

Interview with Ann Koger
SESSION 1 (6/19/2020)
Timed Log

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Koger was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1950. Her father was from North Carolina and her mother was from Somerset, Pennsylvania.

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Was a tomboy as a child. Introduced to tennis in 1958 at age with her family. She played at the Baltimore Tennis Club, formally Metropolitan Tennis Club that hosted the first American Tennis Association (ATA) match. Started playing tennis at the club in 1961. During the winter, as there were no indoor facilities available, they would play at Druid Hill Park in Baltimore, MD. As her mother started to play tournaments, Koger's desire to play and compete also grew. Koger entered her first tournament in 1961.

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During this first tournament at the ATA Nationals, Koger won her first trophy with Bonnie Logan. The tournament was in Wilberforce, Ohio on the Wilberforce University campus. Maceo Hill, an ATA champion and tennis coach made it possible for the tournament to be there.

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Koger's mother belonged to the Baltimore Tennis club, which had a junior development program. She also belonged to the adult-only Netman Coed Club.

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Druid Hill Park was a public park, there were separate tennis courts and swimming pools for Blacks and Whites. The people who used the courts didn't necessarily enforce segregation policies, but there was some enforcement from officials. Koger describes the pecking order of the red clay courts: first whites, then Jewish players, and then Blacks at the end of the day. Some Jewish players would pass their passes to Black players.

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Sometimes players would play with each other across the color line. Policemen patrolled horseback, so people were compelled to respect the segregation laws. Koger explains the nuance of segregation.

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Koger was never asked off the courts personally but remembers being part of a group that was asked to leave. Druid Hill Park was next to a segregated neighborhood that was predominantly African American. Koger lived near the park, they would walk to the park. Remembers spending the whole day at the park playing tennis. It was common for people to spend the whole day at the park playing.

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The popularity of tennis in Baltimore's African American community. Koger remembers finding her dad's tennis racquets in a closet. Mostly college students and professional class African Americans played tennis. Playing tennis was a way to connect socially for many.

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Koger describes her childhood neighborhood, had originally been a Jewish neighborhood, was a mixed-income neighborhood. There were some Whites in the neighborhood. Koger would wear out her shoes she used to play tennis so she would wear boys' athletic shoes which she remembers being a fun of. On her walk to the park, Koger would try to avoid people seeing her shoes.

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Material culture. Players would wear, unless your family could afford tennis clothes, would wear physical education clothes. Koger for a while wore physical education clothes. Tennis dresses were popular. Koger had a physical education dress that she would wear to gym class. For men, if they didn't have tennis clothes, would wear t-shirts and shorts. Koger used a wooden tennis racquet. It was typical to have a Jack Kramer, TAD, Dunlop, or Slazenger tennis racquet. It was a big deal when Head started making composite racquets that Ashe endorsed. Koger was in college when the Head racquets came out, however Koger's first racquet was called a "spoon." A spoon was a wooden racquet that was warped. She was told to use that until her tennis got better, tennis racquets were too expensive. At her first tournament, Koger had a spoon, but someone gave her an oversized racquet to use.

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Wooden tennis racquets needed to be put in presses regularly. If the racquet wasn't put in a press the moisture in the air could warp the racquet. Koger learned to use both sides of the spoon to her advantage. Wooden racquets were heavy.

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Koger started to compete at age 12. Meeting Arthur Ashe. Ashe came to Baltimore with the Dr. Walter Robert Johnson players. Koger met Ashe at the courts at Druid Hill. Ashe and others of Dr. Johnson's team would stay at various people's houses when they came up for a tournament. The juniors would have their meals at Koger's home. Koger describes Ashe's hearty eating habits. They would sometimes play in the mostly White USLTA(now USTA) tournaments, where they would all be assigned to the same quarter, which meant that they would often play each other and only one player would end up playing a White player. Eventually, in the early 60s, the USLTA mid-Atlantic tournaments ruled that only mid-Atlantic residents could play in the tournaments, which meant that Dr. Johnson's players could not play. **

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Koger mentions that this was done because Johnson's players were winning. Dr. Johnson's players came from different places but came to the tournament from his camp in Lynchburg. Koger describes the strategies that were used to prevent Black players from playing in tournaments. These strategies were also used against Jewish people. Koger remembers being told that she, along with a Jewish player, couldn't play at a tournament at St. Timothy's Church. A journalist started to investigate these practices.

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Koger states that some of the tactics were subtle and some were not. Koger remembers playing a tournament at St. Timothy Church and Tennis Club (A church where a segregated tennis club was established on the grounds) against a player who was the granddaughter of the owners of the Baltimore Sun Newspaper, who Koger's grandmother had worked for as a domestic. Koger won. Koger remembers the audience's responses. They would clap mostly on African American player's errors. Cheating in matches would also occur. Some of the players would cheat and tournament directors wouldn't respond. African American players had to make sure that they played way inside the line.

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The first time these tactics happen to Koger, at 12 years old, she left the court after a loss and started crying. She had to become savvy about how to deal with this. She made sure all her shots were inside the line.

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Dr. Johnson's approach to dealing with racism. Koger found his approach useful as she moved up the latter in tennis. Ashe also utilized Dr. Johnson's approach. Koger describes Ashe's personality as calm, laid back, quiet, great sense of humor.

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Koger doesn't remember that there were any certified Black tournament officials when she was playing junior tennis. Once she was in college there started to be more Black officials. There were unofficial officials at the tournaments as well. Koger recalls a Black tournament director at a tournament at Clifton Park in Baltimore, who would not help her when she reported cheating, she would not intervene on complaints. Tournament directors are coveted positions in tennis. Leslie Allen was one of the first Black professional tournament directors.

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In Baltimore during integrated games seating was fairly mixed for spectators. Other than Dr. Johnson, other Black coaches include, Bob Ryland who was the first Black professional tennis coach and player. Maury Schwartzman, a Jewish tennis coach, coached Koger in Baltimore. Coaches at that time were mostly people who coached or played tennis in college. There were more African American coaches out west in California. In California, there were fewer limitations from segregation.

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Koger explains how she dealt with more entrenched and more enforced segregation as she traveled south. They were protected and guided by the adults who facilitated their being at the events. Often they stayed at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) sometimes for a small fee. If this was not the case then they used the Green Book.

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When players would come to Baltimore, players would stay at locals' homes and locals would feed them. This network existed for both financial and social reasons. Males and female players often stayed at different places.

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Koger met Ashe in 1958 before she had started playing tennis. Ashe and other players would come to her house for meals. People kept an eye on Ashe's progress. Koger describes him as the "chosen one." As a strategy, financially it was not possible to forward all players so players with potential were focused on. Ashe was looked at as having special potential not just for his tennis skills but also for his competitive attitude. Koger as a young girl, 8, 9 years old, when teenage Ashe would visit remembers playing with him by going up to him and hitting him and running away.

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Koger describes an exchange with Ashe where she would pick at him. Ashe's star quality was noticed young. Koger learned a lot by watching Ashe on the court. She remembers Dr. Johnson's players would also watch the younger players to see who had potential. The first time Koger saw Ashe play tennis. Ashe was playing on the "Flower House" clay courts in Baltimore. He was a junior but was playing in the adult segment. By the time Ashe was 14 and 15 he outgrew junior players and needed more challenge. Ashe started working with different people such as Bob Ryland and others. By the time that Ashe was 16 and 17, it was evident that he needed more competitive instruction. As Ashe's skills grew bigger tournaments opened up to him and his days of ATA tennis competitions lessen plus college was on the horizon for him.

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Dr. Johnson at this point took on some younger players and he also took on girls such as Tina Watanabe (Tina Karwasky) and Tam O'Shaughnessy, both players from California. He wanted to show that there was no segregation, genderwise, or racewise in his camp.

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Bob Ryland mentioned in his books that Ashe had worked with him. Ryland was a well-known player and coach based in New York. Standard tennis classification dictates that some matches were gender specific and others were coed. Koger liked playing the coed matches. She felt that men and women were treated equally, but there were always more boys than girls in the tournaments. Koger describes how courts were coordinated based on gender and age category at some facilities.

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Koger recalls Ashe's favorite food was fried chicken when he would come to her family's home for meals. Ashe was skinny as a kid. When Koger's family lived in an apartment, they primarily did the meals, when her family moved to a house, players, mostly women, would stay at their home. Leslie Allen was one of the players who would stay. By the time they moved to their house, Ashe had moved on from those tournaments, but would visit if he was in the area.

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Charlie Passarell was one of the other players that her family supported when they went to World Class and Pro tournaments. They were top players for the Black community. Ashe would bring Passarell with him when they were playing in the area, Stan Smith as well. This was during the later 60s.

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Social activities during Dr. Johnson's players' visit to the area. ATA would have a tennis party for the tournament. Everyone who was in the tournament was invited. Sometimes Dr. Johnson's players would attend the party. Dr. Johnson was very strict about the player's social activities. He took care of them as if they were his own children. Ashe had close friendships with the other players. Joe Williams is one that Koger remembers. Ashe played often with Willis Thomas, a Washington DC player. Koger doesn't remember Ashe having a close relationship with any one person.

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Dr. Johnson's players were on a tight schedule and didn't have much time for social activities. Most of their entertainment was with each other and at the homes where they stayed. Koger describes Ashe's interactions with her family. When she was older her paths crossed often with Ashe. Ashe, even as his career took off, always made time for people he knew. Recalled attending Ashe's funeral in Richmond.

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SESSION 2 (6/23/2020)
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Girls and tennis in the African American community. Girls playing tennis in Koger's neighborhood was not the norm. Some families shied away from tennis because of costs. Girls didn't want to get involved in tennis for a variety of reasons, such as sweating or tanning too much. The colorism factor in choosing to play tennis. Koger would play tennis not only at Druid Hill Park but also on the courts of Frederick Douglass High School, the only high school for African Americans in Baltimore (until Paul Laurence Dunbar High School was built in 1918). William "Babe" A Jones would coach them (Koger and her two sisters) along with actress Anna Deavere Smith and her brothers, Marsha Williams, Ruth White (fencing Olympian). The alums of Jone's tennis class. Both adults and children took his class. In her tennis community, there were more boys than girls. Tennis was seen as an upper-class sport, mostly for Whites, it was not as popular.

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The cost of playing tennis at that time. Koger remembers that the cost then was about \$10,000 to play, train, and compete. The higher the level of tennis the higher the costs. The biggest expense was travel i.e., transportation, housing, equipment, and tennis balls. If one was traveling as a young person they needed an adult to accompany them. USTA later tried to address the cost issue by having area training centers to identify talent, but it didn't get a good response from the African American community and particularly girls. According to statistics as girls get older they tended to drop out of sports. Title 9 created a surge due to scholarships.

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Koger's first interracial tennis match was in 1961 in Baltimore at the city championship in Clifton Park on red clay courts. It was also her first match. Koger was 11 years old. People from around the region came to the match. Koger learned that tennis matches didn't necessarily have an end time. By this time Koger had been attending an integrated school and was used to integration, fairness, ethics, but this match was the first time she experienced cheating. Koger describes how easy it was to confirm cheating on a red clay court as the white lines would spread into the court. Koger noticed that she was being cheated and asked for help from officials who did not help. Koger recalls being so angry that after the match she went and sat under a tree where she cried. Her mom came and talked to her. She learned that it was important to ensure that the ball was inside the lines as Dr. Johnson had often taught his players. She also learned the importance of having a strategy to play and compete.

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There were other African American players at that tournament, Ruby Pennington, Sandra Pennington, Pat Koger, Marsha Williams. They were all a part of the Baltimore Tennis Club Junior Development Program. During the tournament, they were scheduled in the same quarter. Having all of the African American players in the same quarter ensured that only one African American would proceed forward in the tournament. This would also happen in adult tournaments.

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Koger mentions that some African American players would call out this behavior. Koger talks about dealing with the subtleties of cheating and racism.

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Koger attended Morgan State University, where she played tennis, this was prior to Title 9 and women's sports being in the NCAA. Howard K Wilson was the tennis coach. Bonnie Logan also attended Morgan State. They were both supposed to go to Pepperdine University, but Pepperdine did not have scholarships for them. Koger was offered either a loan or Teacher's grant to attend Morgan. She decided on the Teacher's Grant. Koger played a number of sports in college. She hadn't played many other sports before. She learned about other sports during her college education. Koger recalls learning how to play basketball. Koger joined a number of sports teams. On these team sports, she would sometimes play against White schools, which was a learning experience.

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Morgan didn't have a women's tennis team so Koger and Bonnie Logan played on the men's team. Logan and Koger excelled. Logan who was a year ahead of Koger left college a semester early and was offered a chance to play in South Africa in 1972. Logan contemplating whether to play in South Africa. Logan was treated well in South Africa. She played mostly in front of African audiences but did had the chance to play in front of a mixed audience. Logan was in South Africa for a few weeks. She gave clinics to young people while she was there. Koger remembers being told that Ashe's people were upset about the trip because they were planning a protest. Logan got a phone call from Ashe. Logan was the first African American player to play in South Africa.

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Gladys Heldman, found of the Virginia Slims Tour, referred Bonnie Logan and Logan referred Koger to the Virginia Slims Tour. Koger had to submit a number of credentials including financial records to play in the circuit. Koger had to get sponsors. Koger got a donation, but need to do a photo op for Maryland National Bank. Koger recalls an offensive comment made by one of the bank representatives. Sometime Logan and Koger would travel together on the circuit. Koger got to learn about world-class tennis on the circuit. After the US Open Koger played on the circuit for another year.

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After the US Open, Koger taught in Baltimore Public Schools. She continued to play tennis and be apart of the tournament circuit. She did that until about 1977, her last tournament.

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Koger stayed in touch with Ashe throughout her college and professional life as he was playing tennis allover the world. He would frequent the American Tennis Association (ATA) matches. Koger would see him at some of the matches. Many Black players would play at the "Jungle" in Harlem (Frederick Johnson Tennis Courts). Ashe had an office in Harlem and Koger would see him there. When saw Ashe he would ask about her family and mutual tennis friends.

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When Koger was still playing professionally, Ashe would give her words of encouragement. When Koger came to Haverford College, the women's tennis team nominated Ashe for an honorary doctorate of

arts and letters (1993) posthumously. Jeanne Ashe had recommended their neighbor to introduce Ashe at the graduation. Koger was to introduce the neighbor. After chatting with the neighbor, he called the president of Haverford over to recommend that actually Koger should introduce Ashe because the neighbor mentioned that Koger know more about Ashe's life than he did. Koger ended up introducing Ashe for this honor. Koger gave a more personal speech that reflected on Ashe beyond tennis. He a humanitarian, a citizen of the world with a cause, and a family man.

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One of the young players that Koger worked with that Ashe took an interest in was Traci Green. Tonya Evans was another player Ashe asked about. He would ask mostly about women's tennis players. Both Evans and Green took other paths in their career. Koger discusses Benny Sims and Lori McNeil as coaches, marking the need for African American representation in support of more African Americans in the sport. Ashe was a part of developing and advocating for this kind of infrastructure. Koger discusses issues of diversity and the USTA. Koger notes the benefits of having coaches/role models that reflect the same culture and ethnic background.

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In the late 70s, the USTA made inroads toward diversity. The USTA started in the section called "middle states" and the Philadelphia area district. Vic Kasser, the middle states president, called Koger to recommend someone to lead their national diversity initiative. Koger recommended Dwight Mosley. Pat Koger, Ann's sister, became the assistant to the USTA's multicultural committee. Mosley ended up being on the board of the USTA. Pat Koger took over from Mosley on the multicultural committee. Kasser organized a meeting of the committee when Ashe was in town. Koger discovered in preparing for the meeting that the USTA didn't have an Equal Employment Opportunity Policy (EEO) Statement. This was mentioned to Mosley, who mentioned it to Ashe. At the meeting, Ashe mentioned that they didn't have an Affirmative Action nor an EEO statement. At his urging the initiative to create a statement was passed by the board.

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Pat Koger traveled and helped establish multicultural initiatives at other sections of USTA. Eventually, she left the USTA due to communication issues. She wasn't receiving notices to attend certain meetings. Following Koger, a committee leader was put in place who was "compliant" to the needs of USTA administrators who thought "things were moving too fast." He lasted for two years and was followed by Karlyn Lothery Kieffer. During Kieffer's tenure, she tried to locate records from Koger's tenure, but they could not be found. She got a lead to check in an office in New York, where she found the records. Lothery Kieffer also received a lot of push back from some in the USTA. She eventually left USTA and open her own successful business.

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Koger describes the ways Ashe tried to make the USTA more diverse. The National Junior Tennis League was one of his efforts. Bill Johnson, a coach from Pennsylvania, sent many young tennis players off to college. Koger worked with Johnson the NJTL. Koger recalls developing young players. Reflects on Ashe's mission with the NJTL and Jeanne Ashe's support for the Safe Passage program.

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Mentions that Ashe had many "quiet visions." He always had a presence. Koger recommends talking to John Lucas, Bonnie Logan, Joe Williams. When Ashe was in Baltimore he would visit her mom.