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Interview with Mark Cooke

Mark Cooke

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**LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interview #219
COOKE, Mark**

COOKE, Mark
Head softball coach

Interviewed: March 25, 2015

Interviewer: Jenna Kasmarik

Index by: Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard

Length: 00:34:35

Abstract: In his March 25, 2015 interview with Jenna Kasmarik, Mark Cooke details the role Title IX has played in athletics at Winthrop. Cooke details changes in recruitment and facilities. He also shares why he's stayed at Winthrop for so many years. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: Athletics, sports, Title IX, softball, baseball, Athletic Director, Presidents, facilities

Interview Session (March 25, 2015): Digital File

Time Keywords

00:00:00 *Start of Interview*/Interviewer's Introduction

00:00:13 *Question:* How long have you been here and why have you stayed? *Answer:* 27 or 28, MC loves this place. Likes working at a place that puts academics ahead of athletics.

00:00:40 *Question:* How many men's and women's sports were there when you first started? *Answer:* Added track and lacrosse since then.

00:00:55 *Question:* Has the addition of sports been positive? *Answer:* Made us better-rounded.

00:01:05 *Question:* How has recruitment changed? *Answer:* Looking at freshman and sophomores. Winthrop recruits people based on academics first and then their ability to play a sport.

00:01:40 *Question:* What was your first year like? *Answer:* Transition to Division I. Coached volleyball and softball. No assistant coaches. Struggling to get scholarships.

- 00:02:20 *Question:* How did that affect the two teams? *Answer:* “It got dizzying at times.” The sports have matured and are viable.
- 00:02:53 *Question:* Facilities? *Answer:* There were just fields. Played volleyball in Peabody. On par with everyone else.
- 00:03:20 *Question:* Is Title IX the reason for the addition of women’s sports? *Answer:* A contributing factor. Former athletic directors help shape the program.
- 00:03:55 *Question:* Define Title IX? *Answer:* A way to keep female athletes in comparable positions to their male counterparts. Title IX isn’t a catchall but a vehicle for students to get an education and play a sport.
- 00:04:32 *Question:* Why did you decide to play softball? *Answer:* Played his whole life – mother taught him.
- 00:04:50 *Question:* How has Title IX affected the recruiting process? *Answer:* More competitive. Softball recruiting is at the forefront.
- 00:05:15 *Question:* What would you say to the sentiment that Title IX has caused an influx of male, head coaches? *Answer:* Doesn’t see that that has anything to do with Title IX. The best coaches should be hired.
- 00:05:45 *Question:* When was the first time you heard of Title IX? *Answer:* 1970s. MC talks about his mother’s influence.
- 00:06:20 *Question:* Any additions or changes you’d like to see? *Answer:* Can’t put one statement to every sport. MC talks about some of the ramifications of Title IX. There is a difference in high schools than colleges when it comes to Title IX.
- 00:07:25 *Question:* How many coach changes have you seen? *Answer:* Quite a few. But Winthrop is rare, because a lot of coaches have stayed for a long time. MC says athletic department is family.
- 00:08:14 *Question:* Is there more equal pay with Title IX? *Answer:* There is an imbalance in baseball and softball. Staff is paid differently in these sports.
- 00:08:45 *Question:* Equality in equipment and staffing? *Answer:* MC feels lucky. Doesn’t feel like he has been discriminated against, because he coaches a women’s sport. Athletic Director is very involved in all sports. DiGiorgio was also involved in all sports – no team discriminated against.

- 00:11:05 *Question:* Going Division I has bridge the gap between academics and athletics?
Answer: It did the opposite at first. Leadership didn't provide that bridge at first. Academics and athletics need to be partners. Professors keep an eye on student athletes.
- 00:13:35 *Question:* What else did DiGiorgio bring to Winthrop? *Answer:* Facilities. MC thought DiGiorgio's ten-year plan was just a political gesture. MC was surprised to see this plan implemented.
- 00:15:00 *Question:* What else was needed? *Answer:* Needed a tarp. If it was a necessity, coaches could get what they needed. MC talks about hearing Title IX complaints all the time. Usually University's just don't have the money, but when there is money, it's usually shared equally.
- 00:16:00 *Question:* What about our current Presidential situation? *Answer:* We may be in limbo. The financial status of the state and economy has caused most problems.
- 00:16:35 *Question:* What are the three prongs? *Answer:* Opportunity, support, and population. It was difficult for some coaches, cause money was taken away. Money had to be balanced.
- 00:17:50 **[no question]** Interviewer and MC discussing the role of Title IX creating lacrosse at Winthrop. Financial reasons behind adding lacrosse. Research to bring lacrosse to Winthrop.
- 00:20:45 **[no question]** Interviewer talking about her experience in lacrosse and coming from Georgia. Interviewer and MC talk about the imbalance between high schools and colleges.
- 00:21:40 **[no question]** Initially Winthrop wanted a woman in MC's role. Mary Roland Griffin and Bert Bobb adopted the program.
- 00:22:30 *Question:* Griffin's and Bobb's Influence in athletics? *Answer:* Major. They have always been vocal and supportive. MC has turned down several opportunities to leave Winthrop.
- 00:24:05 **[no question]** MC continues talking about the athletics department being family. MC finds it easy to talk to people on campus in all departments.
- 00:27:20 *Question:* Since there is no professional platform for women's sport, what is the driving force behind female, student athletes? *Answer:* Academics. Provides academic compensation.

00:29:10 *Question:* Anything else to add? *Answer:* MC has heard horror stories of Title IX. MC elaborates. Parents complained about Title IX. Compares horror stories to Winthrop. Interviewer talks about transferring to Winthrop.

00:32:50 **[no question]** MC says there has never been a problem with Title IX.

00:34:35 *End of interview*