

# KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

VIOLET PALMER INTERVIEW  
*MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA*  
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

**Violet Palmer**  
**American Basketball Official**  
**September 12, 2011**  
**Interviewed by**  
**Total Running Time: 1 hour 19 minutes and 56 seconds**

START TC: 00:00:00:00

CREW:

Turn the nano flash off. That's okay. And, uh, good marker.

**Violet Palmer**  
**American Basketball Official**

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about your family and, uh, where did you grow up and what was your family like?

00:00:13

VIOLET PALMER :

Um, I think I grew up in a pretty traditional household. My parents have been married 63 years. Um, I am the second child. I have an older sister and a younger brother and a younger sister. My older sister was, well, she's a retired RN nurse. And my brother and I are the, pretty much the athletes of, of the family. My, my younger sisters, Andrea is, she's in retail. Um, I have a nephew who still, he used to actually do the tricks with the girl Trotters, but he actually decided to get married and have kids. And so now he's pretty

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much just in the PR department with the Harlem Globe Trotters. So, so I would honestly say to the three of us are pretty much the athletes in the family. Um, myself, of course, being the only girl, my mother couldn't, uh, keep me in the kitchen trying to make me cook and put on the makeup and play with the Barbies and all that stuff. Didn't wanna do it, wanted to go out and ride skateboards and bicycles and play all the sports and stuff. So it started very, very young.

INTERVIEWER:

Great. Um, what was your parents' vision of a woman's place in the world and how were you influenced by that?

00:01:18

VIOLET PALMER:

You know, they, it's funny, they never, I, I was never raised in a, in a family where my parents would say you couldn't do something. It was always, you know, just whatever you wanna try, try it. And I think that was the one reason why my mom, which I knew that, not that she didn't want me to play sports, but she knew the cheerleading and the drill team and all of those things really wasn't, just wasn't something I enjoyed. Um, music I did, my brother and I took piano lessons, but when it came to sports, it was just my knack. And my brother and I, we were like two peas in a pot. We, you know, we were only three years apart, myself being a little older than him. Um, so he would follow me around, you know, in the neighborhood school, grade school-

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Violet Palmer Playing With Her Brother

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VIOLET PALMER:

–until of course we got in high school and we started having a little separation, but just playing sports my whole childhood.

INTERVIEWER:

Um, now your mom played basketball in high school, is that right?

00:02:14

VIOLET PALMER:

She did, yeah, a little bit. But she— it's so funny to hear her tell the stories because she was playing when you could only dribble, I think three times and then pass the ball. They didn't, and they've only played half court. They didn't play the full, full, you know, full court. But, um, was a true athlete. Even to this day, they're huge sport fans. I make sure that they have the, uh, the NBA league pass so they can watch every single game. You know, it's funny, if my mother, if they don't have my schedule, they're my dad's calling me, um, where's my schedule? So I'll know where you are. You know? And even if a game is blocked out, he's a, he would call me the next day and go, um, I don't understand. How come I didn't see the game? I checked every channel it wasn't on. I go, dad, I don't have any control over the network. You know, you're kind of on your own here. But they are huge supporters. Um, not only me, of course, of my brother as well, cuz my brother now is a, a college coach at Cal State Long Beach, one of the assistant coaches. So, um, my mom, my dad, not so much anymore, doesn't really attend games, but my mom, you know, still, she'll go out and, and watch a game or two. But of course when we were young, they didn't miss a game at all. Not one

INTERVIEWER:

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With which parent did you more closely identify and why? And who did you see as having the real power in your family?

00:03:29

VIOLET PALMER:

You know, I, it's funny that you say that. My, I think my dad thought he had the most power, and which probably did my, you know, my father was the breadwinner of our family. Um, a true provider in, you know, every sense. But I truly believe my mother in which my mother was a homemaker, um, I think she really had the power. I think she controlled the, the household totally. You know, I think she gave my father the illusion that of course he was controlling everything. But of course my dad was out working and my mother was the one at home, you know, with us doing all, you know, taking us to all our activities. You know, my dad was always around on the weekends to go to our games and all of that. But I think the day-to-day, um, it was my mother, no question. And truly, probably for me, I, I know a lot of my strength. Um, I just see in her, she was extremely strong. Just, you know, I don't even, I, as a kid, I couldn't even remember not thinking that my mom could get it taken care of or whatever problems we had, or whatever we came home from school with or whatever. My brother and I, we got in trouble. My mother could just fix it with a snap of a finger and it was like everything was okay. So I think for me, I would definitely, definitely choose my mother and say that I definitely drew her strength without a doubt.

INTERVIEWER:

Great. Um, do you remember thinking it was a good thing or a bad thing to be a girl? And did you ever wish that you were a boy growing up?

00:05:00

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VIOLET PALMER:

I never wished that I was a boy. I always knew that I, in my opinion, I just felt like I could be just as good as them. I think that was more so my motivation as a kid growing up. Um, I love being a girl. I, I just didn't really like the girly things like, you know, wearing the, my mom used to always try to make me wear pink. And today, what do I have on, I'm, I'm really close. Every, it's like, now it's all like, pink is one of my favorite colors. Everybody teases me cuz I always say I don't like pink, but for some reason I'm always wearing a color or something close to it. Um, but never wanted, never even thought about being a boy. Just really liked all the activities that boys could do and always wanted to be the one of the best in doing 'em in, in the, in the neighborhood, in school, in whatever it was. For me, that's all I wanted.

00:05:53

VIOLET PALMER:

So being a girl, I was fine with it. I think I kind of liked the attention being the only girl out there with the neighborhood boys. I think that attention was probably a little more fun for me. Now I can think about it then I didn't, you know, of course I didn't think so cause I was just a young kid. But looking back on it, I think even now looking at the attention that I received from, from the guys that I work with, it's not so bad. Not at all, not bad being the lone wolf out there.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Violet Palmer As A Child

INTERVIEWER:

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Do you ever think that you were at a disadvantage playing sports against the boys?

00:06:26

VIOLET PALMER:

No, not at all. I think for me, I always felt like I just had to be two times or 10 times better than them. It was, I knew that because of course they're stronger, they're quicker, they're faster, and they, and that's just, you know, the, the nature of the beast because they're, they're men or boys, um, that I had to be— to be on their same playing field, I had to be a little better than them to be thought of as an equal. So for me, I think that's what I've taken in one of my lifelong journeys going through what I've gone through now, is that no, never really looked at it as a negative or even a problem or something that I'm like, oh darn, you know, that, why did that happen to me? Or, you know, or I, it should be even, or, you know, that's okay, you know? But as long as I'm given that same opportunity and I'm just as good or better that I have an opportunity the same opportunity as the boys in my neighborhood or the men now that I referee with.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you play on a lot of co-ed teams growing up and had that impact you?

00:07:28

VIOLET PALMER:

You know, I didn't, I think the only co-ed is so funny and, and my mother has this picture and, uh, I will always treasure, treasure it. I played little league baseball—

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Violet Palmer With Teammates

VIOLET PALMER:

– starting out and it was co-ed. I was the only girl on the team. And it's so funny, I was on the Red Sox and you, I have this red cap and I used to love two ponytails. My mother used to hate to give me PO two ponytails because she said, putting the part down the middle of your head, you always, it never would go away, I guess when you try to comb your way, your hair a different way. But I love two ponytails and I have this red cap I have and taking this picture with, you know, all the little boys and you see these two berets sticking out of this baseball, this Red Sox baseball cap. It's the cutest thing. So that was actually my only co-ed, uh, team that I actually played on. Um, every other team, uh, softball, track, volleyball, basketball was always girls. So for me, I guess the, you know, just a small little, little chance to play with the boys. But, you know, as far as an organized team, it was little league baseball.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. All right, great. Um, you played basketball in college. Can you tell me a little bit about that? What did you love about being on the court playing?

00:08:42

VIOLET PALMER:

Wow, you know, it was really just being a part of the team, the camaraderie, the day-to-day going to practice. Um, I think for me, coming out of high school, it was a, I looked at it as a way to help my parents because financially they didn't have to pay for me to go to school. And getting a scholarship was, you know, I thought was awesome. Um, not that I was trying to give back anything to my parents, but it was like, well, if you can get a free education,

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take it. So for me, that was a great motivation, you know, as far as playing basketball and being in sports. But for me, I had probably one of the most phenomenal coaches in women's basketball. And it was the late Darlene May. And I think as a kid growing up, I watched her and I always admired her and I just kind of loved what she stood for. Um, she just really had a very, very calm, stern fir— I mean, she was very firm, very strict, but in a real loving way and probably in some ways reminded me of my mother, you know, and I think that was probably one of the, the major reasons that I decided to go to Cal Poly Pomona was because of her.

00:09:56

VIOLET PALMER:

Um, and I just felt comfortable and I felt like I would just have a fair chance. Cuz you know, for any kid growing up, especially coming out of high school, you know, you're the big time basketball player, winning, you know, winning a lot of games. Your league mvp, your, your MVP of your team, you're the captain of your team.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Violet Palmer Playing Basketball At Cal Poly Pomona

VIOLET PALMER:

And then when you get to college, things change because you're playing with players that are just as good as you are. But for me, going to play at Cal Poly, I just thought that I would have a fair chance, a fair shot of, you know, just having a chance to play basketball and do something that I love. And that was one of my huge motivations for choosing that particular school.

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INTERVIEWER:

Okay, great. Um, when you graduated from college, did you want to go pro?

00:10:39

VIOLET PALMER:

Absolutely not. I was, it's funny, when I graduated, I didn't even think about refereeing. I was just concerned with now trying to get out in the workforce and find myself a job so I could actually take care of myself and, you know, do something for my livelihood. Um, and just for some reason I was, uh— being a recreation director, you know, in college I took a couple of part-time jobs in the summer and I was working at a park. I was score keeping, uh, men's basketball and a couple of times my referees didn't show up. So of course, what do you do? You know, it's all about the games are every hour, so it's like you gotta get the games on time. So of course I went in the, in the office, put on a shirt and told my counterpart, I said, you keep score, I'm gonna go out here and referee with this referee because we're on an hour's schedule and we're going, you know, the, of course the longer we go, the later our night is put the shirt on start refereeing.

00:11:34:

VIOLET PALMER:

And the actual, the, the director who handled all the officials for the city of Placenta actually saw me and he said, you know, you have a really good knack for refereeing. Have you ever thought about it? And I was like, no, never even crossed my mind. He said, you know what, you should. And I said, well, you know, I'm trying to graduate, I'm playing right now. Maybe in the near future might be something that I look at. Sure enough I graduate and, um, have a, find a job, end up moving back to Los Angeles. And that's when I joined the, uh, Los Angeles Officials Association and started doing high school officiating.

And the refereeing took off from there. So honestly, the NBA wasn't never, ever, even in the picture. I just wanted— I knew that I wanted to do the division one women's basketball. Like I wanted to do the UCLA, or the USC, or the Texas Tech or the Texas or the Tennessee, the UCONN's. Those were the schools, when I started high school, that I said, I want to referee those teams. So men's basketball, the pro basketball was never ever in the picture.

INTERVIEWER:

And so you never grew up with dreams of, oh, I, I wanna be a professional basketball player then?

00:12:51

VIOLET PALMER:

No, not at all. No, I really, I really enjoyed playing, uh, with the women. You know, I mean, it was, I guess we, we were really tough on each other. So, you know, if you, you were able, and I think for me, the, the, the biggest accomplishment was getting a scholarship to college. Because of course, in the time when I was, you know, trying to go to college, that was huge because Title IX had just kicked in and they had started providing more money for— in, in the universities for, for women's athletics. So getting, you know, having that money come and you could go to school for free, that was huge. So that was more of an accomplishment than actually playing the actual basketball, which that's what I really enjoyed. But at the time it was like, wow, you know, you're actually getting free money to go to school and play basketball, do something that you really, really, really, really love.

INTERVIEWER:

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Well, have you thought about that? I mean, jumping to Title IX right now, um, how did Title IX impact you? Because even being on the boys team in Little League, I mean, that must have been part of all that, right?

00:13:55

VIOLET PALMER:

You know, I'm not sure. Cause I think I was really young at that point. Um, I just knew, you know, it's funny, growing—I, I could always play on whatever team I wanted to, you know, so for me, which was a great thing, and I have to say, you know, knock on wood, my mom was, was total supportive because she didn't say, you know what, no, I think you should be on a girls team. So for me at the time, you know, title IX for me, I really didn't start paying a lot of attention to it until I got in high school. When you really realize, wow, you know what? We actually have an opportunity and have the equal rights as the— as all the guys to actually go to school for free. You know, have scholarships, have those, all those things that guys have always been given a chance to, to do and get. For me, that's when it really, really kind of came to light. And then thinking, you know what, wow. I think my parents would be pretty, pretty proud that they can say, wow, you know, my daughter received a scholarship to school. You know, so I think that was the huge opportunity for me during that time.

INTERVIEWER:

And then, um, I wanted to hit on your coach from, um, college there, cuz she was a pretty renowned ref as well.

00:15:05

VIOLET PALMER:

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Coach May was the first woman to ever internationally referee a men's game. Uh, so not only was she a great collegiate referee, internationally, I think she was the one of the trailblazers that actually opened it up to allow Fiba referees, which, that's what, that's what they're called when you're refereeing internationally, to have that opportunity to referee the men as well. Um, and that was of course, with her, watching her do college games and watching her doing the international games was one of my major motivations for saying, you know what, maybe I, after graduating, maybe, you know, and of course listening to a couple of people say, you know what? You kind of have a good knack for this referee stuff to actually go out and try it. Um, so without a doubt she was a true- Coach May was definitely a true trailblazer and one of my mentors to get me started and going on the track of refereeing.

INTERVIEWER:

Did she encourage you specifically to do it?

00:16:04

VIOLET PALMER:

She did. She did. I'll never forget, one day we were sitting in her office and, and she says, she says, "you know, I heard that you're, you're thinking about doing a little refereeing." And I said, "Yeah, what do you think?" She said, you know what? And she called me VP. She said, "VP, I honestly think you would be really, really good at it." So of course with that, coming from her sitting there, I went, wow, I'll definitely give it a try. Because having so much respect, um, for whatever she said, you know, I just looked up to her with the utmost respect and I said, you know what, I'll try it. And that's when I actually started doing the high school and worked my way up to the college. And here I am in the National Basketball Association.

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INTERVIEWER:

Okay. Why did you decide not to pursue coaching?

00:16:47

VIOLET PALMER:

I tried it. I tried coaching. Uh, I was a grad assistant at Cal Poly for a year, and then I received— I had an opportunity to go, uh, El Dorado High School, needed a women's, uh, varsity coach. And I said, I told Coach May, I talked to her about it and she says, “you know what? Vp try it.” You know, I think, you know, you could always do what you're doing, you know, come, you can always come back to college. I think it'll be, you know, just a great opportunity for you. So I said, okay. I go out, I have this team, this go to the high school. They drove me absolutely bonkers. I had migraines. I was ner- I was just a nervous wreck worrying about my kids. You know, and it's funny, when you're a high school coach, it's more than just basketball.

00:17:32

VIOLET PALMER:

They were calling me because they broke up with their boyfriend. They were calling me cuz they got, they, they had an argument with their parents, they had an argument with their brother. I was, you know, I felt like I was a psychologist, not a basketball coach. And then the games, it was driving me bonkers. So I just couldn't take it to be honest. I went, you know what? Now I know what I'm not, I am not a coach. My heart goes out to every coach that coaches any level on, at any sport at any time. But I figured out real fast, it took me two years. I did, I was a varsity basketball coach and a junior varsity softball coach. It took me two years. I said, wash my hands of it that I will not be, not even close <laugh>.

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INTERVIEWER:

That's great. Okay. And tell me, were you recruited to referee the men's college basketball games? How did that come about?

00:18:28

VIOLET PALMER:

You know, yes. I was recruited to referee men's basketball. And it's a kind of a funny story. I was of course a division one doing division one, uh, women's basketball. And I had just finished working a NC to a division one playoff game. I was in Chicago, refereeing DePaul. And I got home and received this phone call one day out of the blue. And it was from Dr. Aaron Wade, the late Dr. Aaron Wade. And he told me who he was. He said he was a NBA scout for referees. And I went, really? Oh, they have those, you know, and I was kind of, I, I really thought it was kind of a joke. Like one of my friends was playing this joke on me and he says, yes I am. He says, I received your number from Booker Turner. Booker Turner at the times was a— he lived here in Los Angeles. He was a member of my high school association, but he was a big time men's division one referee. So that's how Booker and I knew each other.

00:19:25:

VIOLET PALMER:

So Booker gave Dr. Wade my phone number, all my information, and that's how he ended up calling me. Unbeknownst to me, you know, I didn't know who Dr. Aaron Wade was. He was Dale Garrison, which at the time was the NBA's, uh, chief over referees. And of course they were at that time looking to bring in some women for training. So Dr. Wade of course asked me, you know, have I ever thought about refereeing in NBA? No, uh, would you think about it? I said, sure, I guess. And it's funny, he used to always tell this story because he would call guys all the time, and as soon as he said their names to, to these

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particular referees, they were like, oh my God, is Dr. Aaron Wade calling me from the, in, from the National Basketball Association. And I was like, yeah, okay. I guess, um, I'll, I'll participate. Will it cost me anything? He goes, no, we pay for the training. Um, he kind of gave me the rundown on how this, because they did all the training in the summer.

00:20:27

VIOLET PALMER:

He asked me if I had some videotapes, could I send him a couple of tapes of me refereeing? I said, yes. He said, um, you have, um, I'll send you some rule books. I said, okay, no problem. To kind of get familiar with, you know, the NBA rules cuz I had no clue. Really hadn't, still didn't have a clue, didn't wanna even have a clue. But I'm like, well, the training is free. I guess what's, what's the worst that can happen? I could learn a little more about refereeing. So that's kind of how I actually ended up in the program. And that summer, that's when it all started. That's how I actually got in the NBA program.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Violet Palmer Refereeing

INTERVIEWER:

So this wasn't something that you were aiming for the whole time. This wasn't something that you were driven to do, be an NBA ref?

00:21:10

VIOLET PALMER:

Never even thought about it, never wanted to do it. Nothing. No, not at all. Didn't have any aspirations until I literally, for the first time we were in summer training and I walked out, I was at Cal State, uh, Long Beach, it was

the Fila summer pro league, and that was the league in which we did our training. When I literally walked out on the floor for the first time to referee a pro basketball game, I went, oh my God, what? First I said, what have I gotten myself into? But then the competition, the athletes, the feeling on the floor, the adrenaline flowing, I said, oh no, I'm gonna do these games. This is it. I said, now I don't know why they actually gave me the opportunity to have a chance to even referee these games, but I tell you what, I'm in. Two feet forward and I'm going for it, you know, and I don't even think at the time they really knew that, you know, what, what was really gonna come out of it. They just said, hey, we'll provide an opportunity and we'll see what happens. Oh, I knew right then and there, I called my mom, um, after my first game and I said to her, I said, I know one thing. I said, they don't know they gonna hire me, but I'm gonna get me a job in the National Basketball Association. And I just put the two feet forward and jumped in and just ran with it and I'm still running.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. What was the response from the colleges when the college teams going back to the NCAA, the coaches or the fans, when they first saw you on the floor as a female ref? Because that was not the norm at the time either.

00:22:51

VIOLET PALMER:

Um, it's funny, you know, the NCAA... when I was in the summer pro league in the summer, it was all in the summer. So for me, I'm, you know, I've learned, uh, probably as a referee you kind of keep your mouth shut and you just do your job. So of course when I, when you're in Rome, you do as Romans. So in the summertime, I was refereeing to pro basketball. Soon as

that was over, when I came time for the NCAA, I just went and did my NCAA games. Really didn't talk about it much. Um, there were little media things that was going on in the summer, but really didn't have much to say because here again, I respect the profession. Um, I respect my college referees and I didn't want them to think that, you know, I thought I was better than them or I thought I was trying to do something different.

00:23:37:

VIOLET PALMER:

So for me, when I was an NCAA referee, that's just what I was, I didn't pretty much talk about none of the pro stuff. I worked their rules, um, their mechanics, their everything. I didn't, you know, try, I didn't mix the two because I thought it was very, very important that, you know, as a referee, that's just what you do. So for me, in Rome, I did as the Romans and I really didn't mix the two at all. So there was really no discussion. Um, with my colleagues, with the coaches, they knew me as a collegiate referee. And so for me, it was really nothing to say.

INTERVIEWER:

And was it common at that time though, um, to have a female referee in the NCAA games?

00:24:17

VIOLET PALMER:

Yes, but at the time, it's funny, when I first started doing division one women's basketball, there wasn't that many women. Um, so there was more, so a lot more men. Now I think it's almost even where we have just as many men as women refereeing in the NCAA. Um, but when I started, women were far and few between. So I think for a lot of our college coaches, um, they were

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just happy to have females that were referring in the NC two A. So that's why I'm saying for me, really talking about the professional side, it never really even came up, which is, which was I think was fortunate for me.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay, great. At the beginning when you moved from the Summer league into doing the NBA games, there were some outspoken opponents even to the idea of it. Can you talk to me about that a little bit?

00:25:08

VIOLET PALMER:

Yes. I think, you know, my first year or even couple of years in the summer pro league, you had the, you had that same animosity of, of guys, and I think it was more so the unknown of guys just, they've never had a woman. So they, they really thought that they were gonna have to do something different. They thought that they were gonna have to talk differently. They thought that they maybe couldn't touch me. Um, maybe they couldn't yell at me. Maybe they couldn't use the foul language with me. And I think for me, –

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Violet Palmer

Grizzlies vs Mavericks, 1997

VIOLET PALMER:

– I let them know I can care less when I put this shirt on, the gray shirt, I'm a referee, and as long as you treat me as such, you don't cross a line that you know, you know, you, you're not supposed to cross. Everything is fair and equal game, I think. But generally it was a good old boys club. And I think

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that's what in any sport, you know, of course now we're just talking about basketball. Um, and I think that's really it. It was really, that was more so the problem of it being a good old boy and just having a woman around.

00:26:09

VIOLET PALMER:

You know, it was just the unknown. And I think again, it, it's, it's change and different. And I think in any time we have those two things put in any equation, you have eyebrows that are raised, you have people that'll go, oh my God, no. Well, well why are we doing it like that? We've never done it like that before. Well, it's a new day and things change. People change, situations change. And I think it was, but it was time. It was time for just the opportunity, you know. And again, if I couldn't do it, if I didn't live up to the bill, if I couldn't do the job, you can be the first to say, you know what, pack your bags. Thank you very much. And I would say, thank you for the opportunity and walk out the door.

INTERVIEWER:

Did it ever get personal though? Cause it was more than raised eyebrows?

00:26:54

VIOLET PALMER:

You know, I think it did get personal, but I didn't take things personal. Because here again, when you're a referee, you are used to 300, 3000, 30,000 people yelling at you, calling you names, calling you out of your name, saying things inappropriately. So it's almost like I heard what was said, but I didn't take it personally because they were really talking about Violet Palmer, the referee, because they really don't know Violet Palmer, the person. So it was never anything personal, in my opinion. Now some people may go, no, you

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know, you should feel differently. I just really never did. I think because once you, once you put on that shirt and become a referee, you're so used to it that you're almost immune. So for me, you know, all the things that were said, the reporters, the players, the coaches, you name it, um, I heard it, you know, you know, go back and referee the women's game, you know, your ponytails too tight.

00:27:54:

VIOLET PALMER:

Oh you, you know, all those different comments that they make all the time for a referee. But most people don't realize that they're thinking that, oh my God, I can't believe she's taking all this negative criticism. When we get criticism every time you walk onto the court, every time you blow your whistle, some— those people are saying those same things, and it's not, they don't know me, so there's really no need for me to take anything personal. I think for me, that really gave me more motivation to go out and really learn the craft, do the job, be a professional, and show every single person that, you know what, you will be quiet real soon because you will see that when this is all said and done, I can do my job just like any male referee on that floor. And for me, that was a motivation 100%, without a doubt.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. So did any of the refs, um, resent the idea of a woman joining the ranks?

00:28:51

VIOLET PALMER:

There were a lot of referees that resented women doing, you know, joining the ranks, because here again, we're talking about the good old boys and I, and there wasn't just a good old boys as far as fans or players or coaches. It

was a good old boys network amongst the referees as well. Um, so just the idea of having a woman around didn't rub them very... it wasn't very favorable. And again, knowing that going in, which wasn't a problem, you know, I said, well, it's either they're gonna get to know me and some of them will like me just because they like me, and some of them won't like me just because they don't want to. I'm not gonna let that be my, my motivation or the reason why I say, you know what, I don't wanna do it. Um, because I quit is never, never, has never ever been in my vocabulary.

00:29:41:

VIOLET PALMER:

So for me, I said, Hey, I'm gonna be myself. I'm gonna show them that again. I'm just a referee. Now. There, there's a couple things that I did make very clear with, with all of our referees on our staff. I said, guys, treat me like you would do the next male. I'm not, I don't want any favors. I don't you, whatever language you use, use it, whatever, you know, whatever jokes you want to tell, you can tell them. As long as you're not talking about me personally, I don't have a problem with it. So I think with, with putting that out there and just really being myself, um, and I think that's something that I tell little girls all the time. I go, you know what? Just be you and the people that like you will like you. And then you're gonna have some that don't, but they're not gonna like you because it's anything personal. In most cases, a lot of the dislike is maybe on their side. It's really not on your side. So in my case, I just did that with the guys and I thought, as long as I show them that I have the same work ethic that they have, that I'm just a referee, like them tie my shoes, put my pants on, put my shirt on, put my whistle on, just like they do work as hard as they do that I would earn their respect.

00:30:52

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VIOLET PALMER:

And that's exactly what happened, I think. And when it's all said and done, now if you talk to any referee in the National Basketball Association, they would say, wow, you know what? First she's a referee and she's our referee. And don't say anything bad about her. They would...right now I have so much protection, it's unbelievable. Which is, which is great for me. You know, I tell people I have, I have 57 of the most wonderful men to ever work around, and there's no doubt about it.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you ever second guess your decision to become the first female ref in the NBA?

00:31:28

VIOLET PALMER:

Not one time did I— not one time did I second guess myself. Um, as far as making the decision to do the training to want to get hired, no. I think it was more so I had so much motivation on knowing that I could do it, proving the point to everyone. I think that that for me was more of a motivation than the other direction. So the other direction was never an option, in my case. I said, if I'm gonna go for this, I'm going all the way. I will get me a job. Not only will I get a job, I will stay. I will be considered as a veteran referee in the National Basketball Association. And I knew that that would be something they could never, ever take away from me. No one.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay, great. Um, okay. What was that first game like for you going out into the stadium? Just talk to me about what you were feeling as you were getting

ready and what was going through your mind and what it was like to, to walk out into that stadium for the first time.

00:32:33

VIOLET PALMER:

My first game in the National Basketball Association was literally a blur. It was probably— it was incredible. It was phenomenal. It was fantastic. Every... everything you can imagine. But I was scared out of my wits because I just knew that the entire world was waiting for me to fall on my face. And I think that's how I really felt. Knowing that I would trust my training, my development, my hard work, my work ethic, um, how I carried myself. I knew that all those things would just come into play once I got on the floor. But getting there, oh my god. And I'll never forget, I was in Vancouver. Vancouver was still in our league, and uh, we walk into the arena and walk into the locker room. And at the time, our VP was Rod Thorn. And Rod Thorn walks through the door and when, you know, when the vice president of operations walks through, you go, okay, oh God.

00:33:40

VIOLET PALMER:

I went, oh my God, now I'm really in trouble. I'm thinking, this is really big, you know? So he walks in and he, and the first thing he says, he says, "Violet, I just want you to know I'm not here because this is your first game and all..." I went, yeah, right. You kidding me? No, that's the reason why you are here, because this is my first game. But, and he said, "You know what? No, just really here as a support..." of course, because he was the one that had hired me, which I'm very, very grateful to him for just giving the opportunity as well as the National Basketball Association. But walking out on that floor was tremendous. Um, and I have to give thanks to my two partners, Mark

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Wonderlic and Billy Oaks, because they were two guys that just made me feel extremely comfortable and just, it was just like a regular summer league game, you know, for us, we just went out, we did our routine, we pre regained, we, we didn't do anything different.

00:34:37

VIOLET PALMER:

And when I walked out on the floor, that's how I felt. I was extremely comfortable. I mean, cameras were flicking, you know, flicking. Everybody's looking. I hear all the whispers, oh my God, the woman is here, she's reprimanding, she's here, she's really in the league. She's... you know, it was unbelievable. Soon as the ball went up and I blew my first whistle and gave it outta bounds, it was all over. It was just a regular basketball game, like any day of the week. And just the start of it though was unbelievable. So I think I was so happy when that ball was tossed and we started the game because then it did, I, I was really irrelevant. It was like I was... everybody was on me until we actually started running up and down the floor. After that, everything was back to normal.

INTERVIEWER:

But that's a lot of pressure there cuz you're making split second decisions and you've got the eyes of everybody on you.

00:35:28

VIOLET PALMER:

Without a doubt. I think ha- having to make those split dec split second decisions is kind of normal though. So see, that's just a referee. And I think for a lot of people, they would think that that's really complicated. It's tough to do, you know, you're put on a spot, but really once you become a referee,

that's just the day-to-day part of operations. So for me, that part is not the difficult part. That wasn't the difficult part. The games are easy. It's all the things that lead up to the games. But see, going back to you trust your training, you trust your work ethic, and you, those are the things that you really rely on when you're out as a referee. The, that's, that's the key. That's the core of what you do as well as with your integrity, that you just go out and do, give it 150% every single time you go out. You trust those things and you let the chips fall where they may.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. Now you had one person that when you first started out, um, there was some backlash from players. There was some backlash in the media. There was a radio announcer who said, oh, go back in the kitchen and cook some bacon and eggs. And there was a lot of kind of, uh, um, sarcastic comments like that. How did you deal with all of that?

00:36:46

VIOLET PALMER:

Well, you know, it's funny, that radio announcer, you know, and making all his comments, I think what he really didn't realize was, I'm a horrible cook. So he, of course not knowing that he would definitely not want me to go back into the kitchen and cook anything. I'm a much better referee than I am a cook. So again, not taking any of those things personal, I really didn't. Um, I think for him, he even wanted to apologize and, you know, come back and say, Hey, you know, I didn't mean it this way. I didn't mean it that way. Doesn't really matter to me because again, like I said, you know, before really talking about the referee, I don't, I, I, it's just not personal to me. And I think right now I could look him dead in his face and go, Hey, how you doing? Wouldn't

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bother me one bit. Because here again, he was the one that looked pretty bad, you know, in the whole scenario, not me. But if I cooked him some eggs and bacon, he wouldn't be a happy camper.

INTERVIEWER:

How about some players, were there any players, and I know you can't name specifics, but were there any players who had been derogatory about you being in the league and were turned around and came up and said something to you? Or did you have any turnarounds like that, that you can tell me about?

00:37:58

VIOLET PALMER:

You know, I do. I have one... one funny turnaround story, uh, that, uh, a player had said some comments and, you know, and which was rightfully so. And here again, you know, they, this is the unknown. And after I had refereed his games a couple of times, I'm coming out, you know, in the back of the house getting ready to leave, and he comes over and he says, "Violet, you know what? I apologize for what I said." And I was with my other two partners walking out at the time. He said, "you're a much better referee than him and him." And we all start laughing and just chuckle and walked away. And, you know, that was the end of it and nothing else from it. So here again, I think, you know, um, given the opportunity, probably a lot of things were said in a nice way where that people didn't hear. You know, of course, I think a lot of time with the media, you always hear the negative things and the bad things. But in my case, I've had a lot of positive things said to me from players, um, that I really, really cherish and really look at and go, wow, you know what? I have earned my respect because that's really what it's about.

00:39:05

VIOLET PALMER:

You know, I have no problem with a player being upset with me. You know, just don't call me outta my name. Those are... you know, rules or rules. But again, you can yell, you can scream, you can be upset, you can do all those things in the heat of the moment of a basketball game. And I know that it's not personal, just know that again, if you get hit with a technical foul, it's not personal. It is what it is. And in most cases, if they are hit with a technical foul, they come back and apologize and say, you know what, violet, my bad. And that's a, you know, player's favorite line. You know, my bad, I'm sorry. It was the heat of the moment. You know, I didn't mean, you know, to come at you like that, I apologize. I go, no problem. You know what, it's a basketball game and we're all emotional and we know that basketball can be an emotional game and it's okay. So, you know, even players even now will come apologize to me and my counterparts. They go, well, he sure didn't apologize to me when I gave him the technical foul. I go, you don't smell good like I do. There's a difference. So, you know, we kind of have these little inside jokes amongst me, me and the guys because, you know, we'll get yelled at, we'll get booed coming out of the tunnel and as we're walking to our guys or walking to our cars, you know, I'll have cheerleaders or the players, "Hey, violet, great game."

00:40:19

VIOLET PALMER:

Or I'll have the cheerleaders, "Oh my God, I love you. You're my hero. You are the best." And all of my colleagues, they go, "They're not talking about us. They're freaking still calling us dirt bags and trash and we're horrible." "Oh, Violet, we love you." You know? So that's like an ongoing joke amongst the guys too. So, so again, so we can, you know, kind of keep it in stride and make

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it fun and, and still joke about it. And even, and, and I think the great thing is the guys that I work with, they recognize that they can still appreciate saying, you know what, this particular lady can do her job. And that's really all that people are saying. And I can honestly say that, you know, my guys joke about it and they laugh and, you know, they're, they're not offended by it. You know, those type of things we can... it's just, it can be in fun. And I think for me, that's, that breaks the ice too because then, you know, when you can say things out loud and not whisper them and, and, and not, you know, just kind of let your guard down. I think right now we... all the guards are down, you know, it's just a, a fair playing feel without a doubt.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay, great. Do you remember a call where you second guessed yourself? Or do you ever have moments like that?

00:41:29

VIOLET PALMER:

Absolutely. We have a lot of moments in a game where you blow your whistle and you go, I can't stand that call. You know, I mean, cuz that's just a referee. But here again, you're the only person that knows that you can't... that's your inner, you can't let the inner come out. So, you know, you just, you suck it up. Uh, and you keep the same freaking stoic face that you have and you go out and you report it and you do your job. But what you don't want, and this is every referee's nightmare, to have that particular call decide the game and you're wrong. Because then when you lay your head on that pillow, you're not gonna really sleep much at night because you're gonna be up for about a day or two, you know, because you just made an error. But again, you gotta know, it comes, and again, it can happen in anyone's career. It's a referee's

nightmare. It's something none of us really, really want. We don't look forward to it. But you know that in every single game it's a possibility because we're human beings.

00:42:32

VIOLET PALMER:

And I think that's something else that people, a lot of times on the outside, fans, they don't realize that we are human beings and that human error is human error. Nothing's on purpose, nothing's intentional. That's just not how we referee. I, you know, I wish in a perfect world, I could make every single call correct, but like as you said, when you're making split second decisions, it's ineligible that you are going to at some point make an error, but you just don't want it to happen at the end of a game. So of course, hopefully, uh, I haven't had that many of those nightmares, um, but making a call, you know, that, that you didn't like, you're the first person that know it and you want to just make that next call that next time you blow your whistle, you wanna be nails right on the money. And then it's almost like riding a horse. You get back on the horse and you start going and then everything is fine. It's, it's, it goes away. So, and you know, that's what you hope for. You just don't want 'em to happen at the end of a game that you have to decide it.

INTERVIEWER:

So everyone's aware at the, if there's a tie game and you're going into the last couple seconds and a lot of basketball games are decided in those last couple seconds, they're aware of the pressure on the players. Talk about what it's like for you guys on that court as refs, because you can make or break the game too by your calls.

00:43:54

VIOLET PALMER:

Absolutely. The pressure that we have at the end of a game, it's really no different than the pressure at the beginning. I see. And I think, see here again, when, when you, when you've been trained and you trust your fundamentals, you trust your work ethic, you put all those things on the floor, you do your best to referee the beginning of the game the same as you do the end. So yes, there's a difference between the two, but for us, as far as you... you're not trained that there's a difference. You're trained that when the players go up, you come down, you stay even keel, you trust your instincts, you trust your fundamental, you trust your work ethic, and you just go out, you see it, you call it, if you don't see it, you don't blow your whistle. So it's really, you trust more so your training, um, and your instincts when you're out on the floor, because those are the key things that you can always fall back on.

00:44:51

VIOLET PALMER:

Um, unfortunately, sometimes they... they don't pretty much do what you want 'em to do. But, you know, I would say nine times outta 10 that we're, we're pretty solid, you know, um, as referees at the end of games because here again, you know, that it can be careers on the line, it can be coach's careers, players' careers, games that are on the line, and you don't want that to happen. So for us... you know, it's almost like trying to referee the perfect game. That's impossible to do. You know, referees are the last person that wants to decide a basketball game. And I can, I can say that for every single referee that goes out on referee any sport, that's not what we want. We want a fair, even playing field for either team to have an opportunity to win. And that's what we try our best to provide every single time we're out on the floor.

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INTERVIEWER:

Okay, great. Um, okay, so every day you're dealing with millionaire athletes that aren't used to being told what to do and who throw their weight around. And you are the one that has to say no to them half the time. Do they ever try and test you and how do you get them to listen?

00:46:04

VIOLET PALMER:

Getting players to listen? It's really not a difficult task because here again, you have all the power. And once you walk out on the floor, you run... you know, my job is to run the game. So that just goes with the territory. So it doesn't really matter if you are a million dollar player or you're the little bitty basketball league. It's really no different. The only difference is at the bitty basketball league, you may have 25 parents in the stand versus, refereeing the National Basketball Association, you have 20,000 people in the stands. That's really the difference. The arena's bigger. You're on national television, most of your games, um, and just a lot more fans watching, but they're phenomenal athletes. So, you know, with that in mind, again, you go back to just being a referee. So you don't really, I don't really look at them or I don't really look at what I do as far as saying, wow, I referee million dollar players.

00:47:03

VIOLET PALMER:

Now they're, they're babies, whether they're bitty basketball or whether they're in the National Basketball Association. And you know, players just want what they want. They want the calls when they want 'em. And you do your best to call the game to the best of your ability and go, you go back to the number one things that I've said from the, from the time sitting here. You just go back to, you go back to your training of trusting your instincts, your work

ethic, your fundamentals, and those are the key things as a referee that you stick with and you just go out and you referee 'em, whether they're million dollar players or whether they're bitty basketball, it really doesn't matter. So, but only thing you find out is, you know, million dollar players tend to whine a little more and that's fine, you know, but it's pretty, it's pretty common, I think. And even fans would say that, no different than how I feel, but whining has nothing to do... doesn't get you any calls, just gets me to go, "Really? Okay."

INTERVIEWER:

Now somewhere, I read that some of them almost see you because a lot of them grew up in single mother households, and so that they see you as an authority figure from the get-go.

00:48:09

VIOLET PALMER:

You know, I didn't realize that, that a lot of the players, um, look at me like their, their strong mother or their strong aunt that raised them, or the strong grandmother that raised them. I didn't know that until about several years ago, um, that it kind of... it was like a light bulb that went on that I went... a player, I think he mentioned it to me saying, you know what, you remind me of that strong grandmother I had, you know, and I was raised by my grandmother and I went, wow. You know, it was like ding, ding, ding, ding, ding. That there is a strong possibility that of course for a lot of these men, they were raised by single mothers, um, growing up. That they, they of course give me my respect that I've earned, but they look at me and say, you know what? She reminds me of that strong woman that raised me, or some influential woman in their lives, you know, whoever that might be.

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00:49:06

VIOLET PALMER:

I think that plays a huge part in how they respect me. And I think even, you know, even across the world, people do not realize how respectful, um, the players in a national basketball association are toward me. You know, most people would think that they're... I guess from just watching little snippets on TV here or there, you may think that they're, you know, that they treat me bad when in reality it's not even close, very respectful.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Tom Washington, Violet Palmer & Scottie Pippen  
Portland, Oregon, 2003

VIOLET PALMER:

Um, communicate with me almost better, sometimes, than they do with the men, because, you know, men tend to bump heads versus with me, I'm more of a... I guess looking at me, it's a little more calming for them. I can break up, fights pretty, pretty easy. I step in, they stop. If the guys step in, they may punch them in the mouth. They won't do it with me. So I think being that strong female out there sometimes can calm the waters in a positive way. So I think that's how I've taken it.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you think that the players changed their behavior at all though? Because it is, I mean, before you were in there, it was a boys club, they're hitting each other on their butts, they're, you know, cursing, they're, has that, did that change at all when you walk on the court?

00:50:19

VIOLET PALMER:

No, the good old boys club is still there. And they have not changed their language. They have not ch— I, I'm patted on my leg, my side, my arm. I'm hugged, you know, it's, it's even an ongoing joke. We have our captain's meeting and players now, they'll come over to greet, you know, I put my hand out to shake their hand. They kiss me on the cheek and it's, it's a very respectful kiss. It's not anything, you know, in any type of way, disrespectful, anything like that. It's more nice to see you, you know, happy to have you here versus with the guys. And they'll say to the guys, they'll pull out their head, I'm not kissing you, you know? So then we kind of chuckle, we have the meeting players go, you know, and that same player, he'll end up getting a technical foul later on in the game and it's like, no big deal. You know? So for me, I think that part of what I do is really, really great because I'm given the respect as a woman, but I've earned the respect as a referee.

00:51:18

VIOLET PALMER:

And the difference, it's really, really small, but it's out there and it, and it happens sometimes it's, it's the funniest thing, but you know, I think the respect is there and players treat me like any of the guys, you know, other than I may get a kiss on the cheek every now and then, or a hug or something like that. But it's, it's, it's very respectful and it's, it's more of a mutual good to see you, you know, happy to have you. And, and even if, even if they haven't seen me, you know, I've had players go, where have you been? You know what, you didn't, you don't wanna referee our games, you didn't wanna come to our city, da da da, we haven't seen you, you know, it's been the whole season. This is our first time seeing you. So I go, you know what? I am a, I'm a

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standing figure here. You know? So if they haven't seen me in a long time, they tend to go, where's the girl at? Where's our girl? You know, we, it is. So, I think they look forward to it as well, I think. But it's more so the relationship that I've established with the players and the coaches where it's mutual, where it's, it's just about doing the business. And I think that's what they really respect more, more so than anything.

INTERVIEWER:

You started out with another female ref, Dee Kantner. What happened to her and how did you feel when you heard she was being let go?

00:52:27

VIOLET PALMER:

Wow, Dee. Dee and I, Dee Kantner and I, we came in together, we did all of our training together, and, um... it was, it was tough. It was really, really... I was disappointed when, um, the NBA released her, but here again, I had nothing to do with it. It's purely, you know, trying to hold onto my own little job that I had at the time, had no idea what happened. Um, even to this day, I still couldn't tell you why. Um, you know, why she's not refereeing in the National Basketball Association. Um, but my heart really went out to her because, again, no one at no time would ever want to lose anything. And I know how hard she worked as well as myself because her and I went through training together. So I knew that it was very, very difficult for her, but she's doing extremely well now.

00:53:20

VIOLET PALMER:

And, um, which I knew that she would. So now I don't think, you know, being the lone soldier doesn't really matter, you know, I think the good thing is we

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have several women, you know, I think 20 or so in our D-league and in the development league in the National Basketball Association. So looking at that, I think that's a bright side to the future as far as possibly having another woman to maybe come into our league. I don't know. I think that would be a rubber stamp for me, um, if that ever happened. But here again, not something that I have any control over, none whatsoever. So I'll just keep treading the waters like I am, um, getting ready to start my 14th year and do the best I can and try to get a couple of plays right. And let the... put one more year underneath my belt.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Violet Palmer With NBA Referees, 2011

INTERVIEWER:

But 14 years. And you're still the only NBA female ref that's kind of shocking. 14 years.

00:54:16

VIOLET PALMER:

You know, it is kind of shocking. I— and it's funny, the 14 years have gone by so fast. I think that's something that I've learned that years go really, really quickly. Um, because I could remember walking out on, uh, on the floor in 97, working from that first game in Vancouver, like it was yesterday. Um, so yeah, 14 years and still counting, not going anywhere. Not, not yet, anyway, I hope, um, as long as my body hold up. Um, but I'm really, I'm positive, I'm positive with the women that we have coming up. Um, so possibly in the near future, you never know. You might see another one. You never know.

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INTERVIEWER:

Can you tell me a little bit about the camps that you run?

00:54:58

VIOLET PALMER:

Well, the camps that I run are... it's for NCAA, uh, division one college referees. Um, and I run them with, uh, one of my colleagues and it's called the Basic Ref School. So I personally don't run any camps anymore. Not on a personal level, but, um, and of course, the reason why I do do it is because I love the training. I love the mentoring. I love just having that opportunity. With all the training that I've received in the National Basketball Association, it would just be a waste not to share, um, what I've learned, the things that I could give back to referees. So that was really my sole reason for even going back to the NCAA, it's something that I loved, and that's where I started, um, and had my opportunity because without the NCAA, I wouldn't be in the National Basketball Association.

00:55:49

VIOLET PALMER:

So just having an opportunity to go back and teach and, and train and develop with college referees is something I really enjoy, you know, and I do it all summer, and I tell myself every single summer I'm not gonna do as many, um, camps a summer, because again, I'm, I'm invited to camps from my different colleagues, uh, in the, in the college ranks coordinators. So I have my, I do my own. So I'm still busy, quite busy in the summer, but it's busy in a good way because it's a way of giving back. I think it does no one any good to receive a whole bunch of training without having that opportunity to share it with someone else or give it back. So it's almost my way of giving back as a referee and sharing just my experiences, cuz something that I could say possibly can

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help another referee, uh, you know, trying to go down a path may not be my path. It may be their own, but something that I can say or do or teach them, they'll have the same opportunities that I have... I've had.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. And, um, just a sort of off the cuff, but were you a rule follower your whole life? Have you always been kind of, um, someone who's really been about the rules?

00:57:03

VIOLET PALMER:

I really have. I've been pr— when it comes to rules being kind of straight and narrow, but I think a lot of it came from my upbringing. I had a really, really strict par— My parents were very strict, my dad, oh, a total disciplinarian. So of course in our household, you didn't really wanna get in trouble too much. So going to school, my... you know, making sure that you follow the instructions, doing what teachers told you to do, doing what the administrators told you to do was pretty easy for me. And then of course, once you get into athletics, into sports, it's automatic. You follow the coaches' instructions, you know, you do things with your team. So drawing a line and following rules have always been pretty easy for me, without a doubt. So that part of my life is, is pretty, pretty straight narrow, you know, I don't, I don't deviate from the path, that path too much.

00:57:53

VIOLET PALMER:

Most people... even, even now, you know, I'm around friends or someone that doesn't know me, the first thing they would say, "Wow, you know, if you wasn't a referee, you would definitely be in law enforcement. You just have

that whole..." you know, they even said, "Were you a police officer before you got in, you know, in the NBA? I'm like, no, I was a recreation director. So, not even close, but I think it's the demeanor, it's the look, it's how you carry yourself. I think all of those things play a huge part with just... it's your persona. So following the rules was really not real tough for me. And that's probably why I am, I'm the referee that I am today because it's not like I have to turn it on, turn it off, what you see is what you get.

INTERVIEWER:

But there's an irony there because as a rule follower, you broke the rules by becoming the first female ref in a way, didn't you?

00:58:44

VIOLET PALMER:

Well, bre— you know, breaking the barrier with being a female ref was a little different though. So, you know, that barrier really wasn't a rule. It was pretty much what people kind of... they just kind of put it out there and just never given anyone an opportunity. What happened was they gave me an opportunity and that's how I end up breaking that barrier. So not necessarily a rule. Breaking the barrier? Absolutely. You know, I just take it as, you know, I tell children all the time and talking to kids in schools that, you know what, just give me a little little crack that I can put my foot into and I'll kick the door down. So for me, that's really all I did. I was given an opportunity and I just put two feet forward. Not only did I jump, I ran through the door and I'm still running right to this day.

00:59:31

VIOLET PALMER:

So I think that's something that I can always share with kids growing up that they can look at and, and then having the aspirations that, you know what, there's never really a glass ceiling. You can't... don't let anyone tell you there's something that you can't do. Because of course for me, if I would've taken that, I wouldn't be sitting here today saying, you know, talking about what I do as an NBA referee, because of course no one else had done it. So I didn't have anyone else to look up to or to, to have this, have this model person that I could... I am the model person. So for me it was like, it was about doing it and going out and just doing the best job you can. Then you let the chips fall where they may and not worry about the repercussions or if there's gonna be any, never was a concern of mine. Never in... even now, not never a concern. It's like, you know what? I'm trained, I'm developed, I'm a good referee and I can do my job as well as anyone else, male or female.

INTERVIEWER:

Great. Okay, so now we're gonna move on to um, family. So, um, Violet, were you brought up so that marriage was a given and how did that all work out?

01:00:41

VIOLET PALMER:

You know, it was never really discussed in our household as far as the marriage. My mom never really kind of talked about it. Uh, not a lot. Um, but I think so. I think in kind of an underlying way, you know, I think my mom was like, you, you're gonna get married and you're gonna have kids and you know, all the traditional stuff. Of course, with my parents being as traditional, um, as, as can be with all the years they've been married. Um, but she... I never had that pressure. You know, she always, it was always known that I was always very active, very extremely into my career, you know, that just on, not

woman power, but the power to just wanna take care of myself. I think my mom, you know, her and my dad really, they knew that. So it was never really kind of pushed, you know, one of those things that they pushed upon me to say, Hey, you're gonna get married, you're gonna have kids.

01:01:36

VIOLET PALMER:

I'm like, mom, I'm not having any kids. I made it real. I said, mom, it's not gonna happen. I'm too active. I'm too busy. There's too many things that I just wanna do in my life. And I think here, again, watching... for me, just being in the family that I was in, knowing the sacrifices that my parents made for myself and my brother and sister, it's unbelievable. So I'm thinking with the way that I wanted... and I knew that I wanted to do something where I traveled where I was at, having the opportunity to do whatever I wanted to do. Kids changed that because, you know, as if you're a true parent, your life revolves around your children. So for me, I have two little dogs and um, a really good dog walker <laugh>. So it works for me. But I can honestly say my, um, you know, my brother and my sisters are all married and I have some of the most beautiful nieces and nephews and I am the favorite auntie cuz they all love me.

01:02:33

VIOLET PALMER:

Cuz they can always get what they want. They can go shopping, you know, they go to games, I take 'em places. So here again, trust me, I love it when I can spend time with my nieces and nephew and give them back as soon as I'm done with them. So, no, not really having the pressures of marriage and children and all of those things, no, I'm sure my mom probably has always

wanted it, but I told her, I said, you got, you got grandkids, you're good. You have plenty. So she don't need any from me.

INTERVIEWER:

Is that a luxury of our generation, do you think though? Because if we had been born 30 years earlier, that really would've been the path.

01:03:07

VIOLET PALMER:

I think really it is a huge luxury with and... and the generation now not, you know, being focused on you have to have a family, you have to get married, you have to, you know, and not to say that I think some families probably still have that tradition and, and I'm not saying that the, that the tradition is bad. I was fortunate enough that, you know, my mom and dad didn't push that on me. But I think traditionally now you see, you know, it's a lot of powerful women that are single and have no children and have no problem with it. You know, you're looking at one of them. Um, so I think in this generation it's more accepted. Um, I think if, if 30 years ago po maybe not, you know, I think in my mother's generation she did exactly what she was supposed to and which I'm very thankful that she did because of course I'm, you know, I'm sitting here as one of, one of her prime pupils here, you know, as one of her kids to, to be able to sit here and say it. So this generation, without a doubt, I think, you know, being a power woman and not being married and not having any children, not a big deal, not at all. It's kind of like, oh, okay, but if you, you know, you go the other route, I think people go, wow, that's wonderful too. So you can, it's kind of the best of both worlds at this point, without a doubt.

INTERVIEWER:

Great. Um, okay, uh, what kind of sacrifices in general do you think you've made for your career?

01:04:33

VIOLET PALMER:

I think one of the huge sacrifices is family. Um, and I'm- I'm not even speaking of being married or having children, I think just being away from my family of... obviously I was raised, um, in a very, very close family. I mean, even to this day, Sundays after church, you can go to my mom's house right this Sunday coming and you would have- you could have Sunday dinner. It's like clockwork. So for me, I think those are the things that I've sacrificed in my- with my career to not be a part of. Um, it's funny, if my mom... if anybody wants to plan a special gathering, we wanna do a family vacation, we wanna even on birthday parties or you know, they would call me and check my schedule, you know, what, what's your schedule looking like October 2nd week maybe? Do you think, you know, I've even had my nephew—my nephew and my brother kind of talk planned their wedding so that they knew that I would be able to be in the wedding without disrupting my schedule. You know, those type of things. So I think my... the family sacrifices, I've been huge, but, um, mine have been extremely supportive and understanding. So it really hasn't been a problem. It's not something that I really think about, you know, I think I know it, but not something that I think about on a regular basis. Not at all.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay, great. Um, would you consider, do you consider yourself a feminist?

01:05:56

VIOLET PALMER:

Am I a feminist? No. No. I really wouldn't look at myself as a feminist. I look at... I would say that I am pro... I'm pro-women. I'm pro-women. That if a woman is given an opportunity and that she's able to do the job, that she should be given the opportunity. I don't think women should just get something because they're women. No, I'm one that feels like, you know what? You should work for it just as well as any man. Um, I think we should be given the opportunity. It's more important to me, um, than anything else because I want us to be successful and I want us to be able to do the job. So just, you know, I don't wanna be handed something just because I'm a woman. I just... No, that that's not good enough for me. I prefer being good at what I'm doing. And I'm sure a lot of women will probably feel the same way. Just being able to have the opportunity is more important now because I think for us, we're, we're so strong that if we're given the opportunity, we will be successful without a doubt.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay, great. Um, let's see. What do you think, uh, playing a competitive sport teaches girls in particular? What kind of life skills do they get from that? And, um, if you can just tell me a little bit about that.

01:07:18

VIOLET PALMER:

I think the skills that you learn from sports is you, you learn to be a really, really good communicator. You learn that there's always compromise, you know, that things just can't always go your way. Um, I think it helps with confidence. Uh, your self-confidence is coming... comes out, you know, and, and with sports, in my opinion, um, those are the, the huge qualities, uh, that I think that I've gotten from sports. And I think sportsmanship, being fair. And

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here again, being a woman, I've never felt like I should give any woman some special favor. It's that, no, I will treat men and women the same. I think sports have really done that. That's been a huge plus for me in learning, growing up, being a part of sports all my life. That you know what, it's just a, a fair playing field. And I think that part for me has been huge and, you know, just how I carry myself, um, throughout.

01:08:21

VIOLET PALMER:

But I think sportsmanship, the confidence, I think sports have really been huge as far as just being real confident. And I think it's helped in my life as far as, you know, when you're in sports, you, you, you do abide by rules. And rules are sometimes really, really good because they can, you know, if you, your life is done by rules, you tend to stay out of trouble. I've never been in any type of trouble with anybody because here again, those things are very, very important to me. Um, my integrity with sports has always been extremely, extremely important. And I think that has a lot to do with even being a referee, um, because it's not, you cannot be a referee without having the highest integrity, um, that is imaginable. So those things in sports, I think have been tremendous in my life. And look at those things and go, wow, you know what? I think I, I turned out not so bad. A pretty, pretty, pretty good person. I can honestly say.

INTERVIEWER:

What about competitiveness?

01:09:22

VIOLET PALMER:

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Very competitive, but not more so, you know, you sports for me, you wanna be competitive more so with yourself. I think in refereeing it taught me, and I've always played mostly team sports other than track, you know, cause track is kind of an individual sports, but for me, I've always played team sports and it's more so not competing against someone else, that competing against yourself, that you can be the best you can be and that you will be good enough. And, and everything that I've tried, that's something that I've always taken with me, especially in officiating. You can't get bogged down about who's getting to the playoffs or who's becoming a true cru chief for who's the new next, next up and coming, not my concern. I'm competing against myself year after year to be better than I was the year previous. And if you keep doing that, then you let the chips fall where they're May. And if you, you are as good as you think you are, you will receive at some point those accolades. You don't even have to worry, you will, you will get those chances to make the playoffs or whatever it is you're looking for. And for some people it may be a little different, but I think the key with com being competitive is not being competitive with against or with other people being more so competitive with yourself,

INTERVIEWER:

You know? And one thing that we didn't, um, this is jumping back a little bit, but that I forgot to ask you about. What is your routine after a game?

01:10:52

VIOLET PALMER:

My routine after a game is pretty much we would, uh, look at videotape, um, sometime it depends on the game. We, we could look at the entire game, we could look at specific plays in the game. Um, we pretty much critique it just

like we were working it, you know, things that we didn't like, things that we could do better, calls that we didn't like. Um, and more so with the calls that we didn't like, it's a lot of times why you made the bad call. Was it your positioning? Was it your concentration? Was it that you guessed on the play? Was it that you were you called out of your primary? So you really kind of want to figure out why you did something that you shouldn't have done. And then always remind yourself to stay with the fundamentals and, and keep that as a practice because that eliminates mistakes.

01:11:41

VIOLET PALMER:

So the more you stick with the routine of your basic fundamentals, and that's what you really do when you go back and you look at the games because you wanna stick with those basic fundamentals so that it eliminates the mistakes that you make during, you know, end games. And that's pretty much what we would do pretty much after every game. We do that as a crew. Um, and it's funny, even after that, for me, the next morning, if I got on the airplane, first thing I'd do at my computer, put the d v d in and watched myself personally, you know, how was I running, how I looked, um, my signals, you know, we are referees are the worst critics and I know that I'm even probably more so worse on myself than anybody else could ever be. Um, so watching a lot of videotape, referee, you know, being a referee now it's, it's a must because the training you, you rely on your training every single time you're on the floor. So, and that's pretty much what we would do after every single game.

INTERVIEWER:

What do you think is the biggest issue facing young women today? And do they have it easier than you did?

01:12:44

VIOLET PALMER:

I'm not sure if, if women have it easier. I think, um, the expectation is a lot higher. So that's why I'm not sure if it's easier. I think they have a little more opportunity. I think for, of course all the women that have paved the way than that opens more doors and more women now get an opportunity. So I think the scarier part for me is that women now don't feel like maybe they have to work as hard, which I think we do. Because, you know, if you're in a man's world, I don't think you can be equal. I think you have to be better than them to, to stay on their level or to learn to earn their respect. So for me, I think I would, I would be a little concerned with women just now, you know, feeling like I should just be here because other women have done it and, and I should get that opportunity versus no, I wanna be good or better than my colleagues.

01:13:39

VIOLET PALMER:

Not in a competitive way that you would do anything negatively against them or say anything negatively. More so for yourself saying, you know what? I wanna be the best that I can be and I know that I'm good and I know that I've been trained and I want those same opportunities, but I wanna work for them. Not, they just, the doors were open and I was able to just sit in the seat and, and now do the job. So I think that would be a little concern now, you know, looking at our generation that they don't just have the work ethic that, that I think they should.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. What barriers are there in sports that you'd like to see women break in your lifetime?

01:14:13

VIOLET PALMER:

Well, you know what, I think there's more, there's, there's still some barriers and I would love to have a woman actually play in the National Basketball Association. Not sure if it would ever happen because they're just, there's just so much stronger than we are. And I'm not sure, you know, there's some phenomenal women right now playing women's basketball that, you know, if given the opportunity, they possibly could. But, you know, looking at it, we have women that are commissioners, we have women that own teams. So if we couldn't get a woman to play, I would love for a woman to actually sit on a bench and be a coach in the National Basketball Association. I think that barrier would be phenomenal and just tremendous, um, for, to see a woman do. So if, if we couldn't play, then I would like for us to coach, cuz we've, you know, we're definitely commissioners, we're definitely owners, um, which I think are, are great as well. But coaching without a doubt, and I think she would be pretty darn good. No question about it.

INTERVIEWER:

Great. That's good. Okay. Um, what is the most meaningful, and this can just be a sentence or two most meaningful or useful piece of advice you've ever received.

01:15:30

VIOLET PALMER:

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The most meaningful advice that I've ever received. Never let anyone tell you that you can't do it. That the sky is the limit and that you can always, always do whatever it is you want to do.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay, great. Um, and then can you pick one or two of these and what advice would you give to a young woman on say, building a career, relationships, pursuing your dream or work-life balance?

01:16:06

VIOLET PALMER:

I would say in pursuing her, her dreams is that choose something that she's really good at. Something that she really enjoy because I really believe that if you really enjoy what you're doing, it's not work. You know, I go to work every day and it's not work for me. I'm a, I'm a referee at heart. I love doing it. I probably, I guess I love getting yelled at and screamed at and talked about and all those things, but it, it just kind of rolls off my back and it's not something that I take home. What I take home is the camaraderie, the competitiveness, the being able to referee the best players in the world, being out on the court, the adrenaline flowing, staying in shape. So, you know, you, you look at all those positive things. So I would tell any young girl coming up to just, you really gotta love what you're doing. And I think money is great, don't get me wrong cuz I love making it, I love nice things, but still have to love what you're doing. You can't do it for the money because money's not happiness. So I would, that would be my advice to do something that you really, really love and enjoy. Okay,

INTERVIEWER:

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Great. Um, okay. And then one, you can just gimme a one word answer for each of these. Um, what did, when you were little, what did you wanna be when you grow up

01:17:28

VIOLET PALMER:

A nurse.

INTERVIEWER:

Uh, what is the accomplishment that you're most proud of?

VIOLET PALMER:

Wow. The accomplishment that I'm most proud of. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Wow. Being successful.

INTERVIEWER:

What was your very first paying job ever?

VIOLET PALMER:

I was a recre, a rec assistant.

INTERVIEWER:

What three adjectives best describe you?

VIOLET PALMER:

Strong, confident, passionate.

INTERVIEWER:

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Okay, great. Okay. And this is an odd one, but I have to ask it. Um, what person that you've never met has had the biggest influence on your life and how?

VIOLET PALMER:

I would say the person, it would be Nelson Mandela. Um, I've never met him, but in reading his book and watching every story told about him, I think to see someone persevere from such adversity and come out smiling and, and just still wanting to treat people, the treating, treat people that have treated him so horribly and would love and respect and just wanting a whole country to say, you know what, just stop. I think it's admirable.

INTERVIEWER:

Great. That's a great answer. Um, okay. And then this is the one where we're gonna say, I'm gonna give you two words. So, um, iPad or Notepad.

VIOLET PALMER:

iPad.

INTERVIEWER:

Early bird or Night owl.

VIOLET PALMER:

Night owl.

INTERVIEWER:

Spontaneous or methodical?

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VIOLET PALMER:

Spontaneous.

INTERVIEWER:

Diplomatic or direct.

VIOLET PALMER:

Direct

INTERVIEWER:

Type A or easygoing

VIOLET PALMER:

Type A.

INTERVIEWER:

High math score or high verbal score.

VIOLET PALMER:

High verbal score.

INTERVIEWER:

Patient or impatient?

VIOLET PALMER:

Patient.

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INTERVIEWER:

Prada or gap

VIOLET PALMER:

Prada.

INTERVIEWER:

Introvert or extrovert?

VIOLET PALMER:

Extrovert.

INTERVIEWER:

Prepare or cram?

VIOLET PALMER:

Prepare.

INTERVIEWER:

Domestically. Skilled or domestically challenged.

VIOLET PALMER:

Domestically challenged

INTERVIEWER:

10 minutes early or 10 minutes late?

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VIOLET PALMER:

10 minutes early

INTERVIEWER:

Book. Smart or straight? Smart

VIOLET PALMER:

Book smart.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay, great. That's good.

END TC: 01:19:56