

## **Ms. Pam Fox**

### **Texas Educator, Wheelchair Basketball Official, and a 2013 National Wheelchair Basketball Association Hall of Famer**

*Interview conducted by  
Sebastian Fuentes  
In 2016 in Arlington, Texas*

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#### **Biography**

Originally from the Dallas area, Pam Fox has lived in Texas her entire life. In 1970, she moved from Dallas to Lubbock to attend Texas Tech University. While at Texas Tech University, Fox pursued a bachelor's degree in Physical Education, with a minor in Biology. She was also a student athlete who participated in basketball and track. Upon graduation in 1974, Fox moved back to the Dallas area and began her career as an educator. She has since taught for 38 years in various private, Catholic schools in the Dallas area. She recently accepted a teaching position at an area public school.

For more than the past 30 years, Fox has served as a wheelchair basketball official. She has refereed countless wheelchair basketball games. Because of her role as an official, she has been fortunate enough to travel around the United States. She is a 2013 National Wheelchair Basketball Association Hall of Famer. She is one of the first, if not the first, female officials in the sport.

#### **Topics discussed**

- College experience at Texas Tech University
- Impact of sports
- Post-college experience and teaching career
- Differing school systems
- Becoming a wheelchair basketball official
- National Wheelchair Basketball Championships
- Wheelchair basketball and educating the classroom about disability
- Jim Hayes
- 2013 NWBA Hall of Fame induction
- On being a female official

**Fuentes**

This is Sebastian Fuentes interviewing Ms. Pam Fox for the UT Arlington Texas Disability Oral History Project. Today's date is April 23<sup>rd</sup>, and I am here with Ms. Fox at my home in Flower Mound. I am here today to talk with Ms. Fox about her experiences of being both an educator and an official for wheelchair basketball, and her 2013 induction into the National Wheelchair Basketball Association Hall of Fame.

<topic>College experience at Texas Tech University </topic>

Thank you for participating in today's oral history project, Ms. Fox. Let us begin by talking about, broadly, your young adult life. It's my understanding you attended college at Texas Tech University. Had you grown up near the University or elsewhere?

**Fox**

No. I grew up in Dallas. I went to Tech because it was far away enough from home where if I didn't want to come home I didn't have to. But, it was close enough that, if I wanted to, 99% of the kids were from this area, and you could get a ride any day of the week. So, that was my whole reason. (Laughter)

Basically for going out there, plus there were some football players that went on to the NFL that played and, I was their fan. I don't know, I just like the term Red Raider. I was more of a Raider. "Yeah, that sounded good." (Laughter)

**Fuentes**

Now, it's my understanding because I have heard the phrase from alumni from Texas Tech University that when you go there cry, but when you leave you cry harder. Is that true?

**Fox**

At Tech?

**Fuentes**

At Tech, yes.

**Fox**

I don't think I ever cried there for the school, but you get goosebumps every time you hear the fight song. I mean it's...it's something that...even now I'm teaching and most of the teachers at the school are from Tech, have gone to Tech, have kids going to Tech or you know...It's just everybody's a Red Raider. (Laughter)

**Fuentes**

So, while you were at Texas Tech University, what did you end up studying?

**Fox**

I was a Physical Education major and Biology minor. They didn't have Health for a minor at the time until my senior year, and I wasn't going to start all over and spend another couple

years. I mean, I was done in four, but the only thing about Biology being your minor with a P.E. major, most of your classmates were pre-med students. So much for the curve.  
(Laughter)

Yeah... (Fox motions to pause recording to take time to focus her thoughts. We take roughly a one minute pause)

**Fuentes**

So, when you went to Texas Tech University, did you know you wanted to go into education or did you...?

**Fox**

Oh yeah, I knew way before I even went to college that I was going to be a teacher. In fact, I was teaching as I was growing up. It seemed like I was ahead of my years. I was always told that. And, [I] would explain things and show people how to do things. It was just a natural thing for me, I guess. And, my coach always told me, "If I hear that you got into any kind of trouble or gone off the wayward path with drugs and stuff, your job is null and void, don't even think about teaching." And at the time, you didn't know that he didn't have anything to do with you getting a job or not. (Laughter) But, you believed it. So yeah, you stayed on the straight and narrow, and stayed out of trouble. But you know, I was never in trouble with no body. I was more into sports and didn't have time for all that other stuff.

**Fuentes**

Talking about your education degree and stuff, you mention that you did a focus in Biology, but you wanted to do Health...

**Fox**

Well, it was...P.E. and Health go hand in hand, and they didn't have a Health degree at the time. You had to take so much of the sciences. You had to take Zoology, Botany, and Anatomy and Physiology. That's twelve hours right there. Minor's eighteen hours. I mean, that's a no brainer right? And so, I went ahead. Then I find out taking Biology, you're taking Microbiology, you're taking Invertebrate Zoology, you're taking History of Invertebrates, which was fun because we would always go on these field trips from Lubbock to Port Aransas. That's a long way. Too much driving. Fourteen hours or something like that, but it was a lot of fun and we learned a lot.

It was...Vertebrate Zoology, when we went to Junction and did...we took the population of a river you know and that was a lot of fun. We learned how to do that. You look for reptiles, and I got in a group with this guy who had a sidearm because if we came across a snake, it was going to be that snake, it wasn't going to be me. (Laughter)

So, I made sure I was in his group. But, I enjoyed Biology. It was a lot of fun. Different aspects of science and I was more into the life sciences than the earth sciences and so forth. So that's why. It just made sense.

**Fuentes**

Yes. (Laughter) Well, it seems like all that exposure to biology and science still didn't sway you to...you really wanted to stay with education. So that's excellent. You talked about your

coach earlier and I was wondering if you could talk about your athletic experiences while you were at the University. Am I correct that athletics made up a big portion of your university experience?

**Fox**

Oh yes, yes. I played basketball for Tech, and I was also on the track team, but I was not a runner. Only running I did was up and down a basketball court. I was a spear chucker. I threw the javelin at Tech for the track team. I had to do all the field events, but the javelin was my favorite because I would always win the softball throw in high school and early years, and that was the closest thing to throwing anything. (Laughter) It's hard to throw an iron bar. Yeah, I love the javelin.

**Fuentes**

I brought the question up because I was just wondering in terms of how much did sports impact your education experience.

**Fox**

<topic>Impact of sports</topic>

Well, I grew up playing sports. I mean, there were my sisters. There were four of us and two boys in the family. The only other girls on the street were way down at the other end and it was a long street and around the bend. So, I grew up with playing with all the guys out there. You know, we would play football, baseball, basketball, you name it, and we played it. Ever since I can remember, kindergarten on up.

It was funny because all the neighborhood kids would come over to the house and knock on the door and my mom would answer. Is Pam here? It was like they couldn't have a game without me. And, it would be one of the kids across the street, he was a little younger than me, but he was good. He was an athlete and we would take on the whole neighborhood. The two of us, in any sport. That means in baseball, we would have a bat and tennis ball and whatever, and we had to make sure that we scored each other, otherwise it would count as an out if both of us were on base. One of us would have to be out. So, we made sure we didn't get out for a while. (Laughter) Football was the same thing. You know, "I'll meet you in the end zones." Throw the ball. (Fox gestures like throwing a football and makes a swish sound.)

**Basketball.**

This kid's dad was ping pong champion. He was a professional ping pong player. And, he taught me some ping pong. I tell you, table tennis they call it now or whatever. But I'm in second grade, and I'm playing these adults and it was a lot of fun. So, when I went out to Tech, sometimes for just relaxation or nothing else to do, go down the student union building and they had the ping pong tables and pool tables down in the basement. I'd play with some of the oriental guys, and we'd be three feet from the table battling back and forth. And, it was a lot of fun. We would have a crowd watching us and that was pretty cool. It was fun. I never thought anything of it. It was just, it was fun.

And then, I dated a guy who was, I guess, a pool hustler. (Laughter) He was good; he taught me some tricks on the pool table. So, um I got some spending money. (Laughter)

Back then...there was nothing out there at Tech. You really didn't need the money. There was a McDonalds way down on 19<sup>th</sup> Street and Der Wienerschnitzel on 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Other than that, there wasn't much. The Brittany was a hamburger joint across the street on University, but it was kind of expensive and at that time, a dollar went a long way. (Laughter) You didn't have much money.

I did referee: the intramurals for Tech and worked for the Intramural Department. And that's how I made pocket change, while I was out there. But, that was fun. I was refereeing before I even went out there: some of the kids' basketball games. My coach at home got me involved in that. I enjoyed doing it. And since I couldn't play intramurals because I played for Tech, on the Tech team, I got to referee the games or coach the teams. I coached the dorm team, our dorm team to all university championships. We beat everybody. We had the smallest dorm on campus. Only half of it was used. There were only three floors. Because they were using it for a Home Ec. offices and they were going to convert the dorm into all Home Ec. I guess after.

We didn't have all the...and it was the cheapest dorm on campus. And no air conditioning too. We had the friendliest people I think. Well, anyway. We took everybody on and beat them. That was fun. (Laughter)

So I knew I was going to be coaching and teaching long before I went to college. That just kinda put icing of the cake.

### Fuentes

So. You went to college, and correct me if I am wrong, between 1970 and 1974. Am I correct?

### Fox

August of '70, I was out there, right after the big tornado hit in Lubbock. I got questions, "You still want to go out there?" I was, "Yeah, why not." And, I'll never forget the track meet one year. Back then, we did not have the Southwest Conference for women or Big 12 or anything like that. We were still playing district, state, and so forth because they didn't have that Title IX for women yet. And we were like the pioneers and set everything up for everybody. But we were host of a track meet. The night before, tornados were hitting all around and sirens are going off and big storms and I always hated coming out of the dorm room and sitting in the hallway, especially since I had classes at 7:30 in the morning. I'd take off and say okay, I'm on the bottom floor anyway. It didn't bother me. I said, "Hi, let me know if anything goes on, I'm going back to bed." So everyone was out in the hallway for tornados, and I'm back in my room. So this track meet we were supposed to have the next day, it was a Saturday, we were getting kind of ticked off because our coach was getting kind of cranky and tell us to do this and to do that. Just getting on our case. We kind of had enough of it. I said, "Okay God, why don't you send back a couple of those things you know...one of them."

Well, we were at a track meet, just mess up this a little bit. Just as a joke really. I tell you at lunch time, not one, not two, but three of them came out of the sky one after another. And the Channel 8 affiliated...from Channel 8 Dallas WFAA, affiliate in Lubbock opened their back door to their station and filmed it. And, each one of them (these tornados) came down a little further. The first one didn't hit the ground, the second one came close, and the third one, I think, hit the ground, but I think it went right back up.

So, we got the bright idea...so we wanted to go chase them and see what they look like. We went out chasing tornados. (Laughter) While we were at Tech. Then, it would snow and you'd have a dust storm at the same time so you had orange snow. It would rain during the dust storm. You'd have mud. I mean, it didn't happen very often and you know, there was only one time that we had a dust storm that really bothered me. Because I'd have to go from the women's gym all the way to the north end of campus to the men's gym and to the intermural fields out there. And we had the worst dust storm. It was blowing in and you had your jacket and your windbreaker up over your eyes, just barely looking out, 'em beady eye[s]

and just breathing into your jacket because it was so bad. You could hardly see anything and it was stinging your legs. That dust, that sand would hit your legs and sting.

So that was the only time...the only time that I really remember us having a real bad one, and I know we had others. Maybe I wasn't in town at the time. Maybe I was at home or something. Because I can remember being at home and looking to the west and if the sky was kind of orange, I'd thought, "Oh boy, I bet Tech is really getting it."

(Laughter)

#### Fuentes

So, transitioning from when you left Tech to start your first job, were you still there in Lubbock or did you move elsewhere?

#### Fox

<topic>Post-college experience and teaching career</topic>

No, I came home. I came back to the Dallas area because I wanted to coach on the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade level. And, I wanted to coach basketball. I knew that Dallas had a league. I taught in the Catholic schools for 38 years. The Catholic schools had a league. And that's really what I wanted to coach in.

So...

#### Fuentes

So, you said you taught in Catholic schools for 38 years, had you ever thought about teaching elsewhere?

#### Fox

I thought about it, but I wanted to coach there. They didn't have coaching at that level. Maybe seventh, eighth grade. And there was no...I don't know I just came back home and I...don't ask me why...You know I thought about and then I thought, "I'd go back to where I know because my coach is waiting for me." (Laughter)

It wasn't 'til four years ago I was substituting in the public schools. I substituted in three different districts because I lived right in the middle and you'd cross the street you're in one. You'd cross the street you're in another, and you cross the street and you're in the other. So I thought well if I can't get a job in one district, I can get one in the next district or whatever because you have to make ends meet. I felt like if I didn't work every day, I was going to be lazy. I felt guilty, you know. So, I made sure I had a job every day. Only thing is, is when the kids are off, you were off too, and you didn't get paid for those days, and you didn't have the benefits. When I started to...well my last long-term sub job, and you know you can sub daily or you can get a long-term sub [substitute] job because the teacher's on maternity leave or in the hospital or whatever and take her place, and I was fortunate enough to get a lot of those. After my first year or during my first year, I was put on everybody's priority lists. You know, "Call her first." Because most subs, when you get a sub, they sit and read a book. They don't do anything. Most of them...a lot of them. The ones who are conscientious or have been teaching, or so forth, they teach. The kids will try to give you a hard time. And, they say that substitute teaching is the hardest job in the world. It can be. I just had a knack with the kids because I wouldn't let them give me a hard time. I'd say, "Hey man, I'm here to teach you while your teacher is gone. And, she expects this to be learned. So, we're going to do this today. I've taught for 38 years; I'm helping your teacher out today. She expects

this to be done and we're going to do it that way she doesn't have reteach it when she gets back."

I could relate with most of the kids because I was into sports. I could throw out some names and tell them where I've been, who I've met, and stuff like that. They thought, "Wow." You got the boys in your hand...in the palm of your hand you know and that's all you need right there. It's pretty much fun.

(Ms. Fox requested that I pause the recorder so she may collect her thoughts.)

My last sub job was a long-term sub job at one of these schools. It was for science. I forgot how much I enjoyed being in the classroom. But anyway, the head of the Science Department for the district came to visit four different times and wanting me to sign a contract. I knew the P.E. job was going to be coming open and I thought, "Oh, do I really want to. Do I want to. What do I want to do?" I had my choice really. So, I picked P.E. and the coaching.

Not because I'd have to sit there and grade papers. That didn't even enter my mind. Because I had to do that while I was sitting there anyway because I was subbing for this teacher who happened to be on maternity leave and one of my former students. I had taught her kindergarten through eighth grade at one of the Catholic schools. That was pretty fun. The kids couldn't believe it, "How old are you anyway." So, I told them...I always tell them I'm 92. "92?!?" "Yeah, don't I look like I'm 92?" That gets them going. They start thinking about it and getting their mind working.

So anyway, this school ended up hiring me. That's where I am now in the public schools. I was just told by a superintendent of another district that if I had started, years ago in the public schools instead of the Catholic schools, I could have retired at least 20 years ago if I wanted to or kept on, and retired with my full salary...a 100%. (Pam motions her head back.) "Oooohhhh." (Laughter) Oh, what a dummy. No, God has other plans for me so. It's worked out for me.

**Fuentes**

I assume you're referring to the Texas Teachers Retirement Services?

**Fox**

TRS.

**Fuentes**

TRS, yes!

**Fox**

I said, "Oh, wow!" But you know, back then they don't tell you much about it and you didn't know anything about it. And as a new teacher, these are your options. Well, nobody sits you down and does that. Nowadays, it's different. Everybody knows their options, knows what's coming up, knows what to do, knows what's covered and so forth. Anyway.

**Fuentes**

I just wanted to touch very briefly, you had worked in the Catholic schools and were subbing in the public schools. Briefly, how different was the environment?

**Fox**

<topic>Differing school systems</topic>

The environment? We have kids now that shouldn't even be there. The police have come and arrested them or taken them away in handcuffs. They're back in school the next day. You don't have that in Catholic schools or in private schools. They pay tuition. If they are a behavior problem, they're gone. Period, the end.

But in public schools, you have so many federal laws governing the rights of kids. When...if they are diagnosed as a behavior problem or a emotionally disturbed kid, or whatever, SpEd (Special Education) says it all. They can only put them in ISS [in-school suspension] or suspension or so for, so many hours or days or whatever. And then, it's back to school. I found this out last night, I was talking to one of the principals about that and they were explaining it to me, which I didn't understand because I never had to deal with all that. Now, I understand why the kids are kept at the school and not shipped off to juvie [Juvenile Detention Center] or something like that.

It all has to do with the government, and you don't have the government interfering in the private schools because they don't get any federal aid [Catholic schools often receive federal aid that provides supplemental education for both teachers and students]. What they run by is what they have...what's been donated or what they have fundraisers for. That is a big difference right there.

Discipline. In private schools...Catholic schools you have your discipline problems, don't get me wrong. You have problems, but they're not on the scale as what you see in the public school.

**Fuentes**

Touching back on your experiences as a coach in the Catholic schools, and this concept of how much sports played a role in your life, I was wondering how did you become involved with adaptive sports as an official?

**Fox**

<topic>Becoming a wheelchair basketball official</topic>

I was home from school one night, and I didn't have to referee. I refereed high school and college ball. Basketball. It was my night off; I didn't have any games on my schedule. I had dinner in the oven. I was going to sit down and relax that night. And one of the athletic directors called me, who works over at Bachman Recreation Center, a rehab center, and works with disabled kids. Knew the director of the Center and they needed a referee that night for a wheelchair basketball game...a kids game.

So, I got a call. "Pam, can you referee a game for us tonight?"

I said, "Sally." I said, "This is my night off. I don't have a game scheduled tonight. I'm taking it easy. I got dinner in the oven."

She said, "Are you sure you don't want to referee?"

I said, "No, I really don't. I'm kind of tired. I'd like to take a break here."

And she said, "Well, I guess these kids won't have a game...a referee."

I thought, "Oh God, guilt trip." I said, "Alright Sally, where is it, when is it, whatever?"

"Well, it's over at Bachman."

I said, "That's fine, I just live two...three minutes away," 'cause, I lived over by Love Field at the time. "So, what time?"

She said, "7 (7PM)."

I said, "Okay, I'll be there."

She said, "Okay. Oh, by the way did I tell you it's a wheelchair basketball game?"

I said, "Sally, I don't know the first thing about wheelchair basketball."

"Don't worry, we'll give you a crash course when you get here."

So when I got there, Don Drury gave me a few pointers. He says, "Everything is the same as regular basketball, only they got 5 seconds closely guarding to get rid of the ball."

I said, "That's the same thing as able-body ball."

"The chair is part of the player, if they bang into the chair it's a foul."

I said, "Okay."

"Everything else is the same, but there is no double-dribble and no traveling. Well, there's traveling, but if they push the chair three times in succession it's travel."

I said, "Okay. Fine."

So I get there...in the gym. These kids are mostly...their physical handicap is maybe spina bifida or just... They are very small kids. Their chairs are huge. Nothing like you see today. Their ability and their skills are really nil to nothing. I think...they can barely lift the ball sometimes. And then, when they throw it, it kind of would bounce on the floor. I thought, "Okay, this is going to be...just take it easy don't ...hard to blow your whistle I guess. Kinda help them out. I sat there and helped them out a bit." This one kid tried so hard to get the ball from another kid, and he'd try five, six, seven...I counted. I must have counted to ten. And Don Drury, who's helping out with the kids, is sitting in his chair. He's the other referee; sitting right next to him and he's trying to (motions as if she were Don Drury talking to the kid player) "Pass the ball. Pass the ball."

Finally, he got to almost fifteen, and I blew my whistle and Don looked at me. I said, "5 seconds." And he said, "Oh, yeah," with a big grin on his face. "Okay, you're right." That was probably the only call I made all night.

After it was over, everybody thanked you for helping out with the kids and thanks for refereeing the kids' game, one after another. I thought, "Wow, this is just a different atmosphere. Nobody is on anybody. Everybody is helping each other and thanking each other." I thought, "This was okay."

And one of the ballplayers, who played for the Dallas Mavericks, Ron LaBar, he says, "Yeah, thanks Pam for helping out with the kids' game." The director of the center turns around and says, "Yeah, wait 'til she starts doing your games." And he said, "No way. Not uh, not uh, no way." Needless to say after that, I started doing their games.

It was tough at first. Not for me, but for them. First they [had to] accept me as an official, who knew what I was doing. Because I had been calling high school and college ball, I knew basketball. The only difference in wheelchair [basketball] is that they're in chairs. Maybe

double-dribble and traveling is different, but most of everything else was the same. A hold is a hold. And, a foul is a foul. And, I remember calling something on one of the guys. I say this as a referee because the other guys, the rec center guys, that come out and they would blow their whistle once or twice, but they really didn't know the game that well. They were just there to keep control. Now they had an official who knew the game and refereed. Knew where to stand, the mechanics and so forth. Because the other guys when they called something, you did know what they called. Their hand wasn't in the air. (Ms. Fox motions as if she were refereeing.) You had to wait. "What are you calling so I could go to my position?" I expected that from a fellow official that I'm calling with, because you're used to having your official give you a signal so you know exactly where to go on the court so you can manage. You have to have game management. You have to manage the players and know where to set them up. We didn't have that.

I started calling. I called something on one of the guys, and I'll never forget this. He got irate, "You can't call that! You can't call that!" And he started to come toward me, so I said, "That's a travel. Back off."

"You can't call that. What are you doing?"

I "T"ed him. ["T"ed is short for a technical foul.] Back then was when you could get three of them before you were out of the game. So I "T"ed him and he went ballistic. He started again, and I "T"ed him the second time.

I said, "Now, if you don't want to watch this game from the parking lot, I suggest you shut your mouth and start playing."

And with that, his buddies pulled his arms back on either side and says, I'll say the same, "Come on, Chris, we can't act like this anywhere else we go."

I said, "That's right. And, I'll be damn if you're gonna act like it here!" And, I got right in his chest, with my finger, and I said, "I don't take this from high school coaches. I don't take it from college coaches or players, and I'll be damn if I'm gonna take it from you."

And with that, it was like I was accepted. I'm official, I'm going to call their games and they took me everywhere. When they went out of town, they took me with them. I was their official now, but they couldn't call me a home [official] because it didn't matter who I was calling for, the home team was going to get called the fouls just like anybody else and they knew that. They realized that in one of the bigger games. You don't hold back. You can't be partial or biased no matter who's playing when you're out on the court, and if you are, you shouldn't be refereeing.

I became the only real [wheelchair basketball] official in Texas. San Antonio had some officials down there, but they'd get some guys to help out. Tom Brown, he was kind of the leader of his team down there. When I'd go down there, he'd asked me at one time if I'd help out one of his up-and-coming officials. Help him out. Give him some tips otherwise, and it happened to be Tony Gonzales. Tony started calling a lot. Other than that, we were the only two down in this area calling wheelchair basketball.

## Fuentes

You mentioned two names that stand out during the course of answering this last question that we had not talked about. I was wondering if you could talk about how you met Mr. Don Drury?

Fox

That was when I met Don.

**Fuentes**

That was?

**Fox**

That game [at the Bachman Recreation Center] was when I met Don. Oh yes, and he worked at the center over there. He showed me around and we talked. I'd ask him questions and he would tell me things that were happening. Different aspects and different areas of the rehab center. He played for one of the teams also. So I got to see him.

They played every Wednesday night in a conference. They don't have conferences any more. I know the reason they got rid of them, because they told me, anyway they can get to Nationals...the quickest way to get to Nationals...the easiest way to Nationals, was to go as an independent. You didn't have a conference that you had to play in. You went as an independent, and you had to play so many games for the year and then took away the conferences. It took away sections, regions, whatever...you can pick your section to go to I think, then you went to regionals, and then if you won you went to the Nationals. They don't do that anymore. I forget how long ago that was. That was a long, long time ago.

They used to have conference games every Wednesday night. They'd play two games. That way you got to see it all the time. You got to acclimate yourself to wheelchair ball. You got to know the rules. You really...the more you see it, the better you get. That helped me out a whole lot my first couple of years, because now all they do is tournaments. You go here for a tournament, you go there for a tournament, and they may have a home tournament, so you don't get to see it as often, unless you travel around and go to everybody's tournament. That's one thing I didn't think was very professional. I did not invite myself to people's tournaments. If they wanted me, they could call me. That was it. I thought that was very unprofessional to call and invite yourself to a tournament to referee and I never did it. Most of the referees around do or did, but I wouldn't. That's why nobody really knew me outside of Texas. Until about '84 or '85, when the Nationals were here, I did the women's Nationals. It was at Lowe's Field House. I remember that's when I met Tim Nugent, and that's when I met Al Yoakum and Bob Sizemore, he had the Minnesota team. That's how my name got pushed to the national spotlight.

Tim Nugent would let Tom Brown know, "You need an official for your National Vets wheelchair games." And so, that's how I got with Tom. He called me and said he would like to make me his head official for the National Veterans' wheelchair games. So, I'd been doing that for 30 years now, as his head official. That was a lot of fun. I enjoyed that. I wouldn't trade that for the world. It's like one big, happy family reunion every year, but we're in a different city.

**Fuentes**

That's excellent. I'm struck by the travel. When was that first game you were asked to referee?

**Fox**

1979, I think.

**Fuentes**

And is it fair to say that since 1979 you've traveled as a referee for the wheelchair basketball teams?

**Fox**

1979, yeah.

**Fuentes**

And is there a game or a few games that stand out?

**Fox**

<topic>National Wheelchair Basketball Championships</topic>

Yes. One of the big games that stands out...in fact the tournament that stands out, I was selected...Okay, they do it different now. The national tournament's held at Louisville, Kentucky. That may be changed next year, but it was in Denver and now it's in Louisville. For the last three or four years it's been in Louisville. They invite officials to come in and they have all the games, all the divisions, even the juniors and so forth, at this one site. They need a lot of officials.

Back then, the divisions were separate. The collegiate division and the women's division are separate now. But back then, you had the junior's division in one part of the country maybe, you had the men's division in another part, you had the women's division, you had the collegiate division and I was...they would take officials, they would rank officials back then, but I don't know how, they would take the top officials and have them come in and do the tournaments.

In 2002, I'm thinking 2001 or 2000-something, I was selected to do the junior's nationals in Oakland, California. Then in 2002, I think it was, I was selected to do the men's nationals and that year they had Division I men's, which took on some of the rules of the NBA [National Basketball Association]. 24 second back court, 8 second back court count, the 3 second lane. At the time, it was a 5 second lane. Then went to 4. And then this was 3 seconds. They played...There were four 12 minute quarters, instead of a 20 minute half. It was a faster game.

I was selected to do DI, DII men's national finals. That was in Champaign, Illinois. After we did the first night, each crew had to do a DI and DII game. The directors, observers, officials selected who would do the final games the next day. My crew was selected to do the DI men's (game) the next day. That was exciting. To be the only female in the U.S. in wheelchair basketball on the national level, getting to do the final four of the championship game of the men's DI tournament, was exciting.

Since then, I've done DII, DI, junior's, the women's finals numerous times. The collegiate finals numerous times. Basically, there are so many officials in the area that they have wheelchair basketball, that they'll get the closer officials to save on travel. It makes sense.

But, those stand out.

The one game that really stands out was...I got a call from...

(Mrs. Fox asked to stop recording in an effort to recollect her thoughts. The recorder was paused for approximately 3 minutes.)

One night I got a call from Pat McCoy, who was in Las Vegas, and he needed a DI official to have his tournament or he couldn't have it. And I said, "When is it?"

He said, "It's next week."

I said, "Well, Pat it's kind of late notice to get a flight." He said, "Don't worry about the flight. I got everything, just say you can come."

I said, "Well, I've never been to Las Vegas. Sure, I'll come." (Laughter) I went.

He had taken his team to a tournament in California and wasn't even there when I got there. So, I did his tournament.

I can remember one game especially, which was just fantastic. It was a pleasure, it was a joy to referee. I was so tired after because it was constant running. It was a DI game between the Dallas Mavericks and UTA. UTA had gone. Jim (Hayes) had taken them out there to get some extra practice for Nationals. They ended up playing each other. At the time, both teams were finesse teams. I mean, they didn't spend their time banging chairs and fouling each other. They could maneuver their chairs just extremely well. And, avoid contact when you thought there was going to be a big crash. It didn't happen. That was the joy of calling that game. Just call on their skill alone and not all this banging and pushing and shoving stuff. It was great.

UTA was winning the game up until the final seconds. It was...Mavericks finally scored, and the final score was a 102 to a 101, I think...103 to 102...it was a 1 or 2 point game, but they had broken the century mark there. I mean it was (Ms. Fox makes swoosh sounds, three sounds in total, and gestures with her hands.) back and forth. It was fast.

It was such a pleasure. It was so much fun to call because you didn't have to waste your time making calls; making useless calls on fouls you didn't need. I remember that one well and it was fun. Plus being in Las Vegas, I'd never been to a casino before and ended up walking around in one. I had a blast. So, yeah that was a lot of fun.

## Fuentes

If we could pull this experience back into your passion of teaching, I was wondering how much did your experience as an official impact the classroom? I'm reminded of when we had talked on the phone, a while ago, about how you had Jim Hayes come to your class, and so here is where wheelchair basketball is being introduced to your class environment. I was wondering if you could talk about that?

## Fox

<topic>Wheelchair basketball and educating the classroom about disability</topic>  
I would hold a day at school. I got this idea from TWU [Texas Woman's University], when I went up to call a game for them at one time. They had a little tournament. I said, "I could do this at our school." I would have, the principal came in on this and then teachers all agreed, we would have a Handicap Awareness Day. You had to use crutches or put your arm in a sling or whatever, and you couldn't use your dominant hand, you had to use the other one or whatever for writing. The teachers went along with it for the day.

We made it a jeans day for the kids because they are in uniform for Catholic school. If they could wear jeans, it would be a dollar to wear jeans. So, everybody brought their dollars. Some parents would give them more because they knew where it was going. We let them know ahead of time that all the proceeds, all the money, would go to the wheelchair team to

help them pay for their travel to national tournaments. We would get Jim (Hayes) in and he'd bring his UTA team. Or, we would call the local team or the girl's team.

The Lady Mavericks would come in and they would put on a demonstration for the kids. They'd answer all their questions. Then we let the kids in chairs and try different little races and so forth. Then, what really capped it off, we'd get the teachers in the chairs. They had to go forward and then they had to race backwards. It was a hoot. The kids just went wild over that. So that was kind of an introduction to handicap awareness.

I would show them a film on the veterans' wheelchair games, the VBA games. They'd give us a 15 minute recap of the games on CD [Compact Disc] or back then, 8-track [Stereo 8]. (Laughter) Not 8-track, but the VHS [Video Home System videotape cassettes]. I would show it to the kids and they'd, "Oh my gosh, that guy doesn't have any arms." Or something or they'd be diving into the pool or something [referring to other scenes from VBA video].

They'd go home and tell their parents because I'd hear about it in parent-teacher conferences. (Ms. Fox projects as if she is a student's parent) "My kid comes home and says this and that and that." "That's wonderful that you exposed them to this and teach them about that." It was all a positive thing, all the way around. It's a win win for everybody.

## Fuentes

You mentioned during that story about Jim Hayes. I am curious to know if you had a relationship with Jim Hayes. Was he a good friend?

## Fox

<topic>Jim Hayes</topic>

Jim was also one of the officials for the national vet games. He'd did the slalom, which is an obstacle course. We knew he had some kind of wicked nerve in his head because he would set up the hardest courses. I mean, they were dreadful at times. So, we would get to see each other. We'd meet with each other for a week during the vet games. I got to learn a lot of things that Jim liked like he liked those casinos too. [Laughter and claps hands once] He was fun to be around.

He'd get me over to call his games. (Motioning as if she were Jim Hayes calling her) A lot of times, "Pam. Pam." I think I was the only name he knew because it was "Pam. Pam." All the time on the court. And, one of his pet peeves was not calling that 3 seconds. Well now, they can stay in there 3 seconds as long as they look like they are trying to get out. (Referring to aspects of basketball) How do you know if they are trying to get out or not? You have to make that decision and then they gripe at you. "Well, I was trying to get out." That sort of thing. That was one of his big pet peeves was the 3 seconds nobody would ever call. You'd have to explain to him, "Coach, there are three of us on this court. When the ball goes over here, our responsibility changes. When this player goes over here, it changes." Sure you could keep an eye on that 3 second lane, and this person should and this referee should, but if they're not getting an advantage and maybe if they got maybe a footrest...uh, the little wheel on the line or something, no referee is really going to call it because you gotta have an advantage. And he tried to explain, "Well, it's a disadvantage to us. It makes it an advantage to them because of this, this, and this." You just couldn't win with him sometimes. (Laughter) He was an okay guy. He did everything for his guys. He fought for them tooth and nail. He was sorely missed when he died. It was a shock to me.

## Fuentes

Well, speaking of Jim Hayes, is there any other story or memory you can recall that you would like include for the purpose of this conversation about Jim Hayes? Anything that stands out?

**Fox**

Can't think of any. I remember refereeing his ballgames. He wasn't quite as vocal. (Laughter) I think he let his teammates do that. But, when he became a coach, he was a little more vocal. Not as much, but a little bit. Always a class act.

**Fuentes**

Alright. My next question I wanted to ask, it's my understanding that you were inducted into 2013 National Wheelchair Basketball Association Hall of Fame. Am I correct that you are one of the first, if not the first, female to be inducted as an official?

**Fox**

<topic>2013 NWBA Hall of Fame induction</topic>

I'm the second official and the only female. (Laughter) Yes. I was the only female for the last 30 years to referee on the national level, wheelchair basketball, and travel across the country. We have some good officials coming up now. Now I can retire. (Laughter) That was really an honor. I didn't expect that.

**Fuentes**

So can you tell me how did you find out you were going to be inducted...that you had been selected?

**Fox**

They told me.

**Fuentes**

On the phone?

**Fox**

No. Doug [Garner, head coach of the UTA Movin' Mavs since 2008] told me at first when I was over at UTA doing a tournament. Some of the guys said, "Hi, you've been nominated to the Hall." I said, "Well, cool." I didn't know what to say. I thought that was reserved for the great guys. (Slight laughter) I never put myself in that category. It was an honor to be inducted. I'm excited about it.

**Fuentes**

You said something that really stood out, it's being the only female official at the national level. I was curious if you had any comments about being the only female at the national level for so long.

**Fox**

<topic>On being a female official</topic>

No, I never thought of it that way except...when I refereed high school here, in the Dallas Chapter, when I joined the Dallas Chapter, it was 400 men and me. I was the only female. One of my coaches got me involved so I went up there to sit with him and all, and just got the looks. Nothing else. (Ms. Fox projects as if she is one of the men she is referencing) "Oh God, we got a girl gonna referee."

They gave me a boys' game to referee and they did this on purpose. I know because I know the people after all these years. And, gave me a partner who would let everybody know "Yeah" or "Nay" within a matter of minutes after the game. Well we had this game and it was going on, well you know I had been doing college ball, [and] this was the start of high school ball. I'd been doing college ball. I knew what I was doing. We get out on the court and we're refereeing this game, and everything's going fine until this kid lets off with the "F" bomb. ("F" bomb is slang for the swear word "Fuck") So I stuck him; I "T"ed him and the coach wanted to know why. I said, "Coach, inappropriate language. He's got a technical."

And he said, "What did he say?"

I said, "Coach, I'm not going to repeat it."

I said, "I won't allow cussing on the floor."

And he said, "What did he say?" He got really upset. You see a female on the court and you're gonna try to intimidate her. Most male coaches will do that and do. It's a known fact. Period. I'm the type that is not intimidated by anybody. He kept on and I said, "Coach, that's enough" and I walked off. He said something else so I stuck him. Turned around and stuck him, and he went ballistic. I'm trying to walk away and I stick him again.

I said, "Now" and I yelled it...I said, "Coach, if you don't want to watch this game from the parking lot," and this is my favorite saying, "Then sit down and keep your mouth shut!" I said it loud enough and strong enough that he knew I meant business and he wasn't going to run over me. Well, I think he was so shocked, that he sat down (giggles) that he kept his mouth shut. And the rest of the game went beautifully.

Well, we go to a locker room, and my partner is trying to get the key in the door and he's shaking it so bad. He finally gets it in...he gets in there and he says...he looks at me...I said, "Okay." I know how I did. I said, "Alright, what do you think? How did I do?"

"Oh. Aw. Aw. Aw." And he just grabbed me. He gave me this big bear hug. He says, "I want to call with you again."

Well, the next night we had our Chapter meeting and I walk up. "Hey Pam, when do we get a game?" "Hey Pam, are you on my schedule." Everybody. Word had gotten out within then...(Laughter) that night. That was okay. I'd been accepted as a fellow official. I didn't look at it male/female. I looked at it as officiating...official...referee. I have now been accepted as an official. We are now partners. We are officials...together. And, I never did look at it as a male/female thing. I guess it's been 10 years, we had an official come in. More women started to coming. I tell you, some of them I didn't even want to call with. They were in the wrong business. But, there were a few that were very good and became better. And, rose in the ranks, which is good. I think there's maybe I'd say a fourth of our chapter now are female.

It's good.

A lot of them didn't have the skin. They couldn't take it. Some of them had chips on their shoulder and give it right back. You can't do that. Rabbit ears. You can't have rabbit ears. You just have to call your game and ignore everything else. And most of the time, the noise was so loud you didn't hear anything. You heard noise. You heard people, but you didn't...you couldn't decipher what they were saying.

I had been in it that long refereeing and finally, we got more females in the chapter. I was given games where normally people would not get. I was...That's how I see it. I didn't look at being on the national level the only girl...the only female. I really didn't look at it until maybe after about 25 years. I'm thinking, "You know, I'm going to have to retire pretty soon." (Laughter) But, I haven't retired yet because Doug keeps getting me over to UTA to call these games.

I had ankle surgery a couple of years ago. This has been...it's been 5 years since I'd been able to run or even walk the right way. I had a PT tendon tear [Posterior Tibial Tendon tear]. When it tears, your foot collapses within a week. You can't walk or run ever again they say. One of the players for the San Antonio team...used to be on the San Antonio team, Doc Burnette, he's a podiatrist. He told me...I told him what happened and what they did for it and all. He says, "Well, you can kiss your running days goodbye."

I said, "Well, Doc I was never a runner. All I did was run up and down the hardwood."

And he said, "Well, you might be able to do that. But, it won't be the same."

This year, doing the juniors' game, their tournament a couple months ago, was the first time I could run up and down the court full speed. I tried it. Because you had to get this leg to move again and teach it how to work the right way. I'd been working on that. This past tournament, last tournament, I had to haul down the court. I mean haul it. I did. I just let it go. It felt good to be able to run again. I mean, after 5 years lordy. So, maybe I won't retire for a while.

Unless my mind goes and that's fixing to go I think. (Laughter)

**Fuentes**

Well at this time, I only have one last question and that's to ask you if there is anything you would like to discuss that may not have been covered in this conversation?

**Fox**

Can't think of anything. I really can't. I maybe think of something later on my way home. (Laughter) But, I can't think of anything.

I think we covered most of my years in wheelchair [basketball].

**Fuentes**

Well then, with your permission I am going to go ahead and turn off the recorder.

**Fox**

That's perfectly okay with me.