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The 1959 Wrestling Court  
and the  
Politics of the  
Marriage Market  
at Oregon State College**

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“COED CHEESECAKE”: THE 1959 WRESTLING COURT AND THE POLITICS OF  
THE MARRIAGE MARKET AT OREGON STATE COLLEGE

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On March 30, 1959, a controversy between Oregon State College President A.L. Strand and seven “campus beauties” swept the nation.<sup>2</sup> In an attempt to publicize an upcoming tournament, the wrestling coach and his team hatched a daring plan. They would choose seven of the “best-looking coeds” to hostess the tournament.<sup>3</sup>

It was not the hostessing but the later photo shoot which caused controversy. At a college that prohibited women students from wearing shorts or slacks, the wrestling team had boldly asked them to pose in swimsuits and sashes. Upon the sashes was each woman’s title, each a wrestling objective that had a second, sexually suggestive meaning. Carol Lindbloom was titled Miss Time Advantage, Sue Hall Miss Takedown, Mary Ann Backen Miss Predicament, Carol Scott Miss Fall, Suzanne Chapman Miss Near Fall, Sharon Ransom Miss Reversal, and Janet Aune Miss Escape.<sup>4</sup>

The image caused the conservative President Strand to publicly ban all “promotional cheesecake” photographs for athletics.<sup>5</sup> “Cheesecake” was a common term during that time used to refer to “pictures of attractive young women who are wearing little clothing.”<sup>6</sup> Cheesecake

photographs were deemed acceptable displays of the female form. However, they were closely related to the less acceptable photographs found in girlie magazines, such as the increasingly popular *Playboy Magazine*.<sup>7</sup> The president did not wish to have the students of his school associated with the women found in that less than respectable medium.

Strand did not understand that these women were attempting to parlay their efforts into a much more esteemed institution: marriage. Far from trying to become Playmates, the seven were attempting to show their potential as helpmates in a postwar marriage, a goal that Strand, the administration, and all of mainstream postwar America were pushing them towards.

This essay argues that postwar Oregon State College provided a structured environment designed to help its female college students find a mate, and that the 1959 Wrestling Court controversy is a window onto the tensions inherent in the process. What this essay calls marriageability, demonstrating the attributes of the ideal postwar wife, was a process with high risk and high reward. The 1959 Wrestling Court controversy sharply exposes the difficulties in promoting certain aspects of marriageability such as beauty and hospitality, without going past the appropriate level of sexuality. It raised the question of how much authority the college had over students and what purpose that authority served.

The essay is divided into three sections. The essay begins by exploring the prescribed role that women were asked to play in the American postwar marriage. The next section explores the ways in which Oregon State College cultivated that future role for female students and the obstacles faced by the administration. With those two pieces in place, the final section provides an in depth exploration of the 1959 Wrestling Court. The creation of the Court itself is a concrete example of the process of demonstrating marriageability at Oregon State College at work. The

controversy that followed illustrates the contradictions and complications that the college faced in creating an environment suitable for the marital pursuits of their students.

A variety of sources are used to understand what the Wrestling Court meant for all of the people involved. A survey of print coverage of the event ranging from the student newspaper the *Daily Barometer* all the way to *Sports Illustrated* and *Life Magazine* show the way the women were depicted in the media. Oral histories conducted by the author will provide a behind the scenes look at the event from multiple perspectives. The interview with former Dean of Women, Jo Anne Trow, provides an understanding of the goals of administrators for the students at Oregon State College. The interviews with wrestler, Ken Noteboom, and former *Daily Barometer* editor, Chuck Wenstrom, give the perspective of men who created the media. Finally, the interviews of the court members Janet Aune, Sharon Ransom, Mary Ann Backen and Carol Lindbloom provide an illuminating look at the way the women felt about their participation and how they perceived the controversy. Taken all together, these sources will give a panoramic view of the process of demonstrating marriageability at Oregon State College and its connection to the postwar American marriage.

### **Wife as helpmate in the postwar marriage**

In postwar America, the nuclear family was viewed as the most important social structure. In an era of conformity, being a part of the traditional family unit was a social requirement. For women, the default position was that of wife and mother.<sup>8</sup> "Marriage was consistently viewed as the normal condition of the American adult," asserts Nancy A. Walker.<sup>9</sup> In the 1950s, twenty became the average age of marriage and by twenty-four, 70 percent of all American women were married.<sup>10</sup>

Postwar pundits acknowledged a strong affinity for the Victorian era. Both eras glorified family and insisted that the proper place for women was in the home. As suggested by Arlene Skolnick, postwar women were subject to “even more stringent demands” than their Victorian predecessors.<sup>11</sup> “[T]he new psychological standards” in postwar America, Skolnick argues, made wifely success more difficult because they were “prescribing inner states rather than behavior.”<sup>12</sup> It was no longer enough to perform the physical tasks that were required of her as wife and mother; she had to fulfill the emotional and psychological needs of her family and herself while doing them.

Due to this more encompassing role, the term “helpmate” was often used to describe the ideal wife in postwar era literature. A helpmate performed a multitude of tasks, all of which required unquestioning compliance. A helpmate needed to leave her home at moment’s notice if her husband’s job required it; she needed to give up her own career if it interfered with her husband’s needs; and she was supposed to devote the majority of her waking hours to creating an environment her husband wanted to come home to. She was expected to do all of this with a smile on her perfectly made-up face.

The smile was perhaps the primary expectation. The ideal postwar wife was willing and eager to help her husband work towards his goals. An example of this eagerness is found in Dorothy Carnegie’s marriage advice book *How To Help Your Husband Get Ahead*. It gave wives step by step instruction in helping their husbands get ahead in their career and in making themselves into the type of woman their husbands would enjoy coming home to. Testimonies of wives in the book show that dropping everything for their husband’s goals did not always come naturally. Several women look back at their initial displeasure at giving up their career or their

hometown for the sake of their husband's career with shame.<sup>13</sup> The shame felt at even unspoken reluctance shows how much women internalized the postwar feminine ideals.

The wife's perfect appearance was another important condition. Her pleasing looks were part of the pleasant atmosphere she was to create. Marriage handbooks like Carnegie's often addressed the importance of a wife's beauty to promote her husband's wellbeing. Carnegie asserts that it is "a natural desire for men to want to have attractive surroundings."<sup>14</sup> Carnegie likens the presence of a "pretty girl" in a room to a "bowl of roses" (and let us not forget that the gender conventions of the time meant that she was most likely the one to set out those same roses).<sup>15</sup> For the helpmate, the beauty of her own body was just as important as the beauty she was to create around her.

Living up to the expectations of the ideal wife in postwar America was hard, but being not being a wife in postwar America was much harder. Skolnick insists that single women, along with any person who "deviated from the prevailing family patterns," would have faced social ostracism due to the "McCarthyism of marriage and the family" at the time.<sup>16</sup> Because of the imperative to marry and to marry early for women, the necessity of demonstrating the myriad traits of the ideal wife was instilled very early on. By fourteen, girls were reading articles that assured them that all hope was indeed not lost if they had not yet been out on a date.<sup>17</sup> There was no doubt that finding a husband was on the forefront of almost every woman's mind as she decided what to do after high school.

### **Oregon State College as broker in the marriage market**

The running joke throughout the postwar era was that the primary reason that women attended higher education institutions was to find a husband. An advertisement Gimbel's

department store asked, "What's College?" with the reply, "That's where girls who are above cooking and sewing can go to meet a man so they can spend their lives cooking and sewing."<sup>19</sup> Even the *Daily Barometer* enumerated the "reasons a coed comes to college" as "(1) to get an education (2) to get a man (3) because the other girls are doing it (4) to get a man (5) because dad and mom went to college (6) and to get a man."<sup>20</sup>

Though men wrote of this goal in a humorous tone, it was a serious subject for women. The search for a husband shaped their entire landscape of their lives. For those who chose college, a potential husband's desires dictated which major they chose, how far they would go, and how they would use their free time. The extent that their marital goals influenced their college experience can be seen in Mary I. Champion Carter's 1955 doctoral thesis entitled *Needs of Oregon State College Freshman Women*. During 1952-1953 academic year, Champion Carter interviewed 133 freshmen women living in the Waldo Hall dormitory.<sup>21</sup> She found that only one out of all 133 women did not want to marry.<sup>22</sup> Of the 132 that intended to be married, 123 "planned to be homemakers but wanted also to have an occupation they could use 'in case of necessity' or 'in case they wanted to work,' either before or after marriage."<sup>23</sup> Because "quite a few of the young men sought the friendships of non-college employed girls, such as physicians' or dentists' receptionists, nurses, telephone operators, or stenographers," many of the freshmen women were tempted to leave college because those vocations that "seemed to them to offer better opportunities for marriage than a college degree offered -- and sooner."<sup>24</sup>

To address this great need, respectable colleges became brokers in the marriage market. It became a goal of the administration to create an environment hospitable to the pursuit of marriage. For the college, brokering marriages had to be approached with delicacy. The primary difficulty in creating the best conditions for forging marriages between the students came from



the conflict between the two main ideals for women's sexuality. A wife's requirements as helpmate did not exclude sex. She was expected to be a compliant and eager sexual partner in marriage. This conflicted directly with the expectation of virginity until marriage.<sup>25</sup>

This "tightrope" that postwar women walked has been termed "sexual brinkmanship" by historian Elaine Tyler May.<sup>26</sup> She emphasizes the burden that sexual responsibility meant for women in premarital relationships as they were the ones charged with "putting the brakes on lovemaking."<sup>27</sup> With the line being so thin and the stakes so high for marriage seeking women students, Oregon State College asserted its authority to mitigate the risk of inappropriate contact between students of the opposite sex.

In the postwar era, the administration in higher education took on the role of the parents of its students. This practice was called "in loco parentis."<sup>28</sup> As Lynn Peril explains, college brought freedom from parental supervision. "... [A] freshman walking across campus for the first time had the opportunity to remake herself, in loco parentis and other rules were there to make sure she didn't stray too far from accepted standards of feminine behavior."<sup>29</sup> As virginity was such an important standard of feminine behavior in unmarried women, the rules imposed upon female students at Oregon State College focused on keeping it intact. By structuring the contact allowed between the sexes, the administration hoped to lessen the likelihood of women having to negotiate the sexual brink.

Curfew was primary way of keeping men and women separate at night. Being locked out of one's domicile was a very strong incentive for a date to end before the curfew, which ranged from 10:00 pm to 1:00 am, depending on the residence and day of the week.<sup>30</sup> Though it restricted the liberties of female students, many of them supported the curfew. Consider the experience of Dr. Jo Anne Trow. During her tenure as Dean of Women at Oregon State

University in the late 1960s, she attempted to remove the curfew. Believing that the students would appreciate more personal freedom, she was shocked at the amount of resistance she faced across the board. She had been expecting the members of the Mother's Club to oppose the lifting of the curfew, but was surprised that students both male and female protested her decision as well. In the words of student Carol Lindbloom, "it was great for young girls who did not know anything but life with family."<sup>31</sup> Young college women students had no experience negotiating the treacherous waters of sexual brinkmanship without the aid of an authority figure. It was evident that most women felt that this situation would most likely happen after the time curfew was set. Even the men spoke out against the lessening of the curfew. The reason given was that curfew provided them with an excuse to send a date back home if they were not interested in her.<sup>32</sup> This reaction shows a lack in their training as well. It shows that they felt that without an authority intervention, they were obligated to go as far as possible, even with women they had little interest in.<sup>33</sup>

The strict dress code was another attempt to keep women students from exposing too much of themselves to male students. Women on campus were expected to wear skirts that fully covered the knee and "sweaters" up to the neck.<sup>34</sup> Shorts and slacks were forbidden. While the prohibition on pants would be a rule that follow those who chose a career in education, the clothing the women of Oregon State College wore was considered conservative even for the time.<sup>35</sup>

An even more explicit restriction of interaction between students of the opposite sex was the ban on "fussing." Fussing was the name given to the interaction of students of the opposite sex with the intention of flirting, dating, or other relationship-like actions.<sup>36</sup> The term, which was already widely used by the early 1920s, was given to the "Fusser's Guide," a student compiled

telephone directory with brief descriptions of each student.<sup>37</sup> “Fussing” was banned at sporting events, which meant that women and men had to sit in separate sections of the stands.<sup>38</sup>

One rebellion that occurred at a national level in 1950s came in the form of panty raids.<sup>41</sup> There were several that occurred at Oregon State College. Most were perpetrated by the members of the male cooperative house, Heckart Lodge, against the neighboring female dormitories of Sackett. The morning after a raid, the undergarments of the women of Sackett would be strewn across the street between the two buildings. This act occurred “quite frequently” and went unpunished.<sup>42</sup> To demonstrate compliance, the women relinquished their undergarments without a fight. Panty raids did not do much to help demonstrate marriageability for a woman student because her sacrifice was anonymously hung from the trees the next morning.

Not able to access women physically, male students turned to surveillance from afar. The *Daily Barometer* published several pictures of women unaware that they were being watched. In one instance a male student had found a congregation of women sunbathing off of campus and sent in a photograph of the unsuspecting women who had no idea they were being watched from the trees above.<sup>43</sup> Another picture that appeared at the top of the front page was of the backs of two female students in overcoats in the crosshairs of a sight. The caption read, “Have you ever wondered what those...surveying students peer at on lower campus? Apparently this one is setting his sights on a couple of unknowing Rookesses [freshmen women].”<sup>44</sup>

This tendency was noticeable on a large scale during the ceremony in which sorority rushees received their invitation to pledge that was held at the Memorial Union. In a film made to chronicle the rushing process for sororities at OSU, the presence of men was a source of humor for the narrator. As the women left the building to meet their new sisters, men stood on

each side of the entrance of the doorway creating a narrow pathway for the women, cheering, clapping, and making indiscernible calls. Once past the crowd, a heartwarming scene shows the members embracing the new pledges. “And what were the boys doing all this time?” asks the narrator. The camera pans around to show a long line of men who had been watching the whole scene, some standing, some had brought chairs outside so that they could view from comfort, “getting a real good show.”<sup>45</sup> Though fully aware of this yearly tradition, the administration did not address it in a critical manner until the late 1960s.<sup>46</sup> In their eyes, this was an appropriate form of interaction because it did not interfere with the woman’s marriageability.

None of these forms of surveillance were publicly protested by women students and there is no evidence that any of them felt unsafe or threatened by being watched. Instead, it seemed like they tried to look as “beautifully groomed” as possible so that the view they gave the male students was an attractive one.<sup>47</sup> Although these acts supported an environment of demonstrating attractiveness and sexuality from a distance, none of the examples above benefited the individual women being viewed. For the women of Oregon State College, the beauty contest tradition offered the best platform for demonstrating their marriageability and gaining personal recognition.

Recognizing women students for their feminine beauty was present very early on in the history of the institution. Sporadically through the 1910s and 1920s, when the school was called Oregon Agricultural College, the yearbook would include a section entitled “Vanity Fair” which would feature attractive female students. Their glamorous poses mimicked those done by stage and silent film actresses in the popular magazine of the same name.<sup>48</sup> This tradition of showcasing women in the yearbook changed with the tastes and trends of the moment, but became more frequent as time went on.

By the late 1950s, beauty contests had become a firmly established tradition at Oregon State College and in higher education institutions nationwide.<sup>49</sup> At Oregon State College, most of the beauty contests were created by exclusively male organizations to promote their events. Some of the most coveted titles were Little Colonel of the ROTC's Military Ball, Forestry Club's Forestry Fraulein, and Miss Engineering for the widely attended Engineering Ball.<sup>50</sup> The winners, which would be chosen by the members of the organization, garnered great fame on campus. Their pictures and basic information would be published in the *Daily Barometer* and they were memorialized in the yearbooks. In the small written piece accompanying her sorority's page, their names and titles were proudly listed after the introductory phrase, "[i]n the beauty department."<sup>51</sup> Each year the contestants would be featured after the frontispieces, "Beauties" or "Royalty."<sup>52</sup> In the 1959 Beaver Yearbook, the "Beauties" each got an entire page to themselves, an honor even President Strand was not given.<sup>53</sup>

The publicity notwithstanding, the most coveted prize of the beauty contest winners was the opportunity to hostess a formal event. The chance to be seen graciously hostess a men's event in formal eveningwear, an important skill to master as future wife, was an honor. Karen W. Tice adds that for women "who lacked the wide array of extracurricular opportunities and honors available to college men, social appeal, etiquette, and pulchritude became significant elements in a gender-differentiated status system. Beauty, charm, heterosexual desirability, poise, and popularity were key components of campus queen competitions."<sup>56</sup> The same components that were key in beauty competitions were key in demonstrating marriageability. Through these contests, women had solved both issues facing them. They were able to display all of the desirable traits of a wife while staying at a safe distance from men.

### 1959 Wrestling Court

Within the environment at postwar Oregon State College, the 1959 Wrestling Court can be seen the epitome rather than an anomaly of demonstrating marriageability. The deep roots of that process are evident from the germination of the idea to the ultimate publication of the story in *Life Magazine*. Examining the process of the court will show that the controversy it incited was above all else, an argument about what marriageability meant.

If not for the persistence of Coach Dale Thomas, the 1959 Wrestling Court easily could have stayed within the confines of Oregon State College. The event the Court was promoting was the Pacific Coast Intercollegiate Wrestling Tournament. Coach Thomas had gone to great lengths to get the tournament to come to Corvallis. This displeased several college administrators including purportedly athletic director Roy "Spec" Keene, basketball coach Amory "Slats" Gill, and President A. L. Strand.<sup>65</sup> With little administrative backing, Thomas and his wrestlers were alone in promoting the event.

As the story goes, the idea of the Wrestling Court and the titles originated from a conversation amongst wrestlers on the drive back from the 1958 Wrestling Tournament in San Jose, California.<sup>66</sup> Articles such as *Sports Illustrated* would later describe the Wrestling Court as an "arresting example" of "rare, explosive innovation."<sup>67</sup> In reality, creating a beauty contest would have been the obvious option of gaining publicity for any male organization at Oregon State College at that time.

Even the suggestive sexuality in the women's titles was nothing out of the ordinary at that time. The sexual innuendo was understood to everyone at the time but was nevertheless deemed appropriate for public viewing. Posing beauty contestants in swimsuits was nothing new for Oregon State College, either. Another example in the same year is a photograph of the

contestants of the yearly Rook-Sophomore Picnic Beard and Beauty Contest that was published in the yearbook.<sup>68</sup> Before the Wrestling Court, innocent cheesecake photographs had never before been publicly questioned at Oregon State College.

Even before the women's knowledge of the Wrestling Court, they had demonstrated a major pillar of postwar marriageability: beauty. Wrestler Ken Noteboom had been delegated the task of finding "the nicest, the most friendly, the smartest, and the best looking girls on campus." Solely from their photographs in the *Beaver Yearbook*, Noteboom made his initial selection of twenty-nine women.<sup>70</sup> Just by their pleasant appearance, they had all met the standards of "youthful attractiveness" that "held the promise conjugal bliss" in the postwar era.<sup>71</sup>

All twenty-nine jumped at the chance. Each of the women agreed to be interviewed by Ken Noteboom and three other athletes in at the Memorial Union building. At this point of the process, women only knew that they would be hostessing the tournament and would be required to wear "party dress and heels."<sup>72</sup> None of the women were remarkably interested or well-versed in wrestling and none of the women had any inkling of the level of notoriety they would receive.<sup>73</sup> That all twenty-nine of the women came to the interview shows that they recognized hostessing to be a worthwhile endeavor towards demonstrating their marriageability.

It was not until after the seven were officially chosen and titled that the women were asked to pose in swimsuits. Thomas, who was not paid for his coaching position in 1959, most likely paid out of pocket for the photo shoot at a local studio.<sup>74</sup> None of the women had any reservations. Janet Aune "had no qualms" about posing in a one piece swimsuit. As a lifeguard and swimming instructor, she wore swimsuits regularly so she "didn't think anything of it."<sup>75</sup> Sharon Ransom said that "it never even entered our minds that posing a bathing suit, a one piece bathing suit which covered us very modestly even in those days, was going to cause such a

furor.”<sup>76</sup> To the seven women and to the majority of the American public, a pretty young woman in a one piece swimsuit was an image commonly found in magazines, newspapers, and movies. The members had no idea that their attire would cause such a widespread debate.

After the photographs were developed, Thomas wasted no time sending them to various news outlets. After the photograph appeared in the *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, President Strand called Coach Thomas into his office. In no uncertain terms Strand told him that he could not stage any more cheesecake photo shoots and that he could not contact any more press organizations.<sup>77</sup> Not one to heed the word of authority, Thomas had one of his wrestlers give it to the *Daily Barometer*. The morning after Strand and Thomas met, the Wrestling Court was at the top of the front page.<sup>78</sup> Strand responded with a public edict banning all promotional cheesecake photography in athletics.<sup>79</sup> The ban made the already attractive story all the more intriguing. At that point, there was nothing that President Strand could do to resist the media’s attention. National publications such as *Life Magazine* and *Sports Illustrated*, as well as newspapers from Fargo, North Dakota to Iran published the conflict between Strand and his students.<sup>80</sup>

### **The Controversy**

Strand was not the only one opposed to the cheesecake photographs. Some students shared their disapproval with the seven women.<sup>81</sup> The *Daily Barometer* suggested that they may not have used “proper discretion.”<sup>82</sup> Carol Lind bloom’s grandfather was quite upset about the photograph and let it be known.<sup>83</sup> Out of embarrassment, Mary Ann Backen’s father bought all of the magazines he could find to hide from friends and colleagues.<sup>84</sup> Though she never expressed it to them, the Court members were certain that the Dean of Women, Helen S. Moor was outraged by the cheesecake photographs.



What made the 1959 Wrestling Court so controversial? Countless contests had been done in a similar fashion at Oregon State College with no controversy whatsoever. Without the photo shoot, the Wrestling Court was identical to dozens of other beauty contests that were performed every year at Oregon State to nothing but applause. Even the comparison to the pictures found in girlie magazines would not have seemed too provocative for the college. The Playboy Bunny was an icon on campus. There were advertisements in the *Daily Barometer* for the magazine, there were Playboy themed parties thrown by fraternities, and during one snow storm students made a life-sized Playboy Bunny complete with a bar, martini glass and olive in front of the Memorial Union building.<sup>85</sup> When so many similar actions were being performed with none of the uproar, it is difficult to determine where the controversy stemmed.

Lack of documentation also hinders certainty in the matter. Strand's edict yet to be discovered. President Strand's attitude can only be speculated by his actions. Theories as to why President Strand banned the photographs abound. One possibility was the edict was meant as a punishment to the disobedient Coach Thomas. Wrestling was not a priority and hosting a tournament meant a lot of extra work.<sup>86</sup> If Strand's reason for the ban was to punish Thomas, it is telling that he chose to punish his involvement with the women rather than to address his malfeasance directly. Calling Thomas out for endangering the marriageability of women students would have been a worse accusation than simply going against the wishes of his superior.

Strand's anger towards Coach Thomas may have been a factor, but it is doubtful that it was the sole reason. Strand had made a previous ban on cheesecake photographs even before the Wrestling Court was created.<sup>87</sup> The women of the Wrestling Court who were unaware of the strife between Strand and Thomas gave an alternative reason.

Most identified President Strand as conservative or “old school.”<sup>88</sup> All placed him in an older generation that viewed cheesecake photographs as unacceptable. Historian Joanne Meyerowitz gives credibility to this interpretation in her analysis of sexual imagery in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>89</sup> The rumored origin of the term cheesecake illustrates how much the sexual codes of America had changed. The term has been said to have originated as early as 1915. Photographer George Miller had asked opera singer Elvira Amazar to lift her skirt a bit for the picture, exposing about two inches of her lower leg. His editor had supposedly remarked, “Why, this is better than cheesecake.”<sup>90</sup>

In the forty four years between 1915 and 1959 the term cheesecake had progressed from the display of a sliver of woman’s calf to the entire leg. In 1915 Strand would have been older than most of the members of the court. It is very likely that Strand was judging the image with an outdated lens. In his eyes, the image of the women in swimsuits fell into “borderline material” as it would have been seen in his youth.<sup>91</sup> Subjects of borderline material would have been deemed unmarriageable. By allowing the students to participate in such a display would have meant that he had failed at his job of overseeing the appropriate behavior of his students.

Whatever motivated Strand’s opposition to the cheesecake photographs did not preclude him from later posing with the very same women in *Life Magazine*. In front of the Memorial Union building, six of the seven court members posed walking towards the camera with “now amiable” Strand in the middle.<sup>92</sup> They were all smiling, holding books, and in “skirts and sweaters”, the term for usual campus garb. This pose was a staged act of contrition. When requested to be pictured by *Life Magazine*, the women remember being specifically asked to wear their “skirts and sweaters.”<sup>93</sup> In this way, they could show that they were really wholesome

girls that just got caught up in a craze. By posing with the women, President Strand was showing that, although he opposed the cheesecake photographs, he supported the students.

*Life Magazine's* coverage of the event contained several flaws. The edict was certainly a topic of discussion amongst the student body but they had not "poured out of the classroom on slight provocation to revel in the streets" as the magazine had claimed.<sup>94</sup> The magazine had used the photograph to suggest that the controversy had "ended" with the "friendly meeting."<sup>95</sup> The meeting between Strand and the "pretty principals" could be termed friendly only because he was not openly hostile.<sup>96</sup> That meeting would be the one and only between President Strand and the court members. The extent of their interaction was a polite but brief greeting.<sup>97</sup>

*Life Magazine* attempted to portray the event as a closed matter. As it turned out, coverage in one of the most widely read publications in the nation meant that the Wrestling Court was to gain even more publicity. Although he remained silent about the issue from then on, Strand could not have been happy with the increased amount of attention the women received. The Wrestling Court received even more coverage in the *Daily Barometer* and they became veritable celebrities on campus.<sup>98</sup> For Strand this must have been frustrating. He could not respond without stirring up even more controversy. For the women, the new found fame was impossible not to share with their friends.

The most compelling conflict was one that was never covered in the news and may never have existed. All four of the women interviewed believed that the Dean of Women, Helen S. Moor, had been quite unhappy about the cheesecake photographs. According to Sharon Ransom, Moor was the one who had pushed a reluctant Strand into announcing the ban.<sup>99</sup> With the exception of Aune, none of the women have ever met Moor.<sup>100</sup> There is no record of her weighing in on either side.<sup>101</sup> That these women all assumed that Dean Moor had such a strong

opinion about their actions without any evidence points to a very important understanding of the relationship between women students and the administration.

For female students at Oregon State College, the Dean of Women personified all of the rules and all of the traditions that kept women in their appropriate place. She was associated with real rules such as curfew, the fussing ban at sporting events, and the dress code even though the oversight of those rules was not part of her job description. She was even given credit for creating rules that were not real. It was commonly believed that the Dean of Women demanded that women must place a small “fusser’s pillow” on a man’s lap before sitting on him. She had also allegedly banned patent leather shoes because men might be able to see the reflection under the woman’s skirt off of the shiny material.<sup>102</sup> The Dean of Women had nothing to do with those types of rules, but the rumors had made her a figure both respected and feared by women students. When the women assumed that Dean Moor opposed the cheesecake photography, they were picturing the almost mythical version of the Dean created out of countless stories.

One interpretation for the women’s belief of the conflict is an underlying understanding they were in fact crossing a boundary. Dean Moor, or at least the women’s idea of her, represented a standard of appropriate conduct. Though they stated that the cheesecake photographs did not seem extraordinarily risqué, on some level they knew that the image contradicted the rules designed to keep them on the path towards marriage.

Despite some negative attention, the women found the publicity to be mostly positive. Under usual circumstances, the school-wide recognition gained by regular beauty contest winners at Oregon State College was enviable. It was an amazing feat to be known by roughly ten-thousand students, over seven-thousand of them men.<sup>103</sup> Before the 1959 Wrestling Court, that was an impressive audience. Compared to the student body, however, the viewership of the

national icon *Life Magazine* was astronomical. None of the women could have ever imagined an outcome so great.

As Sharon Ransom exclaimed, "I have a picture in *Life Magazine*...for crying out loud! What eighteen year old wouldn't want that?"<sup>104</sup> For a young woman in postwar America, there really was no better platform to demonstrate their marriageability. The seven members being presented as "beauties" in *Life Magazine* meant being seen by thousands of desirable men across the country and being validated of achieving beauty standards at a national level.<sup>105</sup>

For the Court members, the letters they received from men who had seen them in articles was the peak of their experience in the Court. The men writing to them were even more desirable as mates than those attending Oregon State College. The women received mail from men in prestigious colleges such as Notre Dame and West Point.<sup>106</sup> Most men were simply interested in more pictures but others extended marriage proposals.<sup>108</sup> The women eagerly showed off their letters with their dormitory neighbors and with their sorority sisters.<sup>109</sup> News soon spread across campus that the women were gaining international attention from eligible men.

None of the letter writers became the husbands of the court members, but their interest nevertheless aided in the women's marital pursuits. This fan mail elevated their popularity and, in turn, their marriageability. They could not have reached such elevated levels by any other means. In the case of Aune, the letters directly influenced her marital status. In 1959 Aune was going steady with fellow student Don Essig and therefore did not respond to any of the letters. Even so, the letters aided in her marital pursuits as the awareness of other male interest was a major factor in pinning her that spring and marrying her the summer after.<sup>110</sup>

Gradually the media coverage died out and the letters stop coming. The limelight eventually faded. The women went back to their less notable demonstrations of marriageability,

but their titles followed them. They had already proven themselves as the standard to which other women students were to be measured. They had succeeded in their pursuits past all reasonable expectations.

## **Conclusion**

In 1984, for the twenty-fifth reunion of the Pacific Coast International Tournament at Oregon State, Coach Dale Thomas, who was now getting paid for his efforts, decided to make another big splash. Because of the mass appeal from the first court, he decided to create another updated court with the help of his new crop of wrestlers. He again tasked Ken Noteboom with contacting the old queens. All were married. Compliant as ever, all who still lived in the state attended the meet.

The introduction between the two courts was quite a sight. The former queens marveled at how much the times had changed. It was clear from the women chosen that there was a new standard of beauty. The new queens were thinner, taller, and had bigger hair. This time the court received only a portion of the original publicity and there was no controversy. During the twenty five years between the two tournaments, the rules that segregated men and women at college fell by the wayside. By 1984, Oregon State University women students had no dress code, no curfew, could live with a man, and could sit wherever they wanted anywhere she chose at sporting events. One can speculate what those goals were for the new queens, but it was clear that the new Court was but an echo of a period of time long past.

In late 2013, four of the members of the 1959 Wrestling Court shared their experiences with the author. Each had very different perspectives about the event and the aftermath, but each

agreed, almost in the same words, that they had absolutely no regrets in their participation in the 1959 Wrestling Court. They maintained that it was one of many great experiences that had made their four years at Oregon State College some of the best of their lives.

Looking back at *Life Magazine* and the picture of seven “pretty coeds” in swimsuits and sashes, one can see that it is not just about “coed cheesecake.”<sup>111</sup> The picture shows much more. The photograph shows a college’s attempt to provide a platform for women to demonstrate marriageability. It shows the pursuit of becoming the idealized postwar wife. But most importantly, it shows seven women trying their best to reach their goals. According to their testimonies, they succeeded.

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Title page quote from "Riots, Girls, Fads: Spring's Ode on Campuses." *Life Magazine*, March 30, 1959, 15.

<sup>1</sup> "Riots, Girls, Fads: Spring's Ode on Campuses." *Life Magazine*, March 30, 1959, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Roy Gault, "Those Women of OSU Return." *The Gazette-Times*, sec. B1, January 28, 1984.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> "Strand's Edict Nets Publicity." *Daily Barometer*, April 1, 1959.

<sup>6</sup> "Cheesecake." Merriam-Webster.com. Accessed November 23, 2013. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cheesecake>.

<sup>7</sup> Joanne Meyerowitz, "Women, Cheesecake, and Borderline Material: Responses to Girlie Pictures in the Mid-Twentieth-Century United States," *Sexual Borderlands: Constructing an American Sexual Past*, ed. Kathleen Kennedy and Sharon Ullman (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2003), 321.

<sup>8</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, Inc., 1988), 13.

<sup>9</sup> Nancy A. Walker, *Women's magazines, 1940-1960: gender roles and the popular press*, (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998), 97.

<sup>10</sup> Steven Mintz, and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life*, (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1988), 179.

<sup>11</sup> Arlene Skolnick, *Embattled Paradise: The American Family in an Age of Uncertainty*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1991), 69.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 69-70.

<sup>13</sup> Dorothy Carnegie, *How To Help Your Husband Get Ahead*, (New York, NY: The Greystone Press, 1953), 93, 112.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>16</sup> Skolnick, 65.

<sup>17</sup> May, 119.

<sup>19</sup> Rosalind Roseberg, *Divided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century*, (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1992), 147.

<sup>20</sup> "It's Here---a Date Bureau." *Daily Barometer*, sec. Editorial, January 24, 1950.

<sup>21</sup> Mary I Champion Carter, *Needs of Oregon State College Freshman Women*. (doctoral thesis, Oregon State College, 1955), ScholarsArchive@OSU, <http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/handle/1957/39433>.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 66. At the beginning of the year, the number of women who did not want to marry was five. By winter term, four of the five had changed their answer leaving only one "career girl" as Champion Carter referred to her.



<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 65. On page 9 of the text, Champion Carter herself working towards a doctorate in education, stated her bias against having women who planned to be housewives with no occupational training.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 85-86

<sup>25</sup> May, 123.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>28</sup> Lynn Peril. *College Girls: Bluestockings, Sex Kittens, and Coeds, Then and Now*. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), 149.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>30</sup> Mary Ann Backen Hogan (Miss Predicament), oral history recorded by Brittany Backen, November 2, 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Carol Lindbloom (Miss Time Advantage), oral history recorded by Brittany Backen, November 9, 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Jo Anne Trow (former Dean of Women), oral history recorded by Brittany Backen, November 6, 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Both men and women felt similar pressures to marry. For more on the social consequences faced by men who remained single, read Arlene Skolnick, *Embattled Paradise: The American Family in an Age of Uncertainty*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1991), chap. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Janet Aune Essig (Miss Escape), oral history recorded by Brittany Backen, October 31, 2013.

<sup>35</sup> Backen Hogan oral history, November 6, 2013. She explains that during the first few years that she taught at the elementary level in California, she was not allowed to wear pants. For an in depth analysis of the dress of Oregon State College women students in the postwar era, see Rachel M. Sullivan, *A Comparison of Proposed and Archival Fashions at Oregon State College from 1949-1957*. (master's, Oregon State University, 2013), ScholarsArchive@OSU, <http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/handle/1957/38563>.

<sup>36</sup> Trow oral history, November 6, 2013.

<sup>37</sup> The term fussing was frequently used throughout Oregon Agricultural College. *The Beaver Yearbook*. Corvallis, OR: 1920 SCARC. An early article about long running Fussers' Guide can be found in "Fusser!" *Daily Barometer*, 2, January 28, 1944.

<sup>38</sup> Whether or not there should be fussing at games was a topic of hot debate in the 1949-1950 academic year. So many letters on this topic were sent to the editor that the staff eventually refused to publish any more of them, "Cheers and Jeers." *Daily Barometer*, sec. Editorial, February 8, 1950. When it was put to a campus wide vote on February 8, 1950, the fusser's won out, "Fussing Approved in Close Voting: Motion Voted Upon After Hour Debate; Spectators Overflow Senate Chambers." *Daily Barometer*, 1, February 9, 1950.

<sup>41</sup> For more on panty raids at other college and university campuses, read Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 45-46.

<sup>42</sup> Chuck Wenstrom, *It Never Rains in Autzen Stadium: The Don Essig Story*, (Eugene, OR: QSL Print Communications, 2012), 25.

<sup>43</sup> "Beware of Grosbeaks!" *Oregon State Daily Barometer*, 3, April 14, 1959.

<sup>44</sup> "Up Periscope!" *Oregon State Daily Barometer*, 1, October 6, 1962.

<sup>45</sup> *Rush at OSU 1963*, 2013, SCARC. <http://media.oregonstate.edu/media/Rush+at+OSU+1963/0j8qdj0xu>. Duplicated from 16mm sound film.

<sup>46</sup> Trow oral history, November 6, 2013.

- <sup>47</sup> *Rush at OSU 1963*, 2013, SCARC. <http://media.oregonstate.edu/media/Rush+at+OSU+1963/0j8qdj0xu>. Duplicated from 16mm sound film.
- <sup>48</sup> An excellent example of this can be found in Oregon Agricultural College. *Beaver Yearbook*. Corvallis Oregon: Vanity Fair 145-150. SCARC. A comparison of the poses can be found in "Stars Who Divide Their Allegiance Between the Stage and Screen." *Vanity Fair*, January 1920. <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015041189476;view=1up;seq=316>.
- <sup>49</sup> For examples of other beauty contests and pageants in American colleges and universities, read Karen W. Tice, *Queens of Academe: Beauty, Pageantry, Student Bodies, and College Life*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), chap. 2.
- <sup>50</sup> Oregon State College. *Beaver Yearbook*. Corvallis OR: Beauties, 1959. SCARC
- <sup>51</sup> Oregon State College. *Beaver Yearbook*. Corvallis OR: ΓΦΒ, 1960. SCARC.
- <sup>52</sup> Oregon State College. *Beaver Yearbook*. Corvallis OR: Beauties, 1959. SCARC; Oregon State College. *Beaver Yearbook*. Corvallis OR: Royalty, 1960. SCARC.
- <sup>53</sup> Oregon State College. *Beaver Yearbook*. Corvallis OR: Beauties, 1959. SCARC.
- <sup>56</sup> Karen W. Tice, *Queens of Academe: Beauty, Pageantry, Student Bodies, and College Life*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 25.
- <sup>65</sup> Ken Noteboom (Varsity "O" Wrestling Court Committee member, OSC wrestler), oral history recorded by Brittany Backen, November 11, 2013.; Chuck Wenstrom (former Daily Barometer editor), oral history recorded by Brittany Backen, November 11, 2013.
- <sup>66</sup> Noteboom oral history, November 11, 2013.; Gault, "Those Women of OSU Return."
- <sup>67</sup> "Really Nothing Like A Dame" *Sports Illustrated*, March 30, 1959, 7.
- <sup>68</sup> Oregon State College. *Beaver Yearbook*. Corvallis OR: Beauties, 1959. SCARC.
- <sup>70</sup> Noteboom oral history, November 11, 2013.
- <sup>71</sup> May, 120.
- <sup>72</sup> Ken Noteboom, Dale Sweatt, Jim Brackins, John Dustin to twenty nine female students including Carol Scott, Mary Ann Backen, Sharon Ransom, Sue Hall, Janet Aune, Suzanne Chapman, Carol Lindbloom, Corvallis Oregon, January 30, 1959, Possession of Ken Noteboom. The women were primarily asked to present the medals to the winners of the Pacific Coast Intercollegiate Wrestling Tournament. Secondary tasks included making appearances at half-time at a wrestling meet with the University of Oregon and at half-time at basketball game with the University of Idaho.
- <sup>73</sup> Noteboom oral history, November 11, 2013.
- <sup>74</sup> "Credits." *Life Magazine*, March 30, 1959, 2.
- <sup>75</sup> Aune Essig oral history, October 31, 2013.
- <sup>76</sup> Ransom Reid oral history, November 4, 2013.
- <sup>77</sup> Noteboom oral history, November 11, 2013.
- <sup>78</sup> Gault, "Those Women of OSU Return."; "Coeds Named Hostesses for Wrestling Meet." *Daily Barometer*, 1, March 6, 1959.
- <sup>79</sup> Though the actual ban has not been found, it was referenced in "Strand's Edict Nets Publicity." *Oregon State Daily Barometer*, April 1, 1959.
- <sup>80</sup> Aune Essig oral history, October 31, 2013. Her mother's friend sent her a clipping of an article from Fargo, North Dakota; Gault, "Those Women of OSU Return." Dale Thomas claimed to have received clippings from an Iranian newspaper.
- <sup>81</sup> Aune Essig oral history, October 31, 2013.
- <sup>82</sup> "Strand's Edict Nets Publicity." *Oregon State Daily Barometer*, April 1, 1959.

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- <sup>83</sup> Lindbloom oral history, November 9, 2013.
- <sup>84</sup> Backen Hogan oral history, November 6, 2013.
- <sup>85</sup> "OSC's First Playboy Formal to Be Given by Alpha Sigs." *Daily Barometer*, 7, November 16, 1962.; "OSC's First Playboy Formal to Be Given by Alpha Sigs." *Daily Barometer*, 3, February 9, 1950.; "'Snow Bunny'." *Daily Barometer*, 1, January 30, 1963.
- <sup>86</sup> Noteboom oral history, November 11, 2013.; Wenstrom oral history, November 11, 2013.
- <sup>87</sup> Gault, "Those Women of OSU Return."
- <sup>88</sup> Trow oral history, November 6, 2013.
- <sup>89</sup> Meyerowitz, 321.
- <sup>90</sup> Mark Gabor. *Pin-Up: A Modest History* (Cologne, Germany: Taschen, 1996), 23.
- <sup>91</sup> Meyerowitz, 321.
- <sup>92</sup> "Riots, Girls, Fads.", 17.
- <sup>93</sup> Aune Essig oral history, October 31, 2013.
- <sup>94</sup> "Riots, Girls, Fads.", 15.
- <sup>95</sup> Ibid., 17
- <sup>96</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>97</sup> Ransom Reid oral history, November 4, 2013.
- <sup>98</sup> "Strand's Edict Nets Publicity." *Daily Barometer*, April 1, 1959.
- <sup>99</sup> Ransom Reid oral history, November 4, 2013.
- <sup>100</sup> Aune Essig oral history, October 31, 2013. In their one and only brief meeting, Dean Moor handed Aune a piece of fan mail and said, "this came for you". Aune replied, "thank you" and left abruptly. The topic of the Wrestling Court or the cheesecake photograph did not enter into the conversation.
- <sup>101</sup> Moor's opinion about the matter is difficult to ascertain due to the scarcity of records during her tenure as Dean of Women. The meeting minutes for years 1958-1960 of the Panhellenic Council Records are not in SCARC. Her words are present in the meeting minutes of the Administrative Council of which President Strand "presided" and Moor was a member. During the time frame she addresses several issues, none of which involve wrestling, courts, or cheesecake photography, Administrative Council Records (RG 032), Corvallis, OR: SCARC.
- <sup>102</sup> Trow oral history, November 6, 2013.
- <sup>103</sup> Allison Burr, Kasey Clay, Anna Dvorak, Michael Jager, Kayla James, Jodi Keeling, Adam LaMascus, and Reid Miller. SCARC, "Where's Waldo? A History and the Changing Women at Oregon State." Last modified December 2013. <http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/waldo/women/enrollment/>. According to the graph entitled "OSU Enrollment, 1930-1960", there were slightly more than seven thousand male students and roughly three thousand women students.
- <sup>104</sup> Ransom Reid oral history, November 4, 2013.
- <sup>105</sup> "Riots, Girls, Fads.", 15.
- <sup>106</sup> Aune Essig oral history, October 31, 2013.; Ransom Reid oral history, November 4, 2013.
- <sup>108</sup> Backen Hogan oral history, November 6, 2013.
- <sup>109</sup> Backen Hogan oral history, November 6, 2013.; Aune Essig oral history, October 31, 2013.; Ransom Reid oral history, November 4, 2013.
- <sup>110</sup> Wenstrom, 32-33.
- <sup>111</sup> "Strand's Edict Nets Publicity." *Daily Barometer*, April 1, 1959.

## **Transcript of Kenneth Noteboom**

Interview on November 11, 2013

CH2M Hill Alumni Center

Oregon State University

Corvallis, Oregon

Kenneth Noteboom, **KN**: (Interviewee)

Brittany Backen, **BB**: (Interviewer)

**BB**: This is Brittany Backen. I am speaking with Ken Noteboom at the Alumni Center on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Would you like to begin?

**KN**: Um, Yeah my name is Ken Noteboom. I'm a graduate, class of '59, was happened to be the senior class president. Nobody told me that when I ran for office that I'd have the office forever (laughs) didn't know. So, I am delighted to be here. I am delighted that Brittany is recording this for historical purposes at Oregon State. Most of us that had the opportunity to wrestle in part of this grand program that Oregon State has are deeply appreciative of the opportunities that it created for us.

**BB**: How did you become an OSU-OSC student?

**KN**: I was a farm boy up in Salem, Oregon and there were six children in the family. My brother-oldest brother had been a Naval ROTC student and became a Navy pilot. And, he had liked Oregon State and of course I was in the proximity of it, heard good things about it. It was a conservative campus and so I received an NROTC scholarship and came to Oregon State.

**BB**: Were you involved in wrestling before you came to the college?

**KN**: I wrestled my senior year in high school. That's....I was a farm boy and there were six kids and we were busy bucking hay and feeding cattle and so on so I didn't get a chance to go out for sports until my senior year, but I did wrestle my senior year.

**BB**: So how did you get involved wrestling on campus?

**KN**: I guess I enjoyed it enough when I was in high school even for that short period that I thought it would be good for me. I enjoy athletics and so I turned out for wrestling.

**BB**: And can you tell me a little bit about your coach?

**KN**: The coach I had in my freshman year was Christianson, I think it was, Al Christianson. I'm not sure. I don't remember. He was only there one year. He was a good coach. He didn't have the background of course that Dale had and of course the inspiration really came when Dale arrived on campus and got us going. But we was a good freshman year. At that time freshman could not wrestle on the varsity team so I had to wait till my sophomore year to wrestle varsity.

**BB**: So then Coach Thomas came in?

**KN:** Yes. He came at the...actually the end my freshman year and John Dustin and I worked out with him. He was getting ready to attend the Olympics and he needed some sparring partners but we were, we were hamburger to him (laughs).

**BB:** So John Dustin is another wrestler at the time?

**KN:** Yes. John and I were the two heaviest people on the team. I weighed 167 and he weighed about 191 but we didn't have any heavyweights and any 191 pounders so he and I took turns wrestling 191 and heavyweight. I wrestled heavyweight in the Pacific Coast Conference my sophomore year and I weighed 167 pounds.

**BB:** You were also the class president?

**KN:** The class of '59. In the...I ran, of course, at the end of '58 the last year they had the elections and so on. Not really sure why I did but I guess liked to do things. So I ran and was lucky enough to win and it has been a very fulfilling experience all my life because I have organized homecomings or class reunions for about forty five, probably close to fifty years now.

**BB:** Wow. May I ask what your major was in?

**KN:** Yes. I majored in agricultural education-I'm a farm boy-and ended up teaching school just for two years and then went into the banking industry and actually was a banker for most of my life.

**BB:** Wow. So what kind of classes do you remember taking when you were at Oregon State?

**KN:** Well first year I was actually a chemical engineer and so I took all chemistry, physics, math, and those kinds of classes. It's kind of interesting, I hadn't considered engineering but when I got my grades and my test scores and so on they encouraged me consider engineering which I did. I actually got my highest grades that year.

**BB:** Wow.

**KN:** But my love was agriculture. Has been, always will be. You can take the boy off the farm but you can't take the farm out of the boy.

**BB:** So what....Do you remember when you decided to create the court?

**KN:** Yes. Reading through the various amounts of information that-I remember now that we were driving back from San Jose, California. And we were all interested in the development of the sport. And I forget just how it came up or how it came about but the idea of some wrestling queens came up and it went on from there. We got back here, I think Dale thought it over and thought it was a good idea. He asked me then to identify some possible court queens or prospects. So I actually went back to the Beta house and went through all of the annuals, yearbooks that we had, trying to pick out the nicest, the most friendly, the smartest and the best looking girls on campus and I picked out twenty nine.

**BB:** From the yearbook?

**KN:** From the yearbooks and from people that I knew.

**BB:** Mhm. So then after you chose the girls how did you get in contact with them?

**KN:** Actually Dale was very good at doing things correctly. He was also good at doing things incorrectly (inaudible). Here is a copy of the letter that was sent out to the twenty nine candidates. And they all showed up. Twenty nine. We met in the second floor of the Memorial Union and we interviewed each and every one and I think it was on a Sunday afternoon I don't, I'm not sure but I think it was because everyone was available at that time.

**BB:** Ah. So what kinds of questions did you ask?

**KN:** Well obviously we asked them some questions about wrestling and of course they weren't, most of them were not real knowledgeable but some were. As a matter of fact I think Mary Ann Backen, coming from Roseburg, was knowledgeable about the sport of wrestling. And of course they were not well educated on the way that you score points in wrestling and of course that's where we come up with the names of the queens. Those were the seven ways you could score points in wrestling at that time.

**BB:** Mhm. So what made you choose the seven that you did?

**KN:** Well it actually wasn't just me. There were four of us doing the interviews. I guess it goes back to the original concept. The nicest, the smartest, the....good looking counted. But frankly we wanted the nicest, the smartest, the best looking women we could find on campus. And that's how the criteria I guess, everybody used their own criteria. We ended up with seven wonderful women.

**BB:** So what the first thing you did with them once you got them?

**KN:** Well actually the first thing that happened-Dale Thomas-we arranged to get them together and he took them down to a photo studio and they did their bathing suit photos. That started the gathering of the information that would be used. And I don't know who wrote it, and it could have been Dale or it could have been the assistant coach, but they described each of the moves or the ways of scoring points, takedown, time advantage, fall, near fall, and so on. And that information was developed and we ended up using that a little later in the program but essentially the start was getting this information, getting their pictures and then contacting, or actually I think it was Dale probably contacted the members of various press organizations.

**BB:** So can you tell me how you learned that....about the ban that was given out by President Strand?

**KN:** I think Dale told me about it. Essentially at this point he had already.... it had already been distributed to the *Associated Press*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Stars and Stripes* which went around the world, and I guess the various news services. And so that had, it had gone viral I guess. I don't know what they'd call it in this day in age. I was....it spread fast. It was picked up rapidly. *Stars and Stripes* went to all military members and they were in all places around the world. And they were writing back to the various queens and I think Janet Aune Essig told you about the one she received in Moor's office?

**BB:** Mhm. Yes.

**KN:** But then Dale said that-after that information had gotten out-that President Strand had called him to the office and said no more girls in bathing suits. It's not appropriate at this time and you may not contact any of the organizations, the Associated Press (inaudible) but Associated Press. And he said fine. I agree. But he hadn't named the Barometer so the Barometer was contacted immediately and the next day, on the front page of the Barometer was a picture of the girls in swimsuits and then a complete description of each of the wrestling holds that were there. And of course the whole idea was education about wrestling. And there were double meanings, of course, in the names. But, the sport just grew rapidly as a result of, and interest in the sport, grew rapidly in part as a result of the queens' activities.

**BB:** So when it came time for the tournament, was there boost in attendance?

**KN:** A what in attendance?

**BB:** A boost, was it higher in attendance during the tournament?

**KN:** Oh certainly. Actually the tournament of course helped. But of course the queens had to have a positive impact. They were on the front, on the stage. They did hand out the medals. And of course they well-mannered,

very attractive, well dressed, appropriate, and they were just terrific representatives of Oregon State and the sport of wrestling. That's where they were during the tournament.

**BB:** So during that time, when there was a lot of coverage, what was it like on campus? What were people saying about it? Do you remember?

**KN:** I didn't hear any derogatory comments. Now, when we did our Golden Jubilee I wanted to have the wrestling queens back because we had them back on the twenty fifth year. And I had a little, a little push back on that in the reunion but....We had a committee of fifteen and finally it was passed. Our group thought it was a good idea and added tremendously to our class meeting at our Golden Jubilee.

**BB:** Could you tell me a little bit more about the types of things that the coach did to get wrestling to be a larger part of the campus?

**KN:** To be a larger part of the campus? Well yes. The first thing that he did was he went to work conditioning the people who had turned out. He knew that it would never be a popular sport unless he had, unless we did a good job at wrestling. And so, probably I think we had one of the best conditioned teams in what was, I think it started as the Pac 8 and then it was the Pac 10. But we were in condition and so what it amounted to was he put us to work. And a lot of us were already in shape but he pushed the envelope. Then he went to recruiting and there were times he had to recruit out of his P. E. class to get someone to fit in a weight and actually ended up with some of those, a couple of them, spending the full four years wrestling after recruiting them from P. E. class. And then of course he went to recruiting and he was a, he was a hustler. And he contacted Rob and Vivian Reed and invited Robin to the matches. Robin was a gold medal winner in the 1925 Olympics and actually part of our endowment came from the estate Vivian Reed, the Rob and Vivian Reed endowment fund of about 1.3 million.

**BB:** Wow. So he was active in lots of different areas trying to build up the department?

**KN:** Certainly. He had a number of different things. One thing that he started was kids wrestling. And so all of us that had been with Dale, I started two wrestling programs in Junction City when I was there and one in Albany when I was there. I would give him a call if I, Greg Strobel who was a very famous Oregon State wrestler. And I'd call Dale and I'd say is there any chance I can get one of the team members to come over and show these young kids what a really good wrestler looks like. And you bet. He'd be there and it'd be done. So he started strengthening the team, he started recruiting, he did the publicity thing, and then he really worked for each individual wrestler. He would go way out of his way. At one time I decided I was going to quit wrestling. I came here to get an education and it was taking a lot of time. He came down to the locker room afterwards and sat down next to me and said you know, I don't think you should quit wrestling and walked off. I was never a quitter and it was just enough to say I'm going to do it and so I wrestled for four years for Oregon State.

**BB:** So could you tell me a little about your campus experience, what it was like at on campus during that time?

**KN:** It was amazing. Oregon State campus, we had a very active, I was in a fraternity Beta Theta Pi, and there was a very active fraternity organization. There were lots of dances, there were lots of social activities. We had excellent convocations at the MU. I remember going to see Harry Belafonte. It was very student oriented. The professors were just outstanding. I remember in my honors English class where Artie Brown was the professor and he was so good. And we had no grammar because it was all writing. We felt so good about him we passed an envelope, we called his wife on what he liked to drink and it was Old Mr. Boston so we passed him an envelope, bought him it. There was a lot of camaraderie. And of course it was a lot smaller then and it would have been much easier. For example there were only I think 1600 students in our class and you would know an awful lot of people in the class ahead of you, the class behind you. Of course the campus has always been beautiful and but it was just a real friendly atmosphere, there was a lot of competition between the fraternities, healthy, good competition. We had intramural sports, football, basketball, wrestling, track and it was very

student friendly at that time. Also because the numbers were less, access to your professors was excellent. Any amount of one on one time, if you needed you could get it. We were, it was just an excellent time. We had an Army ROTC unit, a Navy ROTC, and I think there was an air thing. So the military was important at that time. This was the late, well mid-fifties, mid to late fifties. Everything was good. Slat Gill had a great basketball team. It was an exciting place to be that I'll never forget.

**BB:** Thank you. So after you graduated you taught first?

**KN:** No. Upon graduation from the Naval ROTC you have a requirement to serve three years as a regular Navy officer. I had elected, and the election was open to everyone in the naval unit, to become a Marine or a Naval Officer and I decided to become a Marine. And so we spent some summer camps doing marine things but then as soon as we graduated I went into the Marine Corps and had an unbelievably fabulous time in the Marine Corps. My first duty was recruiting at Oregon State University. I had finals week and spring vacation. I called my boss up and said hey and he said hey, just have a good time. So I was able to see all my old friends that I'd had that were going another year and that was great. From there they sent me to sea duty and well that was the last thing I wanted to do. I wanted to be a ground pounder, a grunt. So I went to San Diego, checked in, they sent me to San Francisco. I joined the ship. We went out for one week and came back. No. That same weekend I learned that Oregon State was wrestling in the Olympic club and I asked my C. O. would it be alright if I joined them and wrestled? He said sure. So I went over and wrestled. I was independent of course I was no longer part of the team but stayed with the Oregon State team and wrestled. It was just kind of like a, I couldn't have planned it better myself if I had the choice. Then after that, we spent six months in dry dock living in San Francisco. What are charge that is. Then we went to sea for six months: Hawaii, Guam, Okinawa, Phillipines, Hong Kong, and Japan. And then my year was up so they flew me back through Alaska and then I wanted to join Force Recon which was an elite unit. And again had I never been a wrestler and been, I guess, toughened up a little bit, I probably wouldn't have made it. But I went down and interviewed. They took me, they give you a PT test and it was, there only 400 people. 200 people on the west coast, 200 on the east coast. We were all jump trained, scuba trained, jungle warfare trained, rock climbing trained and escape, evasion and survival. So what a marvelous experience that I would not have had had it not been for Naval ROTC program at Oregon State University and the wrestling program that, I guess, toughened me up enough to be determined to get in. I remember the swim test. I could barely pass it and you had to pass it to get out of Oregon State. And I had to swim almost the entire thing elementary back stroke because that was the only stroke I could do well and so for recon I had to swim in and out of the ocean in the surf but the only way I could swim was elementary back stroke. But I did it part because I'd learned from Dale to never quit. Wrestlers and Marines don't even know how to quit and that's valuable life lessons and actually I had a number of them from wrestling at OSU under Dale Thomas.

**BB:** So as class president you've been involved in a lot of reunions and you've also been involved in wrestling since you've graduated?

**KN:** Oh yes. Dale asked me to serve on the board of the wrestling endowment fund. We actually now have five funds. At that time we had two funds. Now we have five. They've grown from, well virtually nothing, to where we have something in excess of 3 million now. I got permission from the other board members, the athletic director, and the coach to start a blue ribbon committee to do a fund drive to be able fund all wrestling scholarships permitted by the NCAA which is 9.9 scholarships. We've determined that we need to raise 2.6 million and we've raised about a million. We have another 1.6 million to go but we're going to do it.

**BB:** That's great!

**KN:** There's enough benefits from wrestling and the benefits that I got, I want to give back as much as I can.



**BB:** Let me see. So is there anything else you'd like to tell me about the court, about Oregon State, about your experience?

**KN:** I think I pretty well covered it but I think the women on the court were gracious. They were never, they never cowered from doing what they were doing. They understood the double meaning. But they came back time after time including fifty years later and gladly so. Suzanne Chapman would have been here but she was in Phoenix and couldn't make it. Sue Hall was in Alaska, out in the boondocks. They had to fly wherever they went. So we had a couple of them who couldn't make it but what a marvelous group of young ladies. With the right attitudes. They were smart, they were pretty, they were, and they worked at doing what we had intended to do and that was increase the knowledge level of the sport of wrestling and increase attendance at the meets which we did. So that was a good time. To Oregon State I will be forever grateful. Actually three of my brothers have graduated from Oregon State as well. All of my brothers. Three brothers. We're very proud of our time at OSU and what it offers.

**BB:** Well thank you so much for talking with me today.

**KN:** You are very welcome. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about something that is very dear to me and that's wrestling at Oregon State University.

**BB:** Thank you.

[New recording begins a few minutes later as Ken Noteboom remembers more information]

**BB:** So want to tell me about it?

**KN:** Yeah. Dale told me one time that the Athletic Director called him to his office and I think it had to do with the queens. At that particular time but I am not sure but I think it was. It was Spec Keene and Spec said Dale, I am going to have to fire you and Dale said Spec! You can't fire me. I don't work for you. I work for the P. E. department. He was an unpaid coach at Oregon State for almost ten years before they ever paid him. He did that himself. That was Dale. No you can't fire me I don't work for you and that was it

**BB:** Could it be because they also were also unhappy about the tournament coming to the campus?

**KN:** That could have been it. The way Dale told it ended was that he said okay, you don't want the tournament, that's fine. You write the letter to the head of the NCAA and the various other people and tell them that you don't want to have the tournament here. Fine with me. Go ahead. And there was no way that they were going to do that. So he got what he wanted, what we needed for the sport. Not just the publicity but we got the notoriety and actually the Oregon State program is actually legendary for what it's done and people all over the nation know it.

**BB:** Good