

# An Olympian's Oral History

**PAULA JEAN MYERS POPE**

*1952 Olympic Games – Helsinki*  
*- Platform Diving -*  
*Silver Medal*

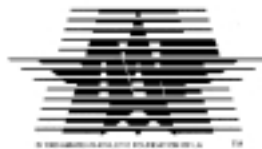
*1956 Olympic Games – Melbourne*  
*- Platform Diving -*  
*Bronze Medal*

*1960 Olympic Games – Rome*  
*- Platform Diving -*  
*Silver Medal*



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## PAULA JEAN MYERS POPE

Today is Friday, March 22nd, 1991. This is Dr. Margaret Costa interviewing Paula Jean Myers Pope, silver medalist in highboard diving in the 1952 Summer Olympic Games.

**Q: Tell me about your childhood.**

A: I was the youngest of four children. I had three brothers and my father passed away when I was about six months old. My mother never remarried, so she virtually brought us up by herself. I was always very interested in sports. I did all the sports through grammar school and the primary grades. We lived on an orange ranch in Covina, California. I was brought up riding horses, going on parades and things of that nature. We used to spend our childhood summers down in Balboa. It was at the old fun zone, on the bay side of Balboa, that I first became acquainted with diving. They used to have a floating platform with a low and a high board. I used to love climbing on that platform and would spend hours and hours just playing around, diving, and spending my summers in that area. Some close friends of our family, who were members of the Los Angeles Athletic Club, felt that I should pursue this diving when I was around 10 years old, which is actually a late age to get started by today's standards. They took me as their guest and introduced me to Aileen Riggan, who was a diving coach at Los Angeles Athletic Club at the time. I started to take diving lessons much in the way a person takes piano lessons. I didn't dive in between the lessons. I would go in a couple times a week from Covina, which was about an hour and a half away. At that time, there were no freeways.

**Q: Let us go back to your childhood among the orange groves.**

A: We had 20 acres of oranges. Of course, there were no tract houses, and I would always ride my horse to a friend's house. It was a really neat place to grow up.

**Q: Do you remember learning to ride a horse?**

A: Yes. When I had my first horse, we kept it at home. I used to be in a lot of parades, including the Rose Parade once. I would show them in the Western Horsemanship classes and would go on horse shows. I was literally raised on horses, riding bareback most of the time. I started riding around the fourth grade in school. My mother was always struggling to make ends meet. She was always out pursuing different avenues to get income. She went in various businesses of her own, anything that she could do out of the home. I lost one brother not long after my father died, when I was a baby. My two remaining brothers went away to school most of the time, so I felt more like an only child. My mother had a lot of drive.

**Q: Was your mother physically active?**

A: No. Not in athletics, and neither were my brothers.

**Q: Do you remember the first time you tried diving?**

A: Oh yes, in fact, that was at a Girl Scout or Brownie camp up in Lake Arrowhead. I have a couple of

pictures of Lake Arrowhead. They had one of these wooden planks extended out over the water. I don't ever remember not being able to dive. In other words, my first dive was a dive, not a belly flop.

**Q: At that Girl Scout camp, did you get a feeling that you could dive this well?**

A: It was just fun for that moment. There was always a next stepping point. I did not start out thinking that I was going to be in the Olympic Games. I learned how to go in head first, basically. I learned somersaults and just fun things that everybody does. At Balboa I lived like a little sea urchin. I would float and play on these boards the whole summer long, and I don't think you can do nowadays the things we could do then because of environmental and risk factors. I would not let my child have that same freedom today. I fished and dived all the time, and I used to go down to the pavilion with my little drop line. My record was 103 for one day. To this day, my youngest son and I are the only ones who really like to fish. We still go deep sea fishing at least a couple of times a year. In those days, there was a group of people in my same situation.

**Q: Did you participate in physical activity in high school?**

A: We had school activities and P.E.

**Q: What did you do in P.E.?**

A: I used to be in GAA and played field hockey in high school. We would have field hockey in elementary school. We played all the sports against other teams and classes.

**Q: In the early years in elementary, what sports did you play?**

A: The first sport that I played was kickball, that evolved into what we know as soccer today. It wasn't called soccer then. It wasn't even a soccer ball, but it was very similar. You couldn't touch the ball with your hands. I do remember playing with hockey sticks in elementary school, and of course, we played basketball. In fourth grade my mother decided that her fortune lay in Mexico. We sold everything: lock, stock and barrel; and I went down to Mexico City to live for a year. I went to an American school down there, but mother became ill and we ended up coming back.

**Q: Did you play any sports in Mexico City? Tell us about that experience.**

A: Except for that year, I grew up in a wonderful, wonderful old house that I wish my kids could have had the opportunity to experience. It was a very, very large home that used to belong to the secretary of the state of California. It had a huge, wood spiral stairway, where weddings used to be held. It was furnished very, very nicely, and when my father died, at 34, he left it in a trust. Unfortunately, my mother had to sell off all of the furniture to make ends meet. It was still a neat house, even though it had no furniture. I, therefore, experienced what was a very good childhood, and I remember at times having to go cut grass for the horse before I went to school, because we didn't have money for feed. My mother kept the horse because she felt that it was important for me to have.

**Q: Did you own the orange groves?**

A: In those times, a packinghouse would come in and run it all. We just lived on it and owned it. At one

time we also owned 40 acres of walnuts, my mother was not a businesswoman and we lost it. There was always room for me and my diving, however.

**Q: In swimming did you have a favorite stroke?**

A: I always swam freestyle. I would do both diving and swimming at the Los Angeles Athletic Club. I was a water pollywog. I don't ever remember taking a swimming lesson. Wes Hammond was the swim coach at Los Angeles Athletic Club. I am sure my mother paid for lessons at some stage, but I was too young to know about such things. So, from around the seventh grade, I would have to take the bus in everyday from Covina and walk two blocks on Main Street in Los Angeles after dark. It was a pretty harrowing experience and I wouldn't get home until 10:00, 10:15.

**Q: How did Aileen Riggan teach you to dive?**

A: I took a couple of diving lessons a week. Quickly it turned into five days a week. I was soon working out with the team. Aileen would teach you the dives as fast as you could learn them. In high school I would get out of school early, at 1:15 p.m., and catch the 2 o'clock bus, getting into the club at 3:30 p.m. I would be there from 3:30 to 8:00 every day. I was only with Aileen Riggan for two years. Russ Smith came into the Los Angeles Athletic Club and was there for about two or three years. Lyle Draves came in, and then I stuck with Lyle for a very long period. When Lyle left there, in 1956, I left the club to stay with him. We went to a hot springs up in La Cañada, and then he went down to Encinitas. I followed him and dived with him until 1958, when I got married. Aileen was a wonderful, nice, very knowledgeable coach.

**Q: What other people were diving ?**

A: Larry Elliot, Paula Henry, and, of course, Pat McCormick. I was very, very close with her for a long period. We were close until I started being her equal and beat her a couple times, then things didn't go quite the way they had gone for years. I lived with her for a summer when we were training, and her husband came in and took over as coach at LAAC after Lyle. That's why I left.

**Q: What other activities did you enter in high school?**

A: I was very normal in my activities. I was a song leader at school and participated in GAA in all sports. Again, field hockey was very, very big. We also played kickball, volleyball and baseball.

**Q: How important did you think competition was?**

A: Well, I'm an extremely competitive person, at any level, at anything. I don't work on it. I don't mean to be. It is just my nature. I really had a busy, busy schedule. They did not have the competitions in diving that they do now. We would have a meet every six weeks. On the weekends I had plenty of time for many other activities.

**Q: Where did you get your drive, your self-discipline?**

A: I think I was born with it.

**Q: Do you remember having a role model?**

A: In the early stages it might have been Vicki Draves. There were no Olympic Games in 1944. As a consequence, there was no one, except Vicki, who was probably the first good diver who came to my attention. I soon found that the high platform was the place to become recognized quickly, as there were many people frightened to be up that high. The competition was very, very good, although it didn't have the depth that other events had. At my very, very first nationals, I came in third place on the platform, which all of a sudden put me in the Olympic picture. I was 14, and the first 14-year-old to reach the nationals.

**Q: Had you participated in state meets prior to this time?**

A: No. They didn't have states just local districts. Ours was called SPAAU, the Southern Pacific Amateur Athletic Union. Periodically there would be diving meets in the Southern California area.

**Q: Was LAAC the powerhouse in diving?**

A: Yes, it was a powerhouse on the national scene. If you did not compete with them, you really would not have the opportunity to compete at all. The Los Angeles Athletic Club would take tons and tons of publicity photos, and when you were to be in a diving meet, they'd send them to the papers and they would be published. There was hardly a month that went by that one of us from the club did not have a photo in the *Los Angeles Times*.

**Q: What did that do for your ego?**

A: It was a lot of fun at school because the sports page was always a big deal with the teachers. It was a nice little motivator to keep you going until the next time. Once I became involved, I was hooked. I didn't really need anybody to push me at all. My mother was not athletically inclined at all. She stayed in the background. I remember driving to my first two nationals. It took about three or four days. We would work out at pools along the way. Of course, none of them had a high platform, but we would work out. That is a lot of workout time to give up. This was 1950, 1951.

**Q: Was the first one at North Carolina?**

A: It was at High Point, North Carolina. Detroit was the site for the second one.

**Q: How did you place in the first nationals?**

A: I qualified for the final in the springboard and ended up sixth. On the high platform, I placed third. The club paid my expenses then.

**Q: Describe the first nationals.**

A: The first nationals were unusual because the high platform was held on a lake, which had floating logs and a huge sunken net to make it safe. Of course, almost 34 feet up was very, very high to begin with. But, over the back it had about a 100-foot drop on the dam, so you are looking at 34 feet, plus a 100-foot drop down the back. I remember it made the front look very, very low. We only had to do six dives then.

We had four required dives and two optional dives.

**Q: What dives were performed then?**

A: I had to do a swan dive, a reverse dive, an inward dive and an inward 1/2. I think I was just learning a 2 1/2 then. I did a front 1 1/2 with a full twist, the most difficult dive, and ended up in third place. I think that was the spark that really made the Olympic Games achievable for me. It was 1950 and I was in high school. Covina, being a very, very small town, my achievements made large headlines. It was nice being part of a small community. I was even given the key to the city. In the '52 Olympics, when I was still in high school, they had a telegram thing going where everybody sent me a telegram. I must have received 600 telegrams in Finland. The next year I placed second in the nationals behind Patty. The Olympic Games then became more of a possibility. I then trained very hard for a possible Olympic placement.

**Q: Tell us about your training schedule for the Olympic trials.**

A: We trained seven days a week. We would train platform in the morning, springboard in the afternoon, and then go back to platform in the late afternoon and evening. We trained all day. In the tryouts I placed fourth and they took the top three. I was just an alternate on the springboard. The same thing happened in '56. I was fourth on springboard and just made the platform. It was not until the '60 Olympic Games that I won the tryouts in both springboard and platform. Overall, the tryouts are much more stressful than the Olympic Games themselves. You have to do well in the tryouts, otherwise, you cannot go to the Games. In the Olympics, you have already made it, so it is not quite a do-or-die situation, even though you want to do your best. Many countries pick their representatives over a series of two out of three, or use point systems. I guess the United States' philosophy states that because you only have one shot in the Olympic Games, you should only get one shot in the tryouts. So many things can happen on one particular day to affect your performance. It seems so unfair to have your whole life dependent on one performance rather than an aggregate of your best performances.

**Q: Do you remember the telethon in 1952, which was held to raise money for the American Olympians?**

A: No. Diving was so different. We used to do exhibitions before the '52 Olympic Games. We used to go to Las Vegas and Palm Springs and the sponsors would pay our expenses. We would be invited to a Palm Springs hotel or to a Las Vegas hotel for three days and we would put on a diving exhibition and a water ballet. These exhibitions ceased after the 1952 Olympic Games. In 1957, I was on "To Tell the Truth," a television game show, and made, like, \$24,000, I saw none of it. It all went to the Amateur Athletic Union at that time, but today, I would be able to keep it. In fact, I was even being investigated for accepting money for expenses.

**Q: Do you remember going to Helsinki and Avery Brundage admonishing the athletes to obey the amateur oath?**

A: Oh yes. Avery was very, very big in my era. To Avery Brundage, black was black and white was white. He could have negotiated some of the rules for better results, but in his mind there were no gray areas as far as the amateur code was concerned.

**Q: Tell me about the restrictions.**

A: We could not accept anything above expenses, in cash or gifts. For example, we could not accept a watch or accept more than \$25 over expenses.

**Q: Tell me about the 1952 Olympic Games.**

A: You had to take all of your clothes to the trials in case you were selected, because you would not get a chance to return home. You went directly from the tryouts to New York for processing. The next four days were spent being fitted for uniforms.

**Q: Describe your uniform.**

A: Well, they improved for each Olympic Games. We were given a travel uniform and a dress uniform. It was a white skirt, navy blue jacket, shoes, hose and two or three bathing suits. We had to wear a bathing cap, and they would also give us radios, for example, that companies would donate.

**Q: Tell me about the International Olympic Committee rules for swimsuits. I read somewhere that your chaperon was very upset, because only the Canadians and the Americans followed the rules for costumes.**

A: At that time they wanted us to wear black or navy blue. The bathing suit alone makes divers look better or worse. We followed that very strictly. Other countries were getting bold and coming out with some different colors. They were just a little braver with some of the suits they wore. We had some striped suits for training. Even those were rare and they were not cut high. They had a little skirt across the front. We also had wool sweat suits. They were just a fleece type navy blue with USA in red across the front. The top was a slip over. In '56 and '60 we had them where they had a zipper in the front, which was a little nicer. They gave us, as part of our '52 issue, blinders because it was light all the time in Helsinki. Unfortunately, I was a little bit young and naive to really fully enjoy the country. It was historical because it was the first time that the Russians were in it after the war and this was very exciting. They would train at 4 a.m. in the mornings so that no one could see them when it was light. In Helsinki, we stayed in a nursing home, which was like a large hotel. We had cafeteria-style meals, but it did not have the camaraderie of an Olympic Village.

**Q: Do you remember if there were any particular rules for you, as you were so young?**

A: The swimming and diving team was a small group who had their own chaperon and manager. Their main job was to get us to workouts and to the competitions on time. We were very well behaved.

**Q: Who was the coach?**

A: Dick Pathenger. He was the coach at Indiana at the time, and came in as a last minute replacement. Such a change did not have much effect because he would not have changed our dives anyway. His job was to schedule workouts and to give general comments. Many of the athletes' parents went to Helsinki, even though they were unable to have much interaction with sons or daughters.

**Q: Tell me about the Opening Ceremonies.**

A: We assembled just outside of the stadium and they had marks where each country was to be situated. I still get goose pimples talking about it. We were given a short lesson on marching and then we marched in, all 6,000 of us with 100,000 in the stands. Being so young, everything was such a wonder to me, the running of the torch by Paavo Nurmi, the doves, the oath. It is still a wonderful blur.

**Q: Do you remember the food?**

A: The American caterers try to fit the menus to what they consider to be a normal American diet. In the dining area the countries that were most alike in food, such as England and Canada, were together. Many of the athletes prefer to experience food from different countries, however. Because I did not get much steak at home, I would order it for breakfast, lunch and dinner. It was a wonderful treat, even though it probably was not good for performance, by today's standards.

**Q: Tell me about your mental preparation for the performance.**

A: Fortunately, our events are early in the Games. We start the next day. When competition time finally comes, you want it to be exactly as you had practiced it. As a consequence, you get on this track of being very focused on the reason you are there. There was not a lot expected of me in '52, I did not feel pressured. I just thought I was lucky to be there. When you are on top, there is more pressure on you to perform well. In addition, I had all of the telegrams arriving from home. They were delivered in sacks, lots of them. One of my dives was an arm stand dive, and I think that was what gave me the most fits. I worried about the possibility of coming back down on my arm stand and losing a large number of points. The weather, of course, was a factor. Finland was a very cold place, even in August. We had to wait 40 minutes between dives. To keep warm we would have to put our feet in buckets of hot water. We would also jump up and down and move around before each dive to try to get our blood going again. We could go off into the locker rooms, of course. The men's room was down near where the diving platform was, so we would go into its outer edge just to get out of the cold. Unfortunately, diving is a sport in which the results are based on subjective judging by judges from different countries. Being that diving in some countries was not as advanced as it was in the USA, many judges did not know what to look for in the dives. Such variation on knowledge is still a problem today.

**Q: Take me through your first dive in Olympic competition.**

A: Diving in my first Olympic competition was like an out of the body experience. All of the hours of practice come down to one performance at which thousands of people are watching a 16-year-old demonstrate what she can do. I tried to think of one or two things, and if I did those correctly, hopefully, the entire dive will be well done. There is one nice thing about the high platform, you are way up there, and the audience is a long way away. It is not like the springboard where you are near the audience.

**Q: What was your very first Olympic Games dive?**

A: I think my first dive in the '52 Olympics was a front 1/2, and I was just very consistent. It was my consistency which enabled me to get to the Olympic Games in the first place. Consequently, I did not blow any dives. In diving, if you are consistent and do not mess up on any dive, you will always end up in the top three.

**Q: Do you remember coming out of the water at the end of that first dive? How did it feel?**



A: It is indescribable, it really is. You are finally reaping the harvest from all of your hard work.

**Q: How fairly do you think the judges scored you.**

A: I don't remember there being a problem in '52. There wasn't with me because I was a nobody. In '56 and '60 there were big problems.

**Q: When did you begin to realize that you were going to medal in '52?**

A: Well, between dives I sat with the coach, because I made a habit of not watching the dives. Watching the competition would have put too much pressure on me. When the coach was watching me in training, he mentioned that I had a chance to medal. Of course, we did not know what to expect of the Soviets, as no one had seen them perform. It turned out that they weren't a factor at all in '52. They hadn't been out of their country, and nobody had been into their country, so they didn't know what we were doing and they were behind in technique and difficulty. Because the U.S. had been the dominant country in diving, I really had nothing to lose. When all of my dives were pretty solid, I began to realize that I had a chance to medal. I was aiming for third and was quite shocked to end up second, very, very shocked.

**Q: Describe standing on the podium.**

A: It is an indescribable feeling to see your country's flag unfurling because you performed well. At those times they played the first anthem, the second anthem and the third anthem. Simply, because it is over, you have been successful and they are playing your country's anthem. You cannot help but be emotional and break down and cry.

**Q: Did you have to do lots of interviews with the press afterwards?**

A: Yes, the foreign press was particularly interested. The Europeans had lots of sport magazines. It was fun being interviewed by them all.

**Q: Do you remember anything that was unusual in the questions that were asked?**

A: Well, because the foreign press had never heard of me, they wanted to know every detail about my life.

**Q: Do you remember any of the great athletes from '52?**

A: From the U.S., I remember our swimmers. I named my son after one of the fellows on the Olympic team, even though I didn't know him really well. But Thane Baker was a sprinter, and we named our son Thane.

**Q: Tell me about arriving back in the U.S.**

A: It was a really exciting time, arriving home and being met at the airport, and escorted home by a band from your hometown. They had banners, and there were probably 300 people from Covina with a sign which read, "Welcome Home, Paula Jean". There was a two to three day celebration with a big parade and a huge picnic in the town park. The town itself was just one square mile. I was given the

key to the city and awards from the high school and many gifts. I had to be very careful not to accept the gifts because of my amateur status.

**Q: Returning to school in the fall must have been very exciting.**

A: Yes, but it only lasts a couple of days.

**Q: Did you return immediately into training?**

A: No. In those days we took September and part of October off. The season would go from the end of January until the nationals, which were in August.

**Q: Did you set a new goal for the next Olympics?**

A: Yes. My goal was to beat Pat. That was really a goal which I achieved in the very first nationals after the Olympic Games. I beat her in '53 at the indoor nationals in Florida. I beat her again in the outdoor nationals.

**Q: Who was training you at the LAAC?**

A: When Russ left Los Angeles Athletic Club, I stayed, and Lyle became the coach and was there through '55.

**Q: Did Lyle set goals for you?**

A: Of course. At that time Pat had left and was being coached by her husband. At that time Pat and I were rivals. In April of '53 I beat her on springboard at my first nationals for that event.

**Q: Tell me about it.**

A: Well, that was really exciting because she had just won the Olympics, two years before and it was our next competition. We were doing more difficult dives. We began performing a double 1/2 with two twists and an inward 2 1/2, which no women were doing. We were pioneering them. I learned them in the summer time, while Vicki was diving in Aquacades in Minneapolis and I traveled with them during that summer. I learned these dives away from LAAC. Pat didn't know I was doing them.

**Q: Were there any rules about the dives that you could do?**

A: Unfortunately there were, and in the 1956 Olympic Games we were not allowed to do them. I felt had I been allowed to do them I would have won the gold medal in 1956. I even demonstrated them for the diving committee to show that women could do them and not get killed. They aren't really all that difficult. The diving committee had old-foggy-type ideas. I had to demonstrate them to show that we could do them and that they should be placed in the book. It did not get into the book until after the '56 Olympic Games. At that time, there were two separate rules books, one for international competition called FINA, which is the international federation, and then our AAU book, which is Amateur Athletic Union for the U.S. There were two sets of rules, but today, both sets of rules and books have been combined. As a consequence, I could use them in all our nationals between the Olympics Games, but

not in the Olympic Games. I could use them in the 1960 Olympic Games, but by then everybody was doing them. It was no big deal. But nobody was doing them even by '56. We just progressed between non-Olympic years of '53, '54, and then in '55 the Pan American Games came around. They were held in Mexico City, and after having a baby, Pat was back diving, and we both made the team. I was doing very, very well and really thought I could beat her there, but unfortunately, I woke up sick with a fever the morning of the competition. I still wanted to dive, but our Olympic committee met and refused to give me permission. The reason given for their refusal was that it was too dangerous from the platform. They said it was too dangerous on the high platform. It was terrible, lying in bed knowing the competition was going on right outside the window. It was just devastating. I had only qualified for the platform and not the springboard.

**Q: Were you still in high school?**

A: I was attending USC. I had very good grades in high school and had a full academic scholarship. I trained with Lyle at LAAC, and then later at Indian Springs when he moved there. I also went off to Ohio State for one year. In 1954 I left SC because I wanted to train for the Pan American Games. SC was only on a semester schedule, but at Ohio State, which was nationally recognized with Mike Peppy as coach, was on the quarter system. I could drop out winter quarter to go to the Pan American Games. I was one of the groundbreakers at Ohio State because I used the men's pool. Women had not been allowed in because the men worked out naked. All of the Ohio State divers were internationally recognized.

**Q: Who was there then?**

A: Don Harper and Morley Shapiro were the two major divers with two others divers from the area, Miller Anderson and Al Patnak. In '55 I went through some problems with diving. I became afraid to go off the high platform and to do difficult dives. It was after the Pan American Games, so the Olympic Games were the next year. Knowing that the Olympic Games were coming up helped me snap out of it.

**Q: Did you overcome your fear in the tryouts?**

A: In '56 I think our tryouts were at the Shamrock Hotel in Indianapolis. They had springboards, platform, everything. Again, I didn't make it in the springboard. I came in fourth. It is especially hard when you come so close and don't make it 'cause all your eggs are in that one basket left. You really have a lot of pressure. The same three of us made it in '56: Pat McCormick, Juno Stover and me.

**Q: Tell me about going to Australia.**

A: Well, that was just really, really fun. I had traveled quite a bit by then, so I was pretty seasoned as a 20-year-old with a couple of college years under my belt. Having Glenn as coach ruined it somewhat, though.

**Q: Did Glenn try to help you at all?**

A: He tried to help me, but in my mind it wasn't help. I was greatly disturbed having to dive under those circumstances. Your coach has to be able to motivate you. The coach is telling you as much

off the diving board as on it.

**Q: Describe the Olympic Village in Melbourne.**

A: The Olympic Village was enclosed in a huge, big fence. It was a whole city within the city. The Russians still stayed out in a boat on the harbor. They had taken a lot of movies in '52 and were now a factor to the competition. They were still very, very closely watched, you know, and we were closely watched by them. Talking to them was difficult. The women's village was within the main village, but it was wired off. But of course there were a lot of funny instances that took place. Some men dressed up as women and walked into the women's compound. They had movies and dances within the compound. We could enjoy ourselves without worrying about the press. They had stores and banks all within the village. Two-story apartment buildings were built to house the athletes.

**Q: Describe the diving facility.**

A: We were not used to diving indoors. There were no indoor facilities at that time in the U.S. It was difficult to get used to having a ceiling over you on the high platform. Spotting from the platform was difficult.

**Q: How long were you in Melbourne before your event?**

A: We were there quite a long time, probably 10 days. I actually became obsessed and overtrained for the '56 Games. I was put in a difficult situation because Pat McCormick's husband, Glenn, was appointed coach. I thought it was extremely unfair and really unethical. It gave her an unfair advantage over me. I just trained and was in the best shape I had ever been in. I didn't have a coach. Lyle was coaching me then, but he couldn't go to the Olympics.

**Q: Do you remember the Opening Ceremonies in Australia?**

A: Lyle had me take his 16-millimeter camera over there, and I had everything on film, which we've since had switched over to video. The Opening Ceremonies were just mind-boggling and earth moving. It was really very, very exciting. Of course, I was in such good physical condition, I had great optimism. When I arrived there, I just trained and trained at the site of the Olympics, which was a very foolish thing to do. A very, very wonderful person, a coach of one of the men on the swimming team, kind of took me under his wing. He was a doctor of philosophy over at Springfield College. I think his name was Red Silva. I had really kind of turned into a loner. He sort of took me under his wing. He was coaching a breaststroker, Bill Yorsik. I would go everywhere with them. They would take me to workout. We would go out to eat at various places in town. I dove my head off over there because I just felt that was the way to get a medal. I didn't know anything about overtraining. I just thought, the harder you'd train, the better you'd do. I was with them a lot, and not with Glenn at all, even though he was the official coach. A lot of this may have been a figment of my imagination, but the fact that I had beaten Pat several times at that point, too, made the situation difficult.

**Q: What happened in the competition?**

A: I was leading after the four dives. There was a break for a day, and the competition continued over the next two days. In other words, it was a three-day event with a day break between the second and

third days. I was not sharp in the last two dives and dropped to third. I don't know exactly what happened. It wasn't pressure because I was used to that. I had a little bit of a female problem there between the two events, which may have been a factor. My last two dives were good dives, but Pat and Juno did very well in their dives as well, so it was quite close. Although I was disappointed, I was happy to get a medal anyway. This disappointment was one of the few things that I have ever allowed myself to dwell on.

**Q: Do you remember the Closing Ceremonies because they were new?**

A: It was the first time the athletes all came in together rather than as nations. You just walked in a huge group. There was great camaraderie.

**Q: Do you remember anything about the famous water polo match?**

A: I went to a lot of the water polo with Olga and Hal Connolly. The Hungarians were really defecting at that time. I literally saw blood in the water. What went on under water was just scary. I can understand why there were 26 defections. After the Olympic Games, I really had an adventure. I took my return ticket and obtained permission to turn it in. In the following weeks I stayed with friends I had met at the Games. I stayed with a family that had a business in Sydney. They lived in a four-level, waterfront home. They took me on tours and they had a business associate in Fiji, so I stayed with that family in Suva.

**Q: Did you return to USC upon your return home?**

A: Yes, then I got back. At USC I had become friends with a dental student who was also a basketball player. He was just bound and determined that I was going to attend dental hygiene school. He sent me the application forms in Australia and even had me practice carving to improve my dexterity, on board the Oronsay, the ship on which I sailed home from Fiji. In April, I took the entrance and the carving test, and I needed three recommendations. Because of my Olympic success, the personnel director arranged for me to have lunch with the president of the dental school. I started dental hygiene the following September.

**Q: Was this a degree program?**

A: Yes. You get a B.S. in dental hygiene. I ended up cleaning teeth for 29 years. I just retired two years ago. Diving really became difficult. We were in dental school from eight in the morning until five at night, and I trained in the evenings as best I could.

**Q: Were you still back training at LAAC?**

A: I was training at Encino with Lyle Draves. Of course, I trained really, really hard in the summer. I won all five national diving titles that year, the two indoor and the three outdoor. I still lived in campus housing. I would come home from workout at 10 or 11 at night. One night, a young man came over to visit the boys in the front apartment. I happened to walk by and they said to him, "She's an Olympian, I dare you to ask her for a date." He took the dare and we were married six months later. He was an electrical engineering major on a basketball scholarship. We both graduated in 1959 and were in school our first year of marriage. He had a four-hour job and I worked four hours on campus, too. I was

also trying to prepare for the Pan American Games. When we graduated, he went to work full time in electrical engineering and I went to work six days a week in dental hygiene. We were trying to save up some money so he could go to the Olympic Games in '60. The Pan American Games were in Chicago in '59, and I trained really hard and won the tryouts on both the springboard and platform. It was the first time that I had qualified for international competition in both events. It was a big year because we still did not know what was going on beyond the Iron Curtain. Out of convenience and for other reasons, Sammy Lee became my coach for the Olympic tryouts. They were just harrowing because my husband and a good friend assumed I was going to make the team and went on to Europe. I had not made the team yet, and there were only going to be two people selected. Fortunately, Sammy was a real grinder and he really worked you. I mean he just had no use for you, whatsoever, if you did not feel quite right on the platform. There was no monkey business with him. He made you reach your potential.

**Q: He trained you for the 1960 Olympic Games?**

A: He trained me the summer of '58, for the '59 Pan American Games and the '60 Olympic Games. After the tryouts, they took us to New York for a training period of about two weeks. We were fitted with uniforms. This time we really did receive an Olympic wardrobe. We were given leisure clothes, parade clothes, and travel clothes. In Rome it was wonderful being with a lot of people from '56. I also became friends with Cassius Clay, Wilma Rudolph, Jerry Luka and Oscar Robertson. Our friendships have lasted through the years.

**Q: Do you remember Cassius Clay standing in the middle of the piazza talking to whoever would come by?**

A: He was just like he was before he became ill. He was always preaching no matter where it was, in the cafeteria, out on the grounds, in the enormous village, out on the grounds, downtown, over the venue for the boxing. He was always talking. I knew Wilma Rudolph from '56 and also became friends with Willye White, who was on five Olympic teams.

**Q: Tell me about the Opening Ceremonies in Rome.**

A: In Rome, I didn't actually march. I had to compete the next morning and it was very, very hot in Rome. I had great hopes of winning gold medals, so I went to the Opening Ceremonies, but did not march. *Sports Illustrated* picked me to win, so there were great expectations. No one had heard of Ingrid Kramer. She just appeared on the horizon.

**Q: Because there were great expectations for you, was the pressure much greater than in the previous Olympic Games?**

A: It was a lot different. There were a lot of good divers for the first time. The rest of the world was going to become a factor. Many of the English and the Mexicans were good. It was obvious that it would not be easy to walk away with gold medals. Ingrid Kramer was excellent on the springboard. She was not as good on platform. Fortunately for her, springboard was before platform and she had established her niche, in the diving world. I think that really got her the gold medal on platform. I feel that I should have had the gold medal on platform, but she could do no wrong at that point. She had clearly out dove me on the springboard. I received the silver medal on springboard and was very, very pleased. I believe that the platform really belonged to me before, during and after. I have all the films

to prove it. Unfortunately, in diving, it is almost impossible to come off a gold medal in springboard and not be awarded the gold in platform if you dive acceptably. In the '64 Olympics she didn't even make her team on platform. On the springboard, she came back and won again. It was a beautiful facility and there was a huge marquee where they not only put your scores up for each dive, but also the name of the dive. For the first time, they had a running score of every single dive. Pope was a good name to have on a marquee in Rome. The Italians got a big chuckle out of it.

**Q: Do you think the Eastern Bloc judges were biased?**

A: Yes. They had more than one judge as there were satellite countries represented.

**Q: What did you do after your event was finished?**

A: I was able to get my husband a press pass to the village. Later, we gave an exhibition at Capri. We also visited the Soviets at their village. It was very interesting and we were watched constantly. Our conversations were monitored. They certainly dominated the diving after that.

**Q: Do you think there is less money going to the Eastern Bloc now?**

A: They still have these fabulous facilities in the Eastern Bloc. It seems that every two or three blocks they have facilities that you would just die for in East Germany. I mean their housing and the towns and everything else was just horribly poor, but these facilities were the best. They are side by side in every town. They still have the facilities and the coaches, so I do not think diving will fall off soon. In addition, steroids are not used. Amphetamines are used to give an enhanced mental state, though. It will be interesting to see if there are many changes on the international diving scene.

**Q: When you returned from Rome what did you do?**

A: We lived in Orange County. My husband has a job in electrical engineering and we had our first child in '61, and then had another one in '63. At this time I have not done any diving at all, and Sammy Lee gets this bright idea of trying out for the '64 Olympic Games on springboard. I decided to give it a try. In the fall of '63 I started training with Sammy for the '64 Olympics games in Japan. I trained at Los Caballeros. They have taken out their platform, so I work out on springboard but concentrated on platform. I worked all winter. Unfortunately, the rules were different, and we are now doing eight dives instead of six. A back dive requirement was added. Sammy worked me up to it on the different levels, and I finally got my back dive off. I would still rather do a four and a half than do a back dive. Sammy felt that I was diving better than I had ever dived in my life on platform. I was in one competition in July and then the Olympic tryouts. I wasn't competition tough. In the tryouts in New York, I just couldn't do it. I didn't dive poorly, but I wasn't real sharp. I got fourth place and was an alternate. It was a really good experience. We then moved to Ventura. My husband went into business with Tom Morrey and the Morrey Boogie. I coached at two high schools in Ventura in diving, as well as my dental hygiene work. In addition, I competed at the masters level. In 1974, when my husband's business went public on the New York Stock Exchange, we sold it. We then moved to Ojai, which is a tennis-crazy town. Incidentally we opened the tennis club in '76 and we have taught hundreds of kids to play tennis and to swim ever since. I have a very, very large diving program here in the summer. I get up to a hundred kids, and I coach all the high schools in the county. They come here in the afternoons in the spring.

**Q: Who are the leaders in international diving today?**

A: China is the one. They just do amazing things. China now is where East Germany and Russia were a few years ago. It is the athlete's ticket to a good life and out of the country. They are so highly motivated. I think we'll be in the finals, but not for a gold medal. I'd be very surprised, and hopefully, I am surprised.



## 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.