

## Glass served up changes in women's athletics



*Suzanne Glass '56 on campus today*

The first woman inducted into the Roanoke College Athletic Hall of Fame, **Suzanne Glass '56**, had a profound impact on the campus community in many ways. Following her outstanding athletic career at the College, which has extended well beyond her college days, Glass became a professor of statistics in the mathematics department, a position she held until 1993. Now retired and living in Salem, she has witnessed the evolution of women's athletics at Roanoke and reflects here on the benefits of a lifetime of physical activity.

**RC:** *The 1950s weren't a big time in women's athletics. What was it like being a female athlete then?*

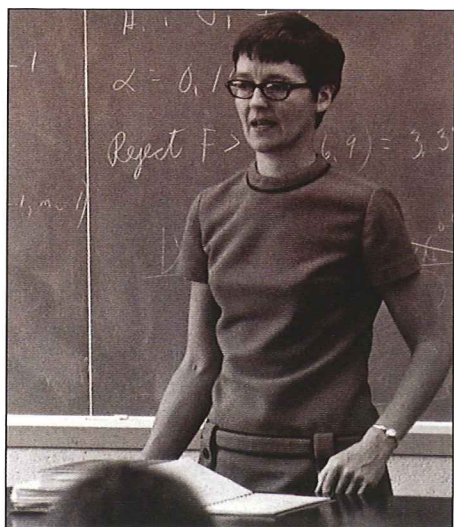
**SG:** There were very few opportunities for women in those days and very few women who went out for teams. In fact, the only two sports the College offered for women were field hockey and basketball. The field hockey team didn't have enough people to practice, so we would only have offense against defense. Tennis is actually my sport, and I had to play on the men's team.

**RC:** *A woman on a men's team in the 1950s? How did that go over?*

**SG:** It was actually well received. ... I remember playing a boy from Lynchburg College, and I know he took a lot of razzing because I did beat him, and he's probably still getting razzed about it.

**RC:** *How did you end up playing tennis on the men's team?*

**SG:** I was watching a match one day, and one of the fellows on the team who



*Glass in her teaching days*

played both singles and doubles played a really long singles match. He was kind of disgusted on how he was playing, and his doubles partner asked me if I wanted to play. I was a commuter student, so my dad had to bring me clothes from home. That was the middle of my junior year, and I played on the team my whole senior year.

**RC:** *That's probably not something you saw a lot at the time, was it?*

**SG:** I think there was a woman on the team at the University of Virginia, but I don't know of any others at a small college.

**RC:** *What was your reaction to becoming the first woman inducted into Roanoke's Hall of Fame?*

**SG:** I felt good about it at the time, but I really haven't thought much about it

since. I'd imagine students today have no idea what it was like.

**RC:** *How did you make the transition from a student and an athlete at Roanoke to a professor?*

**SG:** I kind of fell into that. I was in grad school at Virginia Tech, in statistics, but I still had some friends at Roanoke who told me they were looking for someone. So I applied for the job and got it.

**RC:** *How did your athletic experiences carry over into the classroom?*

**SG:** "Fairness." I think my students always knew I was going to be fair. I think that's something that I picked up from being an athlete. In my student days, there were always a couple of physical education requirements. When I was on the faculty, there was a shift from team sports to "life-time" sports. I thought that was a good move.

**RC:** *Once an athlete always an athlete?*

**SG:** I know some tennis players who play well into their 80s. I plan to play as long as I can. I love the game of tennis. It's a wonderful sport for keeping in shape. And some of the nicest people I've ever met were through tennis. I have some real longtime friends in the game.

**RC:** *Has tennis been a way to simply keep in shape or does it bring out the competitive nature in you?*

**SG:** There used to be a tournament in the valley, the Roanoke City/County. Over a 20- or 21-year span, I won it 10 times, from about 1952 until around 1973. I also have a state doubles title. This is for 35-and-older people. I got it in 1969. I still play singles. It keeps me a lot more active. Now, I think just being physically fit is important. I just feel better overall.

**RC:** *So tennis obviously has always been a big part of your life.*

**SG:** Since I've been retired, I've done a lot of traveling. With my interest in tennis, I've been to Wimbledon three times in the last few years — in 2000, 2002 and this year. And I also went to the French Open in 2000.

**RC:** *Is there a lesson to be learned from years of activity, physically and mentally?*

**SG:** Do whatever you can to stay healthy. I've been very blessed with good health, and I'm trying to make the most of it. Believe me, it's a good way to go.