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Interview No. 1649

Jean H. Miculka

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Jean H. Miculka

Interviewer: Luis A. Saenz

Project: 1966 NCAA Championship

Location: n/a

Date of Interview: February, 2002

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Transcript No.: 1649

Transcriber / Summary: Daniel Santana

Jean H. Miculka begins by describing how he attained his job as an assistant coach for the Texas Western College basketball team. He describes his first impressions of the team as promising since the freshmen consistently beat the varsity students. As a coach, he confronted various challenges that emerged as Texas Western gained notoriety; they confronted various teams who placed all their efforts in trying to defeat them. Nevertheless, it was his team's ability to score points and to cripple the others' defense that overcame this challenge. He never felt discrimination whenever his team played against others from the Southwest since most of those teams already incorporated African American players. However, he believes that some of his team members may have experienced discrimination individually. Miculka believes that critics misunderstood his team members' confidence with laxity. The team gained national recognition outside of the Southwest after defeating Cincinnati and Kansas State. When they played at the NCAA championship in Kentucky, he noted that Texas Western's players were quicker than their opponents. He did not speak with the opposing team's coach, Adolf Rupp, who only shook his hand before the game and then departed. He believes that Texas Western's victory helped to encourage young black athletes to enter universities, especially in the South. The following year, Miculka did not return to Texas Western College since he was offered a job at Memphis State with an all-white team. He was able to recruit one black player who he placed on a scholarship and then recruited more youth of color in the Missouri Valley Conference. Miculka believes that the victory by Texas Western College was important because it helped to create new opportunities. He hopes that people will one day simply be able to reflect upon how great of a team Texas Western was for African American College athletes.

Length of interview 9 minutes

Length of Transcript n/a