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Interviewer: Robin Sellers
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Sellers: Okay, we're all set. Why don't we start out by having you tell me just a little bit about where you were born and where you grew up.

Graf: Okay. I was born in Gainesville, Florida. My dad was a student at the University of Florida and my mom was working to kind of put him through school, and then we ended up moving back to Tallahassee. Basically, grew up in Tallahassee most of my life, went to Catholic school, then went to Leon High School, then came to Florida State as an undergraduate from '71-'75.

Sellers: What was your line of study as an undergraduate?

Graf: As an undergraduate, my major was Marine Biology and I have a minor in Criminology and a minor in Coaching, so kind of a very weird — I have a weird academic background. Every degree is something different.

Sellers: Was that because you couldn't decide what you wanted to do or you were interested in everything?

Graf: Kind of both. Major-wise, I was trying to decide at that time between Archaeology, Astronomy, and Marine Biology. I like the sciences and exploration and being outside. Then, I had always played sports. Criminology came around because for the Biology degree you had to have a minor and I always liked Criminology, so kind of went in that area to get a minor and then ended just getting a coaching minor because I also enjoyed that area as well. So, kind of just a combination, and I enjoy school and learning, so, you know, I didn't mind taking extra classes.

Sellers: And you still managed to get through in four years?

Graf: Uh-huh, yeah.

Sellers: Did you play sports in high school?

Graf: Well, yes and no. I played sports all the time, but at the time that I went to Leon the only two sports they had as varsity sports were track and tennis for women. Basketball, softball, and volleyball, we played — Each high school had a team that you played through the Recreation department. So Leon High School actually had a team that I played on — those three team sports — but I played through the Recreation department against teams From Florida High

and Rickards. Well, my senior year I started playing tennis, because I did want to get a letter. So and play on a tennis team at Leon. So I didn't want to do track, that was way to much work. But I did do tennis. So I played tennis my senior year in high school, and when I came to Florida State I played tennis my freshmen year here and softball the last three.

Sellers: Were you an only child?

Graf: No, had two brothers: one who died fairly young in a hunting accident, and then one brother and one sister.

Sellers: Was your interest in sports part of their lives too?

Graf: Not really. It seemed, pretty much, I was the oldest child and for whatever reason I always enjoyed sports and my brother and sister really never kind of got into sports that well. My sister's a year younger and then my other brother is seven years younger, but my sister and I are totally opposite. She was more artistic and into gymnastics kind of things. She wasn't really, like, in to any other sport and she did not stay in gymnastics that long. Then, my brother really never got into competitive sports.

Sellers: Was there any influence for or against your sports participation from either of your parents?

Graf: I would say influence for, in as much as they let me do anything I was interested in. And as I would move to different things, they would always encourage that. And then of course, they encouraged things I wasn't that good or interested in like playing the piano or tumbling, you know, those kinds of things; but once I found out I wasn't interested, they did not continue me in those areas. But my mother would always, you know, take me to practices and games and those kind of things. My father was always very supportive as well.

Sellers: When you graduated with your major and your minor, which were not really what one would expect for the position you are in now, what did you do immediately after graduating? You went out job searching for what type of position?

Graf: Yeah, immediately after graduating, I decided I wanted to work and I knew I was going to get a master's degree shortly thereafter. When I graduated in '75, we were in a pretty deep recession at that point in time, so jobs weren't very easy to find. So I looked in all kinds of different areas. I had a graduate assistantship to Texas A&M in Marine Biology, but had turned it down because I'd decided, basically, at that point that wasn't the area I was going go career-wise. But I kind of looked around. I wanted to stay in Tallahassee, you know, at least the first year. And looked around and was looking just in any kind area with either Criminology or Marine Biology. Looked at police force and that kind of thing. Ended up working for the Department of Corrections for a year, where, basically, I figured out gain time and leave time to re-figure out when prisoners got out of jail and then also to determine if they had out-of-state warrants so before they were released if they had an out-of-state warrant then we didn't release

them from the state of Florida. So I did that with the State Department of Corrections just for a year, and then I went to graduate school at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro the following year.

Sellers: In what?

Graf: In Physical Education/Sports Psychology.

Sellers: So you added another dimension now. I mean, you had the coaching, but now you're into sports psychology.

Graf: Yeah, that was really the emphasis of my master's degree and I went up there just basically on my own. They had a very good research Physical Education Department and they took people from different degrees; where at Florida State if I had wanted to go into physical education, I would have had to have a teaching certificate and I had absolutely no desire to teach in the public school system, so that would have been a waste of my time. And UNC Greensboro was recognized as a very good research institution. So, went up there and was just really fortunate. Kind of ended up becoming the head men's/women's swimming and diving coach. More by definition, yeah, so I coached men and that was my first coaching position ever. It was a Division III school at the time and I obviously was not that experienced, you know, at all, but they were pretty desperate. But it really worked for me because it gave me a lot of experience very early in not only coaching but in a philosophy from a university that really cared about the student athletes. Because it was more about the student athletes. 'Cause it was Division III, all the kids were there 'cause they wanted to be there. You know, if you won or lost, they weren't going to fire you, because I was a grad assistant. So there wasn't that kind of pressure. If you made mistakes, you know, nobody jumped on you about it, so that was really a good experience for me. Then along with that – I think because I helped them out – they allowed me to be the assistant softball coach and then I got a grad assistant to be, you know, those two coaching positions. So ended up doing that for two years and then when I finished my master's degree that was right at the time that Florida State was changing their Women's coaching positions from graduate assistant positions to full time positions, because of Title IX. And so I was called and asked to apply and Greensboro had asked me to remain as their Swimming Coach and basically once I got the position at Florida State and was offered that I, of course, accepted that, 'cause softball was much stronger for me than swimming and diving. So that's kind of how I ended up back at FSU.

Sellers: You said when you were at North Carolina that you were a graduate assistant and you were allowed mistakes. Do you recall any mistakes that you perhaps learned from or you wake up in the night shivering about?

Graf: No, I mean not really any major, major ones, I think. You know, of course, I think maybe I should have had harder practices or, you know, done more "recruiting" even though you didn't really have any scholarships, those kinds of things.

Sellers: So just general look-back?

Graf: Yeah, just general little things. Yeah, nothing major major. You know, the kids were very good. I think they – you know even though you try to fake how much you knew about swimming – I think they kind of knew I didn't know as much as they did, but during that time we broke, like, eighty percent of the school's records in those two years so I felt like they good experience. You know, I learned a lot; they learned a lot. You know, you really kind of credit those kids for helping you grow, but I think they knew I cared about them a lot. And again, we put them through some pretty decent practices, but I was a rookie-in-training, I guess, so I'd say those kids were pretty responsible for me having a positive experience because had at that point in time I had a negative experience in coaching I probably would have not stayed in the profession.

Sellers: Tell me a little bit about Title IX and how it affected your career opportunities.

Graf: Well, I think I'd say Title IX and the inequities in sport have really kind of affected my whole career. I think, you know, coming up through Florida State, you know, we had volunteer coaches, basically. You know, Dr. Jones, Billy Jones, was my coach my sophomore and junior year. Anne Langford was my tennis coach. They were both full time professors at Florida State, so coaching was something they volunteered to do.

Sellers: Were they Physical Education professors?

Graf: Yes. So they basically volunteer — You know, it was their free time that they did coaching. They did not get anything monetarily out of it. Then Milly Usher was my coach my senior year and she was a graduate assistantship. So, yes, she was getting a grad assistantship, but of course nothing compared to the amount to time that you put in to doing what you do. We played on the intramural fields on campus. Then when men's intermurals started, we got kicked off to the band field. You know, and of course we had to buy our own uniforms and did very little traveling and those kinds of things. And I think then going to Greensboro where they didn't really have any money but they pretty much treated everybody equally was very different than at Florida State at that time. Of course Title IX, I would say, has impacted me career-wise because had they not created full time coaching positions at FSU and the timing not been right, obviously I would not have been coaching, probably. So I think it definitely has affected, you know, my life. Then I've seen the benefits as the money going into Women's Athletics has continued to increase. You know, I've seen nicer facilities and offices and travel budget and Assistant Coaches. You know, things that twenty/thirty years ago you probably never have thought would have happened.

Sellers: You said Florida State called you.

Graf: Well, I was asked to apply.

Sellers: Do you recall who asked you to apply and who you spoke with and things?

Graf: Well, yeah, but I don't really want to say that. But it was somebody that had connections with the university that, you know, basically said throw your name in the hat. You know, are you kind of interested in coming back?

Sellers: So it wasn't a faculty member or something?

Graf: Right.

Sellers: From the time you applied until the time you were hired, were you brought down for an interview?

Graf: Yes.

Sellers: How long did that take and what kind of butterflies lived in your tummy?

Graf: You know, that I can't remember. It all happened pretty quickly from what I recall. There was a search committee and I know Dr. Wells on it. Dr. Jones was on it; Dr. Fran Cannon was on it. Eddie Bass was on it. I'm not sure who else was on that committee – Barbara Palmer, probably. Barbara was the Women's Athletic Director at the time. So I came down. They already had a present graduate student here, so I didn't know, you know, obviously I felt that the person already here would probably be the favorite. So I was kind of a little surprised when Barbara called and offered me the position, but I immediately accepted. Hung up the phone. She had told me when to start work. A couple of hours later my mother called and said Barbara had called her and said that I didn't even ask what my salary was. [chuckling] She goes, "Just to let you know, it's 12,500 dollars." I said, "Okay."

Sellers: This is what year?

Graf: 1979. Well, '78 — Fall of '78, so the summer of '78. I always think in seasons, so the season was '79. So anyway, I was very excited and told Greensboro that I would not be returning that following year, to let them know. And then, basically, kind of came back home and got started with the position, so I was extremely excited about it.

Sellers: What kind of accommodations did they have for you here when you got here?

Graf: We worked you know the white house right across from the smokestack off of Woodward, that where our offices were. It was really neat though, because it's an old house that, basically, then each bedroom was an office. And they had upstairs bedrooms that were offices, and all the coaches and assistant coaches were over in that same building.

Sellers: The women's?

Graf: The Women's Athletics. Oh yeah, yeah. But it was really neat, because everybody was kind of at the same point in their life, I guess, because we were all pretty young.

There were some that were a little bit older, but we were all the first full-time coaches. I was the only new coach that they brought in. Everybody else were the grad assistants. It was just nice 'cause after practice everybody would be back in the same building and you would all, you know, ask questions of each other. If you had discipline problems, how were people handling that; or how did you handle people coming late to practice. You know, just all kinds of thing. So it was really a growing experience and a comradery, I think, that we had at that time that was really pretty special.

Sellers: Were you still doing all your practice and your playing on the intramural fields?

Graf: Yes, we were.

Sellers: Not a whole lot had changed.

Graf: Yeah, no, but the only thing was: we had, like, one field was designated for us.

Sellers: So you couldn't get kicked off?

Graf: Right. Yeah, so we didn't get booted off, but it was the intramural field. I meant to tell you exactly. It was like in that corner, the far corner by the old — I don't know how long have you been here. You've been here awhile. Where the restrooms used to be, it was right above the hill that goes to that Florida High, that's the field that we had. We had, you know, the benches, no fences. So you know, we'd be playing and people'd be playing frisbee out deep in the outfield. They'd be walking their dogs across the field; or if there was an overthrow at first, it'd go down that field to the Florida High thing so we had to have a ground rule about that. You know, it was pretty wild, but those were great times, too.

Sellers: Were you able to recruit or did your teams consists of girls who simply volunteered?

Graf: Now, we were able to recruit at that time. We were under AIAW rules, the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women. Those rules allowed you to actually have tryouts, too, which was kind of different than what we can do now. So we could recruit, and we could invite kids to come tryout, so we could have seniors and Junior College kids come over and we could put them through a tryout, which I thought was very helpful for us. We became very competitive very quickly. Florida State, I think had a really good reputation as being supportive of women's sports, so I think we got a pretty good quick jumpstart on a lot of other programs around the country and that helped us early on. 'Cause early on, see, we were slow pitch, not fast pitch, because the NCAA at that time of course was not interested in Women's Athletics because there was no money in it.

Sellers: You said that Florida State was supportive of women's athletics, maybe more so than some of the other state institutions. Can you elaborate a little bit on that? What were the comparisons?

Graf: I don't know what exactly it would have been, but I think it was – and maybe it was just a bias of my point – but I think that all the coaches that we had that coached our women's teams were just very energetic about what they were doing, spent an enormous amount of extra time doing it, and put in all that extra effort that I think really propelled us in those early years. And I think Barbara Palmer was a big key part of that. Barbara was a very dynamic, very promoting of women. She was very visible. And I think, you now, we were all involved in organizations like FAIAW, the Florida Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women. I think a lot of us at that time would speak at FAHPERD conventions, the F-A-H-P-E-R-D conventions, and really got *involved* and I think that really help spread Florida State's reputation.

Sellers: So Florida State was very supportive enthusiastically with its particular staff, rather than very supportive monetarily.

Graf: Yeah. I think the monetary part still had to build up, but I think the staff – and again you have to give Barbara credit for that. She formed a great staff and she was a very supportive leader who supported you to try to do the best that you could do, and she was very promoting of women's equity and that was not a popular thing to do in that time. You know, a lot of people, I think, got her professionally and stuff because they did push for equity, because still a lot of people in the power positions wanted you to be equitable without spending any money on it and that just doesn't happen. And you still face that a little bit today. I think that still kind of a problem with "things are okay for the women, but they're not okay for the men, we got to do more for the men." It's still a bias that exists.

Sellers: Did you ever, amongst the ones of you who were in the offices or in any of your little jam sessions afterwards, did you ever talk about the inequity situations?

Graf: Yeah, and that was something that would always come up. And again, Barbara was very good at communication to us things that she was working on so that we always knew, kind of, that things were inequitable, but they were being worked on. So I think as a staff, that freed you up to go: okay, well, we have the backing of our administrator that's over us, now we can worry about the coaching part. She's taking care of this. So she would take care of the inequities, like the women coaches did not have courtesy cars and the women coaches, of course, salaries were not the same. We didn't have assistant coaches. And Barbara would let us know that she knew those were problems and that she was working on those. Which I think that communication skill of hers was something that is important.

Sellers: Once Title IX was plopped down in the middle of everything, how long did it take for that actually to start funneling some money and attention to the Women's Program and how did it affect them and improve them?

Graf: Well, Title IX was passed in 1972 and full-time coaches for the women didn't happen 'til the summer of '78, so it took that long. Now scholarships, I know gradually kind of came in a little bit before then. And then we got more scholarship money. The scholarship money was kind of one of the first things that everybody got, so we got the full scholarship

allotments. And then, everything else kind of took time. It's been a gradual increase, you know, ever since then as, of course, budgets have gone up the women have gotten higher budgets. Now what percent of that total budget the women actually get has kind of been murky somewhat by how you shift figures and how you assign "responsibilities" and split-salaries and those kind of things, which you can manipulate pretty well. I think that those things are continuing. And again, that's going to be probably a constant thing to, you know, just continue to keep an eye on.

Sellers: What has been the relationship with the Men's Athletic program over the years? Has it improved, deteriorated, stayed steady?

Graf: I think it's stayed pretty steady. You know, I think that it's a situation where I think the women coaches never have wished anything to be taken away from the men at all. I think it's just a situation that you wanted to be treated the same as the men and I think that that's the part that a lot of people try to blame women's athletics for cuts in men's budgets where women have never advocated that. Women have just said that when decisions are made, they need to be made equitably; and that part still, in my opinion, doesn't occur. But I think our support of men's sports has always been very positive. I think, you know, again, it's a mutual respect that we're all as coaches trying to achieve the same thing. We all want to win national championships, have the kids graduate, have the kids have good experiences, but we also think that the female athletes should have those same experiences and be treated the same as the male athletes.

Sellers: How do you recruit now? Do you go out and observe? Do you have scouts? Do people apply to you? How does that work?

Graf: Many, many ways, I mean, all the above and then more so. Recruiting is like a year around job now, and that's really the area, I think, that's changed tremendously is recruiting. Of course, the competition for the elite athlete is much greater; because everybody has money, everybody has good programs, everybody has facilities, everybody has good academics at their institution. So it's gotten tougher. There aren't as many hidden athletes anymore. Like, you used to be able to find athletes by working hard that nobody knew about. Now, everybody knows about everybody. But we get kids that will email us, you know, of course as technologies change, we still get a ton of letters, but now we get a ton of emails. Kids will send us video tapes demonstrating their skills, then we also get DVDs [chuckles], you know, of them showing their skills. Now we've even gotten little mini-like videos on the web, where the kids will have their videos. So that's all changing. We go out and we watch high school games; we watch summer league tournament games. We talk to high school coaches; we talk to summer coaches. We'll have people call us, you know, that went to Florida State and they know a kid in their neighborhood that is a great player. We follow all those up, and we'll sign four to five kids a year. And it's amazing how much work you do all year for those five kids, but that's all part of it and we like a certain kind of athlete at Florida State. We want a kid that's like a perfect kid: you know, we want the good academics, we want the good athletics, and we want good character. And so those are all things that we really try to investigate. Then, of course, the player has to want to come here, so those are all things that in recruiting you try to deal with, you know, and

there a lot of correspondence that goes on between coach and athletes and coaches and coaches and those kinds of things.

Sellers: How much of a personal hand do you have in the recruiting or do you have scouts that work for you?

Graf: We don't really have any what I'd call scouts. Basically, myself and my two assistants. Louie, who is the associate Head Coach, is kind of the recruiting coordinator, and I'd say Louie and I probably do, you know, most of the recruiting. And then Megan, who's our pitching coach, also will go out and evaluate talent. So really all three of us are involved. Louie coordinates all that and kind of picks out, especially if there's certain kids that we need to go look at or I need to personally go see. We'll do that, but she does a real good job of kind of whittling down the pile, you know, from like thousands of kids to hundreds of kids to, like, a hundred kids. And then, it gets down as the season goes along and as you kind of know the positions that you are gonna key on. You know, it's just really changed where kids now – you know, you're doing in home visits and they come for official visits. In the last couple of years, we've gotten kids that have made earlier commitments, so that we haven't had to really do as much with those specific kids, you know, as before. And you're allowed to call them once a week after July 1st of their junior year, so you try to keep in touch with them that way.

Sellers: So you start lining them up as early as their early high school years?

Graf: Yeah. Yeah, we'll kind of know freshmen/sophomore years who were really looking at. Junior year is when we will start getting commitments. Which is quicker, usually it was like even after their senior year, you know, they'd come in 'cause we didn't have a fall signing date, you know, and so our signing date was April. Well, they'd come in in the fall of their senior year and you still wouldn't know, you know, because they wouldn't have to make a decision until April. Now, we have a November signing date so many, many kids will make the decisions, even they'll take unofficial visits that summer before their official visits, and they'll make decisions.

Sellers: So you kind of project more confidence levels?

Graf: Yeah, and it's again as things have changed, you know, I think we've done a good job here of keeping up with the changes and kind of staying ahead of the curve. Because recruiting's the name of the game. I mean, you've got to get the good athletes in. And you also, again, you want kids that are gonna graduate from Florida State, and we've done a very good job of getting the good students as well.

Sellers: How do you deal with the students who maybe get so wrapped up in their first year of college or their first year of playing softball for FSU and their academics slide?

Graf: You know, we've been really fortunate 'cause we catch those pretty quickly. As a coach, I'm not one of those coaches that practices kids for, like, every, every day. There are

some coaches, you know, that sports is all that matters and they work those kids to death. We really don't do that. We try to really balance academics, athletics, and then social, so that they have time for social life. But we get the kids in study hall right away. Even back in the early days, we have always done progress reports so that we would catch problems before they became major problems, and we really work with the students in getting them to communicate with their professors so that if they're falling behind they can find out, you know, got talk to the professor, see what they're missing that the professor thinks is important. Then, we will target it. If we have a kid that does fairly badly in midterms, we will put them in extra study hall, get them tutors, to try to help them along with that situation, because obviously that's really important. If we hear through the grapevine that they're partying, I obviously will pull them in and have a pretty serious chitchat with them. And I've done different things. I've had kids come in my office and study for certain hours a day so that — I tell them it's very important, and they don't continue to do badly very long 'cause they don't want to sit at this table, you know, and be studying with me watching them. They know that academics is very important to me, and they know my background. I think a lot of them come because they do know we're not going to practice softball six hours a day. Even though the NCAA doesn't let you, that doesn't mean there aren't coaches — [coughs] Excuse me — that require kids to do stuff, and so, again, I think it's a combination of getting the good students in. But we will take chances on students that are kind of borderline academically, and we've always been able to get them through, especially if they work hard, they'll get through.

Sellers: What kind of career opportunities are there for softball players who graduate, actually get a degree, or even do they have the opportunity to go to the Pros like the men do? What's out there for them if they want to continue in the athletic field? Do they have to simply go back, fall back, on teaching or coaching or is there a softball career out there?

Graf: Well, there really are a lot of careers related to softball. So if softball is their interest, there is a pro league, but it's very low salary and it only goes for, like, two months in the summer, and it's kind of been an up and down thing. There's an Olympic team, or a national team — kind of the same thing — but that really only accommodates, you know, fifteen to twenty-five players, and the top players in that area can make pretty significant livings, like Lisa Fernandez who, you know, she's one like three gold medals and, you know, has played internationally. There's opportunities in Japan to play where a number of players have played and made substantial amounts of money for women. Like, you know, we might say a hundred thousand a year. The other international leagues — and we've had some players play overseas internationally — again, are more, you know, you're gonna break even kind of thing. It's not where you gonna make a ton of money, but you won't lose money because the team will pay your airfare, your lodging, they'll get you a job, you know that kind of thing, but it's not gonna be like a really long term career. The areas, though, surrounding softball, I think, for women are really the biggest explosion. We just had a young lady who got a position as an Assistant Director of Championships for the ACC office. So you can do that. You can work for the NCAA. You can work for different companies, like Nike or Easton or Louisville Slugger. With even the pro leagues, I've had a player that worked with the development of the pro league. The Coaches Association has a lot of employees. At different institutions, you know, you've got

coaches, you've got athletic trainers, or, you know, media people, marketing people, ticketing people, academic advisors. So there's really kind of a whole realm there that people can go to, as well as getting connected with, for example, high schools. You know, they could coach in high school. They can coach at Junior Colleges. We've got one of my former players is over at Gulf Coast Community College. There are coaching positions now, 'cause basically almost every school now will have three softball coaches. You'll have two assistants and a head coach. And at the Division II and III those people might also teach or do like another position. They'll have combination positions. But you know those are all kinds of opportunities that really exist and I can keep going on and on. There so many things now related to sport: you know, running a Civic Center, promoting charity events, a lot of your major corporations will have people that deal with their charitable contributions or their sport affiliations. You know, obviously, you have all the minor leagues; you have WNBA opportunities now where people can go work for those offices and USOC. I mean, it just kind of continues.

Sellers: Yeah, there was a lot more than what I expected you to say. I was surprised. You went on for a PhD. When and why?

Graf: Uh-huh. You know, when did I get it? I don't even know. 1992 was when I finished it. Basically, I started it when I was coaching at Florida State. I guess the reason why is probably more ego than anything. You know, it was the highest degree you could get. I always believed, in my career, to provide myself opportunities, because you know I'm still on a one-year contract. So coaching is one of those — Like, Florida State, it's amazing: they'll tenure a professor pretty quickly in my opinion, but I'm in my 28 th year and I'm on a one-year contract. So I've always prepared myself for other opportunities, you know, should something not happen with athletics, because I was never going to compromise my integrity or my principles just to win. So I always wanted to prepare and insulate myself from that if I ever had an Athletic Director that winning was the only thing or I was going to get fired. I started part-time. And the other nice thing is the state program that pays for your tuition as a state employee, so that basically what allowed me to be able to afford to do it. I got my PhD in Sport Administration. So it was really connected to my job, which really made it kind of easy because a lot of the papers or the projects and things that I did I could incorporate into my job and things that I needed to do or wanted to do with my position. So it was kind of a win-win situation. Teaching is always something that I've enjoyed doing.

Sellers: Upper level?

Graf: Yeah, yeah. I taught the graduate personnel class over in the Physical Education Department for several years and I've really enjoyed that. No, I like the graduate level. I like people that are serious about what they're doing, which is the reason I like coaching collegiate athletes is 'cause they are serious about what they are doing. So anyway, it worked out really well and then I completed it in '92.

Sellers: Have you found that it has given you anymore leverage?

Graf: I think it gives me credibility with the faculty members. I think it gives me credibility with parents in recruiting. A lot – I know there used to be a couple of PhD softball coaches, but I don't think there's really anybody that has a PhD that's coaching at the major Division I level anymore. I know at Florida State we used to have a couple, Cecile Reynaud had a PhD, and our men's golf coach at the time, Ernie Langford, had a PhD; but right now nobody else has a PhD, and I think the faculty members understand that I'm serious about academics. And I think the players understand that I'm serious about academics.

Sellers: And that probably gives you a lot more credibility with the player when you insist that academics are important.

Graf: Yeah, and you know I always tell them I got it while I was, you know, I would study on the bus. You know, I would go to the hotel room and study. I'd take vacation time and go to the Stroz library and that would be my vacation. So I sacrificed a lot of my personal time, because it was important to me to get it done and I think they understand what I'm telling. You know, I'm telling them things that I did. It's not "I want you to go do this," and I'm not going to put in the time to do it, but you go put in the time to do it. They know that I made sacrifices and decisions. I think that's what you have to do if something's that important to you.

Sellers: You've been here twenty-eight years, now? Can you talk a little bit about some of the better years and some of the worse years?

Graf: Yeah. I don't know if I've had too many worse years. You know, I think you go through some ups and downs and anytime you're battling an administration because of equity. I think those are the biggest battles that I've had that have made some things unpleasant is because I'm pretty demanding with that. It's just a level of expectation that I think Florida State should have, and sometimes I'm surprised that we're not pretty strict with that. And again, it's nothing that the Athletic Director presently doesn't know. It's nothing I haven't fought with every Athletic Director about, because to me equity's pretty cut and dry. I think that when you have to start making excuses about why things are different, then you're basically trying to justify your inequity – the reasons that things are inequitable. And the definition that I always like for equity is if you can take two things and switch them and both parties are still happy, then you have equity. I found that most of the time you can't do that. There's very few things. You know, if you switch two things, somebody's not going to be happy because somebody had the better end of the deal. But anyway, those are, I think, the unpleasant times are those battles that I don't think should even have to be fought anymore. Other than that –

Sellers: Do you think Florida State is similar to or different in any way from other schools and their equity?

Graf: No, I think most of it – I think it's the same.

Sellers: About the same?

Graf: Yeah, I think it's still something that has to continue. I think it's in all professions. I don't think that it's something that's just in athletics. I think it's across the board, you know, in other professions. I think it's still — I think there's a societal bent towards women don't need to make as much as men. Women don't need the security that men do. You know, women don't need the same — I don't know — reinforcements or the same opportunities or whatever it is, but that has subtly surprised me. But I think that's, I'm sure that's true in probably your profession and, you know, I know lawyers and doctors and, you know, a lot of people, the women get paid substantially less, so I think that's a battle that society is still coming to grips with.

Sellers: Probably today on until we get that woman president who solves all our problems.

Graf: [Chuckles] I know. And again, it's just a no-brainer to me. It's just like men making decisions about women's bodies. That gets more into the political part of it, but, you know, those are issues that I think are tantamount to society and I think women need to get involved in fighting for those. There are far too many women I know — and I'll speak to athletics — that are afraid for their jobs because they're afraid if they fight for equity that the male athletics directors will fire them. So I think that you have because you don't have very many female athletic directors, and I think that fear and threat still lingers. You know, I do think it's getting better. Of course, I think Florida State — I think TK's very supportive of women. And I think that there are things that will improve in that area and you continue to make little steps. The gap seems to continue to be the same, if not greater, so I think as women make strides it seems that the men are making bigger strides. So that gap still is there and that's something that a lot of people, you know, they think your budget's going up — which it is — but the gap between the men's and the women's budget is still bigger or greater than it was fifteen, twenty, years ago, and that's the part that never seems to come out. Again, you can play with numbers a lot of ways.

Sellers: Oh yeah. Have there been any AD's that you have found to be more helpful than others?

Graf: This is the part I don't think I should really answer.

Sellers: Okay. Alright.

Graf: I think they're all pretty much the same.

Sellers: You been inducted into the Hall of Fame. Has that, or do you think it will, have any effect on your recruiting or funding?

Graf: No, it doesn't have any effect on our funding at all. Recruiting: you know I think the biggest thing with that that we try to push, you know I have to fight because everybody — the other coaches — are telling everybody I'm going to retire and they're telling everybody I'm on a one year contract, so I have to fight that negative —

Sellers: Other coaches? Women or men?

Graf: Both. Other softball coaches. When we're recruiting against them, you know, one of the things they try to sell is that they're going to be at their school and I'm not going to be here. Of course, I'm trying to sell that I am going to be here and I'm not going anywhere, so I point to – I think my longevity here has helped us with recruiting. But I do have to always answer those, 'cause every parent wants to know how long I'm going to be here. So you still have to answer those questions.

Sellers: But you are certainly not seventy and over-the-hill.

Graf: [Chuckles] No, I'm not. I'm, like, 52.

Sellers: Well, is there an age, say in your early 50s or late 50s, that a lot of women coaches do tend to retire. I mean, why would they think that?

Graf: Oh, 'cause everybody wants an edge. You know, they want to try to say whatever they can say.

Sellers: So something like you're ten years older than they are, or you've been there ten years longer than they have.

Graf: Yeah, and I think it's, you know, at one point in my career I used to be one of the youngest softball coaches. Now, I'm one of the older softball coaches, so I think as you get towards sixty people do start getting out of the profession. You know, it's physically pretty demanding. It's very time consuming. You have no free weekends. You know, the weather and stuff, that you're out on the sun all the time, all kind of takes a toll, so I think a lot of people do look to get out of it because of the time constraints of it.

Sellers: And if you were a man, you would have been able to put aside enough money that you could. [Chuckles]

Graf: Right. Yeah, there's a substantial difference between what I've made over my career and my counterpart has made over his career. So yeah, and again, that's part of, I think, some of the inequities that happen and then they continue and of course that affects your retirement income and all kinds of things. So, yes, you're right.

Sellers: Can you take me through a typical year, starting from when you sign people, and then how does your year go? You have summer camps. You have a season. What happens? When does it start?

Graf: Oh, it depends on when you start.

[End of Side A]

Sellers: Okay, we're probably running again. Go ahead.

Graf: Okay, if you start a typical year in November, we will sign players in November and then basically it kind of takes you through at that point in time we're also kind of winding down our Fall practice season. We've pretty much have gotten done with that almost. So once you sign a kid, then you've got to deal with the press releases. You do the interviews the their local newspapers. You begin to send them admissions applications, those kind of things, so they can start over Christmas filling those out. We get our players kind of winding down as far as they'll start getting ready for final exams. They'll have like one week of classes after Thanksgiving and then they'll have finals. We will finish up anything that we need to do as far as the Spring Season. We'll do a — We have our Coaches Conventions in the beginning of December. Then, we do a Christmas clinic right after finals that some of the players will stay, like, that Saturday and work with us. Then we get into December, where you will get into final exams. Obviously, then, you see how the players did academically: if there's any potential kids that might be on probation or have problems with that. And you have to deal with those specific issues. We make sure that kids are all, you know, fine as far as going home for Christmas, try to give them heads up about leaving stuff in their apartment so the stuff doesn't get stolen. Yeah, anything we need them for we try to wrap up before they all start taking off. Then, December really for us is a little bit of a slacker time, because from Thanksgiving Day to January we're not allowed to go out and recruit, which has been really nice because it has made so many summer league teams — which now aren't summer league teams they go all year 'round — but it's made them stop having tournaments which has been really nice. So it gives a little time, like down time, to kind of take off. So we'll finish letters, you know, all the assistants will try to take some time off during that December month, which is when I take kind of the bulk of my time off. Beginning of January, it just kind of starts hot and heavy, because we will start practicing the second day of classes. Again, when the kids come back, they should all have their schedules, but, of course, some still have to go through drop-and-add. So we get all that coordinated the academic people. We have to coordinate and set up with everybody to make sure they understand when we're starting practice: like the grounds crew and the sports training people and the whole staff.

Sellers: How long do they practice each day?

Graf: We go two hours with the regular team and then we go pitchers and catchers'll go an extra hour. So we do that. In January, we'll basically finalize most of our travel arrangements which were made this Fall, like we do that in the fall, but we'll kind of finalize it or do that if we add player or lost players or whatever, and need like an extra hotel room or get rid of a hotel room, that kind of stuff. Then, again, you've got to plan practice and all that, but that pretty much goes on everyday during the week from January on. We'll start collecting high school schedules of kids that we don't already have if there's anybody we're specifically interested in or that we watched in the fall that we need to watch more we'll try to watch some of their high school games. Then, our competitive season starts, like, February 9th ish, around in there. We will play anywhere from sixty-five to seventy games usually a year. So we're playing several times a

week; we're playing, like, every weekend, and that really puts a time constraint on the kid so basically in the spring they're studying and playing softball. I think they're social life really kind of decreases in the spring. [chuckles] We're trying to get them to cut back the number of games that we play, 'cause it's too many.

Sellers: Them?

Graf: The NCAA. And we've asked for several years and you think that's a no-brainer decision and they still won't do it. I think the baseball coaches have also asked for the same thing.

Sellers: What happens if you just choose not to play that many games?

Graf: You get hurt when they're doing post-season bids. Because I would choose to play less games, but the problem is: if it's coming to getting an invitation to play in the National Tournament and University of North Carolina has fifty wins and we have forty wins, then they're going to look at that go "they get in" well because they may have played twenty games more.

Sellers: Your percentage of winnings may be higher, but they don't look at that.

Graf: Well, they look at, like, who you've beaten, but they also look at the number of wins. So we kind of have to play about the same schedule that everybody plays, so if they cut it back then we'll cut it back, you know. That's kind of what we're hoping, but for right now that doesn't happen. So the kids will get like one free off weekend the whole spring, once it comes February 'til June now, 'cause they've just backed up our season, too. That's just what you're constantly doing. So during that time, we're getting scouting reports on everybody we play, so again we can play five/six games a week so we're having to collect scouting reports. We'll have our video people will tape games of other people that are on TV. We're still, of course, writing recruits and calling recruits during this whole period of time. And then, you start doing the traveling and then you have to do the paperwork for the traveling, you know, and deal with the media as far as your interviews and you know those kinds of things. So all of that kind of happens in the spring. Then late spring you start really kind of finalizing your summer recruiting schedule. Now in the mean time in the spring, you're also doing camps and trying to set that up for the summer, so you're getting ready for summer which is recruiting camps. Late spring, you'll start trying to get your schedule ready for the following year, so you start scheduling, you know, like, we'll start – you know, February people will start calling, and even probably before then, but we'll start doing our '06 schedule you know right after the conference gives us our conference schedule, then we'll start doing our other scheduling. So that will all kind of go on. And then during the summer, like right when we get done competing, then we'll have summer camps at the beginning of June. Then, the latter part of June we start recruiting. And then, that'll go every weekend almost. You're also, of course, you're wrapping up the budget, so you're trying to tie any loose paperwork budget-wise. Again, same thing academically: you know, you're finding out the kids that want to go to summer school, who needs to go to summer school, you know, those kinds of things are all being done from the academic perspective. If there's any

kids that have to have surgery at the end of the year, you know, Robin takes care of that. We're pretty lucky with that though, it's not like football where they have like twenty guys that got to go in and get surgery. So we're pretty lucky with that part of it. Then, July 1, you can start calling recruits, and so we'll start July 1 actually talking to the kids that are going into their senior year and calling them. We don't call them once a week, but every few weeks. So then recruiting goes hot and heavy, and in between that time, again, you're trying to take a little bit of a vacation. [chuckles] It's hard to fit it in. I usually tend to fit mine in like in August after the national tournament. So between like the second week in August and when school starts is when I try to kind of fit that in. So that's kind of what goes on there, and then school starts the end of August so you're working all summer really you know in making sure that everything's fine – and actually late spring – to make sure the new kids are admitted. You've got to work with academics to make sure they get in touch with them over summer, they do a kind of program in every schedule. And then make sure they've all got places to live. We put them up. That kind of all goes late spring.

Sellers: So they don't all stay in a particular housing area or something like that? They're on their own.

Graf: Yeah, we used to stay in Cash Hall a lot, but now the kids like these new apartments where they all have their own bedroom, their own bathroom, and they share a living area. So they all seem to like that, so most of our kids now do not want to stay in the dorms. They want to stay in an apartment kind of thing 'cause they want their own bathrooms.

Sellers: When you recruit do you pay for their classes? Is it like an assistantship or a scholarship?

Graf: Well, when you're actually recruiting them, no.

Sellers: I mean once the start on the recruitment package.

Graf: Once they come to FSU? Oh yeah. You have to. And that's something: we're what they call an equivalency sport, so we have the amount of money of twelve scholarships and we can split that up however we want. Some players will be on twenty percent, some will be fifty, some will be on a full; so you kind of have to determine who you really want, who it's going to cost you a full to get, who you might get for less than a full, you know, all those types of things, and then explain to them – like if they're an out-of-state kid – how much it's going to cost them. You know, if you're only giving them fifty percent, you know, you've got to tell them it's going to cost them still a whole lot. If they're in-state, you deal with the Bright Futures now, which has been a very good thing 'cause that doesn't count against our equivalency, so that actually helps us, you know, if we can get more Florida players. So all those things are kind of benefits to us.

What are we up to August then? School starts. Yeah, school starts. We give them the first week to get organized. The second week, they'll start weights and conditioning. Third week, we start individual workouts with them, where we're allowed to be with them twice a week. Then we start team practice, which we're in right now, that will go four to five weeks

because we're limited by number days. So depending on how many days we're using in the spring, then we use the rest of them in the fall. Then we'll kind of wind down, you know, that. And then again, the fall you're doing official visits where kids are coming in, so Louis does all that paperwork where she's got to see which parents are coming, make the flight arrangements, you know, do all that stuff with kids. So, we are entertaining players every weekend, you know, and then October – October's mostly just playing and practicing. And then we're finalizing the spring schedule as far as, you know, tightening up game times and making hotel reservations, plane reservations, all those kinds of things. In August we've ordered – like August/September – we'll order equipment to get all that going as far as everything. And then, again, then we kind of kickback into November, where we started. So it's just nonstop.

Sellers: It is! Yes. Where do the uniforms come from? How many does each player get? How are they cared for?

Graf: We've got – right now they come from Nike. You know, we've gone through, of course, where we would go out and get them from any company. Now, the whole university is sponsored by Nike, so they basically provide for our uniforms.

Sellers: Do you have any input in the style?

Graf: Uh-huh, yeah. I mean, not as much as we used to. If your paying for them, you can do whatever you want. But they give you a few basic styles, and then you can changes the colors and stuff but it's not as quite as artistic as we used to be. So sometimes the uniforms are a little bland for my taste, but they're good uniforms and the kids like the "swoosh". They like wearing Nike uniform, so it's kind of nice. We have two sets of like long pant uniforms and two sets of shorts, so we have, like, four sets now of uniforms, which is much nicer than the one pair that we bought ourselves when I played. Then, we have an equipment manager downstairs, so they wash the uniforms for the kids. The kids don't have to even wash their own uniforms now. They wash them, which is good 'cause they get the stains out and they keep them in much better shape, you know, whereas a kid that will throw it in a ball bag and leave it for a week 'til the next time they need, pull it out, shake it out, and it's nasty.

Sellers: Do you find that the maturity of the student has changed any over the years?

Graf: I don't think so. I think kids are the same. A lot people say kids are different, they're different in that they have more *things*, I think. But I don't think kids are that different. I mean, I think the players that we get anyway: they all want to compete, they all want to be the best, they all want to graduate, they're good kids, when you talk to them they don't talk back, you know, they want to listen, they want to learn. So I haven't really seen that big of a difference, but I get to handpick players, so it's a much different situation than a high school coach, for example. But I think they're great kids.

Sellers: You said you signed them and then you send them applications for admission. What happens if they don't meet the criteria for college admission?

Graf: We haven't really had anybody.

Sellers: So you're pretty sure that they can before you sign them?

Graf: Yeah, we get their transcripts before we recruit them, so we don't recruit anybody that hasn't already met the NCAA minimums. Now, those minimums are below FSU's minimums, so there maybe a time when a kid doesn't meet like a BOR, you know, thing and we sign-off on them, but that's very rare because again we get the transcripts ahead of time. If they're a bad student, we want to know why they are a bad student. You know, is it death in the family? Katrina victim that going to be in three different high schools in the next year? What's the situation really, and sometimes there's a legitimate reason, you know. And a lot of kids, unfortunately, they don't realize how important those freshmen, sophomore, junior year. They get to be juniors, all the sudden they get serious about studying, but then it is too late. Kids that don't test well, we have problems with because the test is a big part of it. But there is some players that get good G.P.A.'s but they don't test well. And you have to determine is that grade inflation at their high school, or is that they don't test well. And, you know, sometimes we might make a bad call, but for the most part we're pretty right on that a kid is going to be admitted. I haven't really ever had a kid not be admitted that we've signed.

Sellers: What do you see for the year coming up?

Graf: I think we are going to be young at pitcher. We have two freshmen and a sophomore, and we have a very very tough schedule. So not sure what this year will bring, but we have very good offense, very good defense, and I think we're young. I think this is going to be a maturing year for us, so I'm not sure we'll do as well as we have but I think we're going to get — it's going to be the kind of team that going to get better and better and better as the year goes along. So I think that if we stay healthy, I think we are going to continue to improve. And I think that's the biggest thing: is for the kids to keep a positive attitude as they continue to grow during the year and I think then we'll surprise some people. And at the end of the year, we'll be as tough as we have been.

Sellers: What kind of injuries do women's softball players have to contend with?

Graf: Mostly, you know, you'll get some rotator cuff injuries. You'll get tendinitis a lot just from constant use. You'll get some pulled muscles. Shin splints every now and then because of how much running and weights and stuff that they're doing now. A lot of them're more scrapes and bruises and abrasions from sliding on our infield, it's kind of rough. So they'll get skinned up knees, and we practice hard where they'll dive and go after balls so they'll be a little bit sore. Every now and then you'll get a sprained ankle, but not very constantly.

Sellers: JoAnne Graf Field. You don't want the kids to spit on it, now. Do female softball players spit like the men do?

Graf: Yeah, really. I laugh. Not as bad, not as bad. No.

Sellers: That always grosses me out.

Graf: Yeah, I don't think they're quite as bad.

Sellers: What's it like to walk out on a field and know that it's your field, literally and figuratively?

Graf: Yeah, it's a very nice honor. I think it's, you know, something obviously I didn't expect while I was still alive.

Sellers: I think that's only buildings they can't name after living people.

Graf: I don't know, but it was very nice I think of Florida State to do it at the time they did it. It's still kind of weird. The kids laughed the other day. I made them, 'cause the sun was behind us, and I made them turn their back, you know, to the sun, so they wouldn't looking in the sun. And they were like, "Oh! So we can look at your name on the scoreboard." I went, "No, that's not why." [chuckles] But it's a neat honor, and that's something that, you know, I'm proud of.

Sellers: Can you think of anything else I haven't asked you?

Graf: I don't know. I think we've covered everything.

End