practice facility on the east side. That's just one of the--

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

Fossum: --back there and then the teams can go back and practice also, and have it a little more quiet. Because that driving range is so busy. People are out there all the time. It's pretty nice. I mean, it's just one of the best. It's maybe the best in the state.

Honhart: Of course, I liked it when it used to be you could just take your old bucket of balls and go out there and practice. The [unclear] was nice and I liked that.

Fossum: Over on the other side, you could go over there, and then when we would have golf camp, we would use the east side, but just, we'd have to get our own golf balls and stuff like that and the kids would have to go out and pick them up.

They'd say, "Why do we have to pick them up?"

I'd say, "That's just part of the game. Pick up your own golf ball."

But it was interesting. And then on the west side, you could just have your own balls and go out. So now they've got that wonderful short-game facility, so I think they really have done a superb job.

Charnley: Was there any connection with the turf grass research?

Fossum: I don't think at the beginning. I think they just did it on their own, but maybe after Arthur Hills was in, they might have relied a little bit more on turf grass, which would be a good idea because they're such experts in the field. But I think we've just got a wonderful, I would say a complete--as soon as the pro shop is going to be changed, then that building, I don't know if you're aware of it, but that building is going to go to the men's and women's golf teams, and then they're going to remodel so that they have their facilities there. They'll have a little practice area. I think they'll enclose the, what do I want to call it, the connection, you know, where they have the--you know, they can have dinners and stuff, and lunches in there. So that's going to be quite a project.

There's a fundraising project going on right now for that. I think it's pretty complete. It's great for recruiting. I mean, it's wonderful to have a facility like we have. When kids see that. That and of course, the Clara Bell Smith Academic Center. Those are big, big things, when young people come in and want to see. Because a lot of kids, you know, the whole idea was, well, if you really want to be a good golfer you've got to go south. Well, that's not true, and a lot of kids find that they get worn out, burnt out, if they are playing day in and day out, and it's better for their overall education, golf-wise, to play in the North. I mean, it's just kind of a different ball game because the grass, [unclear], things like that. Playing in the South, you just hit the ball and it rolls forever. So it's just different. It's almost like a different game that you

have to acclimate yourself to, but I think it's good. And we've found that there are so many really fine players that do want to stay up North because they want to be closer to their families, they want a better education, and they certainly can get that here.

Honhart: How has recruiting changed over the years from when you first came to what it is like now?

Fossum: I think probably, we didn't really do a lot of recruiting. I didn't really go out to homes all that much. Maybe a handful of young people. They would come to the campus because they thought that was more impressive, to see what we have here, rather than go into a home. But you are allowed to do both.

I think probably because--I know, for Stacy, with all her energy and being single, except she just got married two weeks ago, but she went to all the national junior tournaments, so that people knew she was there, and that she was interested, and I think that makes a big difference.

I, on the other hand, I was a little more reluctant to not go a lot of places. If I was going to be in Florida, I would and see a junior tournament, but I didn't make that extra effort, really, because I had my family at home, and I just didn't want to leave them all that much. So I'd go to the junior tournaments in Michigan. And of course, fortunately, we had the high school tournament right at Forest Akers. You'd always get a chance to see, on your own turf, the best players in the State of Michigan, and so that was always very helpful.

But I think now it's gone beyond that. It's going to go beyond--a lot of foreign players coming in now, and like even in Canada, there are some fine golfers up in Canada. I know Stacy, she has a wonderful team coming in for next year, and then beyond that, you just never relax. You always have to look ahead and make sure that if you graduate a couple, you've got a couple of really good blue-chip kids coming in. But now with the ability to offer full scholarships, I think it's easier maybe, because there is money now for the young people that

deserve it.

Honhart: What about working relationships with other coaches around the league, as well as at the university? How have you found that?

Fossum: Wonderful. I think probably the Big Ten coaches were as tight as any coaches could be. We would not see each other all the time, but usually every tournament we went to, there were several of us there, if we were out of our region. But if it was a tournament within the region, then we were all there. Couldn't wait to see one another. And actually, it got to be that way with some favorite coaches. Like Kentucky was always a very favorite coach of ours, and Cincinnati, and down in Florida. There were just favorite people that you looked forward to seeing. But I think basically, the coaches got along really well, looked forward to the convention every year so that you could see old friends.

But I have to say, the Big Ten coaches were outstanding and fun, but competitive. They wanted to win as much as I wanted to win. I didn't like to lose. I still don't like to lose. I'm terrible. And Bruce is just like my dad used to be. He said, "You know, you really have to recognize the talent in other teams." Because we were Green Bay Packer fans, went to the games, and I was just awful. And he'd say, "But look at what a good play that was." This is my dad talking to me. No, I didn't want to recognize that. I wouldn't admit it. And then Bruce says the same thing. "They have such good players. You don't want to root against them." You'd be surprised. [Laughter] Anyway, I am very competitive.

Charnley: Over the last several decades, the administration in the athletic department has been in the news a great deal. How has this affected the operation of women's golf, in general, and maybe your work, in particular?

Fossum: In what regard?

Charnley: Maybe talk about some of the athletic directors. Well, you started with Biggie Munn, so you can go from there.

Fossum: We've gone through a lot, and it just seems that, no matter what, we go ahead and we do our job, and try not to get caught up in the politics of it, because I think it's really hard to do a good job. I know before I retired that after we'd have a coach's meeting, and then the administrators would leave, we'd just kind of sit around and talk about things that we thought we should be--we should see some changes, possibly, or something that we could do to do a better job, but we wanted to do it just by ourselves. And they're still here at Michigan State.

Wonderful, wonderful people.

I think of Joel Bond [phonetic]. Oh, my goodness, you know, what a great guy he is, and he's been here for so long. Just a great person. Fair, wonderful. Rich Kimball [phonetic] was always such a great friend of mine, too, and now I don't even see him. But he's very happy with what he's doing, I think, as an athletic director, at a high school. He's just very pleased. I look back on it. I know there were a lot of times when we were just mortified at some of the things that happened, but there's nothing you can do about it, and you don't want it to affect your performance as a coach. You don't want to have it affect your team, and so you've got to put it aside a little bit. You just can't let things like that happen. Some of the hiring, firings, I don't know.

Charnley: Were there any of the athletic directors that were particularly supportive of women's athletics?

Fossum: Well, I think they all were, really, when you really think about it. Biggie was the one

that wanted to get it started, and then I think Burt was next, Burt Smith. And Doug Weaver. He was always very good to us. Joe Kearney might have been the best. I mean, I hate to--because they were all good friends, things like that, but I think maybe Joe might have been one of the most supportive people, and he was very well-liked. And George Perles. He was a wonderful athletic director, even though he was not there very long, but as far as support, any kind of support, moral support, whatever he could do, and I think the coaches as a whole felt that, that he conducted himself as an athletic director in a first-class manner. But as far as administratively or this or that, I wouldn't really want to get into that too much.

Charnley: How did you work with Gwen Norrell?

Fossum: She was wonderful. She is wonderful. I love her, I really do. She was just a great person, and she could get the job done. She really was, because she was really on the ground floor with women coming into athletics, into administration. I think she was the first to do a lot of things. She was a faculty rep. I think she was just great. And as I say, still is. I don't get to see her very much, but she's a great gal.

Charnley: When I interviewed her, we talked at length about the relationship between the AIAW and NCAA, and how she took a lot of flak from women in the AIAW, more than the men, and the men were supporting in the NCAA. What was your position on the relationship between the AIAW and NCAA. Was that a good switch for women's golf?

Fossum: Well, it had to be. It was going to happen at some time but there were a number of women that were kind of in charge of AIAW that it was maybe a little harder to deal with. They were really dragging their feet because they wanted to keep it separate instead of working together. But I think it was inevitable that it was going to happen. It was almost like, the men

would say they didn't want the women, the women would say the men don't want us, but basically, the women really did not want to go in, I didn't think, to the NCAA. I should say, not all of them, but some of them that were influential. They wanted to keep it separate, but they just couldn't really afford to.

They didn't have the kind of financial backing that the NCAA or the Big Ten could provide. The structure is so different. But when we were in the AIAW, we were happy to be in the AIAW. We hosted the tournament in 1976, here at Michigan State. That was a big highlight. So we had a lot of good things happen, but if you're going to make progress, then you have to come together a little bit in your ideas. I think there are probably still some places. I think Iowa and Minnesota still have separate athletic departments. I mean, they have a women's athletic department and a men's athletic department. I can't think of Christine's last name. But anyway, they've kind of kept it separate. For whatever their reason is, it works for them.

So I think sometimes you just have to not always question. If you have a voice in something. I think, to me, the biggest thing was that we used to have differences of opinion with Southern coaches. They thought we didn't play golf in the North. We always had a difficult time convincing them that we could play and should play. Our philosophy was, let's let as many people play as we can, which we always played six comp four. They played five comp four. They thought we were taking an unfair advantage because we were having six people play.

Our Big Ten still plays six comp four, so we haven't changed that. It may have to change. The men went from playing six comp four. Now they always play five, I think, and comp four. But things like that, it's just like, the more opportunity that young people have to compete, the better they're going to be, and can become better players. That was the other thing about players going down to the South, and playing at some Southern school. Our opinion was, if you stay here and play, you'll play. If you go down in the South, you might ride the pines, literally. You might be on the team, but never get to compete. If you're ever going to really do something with your game, you have to compete. You just can't practice all the time.

So we had to have little things like that that we'd throw in, why they should stay up North and play golf. It was amazing. Sometimes we'd have girls from the South that would come up into the North. We had a young lady from Florida that came up and played for a year, but her mom got ill and then she had to go back home again. But it usually did not happen. We usually recruited mostly in Michigan and Indiana. We had a little pipeline into Indiana, so we got some really fine golfers out of Indiana. And a couple from Ohio. Maybe one or two from Wisconsin. So pretty much it was a Midwestern recruiting group.

Charnley: How did you balance the tension between academics and athletics for your student athletes?

Fossum: There wasn't the tension. We had rules. In other words, we could only miss so many days of school. First it was in the quarter system, and then it was the semester. But you couldn't miss any more days of school than that. They were always told that they had to go to their professors if they were going to miss, say, like Friday, and stay in communication with their professors so that they knew they were going to be missing something, and could they make it up or take it early, one or the other.

I could remember at one time I gave two girls an exam, because they had to take it on a certain day, and they were going to be out of town. I would say most of the professors were pretty understanding. I think now they have more tutors, they have more academic help than they did, originally. Not saying anything negative about the academic part of it, but now I think it's much more organized and I think that probably--our young people had to go in all the time to a tutor, but I think at times we've have not the best tutors in the world. There was definitely some time where there was tension with that because they were getting the wrong information to our students, to our golfers. That was the only tension that I can really remember, getting inaccurate information, and the kids being smart enough to go ahead and get the right

information. But I don't think that happens anymore. The people that are in charge do a better job. Okay, I'm babbling now.

Charnley: You mentioned some of the athletes that you had that turned pro. Were there any special pressures that affected your ability to keep players here? Obviously, the LPGA was an attraction. Or did you find that most of those that you had stayed the full term?

Fossum: We had very few that dropped out early. Some of the girls that were on the team, they didn't get to play. But I'd tell them that we'd have playoffs, that you're involved in the playoff. They were not good enough players and they recognized that. Because I didn't want to say, "You're not good enough." I said, "But you have to prove that you deserve to be on the team and to be able to contribute. It's a two-way street. I'll do whatever I can for you, but then you, in turn, have to do for the team. And that means to try to be the best student and the best athlete that you can be."

So there were some that, maybe for their last two years, they knew they weren't going to play, and they would transfer and finish their education someplace else, closer to home. But it wasn't a matter of, well, we're going to leave school early so that we can turn pro. I think there's only one person that did that. That was my only major conflict, in all the coaching, that I kicked one person off the team. She said, "I knew this was coming, so I just withdrew from the university already," because I told her that she had to come to the house on Monday morning. It was after a tournament.

So she knew what it was, because I'd been warning her. I said, "Don't do this. Don't do it. You're pushing me." I'm pretty laid back. So I told her then that she was no longer welcome on the team. She said, "Oh, I knew that." So she said, "I'm gone." She went down to Florida, and she did make something of herself, so that was nice. She was a smart kid. Oh my goodness, she was smart. But she just kind of tried to always push you as far as she could, and that's not

good for the rest of the team. But that was only one incident.

Honhart: How would you evaluate [M.] Peter McPherson, who was the last president who was here when you were coach? He came about five years before you retired. What's his impact then on the program?

Fossum: Well, I think it's a positive one. I think he's very supportive of everything that the women are doing. I know for Stacy and the team, he had a reception at the house, he and Joanne [phonetic], and had their parents come. So he's totally in tune with what they're doing. I think sometimes your administrators and your key people are so busy administrating that they don't read the paper and don't know what's going on, in the sporting world. Because everybody is not as interested in athletics as we are, but I think Peter has been wonderful, a wonderful leader.

Charnley: In looking back on your years as coach, is there anything that you can say that is a legacy that you've given to women's golf here at Michigan State?

Fossum: Well, I don't know about legacies and things like that. All I think that what we tried to do is establish a fine group of young people who played hard, were honest, worked hard, got their degrees, and Stacy has carried that through. I can't tell you how many times she writes letters about how much help that Bruce and I have been to her, to help her be a better coach, better person. I mean, she's like one of our family. And having her as my assistant for two years and then she was on her own after I retired, and what a wonderful job she has done.

I think basically it's just getting a program started that has progressed and flourished and been successful. I think that's the nice thing because it had to get started sometime, and I guess I feel like I was in the right place at the right time to have been a part of the development of women's athletics.

Charnley: And also the issue of longevity.

Fossum: Yes, yes.

Charnley: That's a lot of years.

Fossum: I know it. Stacy's funny. She said, "It's my fourth year, and I'm only the second coach that they've ever had since the seventies." So it's nice, and I think being around young people is so energizing. I mean, our grandkids love the kids on the golf team, and they're so receptive to having the young ones around. It's very nice.

Charnley: What have been your contacts since retirement?

Fossum: I haven't gone out of town to watch them, though I do watch Jen. I tried to watch her play in a couple Futures tournaments. I went down to Ann Arbor a month ago and watched her play. As far as the current team, I see them, but not on a regular basis. I took them down to Florida a couple of years ago, when we were in the Final Four in '99, and it just happened to be the same weekend, because Stacy had to be in a wedding, so I took the kids down, and we went to the game. We were able to get to the game, so it was like a last-minute thing.

So I've been pretty close to the kids, because at that time they were still the kids that I had recruited. Then the year that Kasey Gant came in, that was really like my last recruit, but I had known her dad when he played in college. So that was really fun, to have recruited her.

And they said, "Well, you can't retire."

I said, "Yes, I can. I've got to retire sometime."

I don't know what the question was.

Charnley: I think you answered it. I thank you, on behalf of the project, for the time you've spent, and also your insights. We really appreciate it.

Fossum: I know I'm going to get home and I'll think, "Oh, I forgot. I should have talked about that a little bit." But it's been a great thing for our family, and I love Michigan State. I love it.

Somebody said, "Do you ever wear anything besides green?"

And I said, "No."

It's funny. Then they'll say, "Well, what's in your closet?"

It's like, green.

Charnley: Green and white.

Fossum: Isn't it funny? It's just like, our grandkids. They're terrible. Because I never wear blue, and if they ever have anything blue on and then they'll say, "Grandma, but there isn't any yellow in it." [Laughter] They all knew the fight song when they were two years old. We'd take them to football and hockey and basketball. It's a great atmosphere and we have wonderful people.

Charnley: You started them out early in golf, too?

Fossum: They can't swing a club very well. Bobby, a little boy, can swing it pretty well, but now he's into soccer and something else. And of course, our daughter, Terry, still works at Michigan State. Twenty-one years. I can't believe it. She's been with Ralph Young. The grandkids call her "Titi". So I call her Titi. If I ever say "Terry" she says, "What is the matter with you?" or "What have I done wrong?" Something like that.

But, you know, the whole association, it's just been grand. I can remember when Bruce-- well, when they fired Foddy Anderson, then they wanted to reassign the other coaches, and Bruce had an opportunity to do two things. One was to go into business back in Wisconsin, and then the other was to coach at one of the smaller schools in Wisconsin. He's such a good coach, and it was like--I remember Terry saying this, too. That she didn't want--and her sister said the same thing. "We don't want to have Daddy go backwards." You know, back to Wisconsin. Like sometimes they say, you can't go home.

But we were both from Wisconsin and we always loved it there, but they and I loved it here, so when they asked him to take over the golf program, then he did that, and more doors opened for him. Like he wrote a couple books and was president of the--he'll tell you some of the stuff, but there are just a lot of good things that happened to him in golf, but I always said, with being such a good basketball coach--well, he was an official, so he refereed, he coached his sons [unclear] and things like that. So he still did some basketball stuff, but he didn't play anymore, because he played at Wisconsin. We've had some great experiences. I would not want to go anyplace else.

This is what's funny, after I retired, because Bruce had retired quite a bit earlier and somebody said to me, "Where are you going to live?"

I said, "We'll live in the same little house we've lived in for thirty-nine years."

I wouldn't want to go and move down to Florida, or move anyplace. There's too much going on here. If it isn't sports, it's arts. Whatever you want to do. It's just a wonderful place to be. I'm glad I'm here. Except I can't find my way around anymore. Isn't that the funniest thing, though? I came in the old way and it was like, oh, I guess I can't go down here. Oh, my goodness. Isn't that funny, that it does? But it's so beautiful.

One thing that I didn't say is, when we first came, Dr. [John A.] Hannah was president. I think probably he was the most--he was the strongest--I can't even the word to describe him right now, as far as the kind of a person we thought he was. We just thought he was a wonderful,

wonderful person. And the first story was that Dr. Hannah wouldn't always the right appropriations for a building, but he'd always have the hole dug, and then as soon as the funds came in, he'd get the building up and then the landscaping around it. I mean, it was just like that. He was very impressive. He and his wife both were very, very nice.

Charnley: Thank you again.

Fossum: You want to get rid of me. I don't blame you. Man, I hope that you can get something out of that. Holy mackerel.

Charnley: Thank you.

[End of interview]

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