

An Olympian's Oral History

PAT McCORMICK

1952 Olympic Games – Helsinki

- *Springboard Diving -
Gold Medal*
- *Platform Diving -
Gold Medal*

1956 Olympic Games – Melbourne

- *Springboard Diving -
Gold Medal*
- *Platform Diving -
Gold Medal*



Interviewed by:
Dr. Margaret Costa

Edited by:
Carmen E. Rivera



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Today is Friday, July the 26th, 1991. This is Dr. Margaret Costa interviewing Patricia McCormick, gold medalist in the 1952 and 1956 Summer Olympic Games, in both springboard diving and platform diving.

Q: Tell me about your childhood.

A: I was born in Seal Beach on top of a grocery store. I think this really emphasizes the lifestyle that I live. My mother, who was very loving and supportive, raised three of us by herself. I worked to help support the family from the time I was 10 years old. My brother was responsible for my involvement in athletics because I wanted to be just like him. We were good little urchins who had a lot of fun.

Q: What games did you play as a child?

A: Living in Seal Beach, as well as Santa Monica, we were always near the water. I cannot remember not knowing how to swim. As children we bodysurfed all the time during the warmer months. At Lowell Elementary School, which I attended, I was always the top in the Girls Athletic Association. I played all of the games, tennis, dodgeball and baseball, although I did not excel in team sports. It was a great thrill to be the first one to be picked for teams. At age 10, I remember participating in adagio and athletics at Muscle Beach. I attribute my body strength, for which I became known in diving, to that part of my life. At Muscle Beach, I was constantly lifting men up off the ground. Because weight training was not a part of our normal training regimen in my era, I was fortunate to have those activities at Muscle Beach. Whether it was swimming, football or hop scotch, I just loved competition. As early as I can remember, we used to have little meets in Los Alamitos Bay. My first meet, being a pier-to-pier swim, Belmont Shore to Long Beach, of approximately two miles out in the ocean. I came in second. One of the lessons I learned from that experience, and which has stayed with me all of my life, is that the bigger the prize, the bigger the price one has to pay. Another principle that I remember is that at the right time at the right place a teacher will appear. Someone had seen me at our little meets and invited me to go up to Los Angeles Athletic Club.

Q: When did you first recognize that you were highly talented?

A: I am not sure. Athletics was always my friend. In athletics I could do something and be someone. Although my family had no money, our mother absolutely believed in us. My father was an alcoholic and in and out of the home, but my mother never spoke badly of him. He was my fantasy hero, and I believe my family background contributed to my need to excel. I believe winning in athletics can be attributed to the desire one has in one's heart. As I get older, I can see how grateful I am that I had something to reach out to because there is no way I could have competed in anything that took money. I was a good ice skater, I love horses, but if anything I wanted to do required money, I had to earn it. Because athletics was the only path to achievement for me, I developed many skills in that area. The only approval I received at school and elsewhere was in athletics.

Q: Do you remember your very first swimming or diving competition?

A: It was at the Los Alamitos Bay in the Fiesta Bahia, a meet held every summer, organized by the Long Beach Recreation Department. The Fiesta Bahia leaders placed us in groups according to our age and ability. I was in the minnow program. The local YWCA also provided programs in which I participated. I used to mow lawns for a quarter, which would take care of my bus fare to the Y, as well as a candy bar. I also cleaned houses and ironed to earn money for recreation. It was always a big deal to eat in the cafeteria at the Y.

Q: Tell me about the Y program.

A: At the Y they gave badges for which I loved to work hard to achieve. Those badges would motivate me to go from one little group to the next, to the next.

Q: Was there anyone at the Y who particularly influenced you?

A: Yes, Millie Heath, because I was always in trouble, either talking too much or chewing gum. As one of my first counselors, Millie tried to provide guidance for me. Pete Archer was another great influence on my life, as he would give me help with diving. For example, when I was learning the half gainer, he told me to go out and kick a football in order to get the proper feel for the dive. Although I loved swimming, I found diving a lot more fun. My brother and I would try all of the different dives on our own. We would enter ourselves in all of the little meets in the city.

Q: Did you enter the diving competition on your own initiative or was this after you had received encouragement from Pete?

A: I would not say that I had lessons. I would go up to Pete and ask him how to do certain dives, and he would give me some ideas. I think he was one of the lifeguards during the summer. I was never on an organized team before I joined the L.A. Athletic Club.

Q: Who invited you to join the L.A. Athletic Club?

A: I just happened to be at the right place at the right time. I was down at the bay in Belmont Shores one Friday, and Aileen Allen, coach from the L.A. Athletic Club, saw me springing on the board. She invited me to the LAAC, so I journeyed up there on the Red Trolley. My mother used to give tea readings, and when she would get a dollar, she would give me the money for the Red Trolley fare. I had a friend who sometimes took me to Los Angeles, as well. I will never forget walking into that building for the first time, with bare feet. I was just overwhelmed because I had never seen anything so fancy, so wonderful, and the pool was on the fifth floor. I went up there and met Sammy Lee and Vicki Draves, who are still two of the greatest divers in the world.

From that minute on my dream was to attend the Olympic Games, not necessarily to win, but to attend. Sammy said that when he first saw me he did not believe that I would ever make a team. Not having the skills to do something I want to do has been the story of my life. Whether it was college or diving or being a parent, I have had to develop my own skills and knowledge on my own in order to be successful.

Q: What was Aileen's method of coaching?

A: Aileen Allen was not a great coach. I was more afraid of her than anything. The diving team at that time was so strong that we taught each other. If I were late, because the trolley was late, Aileen would send me back home. Even though she was a very serious person, I did not mind, because I thought I was the luckiest kid in the world to have the opportunity to belong to the diving team. Belonging to the diving team gave me a goal for the first time in my life. An added incentive was the exposure I received to the world's best divers. The best competition always came from the United States divers, most of whom were at my club. I believe if you want to be good, you should surround yourself with winners. One of the best winners and one of the most precious human beings is Vicki Draves.

Q: Would Vicki act as a peer coach for you?

A: All of the great divers helped me. They would say, "Get your hips up," or "You are not getting your hurdle up in your board work," or "You are dropping your head on the entry." Aileen Allen was the kind of coach who gave you opportunities as long as you were willing to work hard. Working hard also meant being punctual and following instructions.

Q: Do you remember your first meet as an LAAC diver?

A: Yes. My first meet was at the Pasadena Athletic Club. The reason I remember it so well is that the first dive I did I was so scared that I held onto a jackknife, I got the judges wet, and everybody was roaring. I went into the shower and cried and cried and cried because I thought they were laughing at me. They were laughing at the fact that I got the judges wet. There were always the Vickis and the Sams that were there encouraging me to keep working. Such a positive situation provided a whole new world for me. It gave me an environment where there was hope and there were opportunities. My thoughts were to make the Olympic team in 1948. I was unlucky enough to miss the selection by .001 of a point. Because of that failure, however, I became a winner because I then realized that I really was of Olympic caliber. It should also be noted that Patsy Elsener, who made the team in '48 and consequently denied me a spot, offered to give me her place on the team. The caliber of the people who were diving in those days was first class. When I first started out, I was probably getting fours and fives, and maybe threes. The main goal is to get into the water headfirst because there are many things on which one has to concentrate. I was absolutely petrified. Everyone has to begin somewhere.

Q: What was your next meet?

A: It was the Blue Book meet at the LAAC. The Blue Book meet was practically the L.A. Athletic Clubs top diving meet for the year. We would get little trophies. In the beginning, I was usually last in everything. Other major diving meets in which I competed were the *Examiner* meet, the Jimmy McCue meet, the Blue Book meet, the junior SPAAU and the senior SPAAU. I would often compete in the butterfly and freestyle to earn points for the team as well.

Q: Who provided you with swim equipment?

A: I would get one flawed bathing suit from MABS, the swimsuit manufacturer. That was just the biggest thrill of my life.

Q: Did diving interfere with your high school activities?

A: At Wilson High School I was allowed to miss the last class period in order to catch the trolley to Los Angeles. I belonged to a sorority and had my buddies and my dates, however. I never missed a dance, although I always went with wet hair. When I finally attended college, it took me 13 years to graduate, but I accomplished it.

Q: Did you perform in any exhibitions?

A: We would travel to Palm Springs and La Quinta. Esther Williams was on the team. Exhibitions were a lot of fun and I loved the buffets. The better I became, the more I trained. Life was fun.

Q: How did you learn to use both boards? Were you better at one than the other?

A: When I first started diving, people thought I wasn't going to be a springboard diver. I think springboard diving takes a lot more finesse than tower diving, believe it or not. For tower diving you have the same kind of take off, where as the springboard is a little more difficult.

Q: At this young age, did you compete in any age-group championships?

A: I don't think I ever won an age-group meet. I was a late bloomer, so I am glad we did not have age-group meets. During the summer, I trained all day everyday at the Coliseum and at the club. It was often 10 p.m. by the time I arrived home. I can remember falling asleep on the trolley and waking up starving to death, as I did not have money to get a snack. Because my mother was so special, I was not envious of other people who had money.

Q: What were the major diving groups at that time?

A: There are five different groups: your forward group, your backward group, your inward group, your reverse group, and your twisting group. You pick one dive from each one of these groups. Each dive has a degree of difficulty. Let's say you can't exceed 9.0 for the dives, the five dives. Maybe a swan dive is 1.2, back dive you can do it in pike, layout or tuck, and again, I mentioned each dive has a degree of difficulty so you pick out the dives. That way everybody has to do the school dives. You may do a dive in a different position, but you have to do one from each group. The next five are the same groups, except they are without degree of difficulty. There is no limit to it, in a sense. You may do a forward 2 1/2, and maybe have a 2.2, a back 1 1/2. Again, you can do it in pike, layout or tuck. At the time I began, for women to do a 2 1/2 was a great accomplishment. I think I did it for optionals. I would do a flying 1 1/2 pike, back 1 1/2 pike, reverse 1 1/2 tuck, inward 1 1/2 tuck, inward 1 1/2 pike, and then I would do a full twist and sometimes a full twisting 1 1/2. That is how I started out. It is progression and preparation. You begin by learning the front somersault on low board. You would progress from a front somersault, to a 1 1/2, to a front double. I think we would go in headfirst to get the feeling of a 2 1/2 and then advance to the three meters, which is 10 feet. I really felt exhilarated when I learned something new.

Q: Did you have anything like the gymnastics harnesses that are used today?

A: No. We used to wear T-shirts when we were learning new dives so we would not get too many welts on our bodies.

Q: Did you travel to San Francisco and other places for meets?

A: Our biggest meets were probably the junior SPAAU and the senior SPAAU. As I improved, we would go to Flieshacker Pool in San Francisco. Because I was not a recognized swimmer, the club would not pay my way, however. In fact, in '48, my brother had to borrow money to get me to the Olympic tryouts. The club was going to pay my way, but gave the money to Lyle and Vicki Draves instead, because they would get more publicity for the club.

Q: How old were you then?

A: I was 18, because my birthday was May 12, 1930. I missed my high school graduation night, and went back to Detroit where my roommate was Brenda Helser. Brenda was a beautiful woman who was a swimmer, and a real character, and made the team. I did not.

Q: How did you meet your husband?

A: I was working out at the Pacific Coast Club here in Long Beach and I saw this young man, five years older than I, who was helping put the board on. Glenn had just mustered out of the Navy and was about to go to college. I was only 15, so we became good buddies. We would go to baseball games, down to the beach, and we would play different games.

Q: Did he have any diving background?

A: He was a diver with bow legs and flat feet, and a good athlete. After the Olympic Trials, we started really dating. I don't think I lost one nationals after that. Vicki Draves did not compete after the '48 Games, so Juno and Paula Jean Myers were the major diving competition. I really think the next meet after the '48 Games was in Florida when I beat Juno.

Q: When were you married, how did this new partnership fit with your diving competition?

A: Glenn and I were married June 1st, 1949. He was attending USC and wrestling in intercollegiate competition. He had his eye on the Olympic Games as well. It was just a fairy-tale marriage. We had no money, but we had each our own dreams and our own goals. I was training at the L.A. Athletic Club and I worked as a locker lady for a while. Glenn sang barbershop quartet. Many times we would take my first place money and go across country in some beat up old car. Many times we would have Paula Jean Myers, Gary Tobian, Willie Farro with us during the summer. We would go to the outdoor nationals, take our sleeping bags, stop at different pools and different quarries along the way, and swim in them. I have pictures of us hanging on vines and swinging on ropes just having a great time. I can remember eating watermelons from the local farms. When we competed at High Point, North Carolina, I won three events for the first time. We competed in a dam that was blocked off. Visualize this. The distance to the bottom of the dam was about 100 feet. We would have to climb up a ladder and look down at that big drop. It was quite an experience.

Q: Did you know what was on the bottom of the dam?

A: We knew we would get stuck in the mud if we went down too far. The water was very dirty and unclear. The judges sat in rowboats. Another interesting pool was in Detroit. When you were at the top

of the tower and looked down, all you could see was cement. We certainly became used to adapting to the environment. I was in really good shape in the summers, as I worked out for many hours by walking up those towers as well as diving. I worked as a locker lady during the winter and then, around 1950, I worked as a typist, as I wanted Glenn to go to the 1952 Olympic Games. We had little money, and if I did not work two jobs, he could not go.

Q: Did you compete in the Pan Am Games in Argentina?

A: That was my first trip away from home, and I was scared to death. All of the athletes had a great time in Buenos Aires. One day we were caught racing our horses and buggies up and down in Buenos Aires. We were taken before Juan and Eva Peron, and we were scared absolutely spitless. Eva was very, very intimidating. Juan Peron was much more personable. Also at that meet, I missed the board because Juan walked in right when I was in the middle of my hurdle and the band began playing. I won the tower event, however.

Q: Do you remember qualifying for the 1952 Olympic Games?

A: Yes. I split my head wide open before the competition. We were diving at Edwards Air Force Base, and I sliced that water because I was stretching for 17 feet of water and hit that bottom. I cracked my head open, and an old ambulance picked me up. I was embarrassed and trying to keep the blood in. I hit the bottom so hard that I chipped both my teeth as well. Since that time I have had many surgeons and dentists who have told me that for the number of times I have hit my head in a dangerous way, I am lucky to be alive. In this instance, they were sure I would not be able to compete in the Olympic tryouts. My face was so swollen that tears would pop out of my eyes. I made the team by putting a sponge on the shaven part of my head to protect it when I hit the water.

Q: What were your feelings upon being selected for the Games in '52, your first Olympic competition?

A: When I was selected, I was so excited. It was so funny because I remember leaving for New York and staying at this old hotel, and getting uniforms and sweat suits. Your first Olympics Games competition is like your first kiss. You've made it. It's a dream. The training was really hard because it was really, really, really cold. The competition was outside and so cold that you could see people's breath. We would stuff little ham sandwiches in our pockets each day before we went to the stadium. Glenn had gotten there and was trying to find me, and of course, I didn't see him until my event was over.

Q: Do you remember having a sauna?

A: I will never forget walking in one day, maybe Juno was with me, and this huge naked Russian lady was sitting there with her legs apart, her boobs down to here. It was a good cultural lesson. The Russians took pictures of everything I did. In the locker room they were really friendly, but they could not fraternize with us in public.

Q: Tell me about your event.

A: My event was the last event and we were tied with the Russians. It was really fun watching everyone up in the stands cheering for me. I won my event and got to be really good friends with some of the

Russian divers. Glenn was there all of the time, touching me, giving me assurance. It was wonderful. It was something that we shared together. The night before the first dive at the Olympics, I was thinking that my stomach hurt because I had gas and the runs. I think that most athletes get that sick-to-your-stomach feeling before events. You say this time next week, this time next month, it will be over. The day of the meet, I am thrilled because it is going to be over one way or the other.

Q: Can you remember walking into the Olympic arena?

A: You walk in there with a ton of towels. You are cold, because you are so nervous. You are tired, which is part of the being nervous. You think, "How am I going to get through this?" You are really cold because it's freezing. They had a big hot tub set up to keep warm in between dives. If you get into the hot tub, your legs are going to be like rubber and it is scary. It is scary, but you are really ready.

Q: Do you remember getting on the board for the first time?

A: I remember that my name was called in four different languages. I was thinking, "Don't blow the first one, keep steady." I knew that if I could just get my head in first and stayed focused I would succeed. There were certain key words that I thought about for each dive. If I am steady for the first three dives, I know I am on my way. Diving is a sport made of composure. We did 10 dives in the preliminary and then 10 dives for the final. Once I started winning I didn't lose a national or an international meet ever. I led from the beginning in Helsinki. I was getting some competition from Zoe Ann, but then she slipped and fell, and finally the next two dives were just as bad as the first one. Mady Moreau, from France, took second.

Q: Do you remember who gave you the medal?

A: I believe Avery Brundage. I remember something that is really special. They gave us red and white carnations after each victory. Glenn and I had a little place at which we ate every night. We liked to get away because the tension from the competition was very wearing. I became tired of the training halls and the Finnish people were just wonderful, but did not know me from Adam. After I won the first time, I gave each of the waiters at this little place a red carnation and a white carnation. It was just so thrilling. Another special memory was the cake that the Olympic chef would bake for the winners of events. I remember it was a sponge cake and had crystal frosting. That was also very special.

Q: Describe the next event.

A: That was the 10-meter. If you have won an event, you cannot afford to relax if you have another competition coming up. Psychologically you have to train yourself to stay in focus. I think the newness and just being a part of the Olympic Games kept me in focus. Juno and Paula Jean were my rivals in this event, so we were all in it together. I believe we did dives from the 16. We did a forward 1 1/2 with a back layout, a standing swan, and a running swan, and then two optionals. I was really pleased when I won that event as well. I remember one of the Russians sat with Glenn during the competition. I'll never forget, after I won my second gold medal, Bob Mathias congratulated me, but told me that I was just as good as my next dive. He knew that I wanted to go to another Olympic Games. He was correct because the next couple of years following the '52 Games were a great letdown.

Q: Would you show your medals to Glenn immediately upon receiving them?

A: I would give my medals to Glenn because I was so proud that he was proud of me. I really looked up to him because he was educated and had a really neat family. I would like to repeat something I have said before. The first Olympics are like the first kiss; you do not know the possibilities and responsibilities that go along with it.

Q: Were you able to participate in any tours following the Olympic Games?

A: After the Olympic Games we wanted to tour Europe but were told that we would be put off the Olympic team if we did not go straight home. We disagreed and had a wonderful tour courtesy of the Army. Glenn had one shirt to his name, and I had my Olympic uniform. Sammy was with us. We gave exhibitions for the troops. Every day Glenn was washing out this one shirt. When we say we had no money, we had no money. We really didn't need it. Oh, it was so neat for us to share this together.

Q: Tell me about your return trip home.

A: When we arrived back in New York, the City of Long Beach had given us the airfare home. As we were driving, we envisioned receiving the money for the tickets when we arrived in Long Beach. Taking turns at the wheel, we drove day and night to reach Long Beach. Unfortunately, upon our arrival, we discovered that the money had been confiscated.

Q: Were there any offers for speaking engagements and movie contracts when you arrived back in California?

A: There were various offers of acting contracts and other types of things which were discussed with me, but none of them seemed appropriate. My life seemed to be so out of balance in the next few months that I realized a need for an education. I think it was the Kiwanis or the Optimist Club that donated \$25 so I could enroll at Long Beach City College. At the back of the classroom sat this double gold medalist, who was very frightened. It took me 13 years to complete my undergraduate degree because I continued to compete and have babies.

Q: How many classes did you take the first semester?

A: I would take two at the most. That is all I could handle. Sitting in a classroom and attempting to gain some learning skills was quite a feat. Fortunately, I had two mentors who believed in me. They told me that to achieve what I had at the Olympic Games I could not be too dumb. They persuaded me that while I was perfecting diving skills, others had perfected studying skills. They added that it was the time for me to perfect my studying skills. Both of them worked with me on test taking and studying, which I really appreciated.

Q: Did you continue with the diving competition?

A: I went to the next Pan Ams, in Mexico City, and won those. Although I became ill as many people do, I "puckered up" and steeled myself to dive anyway. In addition, I had Timmy, my son, in March of '56 and competed when I was pregnant. That is called survival, as women did not compete pregnant in those days. Because the '56 Olympic Games in Melbourne were held in November, I had more time to prepare after the birth.

Q: Did you find that having been pregnant, you were physically stronger?

A: I realized that diving wasn't the whole thing in my life. The realization came to me when Paula Jean was ahead of me on the 10-meter competition. I was happy with the results as my family became more important than diving for me.

Q: In order to stay in shape, what type of exercises did you do while you were pregnant?

A: I swam up to the day I delivered. Glenn coached, and I swam at the LAAC.

Q: When did Glenn begin coaching?

A: Because he failed to make the Olympic team, he began to think about coaching. The coaching position at the club changed, and Glenn was able to learn from the new coach along with me. Rusty Smith was the new coach who taught us both so much. Glenn and I would study the technique of other divers and then work on my diving together. Soon we had some male divers with whom Glenn worked. It was not long before we had assembled a world-class diving team. Within three years he became an authority. In 1956 Clarence Pinkston was named the Olympic coach, but surrendered the position to Glenn because he believed that Glenn deserved it. We were thrilled to death.

Q: How did the other divers adjust to this circumstance?

A: I think that Paula Jean eventually ended up with Lyle because it was difficult for her to train under Glenn, as he was my coach. I think psychologically it would have been difficult. Most of the divers wanted to train with us. Jeanne Stunyo and Barbara Gilders joined us. I had a small baby and was getting up, feeding him and training. Glenn was training them to beat me, and I was supposed to be the star. His mother and my mother took care of the baby. We finally took the baby to his mom's house because she loved him. I would go over every morning, bathe him and play with him, do the diapers, and then train from noon to 10 o'clock at night. Diving became our lives.

Q: For the Melbourne Olympic Games, did you leave from Los Angeles?

A: I believe we did, because I remember my little boy, my sister, my mother and my brother were at the airport to see me off. It was tough leaving my son. The second Olympic Games were an entirely different experience. First of all, I had Timmy; secondly, Glenn was coaching; thirdly, I was supposed to win. I was so glad to get on the plane because everybody seemed to want to get on my bandwagon. It was really hard.

Q: Were you allowed to room with Glenn in Melbourne?

A: The most wonderful thing about the Olympic Games is the isolation that the officials set up for the athletes. The athletes are placed in an environment where all they have to do is train for their events. We did not even know what was going on in the world. It was wonderful and I really appreciated it more than I ever appreciated anything.

Q: How far in advance of the Olympic Games did you arrive?

A: We were there a couple of weeks before the Opening Ceremonies. 1956 was difficult for me because diving became a job. I was aware that my baby was at home and I would have to learn to be a mother upon my return.

Q: Were you leading the scoring all the way through this second competition?

A: In the 3-meter the competition was just a piece of cake. I was far ahead on the last dive. The second event was a little different situation. The best way to describe that is in '56, after the 3-meter competition, I had won three gold medals and I had one more to go. I competed Monday, Tuesday, off Wednesday, competed Thursday and Friday. I had to be very careful not to let down. Unfortunately, I must have let down a little because just before my turn, the Russian diver attempted to do a handstand and came down on it. In my sport, that is 1/3 off. I followed her with the same dive. As a consequence, all I was thinking about was to keep the dive up and hold it, hold it, hold it. I held it so long that I completely missed the dive. I was in fourth place with two dives left. I felt pressure for the first time.

Q: Who was leading the event at this point?

A: P.J. was in first place, I believe. One of P.J.'s weakest dives was a handstand cut-through, which had a low degree of difficulty. The two dives which I had yet to perform, were my strongest dives. I remember very, very clearly returning on the bus and crying because I could not understand how I missed that dive. It was one of my strong dives and at that point, I remember looking at Glenn and I wanting so desperately for him to say, "I love you, you're the best." He could not because he was the Olympic coach. I had two feelings. I had one of respect and one of hate. I respected him for not treating me any differently than the way he would treat anybody else. In addition, P.J. was my friend and my teammate. I remember returning to the swim stadium on the bus and thinking, "I have trained 15 years and taken off four seconds. I have two dives." I put my suit on, heard my name called and walked up the tower. I hit the first one, and it all came down to the last dive. I could think of 15 years in two seconds. I walked up the steps and counting each one of them as I ascended. This is the honest to God's truth. I counted the steps, and I realized that my whole life revolved around the next few moments. That walk to the top took so long. When I arrived, I focused in on the mechanics of a forward 2 1/2 or twister. I knew that I had to get that entry. I hit it, and there was one sigh of relief. I had accomplished something. They came to get me for the award ceremony, and I told them that I had to make a phone call. They said, "Pat, the whole world is waiting for you." I said, "There is only one person in the world that gets to know first, and that's my mom." They took me down to call my mom. We both cried. I was still crying when I ascended the victory podium. When the national anthem was played, I swear that the flag was shimmering in the water. It looked as if it was coming up to me.

Q: Describe the feeling of the fourth win?

A: The first time was like your first kiss. The fourth time was a sign that I could proceed with my life. I could finish school. This is where my bubble burst, because all of a sudden the coaching became Glenn's whole life, his mistress, his everything. And I was just another person.

Q: Of course you had also been the star as well.

A: I wanted to get completely out of diving. Again in '56 there were movie offers, and the real stress of success really hit me. I received the Sullivan Award, and the AP Award. I was receiving all of the

awards that I had ever dreamed about. I was even on the Ed Sullivan Show. In the meantime, Glenn was flying for United Airlines and had plenty of time to coach. Financially we were in a better position and could go any place in the world. I love to ski and ride, and I thought that we would do all of these wonderful things. Our problems started because our home became a glorified diving place. All the kids from all over the world came to train with us. I loved the kids, and I wanted Glenn to accomplish his dreams because I felt he had put up with a lot because of my notoriety. I really respected him for it. We had some misunderstandings about that which pulled us apart. He found somebody that he could share his dreams with, and it worked out better. Now he coaches and she competes in tennis.

Q: How did you occupy the void which had been left by your retirement from diving?

A: Paul Runyan, a golf professional, wanted me to try the golf tour because I was a good golfer. In addition, through Catalina swimsuits, Helen Gurley Brown and I went on tour. I was modeling for them, and she was their fashion consultant. We visited three cities each week. The first day we would do the media, the second day we would do the promotional stuff in the store. For that three months of travel I was compensated \$5,000. If I were to do that today, I would receive between \$200,000 and \$300,000. Duke Snider, a really good friend of mine who is a baseball Hall of Famer, was the highest paid baseball player in the '50s, and received \$26,000. We had old buck diving boards with cocoa matting on it.

Q: Out of what was your bathing suit made?

A: It was a type of a sharkskin. It was the Ester Williams MABS suit. The suits today are like paper. You can see through them and they are cut very high. I always tease Kelly by saying that if I had worn it, a modern day suit, I would have received 10s all of the time. I should note that Helen Gurley Brown is an excellent businesswoman.

Q: What did you learn on that tour?

A: I learned to give interviews and to model. I taught myself to walk and keep my feet in front of each other and try to be as natural as possible. Of course, having been an Olympic champion, the audiences were very receptive.

Q: In the meantime, was Glenn's coaching career taking off?

A: By 1958 we had this huge home in Rossmoor, and all kinds of people coming to live with us. As a result, I felt like a glorified housekeeper and part-time coach. Glenn was flying and would coach on his off days. Our activities together were the indoor and the outdoor nationals. We had another child, Kelly, in 1960. I could feel the confrontations because I had to leave her with my mother or a babysitter when I was on tour. In addition, I was in city college. I took my books every place I went. I had more time away from home than I did at home. I studied on planes, in hotels, wherever I was. I was probably the top female athlete in the United State in a sense. Glenn was getting tired of my notoriety. We were growing apart and there was nothing I could do. He was meant to coach. Finally, he married a girl who was about 30 years younger. It was the right decision, and I am glad for everybody at this point. You know, you get over it.

Q: Did you finally settle down and become a college student?

A: I was being constantly pulled into the limelight. I attended Long Beach State in the '60s and '70s and finally graduated.

Q: Wouldn't people want you to coach them because you were the gold medalist?

A: That was probably my problem. I was always trying to boost Glenn. He is a good coach, but not the greatest coach. I would take the kids and really work on the mechanics when he was not there. Diving was my life, and I loved it, but it was time to change directions. I had decided to return to college to become a surgical nurse. I continued to help Glenn, but I wanted to do things as a family.

Q: Tell me about Kelly.

A: Kelly began to show signs of great talent as a tiny baby. It was a thrill, but yet, deep inside of me, I realized that I tried to steer her away from diving. She was in gymnastics with Kathy Rigby. She was becoming an elite gymnast and appeared to be Kathy's successor. Then Glenn and I split up, so she went back into diving to be with Glenn. When Glenn and I broke up, I decided that I would never step foot into a pool again in any capacity. Kelly was involved, Debbie, Glenn's wife, was involved, and Glenn was involved. I could just see me on one side and them on the other. It was a difficult situation. I really had a broken heart. In addition, the more I tried to find work, the more difficult life became. I desperately wanted to keep Kelly in school. One day I realized that I should take charge of my life, so I began to develop speaking skills. As part of the Spirit Team in 1984, I was in demand as a speaker. Peter Ueberroth heard about it and asked what I wanted to do on the organizing committee? I told him that I wanted to speak. I was paid to do five speeches a month. He gave me the opportunity to develop my skills. Again, I surrounded myself with the best. Jim Tunney, the Interfel guy, Danny Cox and Danni Kennedy. Danny Cox is a speaker out of Tustin and Danni Kennedy is a woman who is out of San Clemente. I made the connections through the National Speakers Association meeting. I received materials and read books. I learned to market myself in schools. At present, I am in the process of marketing myself to corporations. I am attempting to develop a corporate video and a corporate packet. That material has to match your fees. I get \$2,500. My corporate video will be done in September. I just had to work as I have the funds.

Q: Tell me about your foundation.

A: Five years ago I began speaking at schools. I was giving a speech at Woodling Elementary. A teacher informed me that over 100 of the children there were high-risk students. In addition, she asked for my help. That meeting resulted in my scheduling meetings with these kids twice each month. I tell them, "You have to have a dream. You have to work. You have to fail. You have to surround yourself with greatness." Soon these kids went from F's, to D's, to C's to B's to A's. I have one little girl getting A+. I have about eight students that are really going to be college material. Consequently, I made a commitment that if they stayed in school and made good grades, I would see that they were able to attend college and trade school. I really never dreamed that such a thought would come true. Last year I realized that this year all of my kids would be in high school and I should start planning. Some of them were being successful and would need financial support. In addition, a large portion of my own funds had been invested in field trips and paying for the buses for other activities. I have finally established a nonprofit foundation, and we had our first fund-raiser last year.

Q: Tell me about Kelly and your son. Did they both become divers?

A: Timmy was a great athlete, but never a great competitor. I could say that about his father, too. Glenn was a good athlete, but he was not a good competitor. Timmy did some pole vaulting and Don Bragg, the Olympic champion, helped him. He chose to go into the restaurant business, and that's where he is now. I have three grandchildren and that's exciting. Kelly chose to go from gymnastics into diving, and that was really, really difficult for both of us. Glenn coached her for a while, but the situation was very difficult because Glenn's wife is about eight years older than Kelly. They competed against each other. Kelly left and went back to Ohio State where she developed and created her own identity. She developed a good relationship with Vince Paisano, the diving coach at Ohio State. The situation has been really difficult for me as I had to turn my back on something which had been my life.

Q: When was her last big competition, '84 or '88?

A: '84 was her big competition. She took second in the 3-meter springboard in '84, in '88 she took third.

Q: What were your feelings about the Olympic competition?

A: I was very uncomfortable because I knew, the minute she walked out there, what was going on in her mind. I could not show emotions. The most difficult time was '83 when Kelly won the Pan American Games event. That is when the comparisons started coming. She was placed under a great amount of pressure because her mother had won gold medals in the same event. The *Los Angeles Times* was doing an article on the two of us, and I had the idea of getting the reporters together with us for one informational session. The resulting article was depressing for both Kelly and me. I had not realized how angry Kelly had become. From that experience I realized that I had to distance myself from her competitions. Kelly wanted me totally out of the picture except for a few precious moments before each event. During those moments we would cry and she would ask, "Am I ready?" I would say, "Yes." In 1988 I sat up at the very top of the stadium at the tryouts in Indianapolis. Kelly broke the world record in scores. She dove brilliantly. I sat there in tears, and pretty soon CBS and NBC, and all the networks were coming asking me to come down on the deck. I refused for a long time. When I finally stepped on the deck, the press would begin making mother-daughter comparisons. In Korea, I was sitting up in the stands with General Parker. Kelly walked by and invited me into the victory room. Colonel Parker insisted that I join her. Unfortunately, as soon as I arrived the reporters came over to me. Kelly walked out.

Q: I remember the television panning on you and then Glenn when Kelly was competing.

A: I was not aware of the exact moment that the television was focused on me, but I was aware that I was being watched. I would have been more comfortable at home watching her event on television, but I thought I should be there to lend my support to Kelly.

Q: Give me your philosophy on competitive athletics?

A: My philosophy is simple. If you always do your best no matter what it is, you will feel good. Success is really just peace of mind. You can win and feel empty.

METHODOLOGY

Dr. Margaret Costa, of California State University, Long Beach, conducted this interview. The interview was recorded on audiocassette and then transcribed. The interview addresses the following major areas:

Family History

Date/place of birth; occupation of father/mother; siblings; family residence;

Education

Primary and secondary schools attended; college and post-collegiate education;

Sport-specific Biographical Data

Subject's introduction to sport—age, event and setting of first formal competition; coaches/trainers/others who influenced athletic development; chronology of sports achievements; Olympic competition; post-Olympic involvement in sports;

General Biographical Data

Employment history; marital history; children; communities of residence; retirement;

General Observations

Reactions and reflections on Olympic experience; modernization of sport; attitudes on and involvement with the Olympic Movement; advice to youth and aspiring athletes.

Interview transcripts were edited and may include additional material based on subsequent conversations and/or subject's own editing.

The opinions and recollections expressed in this oral history are exclusively those of the Olympian interviewed. They do not necessarily reflect the positions, interpretations or policies of the Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles.