

An Interview with

Margo Gavin

at *The Historical Society of Missouri* St. Louis
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Oral History Program

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PREFACE

The interview was taped on a placed on a tripod. There are periodic background sounds but the recording is of generally high quality.

The following transcript represents a rendering of the oral history interview. Stylistic alterations have been made as part of a general transcription policy. The interviewee offered clarifications and suggestions, which the following transcript reflects. Any use of brackets [] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Physical gestures, certain vocal inflections such as imitation, and/or pauses are designated by a combination of italics and brackets []. Any use of parentheses () indicates a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation, or laughter. Quotation marks [""] identify speech depicting dialogue, speech patterns, or the initial use of nicknames. Em dashes [—] are used as a stylistic method to show a meaningful pause or an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech or when indicating a court case title. Particularly animated speech is identified with **bold** lettering. Underlining [] indicates a proper title of a publication. The use of underlining and double question marks in parentheses [(??)] denotes unintelligible phrases. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor, Josephine Sporleder.

Margo Gavin: I'm Margo Gavin.

Maureen Zegel: Where do you come from? Who is your family? Talk a little bit about your youth and where you might have gone to school.

Margo Gavin: I grew up in Boston and I lived in a town called Dorchester which is right in the heart of Boston. A familiar name would be South Boston to most people, notorious. I was born in Cambridge, now that I think about it, next door. Anyway, I lived there for about 22 years. I went to both private schools and public schools, first couple of years, private, then in moving, whatever housing, went to public. Then, by the time I moved onto high school, I was in a neighborhood of Dorchester where all the friends were in private high school. Monsignor Ryan and I wanted to go so I asked my mother if I could go and she said, "No, we don't have any money," so I went and I worked and lied about my age and said I was 14; I was really 13. You didn't need a paper. It was an Irish nanny down in a small town outside of Boston and I made \$50 in the summer. That got me my tuition, my uniform and two blouses. Is that a laugh-and-a-half? Anyway, it was a wonderful experience, absolutely wonderful experience. My folks were from Ireland. My mother was from the north of Ireland and my father from the south. They both met in Boston, in the Irish dance halls, which was one of the other treats about the movie, Brooklyn. That was similar to my life.

Maureen Zegel: Siblings?

Margo Gavin: I have four siblings, three girls and two boys. I'm the youngest. I don't remember everybody's schooling and stuff like that. They did the similar though. None of them went to a private high school. I paid my way through high school and I had a job since my freshman year, or 8th grade and they all went on to public high schools.

Maureen Zegel: So what was it like growing up in the middle of a big city?

Margo Gavin: Oh, I thought it was wonderful. I absolutely love Boston to this day, even though I've lived here for 100 years and its fine, but I still call Boston home. I grew up in an Irish enclave, actually, and there were, like...although it's interesting how much I've looked at that, my diverse background. That's added to the project next to University of Massachusetts. That was all black, white and brown folks. I found a wonderful photo of me in the 5th grade with my class and I remember

that they had an African American girl and myself go around and sing the *America, the Beautiful* in every classroom and I thought, boy, did she make me look good. I came out with a good voice but she was singing because she had this gorgeous voice. So that was throughout and then, through high school, that was a very lily white all-girls high school and they called three of us “white trash” because we came from public school down the street.

Maureen Zegel: What was it like going to an all-girls school?

Margo Gavin: Oh, I thought it was really a great experience, yeah. I thought it was absolutely wonderful. It was a small, very small school and it didn't offer a lot except great academics, which is why I was really interested in school and I loved it and I got to play basketball instead of street ball. I was playing on a formal team and those rules that 150 years old, of course. We don't want to talk about them, but at any rate, that was fun. The girls were wonderful. I just went to a 50th reunion and I said how they were silly and they were smart and it was great to be there. It was a wonderful environment.

Maureen Zegel: And you had nuns teaching?

Margo Gavin: Oh, yeah, we did. In fact...yeah, I enjoyed them. I had fun. A gal at the reunion said that, did I ever get over the trauma of the nun who slapped me in the face and I said I had to have blocked that out because I do not remember being slapped in the face. She said I definitely was. But whatever I said, I'm sure...angelic as I was, I was outspoken. I was very outspoken. So, no, I liked the nuns. Then, I'd say maybe about 20 years ago, my mother and I went over to the school because my mother lived around the corner and I was home in Boston visiting and this ancient nun came out and I actually had a flashback to the old nun who was there who taught Latin when I was there and this woman said, “Who are you?” and so on, and we introduced and she said, “Well, let me see if you're in the yearbook” and I said, “Well, whether you find that yearbook or not, I did go to school there.” That was kind of funny. I'm looking and my mother says, “Are we lying or something?” So she calls and she says there's no yearbook.

Maureen Zegel: For that year?

Margo Gavin: For that year..."Are you sure you went to school there?" I said, "Yes, ma'am, I did" and so they were really so rude to me and I thought, gee, they must have had me on that flunky list or something. Anyway, so, no, I enjoyed the nuns and I enjoyed school, very much so and that was great. Then I wanted to go to college, couldn't afford to go then and that was Lyndon Johnson's poverty programs at that exact time.

Maureen Zegel: Were girls at your school going on to college?

Margo Gavin: Oh, absolutely, and most of them, socio-economically, were working-class families like mine and myself. Oh, yeah, so that was a disappointment, when I couldn't go. So I went to happy John Hancock like all the other little smart girls in the private schools and worked in stats and read something in the paper about the poverty program and I went and applied and I was accepted and these were girls and guys all over the State of Massachusetts. I forget the criteria but you had to be poor.

Maureen Zegel: And where did you go?

Margo Gavin: Northeastern University to be a lab technician and that was, like, a year-and-a-half. Boy, that was great, that was actually great. I worked at Boston Hospital for Women, enjoyed that immensely and then that got converted to an Associate Degree by the time I went to the famous Webster University.

Maureen Zegel: You're jumping ahead.

Margo Gavin: Oh, sorry. Okay, jump back. Where am I supposed to go?

Maureen Zegel: Talk a little bit about who influenced you when you were a child growing up. Talk a little bit about games you played and who you played with. What was it like to be a girl growing up...out in the street.

Margo Gavin: I sometimes attribute it to me being outgoing and assertive behind my two brothers, just because they were real...they were thugs at times. They fit the thug category well, and yet, they looked after me too. My folks both worked and they worked hard. They really weren't around a lot and my mother was around more than my father. So I don't know if I could say who was the lead. That would have to be my mother but as far as outside the family...well, in terms of the family, everybody pitched in and did obviously certain things that I probably don't even remember.

My brother, Jimmy, I tell him this story: He taught me about jazz. He doesn't remember that so I said, "Do you remember when I stole all the money out of the dime bank and I was away at camp you said, 'Ma's going to kill you when they get home because you stole all the money from the dime bank,'" and he goes, "Did you just make that story up?" "No, it happened." So they all pitched in in their little funny ways. I would say that I tend to lock on to my girlfriends at high school's grandparents because I didn't have any and I just...I don't know if that's a leader, per se, but I thought they were special people and they noticed that even. They'd say, "You're really different. You're more mature" and all that and I thought that was interesting. So that would be the ones that stand out, and then my aunt, who was a nun. She was literally in a convent that was allowed to go home every other month. That was unheard of for nuns and I used to say to my mother, "Are you sure she's not stealing out the back door" because...that was her sister...and she said, "No." She was a force when she came into the house. She was self-educated, was a nun forever and ever. They never even gave her a degree. They couldn't even have made one up, for cripes sakes. She never got any education, so self-educated, very, very bright. She was fun to be around and she was strict. Anyway, we liked when she was coming. We got ready for her to be strict too. That's all I can think of in terms of being a kid. I just kind of ran around and I worked, I worked very, very hard. One thing that stood out in terms of being assertive is when I lived in Dorchester and had nothing to do when I was going to high school and I had to earn the money to go. Otherwise I wasn't going [inaudible 10:09] even though I had gotten into it, passed the test, is I lied about my age, I said, and I went and did that Irish nanny thing and I kind of thought that was kind of an assertive thing to do.

Maureen Zegel: When you're 13.

Margo Gavin: And take care of an eight and ten-year-old. That was a big deal and carried myself in a mature fashion. That was pretty good. I don't know who you could say was a role model and all that. My sister got me the job. That's it. She was a role model then.

Maureen Zegel: And did you do that every summer?

Margo Gavin: No, no. See, that's just it, it was one summer. It was for, like, six weeks but, no, I went and I had the working paper the following year. You could

get them at 14 in Boston. No, I worked in retail and I worked in a nursing home, two jobs I had, all through high school. I was exhausted but you had to do it in order to go to the high school, in order to have spending money. So anyway, that was fine. I just went and did it. I got all my own jobs, nobody told me anything and so that was okay.

Maureen Zegel: So, there you were, a lab technician and you were still living in Boston. Then talk a little bit about St. Louis, the next phase in your life.

Margo Gavin: We basically moved here because my husband was going to medical school, couldn't wait to come, although I loved Boston. I was really looking to be the ungluing part of my family. They said I was the one getting the house and everything and helped take care of these crazy siblings that I had, that kind of thing. So I know I couldn't wait to leave that. And so, going to St. Louis was a big deal. So, got married too young and had children too fast and had no money. That's a great combination to work with, shows you how smart I was. Well, we lived in great diverse housing at St. Louis University in the graduate dorms and then got to know some real St. Louisans and we lived with them for two years and then we lived in Laclede Town. It was a fabulous, wonderful, first of its kind, diverse community, every form of diversity that you can get, and it was just fabulous. I felt like I had an education in life then, being so young and yet, learn so much in such a short time. I remember, with a couple of folks, started a babysitting co-op and food co-op. It was great, we had no money, and to figure out all this stuff, and it was the times, they were really exciting. So that was really wonderful for a while, for about seven, eight years, a great experience. I never forgot then and everybody still talks about the place, including me.

Maureen Zegel: Talk a little bit about Laclede Town.

Margo Gavin: You had to get in as to who you knew and Jerry Burger, the manager, he decided how many whites, blacks, money, no money, school, the whole gamut. He was fabulous. He was from another area. He just died, in fact. I saw that in the Times last month. So, in order for me to get in, my kids were in nursery school there, I just hung out there with people I knew and wanted to be around there, it was so exciting when I wasn't working and taking care of kids. And really, Jerry's daughter got me in. She knew my kids in the daycare. So that was great. So we moved into a new division called Breakthrough, first of its kind, pre-fab housing, first,

second, third floor. In fact, it's out of New York and it's made by a company that's still around today called Gluck & Company, just found that out. Anyway, that was a great experience there, living just in that house. That was wonderful, all brand new and cheap rent. So, being around all of the different kinds of people, the clubs we had...not because everybody was perfect and got along perfectly, but we sure worked at having a good time and trying to figure things out. Then when the rock stars came to town, they came to stay and visit in Laclede Town and stay with whomever. I don't have all the stories of the pub like everybody else because I had three kids to look after but it was a wonderful learning time and it maturing, it was just extraordinary. So lots of things happened there but pretty much everything was wonderful. We had loads of parties and when my husband graduated, we had a party for 94 people out in the front yard and it was a pot luck and that was kind of funny because a cop friend who showed up brought a hot pizza to a pot luck party for 94 and we just made fun of him the whole time. Then we had a play. You just did what you wanted. We went to our friend's soul party and all of the people there were white and they were dressed as black people in their mind. That was hysterical. I've got pictures of that. So there was all the social, started to get my feet wet going to Harris and night school at SLU and I was there because I wanted to go back to school, of course. And I worked. I mean, I did all kinds of...hospital, medical management, paralegal, American Diabetes Association. I worked for everybody, wherever I could get a job at that point in time and I went back to school, to Webster. I do remember going to Wash U first because I wanted to be an anthropologist and the man behind the desk said that since my husband was going to be a doctor, I probably didn't need to go to school, forth which I can just see myself with my long red pigtales, I stood up and I asked him, would he like to repeat that again so I could get it written down. That's a true story. And he apologized repeatedly until he practically ushered me out the door nicely. Then they sent me an apology letter with no money or anything to go to Wash U. So I danced over to Webster and they said I was right on time because it was the year of the older woman, and I think I was 25, something like that, and I said, "You can call me anything you want. On another day I might get pissed off about that but today I don't care," and they gave me full tuition. So needless to say, I loved Webster University. And when went to school and I got out a little early though. They gave me that much money,

Northeastern credit that I graduate a little bit earlier. It just commuter students so I didn't get to have all the fun that the college students had but that was great, got my degree and I remember one time walking down...passing Webster and I said to this friend, "We should go get our Master's," and she said, "Are you crazy. We're so goddamn tired; we're not going back to school ever again."

Maureen Zegel: Because you were in school with three children?

Margo Gavin: Three children, crazy. She was not as crazy as me. So that was that about college. Anything else you want to know about Laclede Town or college?

Maureen Zegel: Talk a little bit about the people at college. Who influenced you at college?

Margo Gavin: Well, Seena Cole, for sure.

Maureen Zegel: And Seena is?

Margo Gavin: I think actually she was the head of the Department of Anthropology/Sociology and Bill Berry maybe right there with her and, in fact, he lived right near me in the city where I lived and Seena had wanted me to go back and get a Master's at the end of that to be the urban anthropologist which I didn't really pursue that actually but she was marvelous, yeah, she was marvelous. You know, the times were, with all of the civil rights action and so going to school at that time was also exciting.

Maureen Zegel: Now, we're talking the '70s?

Margo Gavin: Yeah. In fact, we would have a lot of heated discussions in classes too and we had one football player from the St. Louis Cardinals, his brother was a guest teacher for the semester and he got everybody all riled up. I don't know, we felt like we were more mature anyway, and I was like, I don't have time for that crap. I've got to go home and read the damn book so I can get through the next day, and yet, I lived in the diverse area. I lived the life of what they said we had to have so I skipped a class and I was called on the carpet for sabotaging the course and whatever because I was supposed to be there because I was more mature. Well, that's great, come to school because you're old. Anyway, that was an interesting

experience but Seena Cole and Bill Berry were just marvelous people, so wonderful and smart and taught you things and answered questions.

Maureen Zegel: Did they encourage you?

Margo Gavin: Oh, definitely, absolutely, yeah. So, I mean, I graduated and, in fact, I graduated early so I was a little disappointed. I enjoyed it, very much enjoyed going to Webster. I've always promoted that and I've seen...well, Bill has passed but I've seen Seena over the years, yeah, I've seen her, a great lady.

Maureen Zegel: Did you have any leadership positions at college?

Margo Gavin: I was the president of the class at Northeastern, yeah. That was interesting. Great people I went to school with but they elected me so they made a few errors. I was in charge of the urban concern workshop which they called that a big deal at Webster. To me, that was just having a ball, people telling me stories about their internships and I'd tell them what they should be doing because I know everything. Yeah, so mostly that, graduated with honors, and beyond that, no, I had no more time in a day to do that as a commuter student. Beyond that, I don't remember honors. Maybe I should make a list and go find these people who should have been giving me all these honors. No, I don't remember.

Maureen Zegel: Talk about your career, now that you've got your education.

Margo Gavin: Yeah. Well, I continued there for a while, in the different jobs I referred to and the newspaper business at the Webster Grove Times and I was an ad sales person and that was truly, I still feel, with all due respect to my own private business, which I absolutely adored, was one of the best jobs I ever had, just learning the newspaper business, and some of the funniest, smartest people I ever met in my life were there. God, we used to have such great parties too.

Maureen Zegel: You got to know the community?

Margo Gavin: Oh, the community was fabulous. I liked small towns. A lot of my work during Webster Grove Times and afterwards was around small communities and I loved it. I loved that and Webster was a great town, and yet, you really did to...going out to the stores. That was not even a job. That was just fun and games, talking to people, right? That's hard for

me. So that was a great learning experience and I enjoyed that and I was there for about seven years and then I went on to do...within, I think, the next six months, I started my business in sports and it was sports primarily and in the newspaper business. I had a basketball magazine called Keep Hoop Alive and I helped kids get scholarships to go to college in their sport with their academic grades and that was exciting and that was called College Prospects, and then I just changed it to my own name, Margo Gavin Sports and eventually Margo Gavin Sports & Entertainment. One of the key elements around the sports business besides the educational scholarships was that I owned a women's pro basketball team called the St. Louis River Queens in the mid '90s for about three years and that was a thrill of a lifetime. And the women came from around the State of Missouri and we did very well and we played our games at the famous University of Missouri-St. Louis. Then the bad news came, is the WNBA was coming around and so they nudged the owners of the league that I was in, which only had eight teams, nudged us out and that was it. They just pulled the rug out and I sued and this one funny line I had from an attorney here in St. Louis, "I don't know what we're going to do with this because, you see, we don't know anything about sports law here." Well, who the hell would even admit that as an attorney? And so, I found one that believed me when I said, "It's not about contract law", I knew that much and so they paid me back all the money I spent. I didn't make lots of money. They just paid what I spent in three years and that was okay. And yet, it was a really...oh, God, it was a wonderful time. We had such a great time with the River Queens.

Maureen Zegel: Talk about that a little bit.

Margo Gavin: Well, it's just that...well, I remember, first of all, coming home that night and said to my husband, "How was your day?" I asked him and then he asked me and I said, "Great. We're going to buy a basketball team," and he goes, "What the hell are you talking about now?" I said, "I went to a game..." and there were two local teams, Illinois and somebody else and they need it. It was all volunteers. Nobody owned it and so I said, oh, okay, and it wasn't expensive and I bought the team and it was great and so we practiced at different places, including UMSL and the games were at UMSL and the women were terrific. I mean, the tryouts were just fabulous, all the women that came out for it, starving to play. They played college ball. Most of the players we had were Division One ball

players, even though we had Two and Three if you were that good. So, that was great.

Maureen Zegel: Who did you play?

Margo Gavin: Oh, gee, Illinois teams...it was all Midwest. The furthest we went was Minnesota. That's, like, a 10-hour bus trip. That was a happy trip and we went in practically a blizzard. That was the furthest away team. They were all around the Midwest. It was only eight teams and the playoffs were always in Kansas City. I can't think of the name of that famous facility up there, and we won one year, Kansas City team won another year. We were the top teams in that whole league. Then we'd drive on the [audible glitch] accident and so we had coolers and we had soda and we had beer on the bus and that was all legitimate supposedly and one of the gals, Pedra Jackson said who was in charge. She was a friend and a smart player and she said, "Margo, I don't think you should go out as the owner because, you know, we've got beer in here. This isn't a good idea." She was an insurance person so she went out and shot the breeze with the police and we were all set and I thought, Oh, my God, they're going to send me to jail, they're going to see me in the headline of the (Poster's Hitch?), River Queen's owner) busted. Some of the best times were riding on the bus, besides the basketball game and you got to be real chummy with the other teams. I was the only woman owner in that league. Someone brought it to my attention a few years later that I was the only woman owner of any women's pro basketball team, ever. Of course, you know there's small leagues going on for years, going back to the 1950's. At any rate, I found that interesting.

Maureen Zegel: Let's back up a little bit. You didn't just fall into basketball. You played basketball as a kid in high school but you were coaching your kids' teams, weren't you?

Margo Gavin: Oh, yeah. I forgot about that, yeah, good point. When the youngest son was 10, I think it was, and Cathedral School needed a coach and their AD was a neighbor of mine and brought to our attention and we wanted our son to play ball because there wasn't any team at his school. That was it. We became...Paul was the head coach and I was the co-coach who told everybody what to do and came out with all the rules of...not basketball, all the other rules. So anyway, that was a great experience. That was about three years but that was at the grade school level. Then at Metro

High School where my kids all went and played basketball and other sports, I was the sports coordinator. That was a volunteer position. I was full-time employed and I would just make sure things were going the way of the course of the sports programs and I put on the annual awards event every year. That was a great time. That was a really good time. So basketball's always been my favorite sport and then it just worked its way into what we just finished talking about, the River Queens. Then the Basketball Magazine, we covered obviously the River Queens. It was boys and girls but we tried to really cover the girls because they had not been covered in the media in St. Louis and that was an opening door for that to happen and I'm proud of that because we then saw the competition with the other parts of the media, wanted to cover girls sports. So that was great. So we had the pro women and we had college women included. I mean, it was the guys too. I didn't get to the NBA games. I just made sure I got myself to the WNBA games. So, being in the media, that was fun too with basketball. That was great. So I did a little of everything there. That was mostly all the coaching and then just followed my kids in the rest of whatever they did in sports. That's all I can think of in that.

Maureen Zegel: What happened after basketball? What did you do after the basketball?

Margo Gavin: When the team was done? Well, I cried for a while. I still was doing the newspaper, Keep Hoop Alive that came out monthly and then the boys and girls athletes who wanted to...you know, I was the consultant. That's basically what I did and the mother and father or whoever parents or guardian of the kids would come and we would talk about all their abilities and I would recruit kids that I knew also. Then that was it. I would market them out to college coaches all across the country where I thought they could fit, at what levels, because there were criteria. You knew the criteria for what they were looking for for the upcoming seasons and then you taught them how to negotiate for money with these coaches and how to get through the process because I wasn't allowed legally to do that, per se, and so you just taught them how to do it. You didn't make a lot of money doing it but I loved doing it because it was about education and I covered all sports, boys and girls, all sports, not just that. That wasn't just a basketball thing. So I did that until...I think that was, forever, it seemed and I had always been doing sporting events, awards kind of events and so I kind of worked my way into the music business. When the internet came along, you had to adapt to that and I

chose not to, competing for this other kind of consulting business. I just went into managing bands and singers' performance here in St. Louis and I liked that a lot. It was a lot of fun because I love music. So I just edged out of the other consulting business and just did the music business for...I don't know, I stopped a few years back per se. That was fabulous obviously. You got in everywhere free and everybody sang fabulous and if they didn't, I didn't work with them. You helped them if you could in any way, and I'm not a singer and I've never been in a band but I was damn good at it. It was fun, yeah, very, very, very fun.

Maureen Zegel: Who's one of your top people?

Margo Gavin: Well, the top was Kim Massey, yeah. She was just singing. I remember the night, I had my camera and I was down at the Beale, right down there in the blues triangle area downtown near the park and so I'm just listening to her sing and I had not heard her and I had been around blues a lot. So she's singing Midnight Train to Georgia, one of my very favorite songs, and as she's singing Midnight Train, it was just silly, there's a train going by on the tracks, which has got tracks right there in downtown and I thought, oh, God, this is just too much. So I just told her afterwards how I thought she was terrific and was anybody managing her, did she need help and she was tied to that organization and I said, "Well, if you want to make more and do a variety of more songs, I know you can probably sing anything." So I took some pictures of her. She wanted some pictures. I gave them to her and she said, "I can't believe it's me" and I said, "Well, you look beautiful." I said, "What's the matter with that?" and she said, "Nobody's ever told me I was beautiful." I said, "Well, you are beautiful and that's without make-up. Wait till we put the make-up on." Anyway, so it went from there and then she knew that she could do a lot. She knew she sang beautifully. So we took it from a blues joint, which is still there and she still sings there now even, but we took her. She was the star of St. Louis, yeah. She sang jazz, blues, R&B, soul, funk, you name it, she could sing it and St. Louis fell in love with her and she did all kinds of gigs too. Then, within a year-and-a-half, we had her performing for major league baseball come into play in 2004 against the Cardinals and what was great about that was corporate America, the world was at bat and so I had to ask the band to not just cheer for the Cardinals because they were here for everyone and the people who were for Boston thought I, when I'd go around saying hi to everybody, blah, blah, blah, they thought

I was cheering for Boston and they found out I was for both teams so that was a funny night. That was a great night. So that was a big deal for her, to have that kind of gig within a year-and-a-half. But I worked hard at doing that. You had to do that promotion, marketing. But I thought it was an easy sell because she was a great performer. So that was the top person. I mostly consulted with a lot of others. Oh, Jeannie Trevor, she was great. Jeannie Trevor is still around. I mean, she wasn't the style of Kim. She was another style, jazz performer, great singer and people from the woodwork came out when we got her back into the limelight, all kinds of people in St. Louis because Jeannie had been not performing as well and, oh, man, she just took off. Those were the two that stand out.

Maureen Zegel: What kind of influences did you have in that part of your career, sports and entertainment part? Not very many people were doing what you were doing.

Margo Gavin: In the sports, no. There were some women in the past leagues that I had researched that were around, wives and all of that. And then, of course, in the league we had, we had women coaches and then I found out that I had been the only woman owner. I found that interesting. So, yeah, that was a first. That was fun. I've been a strong advocate of promoting women for many, many years so in terms of who was there for me, I got connected to the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame too. Those people were very helpful at times and the fact that you were who I was at the time, they thought I was a hot tomato so, you know, we had fun with promoting a lot of that because that was in Women's Basketball Coaches Association. I worked as a volunteer for the Sports Commission when the women's Final Four came here. So that was, like, two or three times...no, twice they came here and that was a big deal, 20 years...now I think we have that Final Four. Vicky Pimentel and myself, she would be another advocate for women in sports and she was also in the media. So we ran these workshops and they were for girls who were 6th, 7th and 8th grade girls and we selected them to get them to apply and had fun in telling them about ourselves. So then we would have the workshop two days before the Final Four and even that day and we taught the kids about what this whole process was about and, oh, God, it was exciting. The kids were fabulous. They were just so excited to be chosen. I remember one time opening up a session and saying, "Gee, there's an amazing event going on in this country today. Does anybody know anything about it?" I

don't know if it was in the Post-Dispatch or whatever but I said, "But it was just an amazing thing, about 20 girls" and they're all going, "No, we didn't see anything," and it was them. Here they were, performing in this whole event. Anyway, that was terribly exciting.

Maureen Zegel: So they were playing basketball?

Margo Gavin: Well, yeah, they did with the...okay, there was a workout day for the two opposing teams for Final Four and they took time away to have these girls come in, just them privately before the fans of St. Louis were allowed in the day before and they took all their questions. Then all the media I knew from National Media. They came in and spoke to the kids. Oh, my God, they were blown away and they were wonderful women. They were all women at that point, maybe two guys. That was pretty exciting. I thought about it when I put that together, I thought...well, Vicky and I put that together...that was pretty exciting. We did it in Atlanta, I think, twice; Boston and I was ready to go home and do that one. We did it for only so many years and it was all volunteer. God forbid they'd give you a dime to do it, use your genius, girl; you know how you do that all the time so we did and it was a wonderful experience and those kids, they had a wonderful...imagine being 6th, 7th and 8th grade and getting to be in the national limelight and, when we would go to the press conference, like [inaudible 39:30] University of Connecticut, hotshot guy in a women's game. He was such a jerk at first. Well, he's not a jerk anymore. But to go into those press conferences, these kids, and we primed them and the coaches knew ahead of time, this was a workshop from and who these kids were and they were so good to the kids, tough but good. That was exciting. That was a pretty exciting thing. So anyway, then pretty soon I had friends of mine saying, "Can I come to the event, be an instructor or whatever?" because it was a big deal and the women were terrific. The players came in and offered the kids brownies one day. The girls just went crazy: "Can you autograph my brownie?" I mean, stupid stuff but it was fun. So that was one of the more memorable times that I remember.

Maureen Zegel: Then I want you to talk about the one really big volunteer project that you took on that probably is still hanging out there. Talk a little bit about the All-American Redheads.

Margo Gavin: One that's still out there. Oh, yeah, the All-American Redheads. I remember just reading an article many years ago about them and I said, the All-American Redheads? What the hell is this? And I should know because I was a redhead and I needed to know so I never heard of it so the group that started out of boot heel of Missouri...I can't think of the name...Canton, Missouri and it was a Swedish guy who started this and the gals would go around and play the men in basketball clubs in the country. They did the Midwest and then they eventually did the coast and so I'm learning all this and I'm thinking, this is absolutely extraordinary. So I started collecting things. I went to their reunions down in Georgia and Jonesboro, Arkansas and met the women and I knew there was one at the time. I saw this girl and I knew I recognized her. She was from St. Louis. So over a 50-year...30 to 80, I guess it was, there were all these different teams that would take off in buses and go all over the country.

Maureen Zegel: They were young girls though, right, right out of high school?

Margo Gavin: Right out of high school, yeah. Most of them really were farm girls, country girls because sports were a big deal in the country, not as big a deal as today in urban America, and they were fabulous women, as players and they were fabulous for their enthusiasm and basically they'd pull up into a town, they would put up all the signs, they would do actually the marketing for the team and the tickets and then play the men and do the half time show and it was just a genius at marketing, that whole thing. I covered them, I did stories on them and, of course, I went to their annual event and the man who owned it at the time, he bought the team from the Swedish guy and he was down in Arkansas. I can't think of his name right now and so I'm down there and someone told him who I was and he said, "Were you an All-American Redhead?" and he had this great drawl, and I said, "No," and he looks at me and he says, "Are you sure?" and I said, "I'm damn sure" and he said, "But you're a goddamn redhead, aren't you?" and I just fell out of my chair laughing so hard.

Maureen Zegel: Were the girls all redheads?

Margo Gavin: So they had to bleach their hair with Henna. Now, that's when the Swedish guy had them. His wife was a hairdresser. We had that whole red hair Henna came from which I found is wonderful, and so that went

on for a long time and, no, they always did do their hair red. I mean, the gal from St. Louis, she said that they had to find something red and some of the girls didn't want their hair to be red because Henna was the thing to use because it washed out. That really was the thing. And so that went on forever, yeah. They have a website and some guy's been writing a book like me for about 100 years so we're probably going to meet in the afterlife. There will be a special place in Henna Heaven. That's the name of the book, Henna Heaven.

Maureen Zegel: Okay, Margo, when you were in school in the early '70s, talk about what was going on in the rest of the world and what it was like to live as a woman in the mid '70s. All kinds of movements going on.

Margo Gavin: Yeah, exactly.

Maureen Zegel: The Vietnam War was...

Margo Gavin: The Vietnam War, civil rights all around, the women's movement, feminist movement, all that happening and, as I see it, we were doing a lot but a lot was happening that we could fit our lives into. Activists just do that. They move and they get things done and they're happy to see the Gloria Steinem's and Bella Abzug and all the rest of them there pointing the way. I mean, I remember walking down the street one day and a friend of mine who ran the ERA, Susan Sperry...

Maureen Zegel: Say what the ERA was.

Margo Gavin: Oh, the Equal Rights Amendment. Yeah, well, we tried to get that passed so that the women could have equal rights. We're still fighting for them and we never got that one passed but, at any rate, she said, "Hi, how are you? What are you doing?" I said, "Nothing, I'm looking for a job." She said, "Good, come work" and I went there. So I worked with ERA, I worked at three of Harriet Woods'...see, the political campaigns were all there too, so I worked there managing the office staff of Harriet, two state and one other congressional. That was great.

Maureen Zegel: And Harriet Woods was?

Margo Gavin: She was running for state senator in Missouri and other than the state, she had one more kind of, I thought she had and I can't remember what that was but I know I worked three campaigns. Then the African

American guy who ran for the mayor of St. Louis who owns a mansion at the corner of Lindell Boulevard and Kings Highway and I can't think of his name. His brother's name is (Deif?). I can't think of his name. He's still running around. That was another crazy campaign. The crazier the things were, I seemed to fit, so I did bounce around with all those movements, obviously civil rights you were kind of living that as a white person still. I was really busy but that was the wonderful part of busy. I mean, look at the change we were working on...not me, people. The law was just really an awful time there for so many people. But it was the times that we lived and when I think of the times that we lived through and the movements, the change, and yet, civil rights are back in the same mix again here now. So it's just ongoing but to have that kind of education and I think that's just absolutely marvelous, to be that exposed and learn so much and feel as if you're contributing something, whatever that might be. And you meet the craziest people, absolute craziest people you'll ever meet in your life is in a campaign, all the screwballs show up to apply for a job and they get hired, and they get people elected and if your candidate loses, some people are crying their eyes out. I'm like, let me out of here. I've got to go get to the shop. I don't have time to cry about it. Anyway, so, yeah, the times were changing but a lot of stuff happened all during that time that I'm really glad I was part of, to be alive at that time. Then, again, living in Laclede Town kind of environment, it all fit. All that stuff fit just wonderfully and you could say any damn thing you wanted.

Maureen Zegel: You stayed in the city?

Margo Gavin: Yeah. When things weren't doing too well in Laclede Town with the mismanagement of HUD first and then the private ownership really let it deteriorate Laclede Town drastically and then I knew we were going to have to move. So we did plan to move and a friend of mine called and said there was a house for sale and we had planned and we got this house for a song, literally almost a song. It was right up the street, on the same street, Laclede.

Maureen Zegel: So, you were a pioneer in that sense too.

Margo Gavin: In what sense?

- Maureen Zegel: Urban pioneers, they talk about urban pioneers, the people in our generation, when certain areas of the city were looking like they were falling down, young people would move in and...
- Margo Gavin: Oh, yeah, that was wonderful. I wanted to live in Lafayette Square. That's where I really wanted to. That was such a cool, cool area. No, I definitely wanted to stay in the city and then I moved up to Laclede. I think that's a riot, right off the same damn street, still have the same phone number. Well, yeah, you could say, I guess, that's an urban pioneer. I didn't think of it from that perspective.
- Maureen Zegel: Talk about your house.
- Margo Gavin: Oh, well, the first thing I remember about the house when my friend, Anna Forder called me about it, she said, "Nobody's really buying it so I thought I'd call you." That's always a great line, and take my kids in the door and open the door and I say, oh, my God, it's a mansion and the kids said, "What's a mansion?" It's 100-year-old house...well, that's 100 years now and it's beautiful, old, Victorian-like three-story home and I just loved it and right off the pop, we had paint parties and lots of beer and we painted it and fixed it and had all kinds of...probably 1,000 parties in that house and that was just great. I didn't care for the neighborhood. It was developing. I wasn't too crazy about it but I felt I was spoiled coming from Laclede Town. I knew community. This was not quite into a community phase but I got over that and worked at community, set up with a couple of friends, we set up crime control in the area. We did all kinds of things to keep it moving in the right direction. So I loved it and lived there for 30 years, plus, wonderful place to live, still within the city now, in the next block; can't get away too far. It's like, I better get lost.
- Maureen Zegel: I ask this question of people. I don't know who came up with the question but what do you think your life would have been had you been born 50 years earlier? So, in, what, the late 19th century?
- Margo Gavin: You mean, like I'd be 120 now?
- Maureen Zegel: I wouldn't be talking to you. So your grandmother's time, as far as being a woman is concerned. What would life be like?
- Margo Gavin: Here, in this country or in Ireland?

Maureen Zegel: Yes, in this country.

Margo Gavin: I'm supposed to know some history here, aren't I? Oh, great.

Maureen Zegel: [Inaudible 51:47] really difficult. In other words, it wasn't easy and you wouldn't be doing the things you're doing.

Margo Gavin: Oh, never, never, never. You'd be still working hard and you'd be raising probably even more kids if you were so inclined to have children. Yeah, I'd be probably having 10 kids and screaming at them and be working whatever jobs. I was still doing that. That's interesting, how many jobs I had. You could have said I was kind of schitzy individual, all the jobs I did have, but...well, those would have been really hard times. I didn't come up in hard times. I hear people say today, "Well, we didn't know we were poor when we were poor." There's some truth to some of that there and I didn't learn the working poor term until I got older. I didn't know how we were poor at all, but God knows, a lot of people lived through some terribly hard times, going back that far. So, no, I wasn't...I had a good life, considering all of the advantages that I had and as much as women were kept back, some women just kept pushing and women, as a group, were powerful and I got to be part of that kind of event too and smart men if they had any sense. They hung around with the right women.

Maureen Zegel: I think that's the end of that.

Margo Gavin: Is that enough?

Maureen Zegel: I think that's enough.