

History Interview

Michelle Gray
6-29-02
By. Lorna Ryan

Lorna Ryan and I am recording Miss Michelle Gray for a history project it is the 25th.

LR: say your name

MG: you want my full name?

LR: Michelle Gray is talking

LR: Ok Century High School was opened in 1997 and you were chosen as a teacher how were you chosen?

MG: Interview, actually it was a recommendation I had I was doing my student teaching and I was coaching basketball at Westveiw, head basketball coach and Ron and are good friends so that's how I kind of got my foot in the door was it was I had that connection between the two of them. And that's when I got an interview process I had to apply and I actually I actually had 3 interviews. My first interview was with Mr. Webb and the librarian at the time and Mr. Orme who was one of the VP's. Then my second interview was with Mr. Barnekoff and one of the other Vice principles I don't remember who it was and one of the counselors Vikki Lindbergh and the I had a third just one on one interview with Mr. Barnekoff.

LR: Ok did they ever talk about like what they wanted for Century like the vision of Century, there's been lots of talk about it with the other teachers that we've interviewed? They always we had this plan, did they ever talk to you about that?

MG: Not, not really I mean we didn't get in to that maybe maybe because I was I first year teacher it was my first teaching job out of college and so my, I didn't have the same experiences that some of the other teachers had that were already in the district and what they wanted to do. It was, the interview process that I had was more about me and what my philosophy was for coaching and teaching and that's, I honestly feel that one of the reasons I was hired was cause of the coaching piece. If I had been just another Spanish teacher I probably wouldn't have gotten the job, my have but may not.

LR: In talking with your Spanish stuff what was the first day like you know, how was that, how did you just plan for it, were you nervous at all?

MG: A little bit. Not, not really you know I, I always think the first day, the first week is actually really important for me cause I think it makes or breaks a teacher and their relationship they have with the students. And weather or not the students are going to respect you or weather their gonna walk all over you. And usually you know what I try to

do is the first week is actually very difficult and I'm a little more strict and more forward about things and I don't let the kids get away with a lot of stuff and it kinda puts a tone for the rest of the semester and then as the semester goes along you know we become more relaxed and can joke around and stuff. But if you do that, in my opinion, if you do that from the first day the students aren't going to respect you and there gonna walk all over you, your classroom management is gonna be just a nightmare, horrible, to try and get you know the attention of the class and especially with bigger classes that are 30 plus students that makes a big difference.

LR: Why Spanish, what made you chose to be a Spanish teacher?

MG: Actually as I, I actually started out to be a math teacher and I was at Gonzaga so I went to the same school that Mr. Bacca and Mrs. Kenney went to but I couldn't, the math that I was learning there was engineering math and it wasn't teaching math so I, I struggled horrible, and just you know after the third time of calculus just said this is not really, this is not worth it. And I had already always done really well in Spanish in high school and enjoyed and just thought that you know as far as getting job it would be a better opportunity for me teaching a foreign language then teaching health or p.e. or something who are a dime a dozen so.

LR: What are some of the challenges do you go through as a teacher through the day and stuff like that?

MG: Motivating students dealing with, dealing with the outside issues that they bring in the class that are unknown. But foe whatever reason there not awake, there feeling bad that day or things that you have no idea and have no control over but you just have to learn to adapt and adjust to it and the same thing with like if a lesson is not going well, if there just not getting the concept of having to slow down and adjust in the middle of whatever you're doing to get them to learn anything.

LR: You're a teacher as well as a coach is that difficult at all like?

MG: I think it's difficult during the season, and I think for me it's more difficult because I teach like I said I don't want to make it sound bad and an actual subject matter. You know I honestly believe it would be a lot easier for me if I taught P.E., if I just walked into the gym and you know. The lesson planning, the grading of the papers is, grading test, is a lot more, there's a lot more worked involved in that then walking into a gym and saying lets play pickle ball today. So during the season that is my most challenging time, and I, you have to, in my opinion you have to be organized and you have to stick to that schedule and you know if you set aside this many hours at night to grade papers then that's what you do and you know I'm a firm believer on getting the papers back to students as soon as possible and I usually try to give a one day turn around, so if they turn it in I try to get it back to them the next day. And if were playing a game or having a late practice, or you know the weather it's not like it's the same everyday, a lot of adjustment. So during the season is by far the busiest time and the most challenging and trying to stay on schedule and on track.

LR: You were the first coach at Century, you had to build a program from scratch how did that, how did you do that, how did it work?

MG: Actually it was quite fun you know and it's all the little stuff, the buying equipment you know and the good thing was I had all this money to spend and you know did really have to do anything just spend it. Buy equipment and hiring coaches, that to me has been the most frustrating thing about starting the whole program, is we have not had the same coaching staff for two years in a row, were its been all three levels you know. Amy and I have been the same all five years. The J.V. coach, we've had three different J.V. coaches and four different J.V. II couches in five years and that has been the biggest struggle for me is that I'm having a hard time finding people that number one are knowledgeable about the game, that know what they're doing, and number two will give the commitment to be here when they need to be here for more then one year at time. But other then that it's been a blast you know I think it would be harder to come into a program and try to change or adjust to something that someone's already been doing for however many years verses starting from scratch and just building on whatever my philosophies were. And that, that was the fun part.

LR: What was the first team like, I mean was it fun for you to do deal with those kids?

MG: Actually it was it was very fun and I think the thing that made it fun was that the group of kids that was here had already played together for four or five years. So they were already comfortable with one another they were fairly athletic and had some, some talent that way, had already done well and been successful in that past in the teams that they had been playing on and you know so I feel like with that group of kids I was more a facilitator and a fine tuner on what they had already learned and already knew verses the last couple years where there was a lot of teaching going on and things that they didn't know and experiences they hadn't had so yeah and the other thing was I had the group of, that group of kids for three years on the varsity level which makes a huge difference and there was improvement and growth every year.

LR: the first season, it was an o.k. season, everybody said it was pretty good season for, how did you feel about that?

MG: I thought it was a good start, I thought we were very young we had mostly sophomores on the team the majority of the players that started and played were sophomores and not that we had a great record, we were close to .500 , but we competed in every game you know we lost several games by one or two runs verses you know the last couple of years we haven't been successful you know and the meridian of defeat is greater so in that I was excited because I knew what we had to look forward to for the next two years and that where we were going is where we wanted to be and that we could do it and there was never a thought of I really don't think we're going to do well it was this team, this group of kids is going to be successful.

LR: How does that compare to other seasons, I mean like going from the starting and feeling good and then?

MG: it's frustrating for me, I really feel like there's no continuity, there's a lack of leadership, lack of experience. Last year you we had, you know we lost nine seniors from that team, the team that did well, we had another seven seniors which you would think with seven seniors would be very good but of the seven seniors only three had varsity experience which makes a huge difference in our league that's so competitive. And then this year we're kind of back where we started were we are very young and inexperienced again, we have three freshmen, three you know four sophomores, three juniors, and five seniors three of which play. So basically we're losing three people from our team that we have to replace, so that, it's kind of back to that exciting point again where you know that your young and this group of kids has potential to do well, they're competitive, they work hard, they listen and they try, and you know unfortunately in the game of softball pitching will make or break your team and if you have good pitching you'll be in the game, if you don't have good pitching it's hard to defend against base hits you know if a team is just hitting you base hit after base hit after base hit, there's nothing you can really do so yeah.

LR: Well, we'll get to the good stuff here, your 2000 season it was the, it was a really good season how did that feel all over?

MG: Oh it was awesome, we were the first team to make the state playoffs, we made it to the semi-finals or excuse me the quarterfinals, and I really thought that we could have gone farther, I don't think we played well in our quarterfinal game. I, I don't think, I would have felt better if we had played our best and gotten beat, but you know I don't think we played our best I think we could have gotten farther and maybe the semi's were as far as we would have gotten but I wish that we could have preformed to our ability in the last game, but you know regardless somebody has to lose and somebody win and the whole seasons was a blast we went to California over Spring Break and you could tell that the girls wanted it they were hungry, it was their last chance and they wanted to be successful and it was just an amazing feeling a you know for them I was excited for them you know regardless, for the coaches it's just an experience but I was excited for them and what they got to experience.

LR: Did at any time in the season did you ever feel like I could win, we could win, but yeah did you ever feel you could win Metro League?

MG: Oh I knew we could win, before the season ever started. I knew at the end of the previous season that we had it, you know winning the Metro League takes many things and a lot of it is the combination of kids that you have. And you either know that you have chance or you don't and we knew we had a chance that year and the last couple of years I knew that we had no chance based on the combination of skill and leadership and dedication and determination just had a feeling.

LR: After the seasons, the season you won, was it hard to follow it up and then having this season which was a very tough season for you team how does that, how do cope with that?

MG: It's frustrating, to me it's frustrating and I kind of try to keep it in perspective we went from first to last and that I mean that's it first to last the next year and we were last again this year and to me that's frustrating and to the kids it's at least this, the difference is the mental game with the last two groups that we've had winning hasn't really mattered that much as long as they we're having fun and learning. It didn't matter if we we're league champs or if we made playoffs or, and to me that's frustrating because I wanted to build a tradition where we went to state every year and to compete for that and be mentally tough in that way and in the last two years we haven't had that so in a sense it's like starting from scratch all over again.

LR: Well you talk about the league and stuff like that how, who do you think the toughest team for you guys to beat mentally or physically?

MG: At this point it's Westview and the only reason that it's Westview is because they have the talent. You know every single one of their varsity kids plays for an A-summer that travels, that plays against players in the United States and, and at this point their younger program, they have kids that are twelve that are all ready going to Westview, that are already good and by that time will have so much experience and we don't have that yet and that's what we're trying to develop verses I think Aloha has established a program that is successful, year after year after year and they may not have the most talent but they have a great coach and she gets every single ounce of ability out of the kids that she has so you know that's kind of what I'm striving for, is to get every ounce of ability that I can out of the kids that we have that we can.

LR: We got two questions left. What were the is the greatest moment of your career at Century, your worst and I have to get this, your most embarrassing you funniest?

MG: All those, I think the most exciting at this point was when we won the league you know that was an accomplishment that we had set for our selves and we made that so that was pretty exciting and I think we did it by beating Glencoe which made it even better. My worst moment?

LR: You do have a deed of Gift which I can take out if at the end of this conversation you feel you don't need to discuss this a deed of gift.

MG: You know what I don't know, I don't know that I really have a worst, a bad, I can't think off a time you know other then the last two seasons which have been very frustrating, you know as far as teaching point goes I don't really have a worst experience, cause I, I pretty much have great relationships with all of my students and I see growth in them so in that respect I don't have really have a worst moment, the last two years have been really frustrating for me but.

LR: Your funniest, you gotta give me that

MG: Funniest, lets see, I trying to think, there's been a lot of them. I let one year, I think it was the first year Ms. Martones class and my class did a competition of collecting cans

and our bet was I let two of my students pie me in the face it was kind of an inter class bet so that pretty fun I don't know there's a lot of, a lot of good little things that happen in class or little things that happen in games or trips that make you laugh but you don't really remember them so the one, the one funny thing I would have to say, I guess I would say when we won that the league two years ago, Amy and I put together a video tape of the season and we spent god we probable spent twenty hours taking clips you know from different videos and putting them al together on one and we where at her house, and we where in California and it was just this funny thing where the kids were swimming and we were having pizza, it was dinner time, and the camera was just kind of panning around and it actually got to me and I was eating this piece a pizza, piece of pizza and it was hilarious cause it was like chomp, chomp, chomp, just totally random, not planned or anything, but we must of re-winded that sucker at her house like fifteen times, she was just rolling, she called her parents in the room, and her brother, you gotta see this. So that was pretty funny and those are the things that we kind of talk about, or she was walking up to practice and kind of fell down the side walk on her way while we were waiting for her to get there so yeah.

LR: When you do decided to leave Century what kind of legacy do you hope, do you think you'll have left behind?

MG: Gosh that's a good question. You know I, I, regardless of weather it's athletics or academics I would hope that people would say that I was tough but far and that I worked hard in both, and just overall I would hope that you know would be the impression that people would have, cause you know I, I kind of like being known as a hard teacher I don't mind that cause I, I think that kids need to be pushed and challenged but at the same time I just need to be fair so those two things and that, just that I always gave it my all.

LR: Thank you.