

Interview with Ellyn Bartges

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Interviewer: Mark R. DePue

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Bartges: But the sport thing, I was aware of Title IX. I wasn't sure, I didn't understand the legalities. All I knew was now, instead of being told, "No, you can't play because you are a girl," which I ran in to repeatedly in my younger days, now I knew that I was going to be able to play but I didn't know what the scope of that meant.

DePue: I'm going to read, very briefly, what the essence of the law states and then let you explain in more detail and we'll take kind of an aside here to flush out what Title IX was and is because it's so important to the rest of our discussion today. So here's basically what the law says "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

Bartges: It's so simple, so eloquent. I mean it can still almost bring tears to my eyes.

DePue: Wow. Why?

Bartges: My life has been guided by those sixty-four words, thirty-five, I can't remember exactly. Everything that I've done, personally from a sporting perspective and professionally, have been guided by that.

DePue: Okay. That was the opening of the door, the opportunity.

Bartges: That's exactly what it was and when you listen to the interviews of the women and the two men also that I interviewed in my twenty-six interviews, almost without exception, almost I say because there is one for sure, you will hear the people talk about throwing open the door, opening a gate, turning on a light. There's a lot of different phraseologies, but it all amounts to the same thing that this was – I think Charlotte West put it best. Next to the nineteenth amendment, this is the single most important piece of legislation affecting women in the United States in the twentieth century.