

HAZEL SMITH VARNER
SUSAN B. ANTHONY WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD
FOR SERVICE TO THE ROCHESTER, N.Y., COMMUNITY
ACCEPTANCE SPEECH
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
AUGUST 7, 1983

Last Wednesday when I said goodbye to my friends, leaving Rochester, moving to Keene, New Hampshire, to become the Director of Recreational Sports at Keene State College, I never expected to be standing in Susan B. Anthony Park today.

I think I am here today because I have worked for 30 years to give girls and women the right and the opportunity to play. Boys and men have always had this right and were given more access to the opportunity to play both intramural and varsity sports.

Because I am a professional educator in the area of sports and recreation, I have worked within the schools and universities for equality for students and equal rights for staff.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, laws and regulations were passed to ensure more equal treatment of students and professional staff. Title VII, a federal law, and state human rights laws were passed to bring about equality for the worker. Other regulations, specifically Title IX, were introduced to insure equal rights for female students.

As educators, we felt it to be our responsibility to study these laws and to discuss the implications on our own campuses.

Some of us learned that our university administrators did not wish to discuss these laws of equality. Some denied that any inequality existed. It was said that paying men more than women was merely a campus tradition. There was not money in the budget to increase women's pay... And why was money important to us anyway... Didn't we just work to have something to do?

And concerning women's sport---the alumni was not interested in women's sport and never would contribute to athletics for women.

... Women didn't need to travel very far to play their games and would not need much travel money.

... Women could share uniforms--would there not be much wear and tear due to less effort?

... Surely "girls" would not mind paying for their sneakers if the school furnished the shirt and shorts. And of course, girls know how to do laundry so they can wash the uniforms.

- ... If "girls" wanted to practice before playing a game, they could have the court or field when the men were finished with it.
- ... If "girls" played nearby, they could eat at the dorm and the university would not need to budget money for food for away games.
- ... If they should be lucky enough to be invited to a post-season tourney, possibly out-of-state, cars could be found for the trip. (Only men could fly.)
- ... Of course, "girls" teams did not need full-time coaches because part-time coaches would do very well.
- ... Why in the world would "girls" ever need a warm-up suit? They do? Oh, then we will buy one set which can be shared by teams.
- ... You think you should have a few more teams? We have four for women, surely there are not more "girls" who want to play.
- ... You want to play in the Palestra where the men play? Do you think people will come to watch? Do you need all those seats?
- ... Do you really need more than four volleyballs for the varsity team? You say their uniforms are seven years old?
- ... Why would you need an athletic trainer for a "girls" team? We only have one and he is busy with football.
- ... You can't be serious! You want to schedule time on the indoor tennis courts for the women's varsity tennis team? We only have two, and the men's team uses them.
- ... You want better publicity? What's wrong with this campus sports page?

"U OF R ROLLS OVER ROBERTS WESLEYAN"

and down in the corner,

"GIRLS' TEAM PLAYS SYRACUSE"

... You expect us to keep the food line open late so the girls' swim team can eat dinner after practice? That costs money--it's only available to men's teams who are on training table (FREE MEAL).

... Yale and Penn State want to play us in women's volleyball. Oh, NO! That would be too expensive.

It is no wonder that students at the U of R, and across the land, began to question these discriminatory practices.

It is also not surprising that concerned professional women in sport began to respond to women students' needs.

By not being in the power positions (men held those jobs), we were not able to meet these needs.

We made requests, we asked questions, we quoted laws.

We asked for more equal treatment for our women students.

We also began to ask for equal pay, more supportive services, more promotions and for more women to be hired in the department.

Neither students nor staff asked for much, only for fair treatment.

Some of us were more outspoken than others. Somehow, I was identified as the "Gang Leader." I was called a "Negative Influence," "Insubordinate" and one athletic director voiced concern for my "mental health."

In 1972, I was naive. I sincerely believed that if we showed the U of R how they were breaking the law, they would "fix it."

That was not the case. They let it be known nothing would be changed to accommodate women. It just wasn't in the budget.

After careful consideration and as a last resort, I reluctantly filed a complaint with HEW charging discrimination in the athletic department. My husband, the University registrar, completely supported this complaint.

Almost immediately, as HEW began to investigate the complaint, action began to take place in the administration building which signaled the firing of Ken Varner from his administrative post of 10 years.

According to existing law, the U of R could not fire me so they did what they thought was the next best thing. Subsequently, both my husband and I sued the U of R for discrimination and for his wrongful firing. The litigation was filed in October, 1974.

After searching for another position for more than a year, Kenneth Varner despondently took his life on December 17, 1975.

The trial was heard by a jury in New York State Supreme Court beginning in October, 1978. In January, 1980, the jury ruled that:

The University of Rochester
had discriminated against
Hazel Varner solely on the
basis of sex.

and

The University of Rochester's
treatment of Kenneth Varner
had been "outrageous, cruel,
inhumane and beyond the realm
of human decency."

During the ten year struggle, I could not have gone forward without the support of dedicated friends and others not even known to me. It would be impossible to thank each one who helped.

I will share with you some special moments---that will never be forgotten.

1. The U of R faculty members who gave me visible support by speaking out on my behalf ~~of~~ having lunch with me at the Faculty Club.
2. The invisible support given by those who feared losing their job if they were open.

3. Especially the students who supported me in every possible way:
 - a. Raising funds through bake sales, garage sales and Sunday dinners.
 - b. Dropping into my office to boost my spirits---one who left a note saying, "You have done more for women at the U of R than anyone since Susan B. Anthony."
 - c. The diligent reporters on the Campus Times who were not afraid to print the truth.
 - d. The student employee who lost her job because she informed me that University administrators took my medical records from Strong Memorial Hospital files without my permission.
 - e. The medical student who asked if she could sit as a member of the family at the memorial service for Kenneth Varner in the U of R chapel.
 - f. The women's volleyball team who sat in the courtroom to show support of their coach---and who worked hard to win the first women's sport state championship for the U of R in 1979 (following the trial).
 - g. The dedicated student leaders who ran the intramural sport program smoothly in my absence.
 - h. The students who held a rally and demonstrated to show support at the time of the trial.
 - i. The students who worked long hours with the National Jury Project.

4. And then the other special people and moments:

... The dedicated friend and colleague who came to the courtroom every day.

... I remember the first dollar contributed to my legal fund by a maintenance worker at the U of R, and the

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... \$1,000.00 quietly contributed in my lawyer's office by a

friend. And many others who contributed moral and financial support.

... The support of WEAL, N.Y. STATE NOW, and later, the Women's Political Caucus.

... And the witnesses who stepped forward to testify on our behalf at the trial. They came not only from Rochester, but from across the country.

... The Susan B. Anthony poster, hanging in my office, with the message, "Failure is impossible."

I salute Kenneth Varner for his support, his belief in human rights, and his courage in standing up for his beliefs.

I thank my son, Chris, who was a boy, too young to understand his father's death and his mother's absence during the long nights spent in preparing the case, during this struggle. I am thankful that he has grown up to be a fine young man. As parents, I hope we taught him the values of equality, justice, humanity and freedom.

It was Susan B. Anthony who got the women into the U of R. I believe that my contribution was to make conditions better for women in sport in the 1970's.

I would like to leave you with a couple of Miss Anthony's thoughts that have been important to me.

"Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputation and social standing, never can bring about a reform."

and

"There should never be another season of silence until women had the same rights, everywhere on this green earth, as man."

The receiving of the Susan B. Anthony Award today closes a chapter filled with working for change and reform---a time to work with those who supported this effort---a time of winning a moral victory against those who fought change. It was a victory over shadowed by grief and pain. But, it was a victory which righted the wrongs that had existed far too long.

I thank the Susan B. Anthony Preservation District of Rochester, New York, for giving me this award.