

# 68OHP Barkman Jane SWI

Interviewer: Desiree Harguess

Narrator: Jane Barkman Brown, 1968 Olympic Games, Swimming

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DH:

Today is November 17, 2013. This is Desiree Hargis on behalf of the H.J. Lucher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports. As part of the 1968 U.S. Olympic Team Legacy Project, today I am interviewing Jane Barkman Brown over the phone about her experiences in the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City. Jane, can you begin with when and where you were born?

JBB:

I was born in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, September 20, 1951.

DH:

And where did you grow up?

JBB:

Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, about five minutes outside of Philadelphia.

DH:

Okay. And tell me a little bit about your family. Like, were your parents athletic?

Did you have siblings that were into sports?

JBB:

My dad ran track at Colgate University. My sister was very athletic in her high school years. And summer, she played field hockey.

She was a cheerleader. She was a diver. So the athletics kind of ran in our family.

My mom was not so much, but that's about all I can say about my family.

DH:

Mm-hmm. When were you first introduced to sports? And did you do any other athletic activity before swimming?

JBB:

I learned to swim when I was six years old. My dad taught me how to swim. And things just took off right pretty quickly after that.

I turned seven and started swimming in a Y in Ardmore, Pennsylvania. And then that became stepping stone to then swimming all year around at a swim club by the name of Suburban Swim Club in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania. But I mean, I watched my sister dive from an early age and swim at Martin's Day Swim Club, where I also started swimming a beautiful summer club outside of Philadelphia.

So that's where I started. Swimming was the only sport I did for years and years and years.

DH:

And what about friendships? Were most of your friends also at the club, also swimmers? Or were most of your friends other people at school?

JBB:

I had friends at school, but I wasn't there that much. I was gone before school. I got up and swam in Philadelphia.

So I would come into school with wet hair. And I was after school quickly going home to get ready to swim again. Because it was 45 minutes driving into Philadelphia and 45 minutes back.

My parents drove sometimes twice a day in and out of the city. So there wasn't near enough time to have too many close friendships in school. I had a core group of friends that were, I'd have over, you know, get together or I'd go to their house.

But I was pretty limited as far as time, as you can imagine.

DH:

Yes, absolutely. Well, your parents sound like they were pretty supportive of your swimming.

JBB:

There's no question about that. They were incredibly supportive. And, you know, continually would say things like, don't do this if you don't want to do it.

Don't do it for us. But I was really lucky. Because I wouldn't say it completely came easily to me.

But I loved it right away. I had coach after coach that was very supportive and caring, beginning with a coach by the name of Bob Fitzgerald, who was the summer club swim coach at Martin's Dam and also was a guidance counselor at my high school, to a man by the name of Mr. Bill Taylor at Suburban Swim Club. And the list went on and on to Mary Kelly, who was, she was the sister-in-law of Princess Grace from Vesper Boat Club to George Freeman, who got me to the two Olympics that I went to.

So I was really blessed with parental support and fabulous coaches through the years.

DH:

How old were you at the 1968 Olympic trials?

JBB:

What did you say? I missed you because it was a sound.

DH:

How old were you at the 68 trials?

JBB:

Oh, well, and I went to the 64 trials and got ninth place and they took five at 12. So in 68, I was 16. I had actually had my 16th birthday at Olympic training camp in Colorado Springs.

DH:

Oh, wow. Well, tell me about some of your biggest victories leading up to the trials.

JBB:

Well, let's see. So in 67, I finished first place nationally in the summer championships at Kelly Pool in Philadelphia. And then also in 68, and that was in 100 freestyle, 68 indoors, I finished first.

So I knew I had a shot, but those were two big, big steps. I also got a first place medal when I was 14 in a different event at the national championships. But Olympic trials is a whole lot different than meets, you know, national meets.

It's a whole different level of intensity. And I really got nervous.

DH:

So tell me about the trials then. And, you know, did your nervousness affect your performance?

JBB:

I'm sure everyone was nervous. So I don't want to make excuses, but I qualified first at Olympic trials, actually both in 68 and 72. So I was suited first.

And in 68, I had won, you know, the previous summer. I had won the winter before the Olympic Games. So there was a lot, I put a lot of pressure on myself.

And I got really nervous. So yes, my nervousness definitely affected the finals of the Olympic trials at 100 freestyle. I just, what the term is choked, meaning got really, really nervous, but everyone had that same thing to deal with.

I just didn't handle as well as I might have if I finished fourth, both times, 68 and 72.

DH:

Okay. And so how many, well, you made the team, and so they were taking how many that year?

JBB:

Well, in 68, I went ahead unexpectedly without the pressure, got a third place in the two-year freestyle, my, you know, longer event, my off event. So I was very surprised. It was a very close race, seven tenths between first and third.

So I made it there, and I had to wait until the very end of the trial to see if anyone that had made the team previously, they tried to beat my fourth place time, 100 meters. So in other words, I'd made the team in the two-year freestyle, my off event, but I had to wait to the very end to find out if indeed I'd make that relay team. So I'm smiling, thinking about how lucky I was, really lucky, because there was a lot of people that could have just slid by me and replaced me as that fourth member of the relay team, but I lucked out.

DH:

What was the reaction of friends and family to finding out that you had made the Olympic team?

JBB:

They were very excited, of course. My town, you know, Wayne had watched me, Radnor, where I went to school, had watched me working really hard. Martin Stamp had watched me.

People were very, very excited, but, you know, back then, you know, there was a lot of pressure if people said, you know, if I finished third in the national championships, they'd say, oh, what happened to you? You know, I thought you would have won. So there was, I felt a lot of pressure, but once I made the Olympic team, it didn't feel, it felt wonderful, because that was the goal I had all along, not necessarily winning a medal, but making an Olympic team by itself.

Afterwards, it was to get a medal. You know, my goal wasn't to win a gold medal at the Olympics. All the years that I crossed my fingers and wished on the first star, it was to make the Olympic team.

It wasn't to win a gold medal.

DH:

Uh-huh. I like, I like that kind of multi-stage goals. Just make the team first.

JBB:

Yeah.

DH:

So tell me about training, Olympic training camp and acclimation to altitude.

JBB:

Oh, it was tough, and very many of my teammates on the Olympic team had their coaches visit during that time, but there were two of us for the same team, and our coach didn't come. We had to just do it on our own. There were five meals coaches, you know, that we knew, but didn't swim for them privately, you know, as part of the club, but you just had to adapt.

It was, you could definitely feel the altitude in Colorado Springs that was getting us ready for Mexico, but we did, I wished longingly to have my coach there, as so many others did, but that was turned out to be a really good move on his part because it made us both that much more independent and strong as athletes and as people to know we could do it ourselves.

DH:

So you celebrated your birthday there in training camp. What sticks out in your mind, in your memory about that time?

JBB:

We ate in the dining halls of the Air Force Academy, and if I'm remembering correctly, they had a birthday cake or some sort. That's all I can remember.

DH:

What did you think of the Air Force Academy?

JBB:

It was phenomenal. The only thing that I remember that was kind of sad was back then, that was, you know, that was many, many years ago, 45 years ago to be exact. There was a wall along the pool deck that all it had was the names, the letters that spelled out All-Americans, and there weren't any All-Americans.

Or they hadn't put them up yet, and so my thinking was, well, I don't think I would have put up a sign All-Americans if there weren't some, but maybe there were later that year. I hope so. We never did find that out, but that seemed kind of strange, but it was a wonderful place.

We were very well treated, beautiful campus there and the church. Everything was just gorgeous. The guys stayed at Broadmoor, which is quite a fancy resort, and while we stayed at a not-so-fancy motel, but we didn't care.

It was still a great experience.

DH:

I was going to ask you about that, but you just answered my question. You said you didn't care about that, but you did notice.

JBB:

We noticed, but you know what? You made an Olympic team, so really, who cares? I was young.

I mean, I was 16. If that had happened to me four years later, I might have been a little bit more irritated by it, but it didn't really matter.

DH:

Some of your teammates have told me that the 68 Olympic team women who were training there at the Air Force Academy were the first women to eat in the Air Force Academy dining hall. Is that true?

JBB:

I don't remember that. I know we felt kind of strange because everyone was staring at us, but I don't know that for a fact.

DH:

While you were going through training camp, do you remember hearing anything about possible boycotts or protests by members of the U.S. track team or anything about an Olympic project for human rights?

JBB:

Not at Olympic training camp, no.

DH:

When did you first hear anything about that?

JBB:

Not until in Mexico. Not until we heard about what Tommy Smith, the whole movement, the Black Fist, that whole scene. I didn't know about it until then.

DH:

What about the student protests and violence that happened in Mexico City about 10 days before the start of the Games? Did you ever hear anything about that on the news or in a newspaper back then before you went down to Mexico City?

JBB:

I have vague memories of it being told, but then being told it was going to be all right when we got there, but I didn't know much about it.

DH:

When you first arrived in Mexico City, what were your impressions of the city and the people?

JBB:

Um, I noticed that there was downtrodden places, but people were really friendly. That's about all. And it was very colorful to me.

The different parts of the city and Olympic Village was beautifully decorated and exciting. Lots of people from, I mean, we didn't spend much time in Mexico City proper, so I can't really answer that in terms of just Mexico. I was really overwhelmed as well to be able to take it all in, so probably I'm sounding like I didn't notice much because I was in a dream world.

But I did notice that in driving to and from different facilities, you could see that there was a very unbalanced level of, how do I say it, of socioeconomic situations there.

DH:

What about your impression of your accommodations in the Olympic Village?

JBB:

I thought there was like a little hotel suite in a way, and we each had our own room, which I thought was amazing. Very bright and airy, and I thought it was fine. I don't know what other friends thought, but I was still, again, I was in awe that I was there at all.

DH:

What did you think of the Olympic Village?

JBB:

The pool itself was incredible. It was beautiful. It was huge.

It was very well lighted, windows, sunshine coming through. I thought it was just top notch.

DH:

What about the food? Did you have any food or waterborne illnesses, or did anyone you know contract any food or waterborne illnesses?

JBB:

I think some people did, but I cannot now remember. I didn't have any problem with it. I know we were pretty careful, and I know we were warned to be careful what we ate and drank, but I don't remember per se certain people having problems.

DH:

What were your impressions of security and security measures at the Olympic Village and at the venues?

JBB:

Well, that was the first time I'd seen, there were armed guards around the village gates, and I think there was barbed wire. That's a funny memory. I'm not sure that's right, but I just figured this was a real big deal.

It was all the countries in the world, and they had to be sure that everyone was safe and protected. At the pool, I don't remember the security so much. I just don't.

DH:

Mm-hmm. What are your strongest memories of the opening ceremony?

JBB:

It was very exciting, and I was afraid I'd get hit by a pigeon. It's supposed to be good luck if a pigeon poops on you, but I was thinking about that a lot of the time, but more than that, I was thinking about my parents. My parents and my sister Diane both got to go, and it's a very, very strong memory of me wondering where they were in the stands as we walked in.

If I'm remembering correctly, I think they played when the saints come marching in, but I'm not real positive about that, but it was just earth-shatteringly amazing, lots of proud feelings, and lots of gratitude feelings towards so many people that supported me and helped me to get to that point.

DH:

Speaking of support, was it a financial burden or a strain on your family to get you to that place?

JBB:

A financial strain, is that what you said?

DH:

Yes.

JBB:

I'm sure that they never made light of that, and they really wanted my sister Diane to be a part of it. They went on a swimming tour through what was called Swimming World Magazine. I got to be pretty close friends with the editor of that, so did my parents.

So I imagine it was probably a burden on them, but they, of course, never complained in front of me, but I'm sure it was.

DH:

Who was your best friend on the team there in Mexico City?

JBB:

I was friends with everyone, but the one two girls that I've stayed and got in touch with all these years, one is Pokey [Watson] Richardson, and she and I competed across from Philadelphia to Los Angeles since we had competed since we were both 10 years old. So I just idolized her and got to know her through that trip, among other trips prior to that time, and we have stayed to be very, very good friends all these years. But there's another very special one girl that I idolized and loved, and her name is Susie Shields White.

She was from, let me say St. Louis, but that's not right, Kentucky, Louisville, Kentucky, and we haven't always been in touch, but after you and I finished talking, I'm calling her, she was the most down-to-earth, fun-loving, cute, talented, great girl you'd ever want to meet. We got to be close friends very soon after meeting each other. I admired her greatly.

DH:

That's wonderful.

JBB:

She went into being a teacher, as did I, and coached some, so we had a lot in common.

DH:

Yeah.

JBB:

And she made your two kids, Daniel and Jennifer, which is the names of two of my three kids. Interesting. You love her.

Everyone did.

DH:

Tell me about the Cold War and any effects of the Cold War that you might have noticed at the Games, if any.

JBB:

I didn't notice it. I was pretty unknowing of any of the politics that was going into things. I think I was 16 and very, very naive about all of those things, so I can't really add to that.

DH:

Did you have any interactions with any athletes from the Soviet bloc?

JBB:

Not there. I had met a Russian swimmer in October of the previous year that asked me what I thought about Vietnam, and I was afraid of what to say. I calmly and naively said I'd go along with my government, but at the Games, no, no Russian athletes that I could speak to very much.



I did make friends with a rower from Poland, but not to any extent that we had lengthy conversations.

DH:

What do you remember about the drug testing program at the 1968 Games?

JBB:

Well, that is another story. I'm trying to make sure I remember this correctly. In 1968, now, I'm trying to remember.

I probably should verify this, but I'm almost positive. In 1968, I was drug tested, and I could not go to the bathroom for the rest of the week. So it took me, I heard one of the divers, Bernie Wrightson, I hope that's 68, not 72, couldn't go, but it took me several hours.

I was the last one to leave the pool. My shoes were in the pool. Finally, I went.

It was a huge relief, but people did tease me a little bit about that because I couldn't go. It was 68. I'm almost positive.

DH:

Did you remember hearing anything about any athletes being disqualified because of using banned substances?

JBB:

Well, we had a distance swimmer that was disqualified for using a nose, a sinus spray of some sort, unknowing that that was a banned substance. He lost his medals and later was reinstated and got his medals back.

DH:

Oh, wow.

JBB:

That was the only one that I, there were rumors that other athletes had their cheeks swabbed. They did that too. It wasn't just a urine test.

They swabbed your cheek. So look at genetic trails. Find out there were not just drugs, but different genders.

I think I knew a little bit of that too, that people were disqualified or questioned in terms of that stuff too. The swimmer that had his medal taken away was whipped a month. I remember that.

No, I think that's right. That was really sad because that happened very unknowingly. He didn't deserve that.

He didn't know about that these nose or whatever, some kind of medication for either sinuses or a head cold. But I'll try to, as we're talking, I'll try to make sure that's who it was. Not that I guess that matters.

But anyway, go ahead.

DH:

Well, thank you for sharing that. That's definitely interesting and I would be interested in talking to Rick about that.

JBB:

If he would be willing to.

DH:

Yeah, yeah. So you mentioned the gender verification testing, the cheek swab. Did you have to undergo that?

JBB:

Yes, I did.

DH:

How did you feel about that at the time?

JBB:

I don't think I really, really understood it, but I figured it was what you did, what you had to do. It just seemed like I was young enough that I was going to do whatever someone told me. I didn't question a whole lot back in those days, like I do now.

But it seemed odd and then it seemed shocking and then sad to think that that existed, that there might've been athletes that were competing as women that were actually had male steroids or whatever it was in them. But it didn't hit me until 72, because that's when it became more, that steroid situation came up.

DH:

Well, tell me a little bit about 72 in comparison to 76 or the steroid situation that you're talking about.

JBB:

Well, 72 is when the East German women were noticeably, I mean, we had strong necks as women and we had strong lap muscles. And I didn't pay that much attention, but there was a lot of scuttlebutt in terms of the East Germans, something was fishy because they improved so quickly. But it wasn't until the next 76 Olympics that it became even more apparent and sad to think that that we lost medals that we should have gotten because these women won the medals, but really illegally.

And that came out much later. That was sad because years after that, we found out that those athletes may very well have been forced to do that and had suffered medical consequences as a result of that sterility, different health issues. And to me, that was sad.

I knew some of those girls a little bit, so it was sad to think years now looking back on it.

DH:

Mm-hmm. Well, you mentioned medals and winning medals that leads to your event in 68. Can you tell me about your medal winning event?

JBB:

Well, I got the third in the 200 freestyle with the seven tenths of a second separated. We were first, second, third. So that was very satisfying, very exciting, of course.

And to know that it was that close. So that was a great experience. It was kind of eye-opening, though, because I finished and a writer for the show about the Inquirer stopped me and said, I bet you're really disappointed you only got third.

And I was shocked. I mean, I was only 16. And for somebody to say that, I just looked at him and said, Are you kidding me?

I don't think I was that bold. I'm lucky to be here, let alone to get a medal. But that was kind of sobering that someone addressed me that way.

And I just, while we were talking, for your information, backtrack a little bit. It was definitely Rick DeMont, D-E-M-O-N-T. And it took him 29 years.

It was 72. 29 years, wasn't 68, 72. But 29 years later, he got his gold medal.

So you can't put it with 68, but you might talk to him if there's ever a 72.

DH:

Yes, definitely. Thank you for verifying that.

JBB:

Yeah, yeah.

DH:

So what did it feel like to stand on the medal stand and receive your medal?

JBB:

Oh my gosh, it was amazingly like a dream. I can't remember anything except that I was just shocked. And I kept looking up in the stands to see if I could see my parents.

Both for the relay and the bronze and the 200 freestyle, it's very hard to express the emotions that I felt. And I still do. I still can't believe it.

I think I'm talking about somebody else to you. But it wasn't really me that did that. I kept feeling very, very fortunate.

So that's all I can say. Very hard to express.

DH:

What about receiving the gold medal for the women's 4x100 relay?

JBB:

Well, that was very exciting, of course. That was my best event. And so I got to share my best event with three of the best swimmers in the world in that event.

We were super excited. I think we were probably favored to win, but you never believe that until you do it. So it was unreal what it was.

DH:

And your teammates and you set a new Olympic record in that event?

JBB:

We set a new Olympic record, but we didn't set a world record because of the altitude change. But yeah, I think so. As far as I know, that's right.

DH:

What about in 72? I read that in 72, you also won the gold as part of the 4x100 freestyle relay, and that you set a new world record then.

JBB:

We did. And I was one of the oldest then. I was one of the tri-captains.

And that whole experience was, you know, it's four years later, I'm 21. And that was also a dream because I had quit and come back to make that team. And I whistle all the time.

I still do. And I whistle Ben. And my teammates, Sandy Nielsen, Shirley Babashoff, and Jenny Kemp, dared me to whistle the national anthem if we won and set a world record.

So that award stand is more clear to me. It's still as many years ago, but they started elbowing me. And I could only whistle about four notes before I broke down into tears because of being so overwhelmed that we had done what we did.

And as a result, I got questioned by the German press. They were trying to make it out like I did it in disrespect of the United States, which was not at all true, of course. My parents were in the press room at the time and were nervous about it because they knew I hadn't done that.

They were just hoping I'd give them the right answer when I was questioned about it. But no, that was amazing. And the red light was flashing.

We set a world record. And I just got a video of it. I just got a video of it in the last year.

DH:

Oh, wow.

JBB:

Watching. Yeah. From online.

DH:

That's wonderful. Who put that video up?

JBB:

I can't remember. I don't know. I don't know that.

You could find it if you looked.

DH:

Okay. Yeah, I definitely will do that. So I read that you narrowly beat the East German team then.

Yeah. Did you feel like in 72 that you missed out on any medals that you should have won? You mentioned the steroid scandal earlier.

JBB:

No. Did you say in 72?

DH:

In 72. Uh-huh.

JBB:

No, we barely beat them. We were just at the very beginning of that whole scene.

DH:

Okay.

JBB:

So I certainly didn't. No. I mean, I relayed one.

It was just starting. It didn't, like I said before, it didn't really become apparent there was funding business going on until the next Olympics and the next few years after that.

DH:

So going back to 68, you mentioned earlier the civil rights demonstrations. Did you witness Tommie Smith and Giancarlo's and their protest or did you just hear about it afterwards?

JBB:

No, I'm pretty sure I just heard about it. I'd like to think I saw it because there were huge TVs set up all over screens all over the Olympic Village, but I honestly don't think I saw it in person. I know I didn't see it in person and I'm not sure I saw it as it happened.

DH:

Okay.

JBB:

Live on screen or anything. But that was really upsetting to me because in my years of high school, I had befriended several African American people and my parents had African Americans working in their store that were members of our family. So when that happened, I was feeling not threatened by it at all.

Just sad to think that they felt strongly enough that they had to let people know around the world that they felt slighted.

DH:

What did you think of the media storm reaction or of the Olympic Committee expelling them from the village?

JBB:

I don't know if I had a thought, but soon after that, I didn't understand it and I didn't understand why they take such bold steps to remove them, let alone take their medals away, but remove them from the village. That seemed extreme. Really did.

DH:

Do you remember the thoughts and feelings of those around you? What they were saying or expressing about that event?

JBB:

Don't remember a lot, but I'm pretty sure the people that I was close to probably felt the same way that I did.

DH:

What about the closing ceremony in 68? What memories do you have of that?

JBB:

It was a lot of fun and sadness because I stood next to Gary Hall, who is one of our leaders today in the United States and internationally known. I don't know whether I tapped his shoulder or what I did, but I looked at him and I said, well, this is it for me because there must have been something that said, well, will we see you the next Olympic year? He said, well, I'm going to try to go again.

I was in tears saying, well, this is it for me. I won't get to. How wonderful that I did get to go again.

I was certainly a lucky girl to get to go to not one, but two.

DH:

Why did you feel so positively or strongly that you were not going to get to go to 72?

JBB:

Because I was my senior year of high school and there weren't many college scholarships. And I just kind of took it that my next step was to go to college and get a job and that I wouldn't be able to swim another four years. But my parents really, having missed by five one hundredths of a second in my best event in a freestyle, I started to get the itch because the times didn't get any better.

In fact, my national record still stood in seventy one. My yard's record still stood. And so I was starting to wonder whether I should try again.

And my father said something to the extent, well, you know, you can go for it. You got any ounce of bark in you, you'll want to. So he was encouraging me to.

And that's all I needed to think about trying again.

DH:

Well, in terms of just 1968, what for you was the most memorable or meaningful part of being on that team?

JBB:

Being among the best swimmers in the country. Some of them I didn't know and got to be friends with kind of on equal terms instead of competing, you know, across the country with them for national positions. I was on one team with wonderful, wonderful people, let alone swimmers.

So along with having my family there, it wasn't. I mean, the medals, of course, were important, but the total experience of knowing that I was among the best swimmers in the world and had such a supportive family and coaching background. That's probably the most important thing.

DH:

Mm hmm. Yeah, for sure. What about your homecoming in 68?

What was that like?

JBB:

Oh, I had a great thing. A few of my high school friends, namely three or four, arranged for there to be a parade. And they told me that I had to go somewhere.

And I didn't. I'm so naive still. I didn't know what was happening.

And I came out of my house and there was a fire engine and the high school band. And they took me. My grandmother and my parents were in a convertible leading the fire engine.

And my grandmother was yelling, I'm her grandmother. I'm her grandmother. So that was that's the homecoming.

And then we got we went down to the auditorium and there are telegrams from different people, including President Nixon. And it was great. Absolutely great.

And the party followed.

DH:

Awesome.

JBB:

Yeah, it was.

DH:

So you told me that you decided that you probably weren't going to be able to swim and that you weren't going to make it to 72 and that you would actually quit. Can you tell me about the reversal there and about making the 72 team?

JBB:

It was not easy. I started swimming in spring of 1971 or January of 71 with a men's team at Wake Forest because I was at school at Salem College. And that was fun, of course, swimming with a men's team.

Who wouldn't enjoy that? But it was not easy because I had to kind of start over again. I hadn't been swimming much since I went and swam at Indiana University in the fall of 1969, but then I quit after that.

So it was a matter of getting back in shape. And it was a different training program at Wake Forest that semester at school. After that, I went home and back to my coach in Philadelphia.

But I had to swim against, you know, 12 year olds that were swimming faster than I was. And I had to really swallow my pride and just know that I was going to get better. I had nothing to lose, in my opinion, though.

I made it once. You know, wow, how lucky I was to make it, you know, get a chance to try again. I felt like I had nothing to lose.

So that's kind of how I presented it to myself. And my family was very supportive, of course. I stayed out of college to train, but I got to be with my coach, George Green.

And it was just another journey. And that summer of 72, I finished 16th at Nationals. And that was a long way away from thinking I could get, you know, top four.

But I hadn't competed in a long time. And so it was a really good experience. And then the Olympic trials came.

And wait, maybe, I'm sorry, let me think a second here. If I started, it was, I'm sorry, it was the summer of 71 that I finished 16th, a year before the Olympics.

DH:  
Okay.

JBB:  
That's right. But I stand to be corrected.

DH:  
Okay. So what was more difficult, quitting swimming in the first place after 69, it sounds like, or getting back into it?

JBB:  
The quitting was dramatically sad, because I realized, you know, that I had to, was leaving something that was in my life for so many years. But I was, it wasn't very long before I was back in the water again. And yet, so two very different things.

But going back to it, for me was not, I mean, like I said, I had nothing to lose. So why not go for it? It was presented in such a way that it was a little bit different.

I, you know, I was in my hometown, swimming with a coach I've known and cared about for a very long time. So I just had to be patient. And I knew that was something very special if I could do it again.



But not that many people had made two Olympic teams in a row, especially out of Philadelphia. So it's just a challenge. Yeah, I mean, people kept calling me grandma, because back then, 20 was old, 21 was all to be swimming, because there weren't the scholarships.

So I had to kind of get over that. But that seemed that was easy to get over. Who cares how old you are?

I wish in a way I could have tried one more year. Now looking back on it, but that's okay. I can't be selfish.

I was lucky to have gone as many times as I did. I do believe that I'm, you know, Dara Torres is proof of it. I a little bit over the top proof of it.

But I think you get stronger emotionally and physically as you get older, whether you're a male or female, it holds true. So anyway, I'm smiling just because I was really fortunate all those years to have what I had going for me and what I got out of swimming. And that's why I still teach today.

DH:  
That's wonderful.

JBB:  
Yeah, I love it.

DH:  
So going from a really happy topic to the tragedy that happened in Munich, how did that impact you?

JBB:  
It's different now talking about that than when it happened. When it happened, it was shocking and scary. I was walking around the village at about three o'clock that morning.

We were finished swimming, obviously. And you know, when I got back, it wasn't long before they said no one was allowed to leave the village, that there'd been an Arab terrorist attack. We could see that.

We could see the tanks going into the village from our windows in the dormitory. We were right on the edge. So it was traumatic.

And Mark Spitz had his life threatened at least once, definitely with a life-threatening note. And we were made aware of that. Our parents were all worried about us.

My parents had already gone home. So they were seeing the whole scene on live TV over and over and over again. You might have seen it.

You're young, but you might have seen the scenes with the terrorists with their masks on. It was an awful scene. So back in the Olympics, and the Olympics did go on, and we all felt as if the people that lost their lives, that's what they'd want, because otherwise the terrorists would have really won.

So it was a very sad, I went to the memorial service, and it was very, very sad. And I went home, and a lot of the focus when I got home was, of course, on the tragedy. People wanted to know where we were and what really happened.

In just a few years after that, I got to thinking about it, thinking that I realized why the terrorists chose to do that at the time they did, because it was a world event, and they were really trying to make a statement. But how unfortunate for all those people to be gathered together in such a sportsmanlike manner to have something so devastating happen. And in 1998, I think that's right, at least, I think it was 1997, 25 years later, I was asked to speak at a temple in somewhere, I was at Princeton at the time, I think, and I was asked to speak at a temple, and the people were still asking for answers, the Jewish people, still mourning the death of the wrestlers, and still feeling so ill-treated and sad.

And that brought it all back to me. And my family background is my mother's father was a Russian Jew, and I really hadn't thought about that very much. But it made me take a little closer look and try to understand how all these years later, the people of the Jewish nature still felt so prejudiced against.

Yeah. It took a long time for them to get the person.

DH:

What a sad time.

JBB:

That last reminded it, yeah.

DH:

Well, how did you transition from winning a gold medal in the 72 games and two medals in the 68 games, how did you transition after 72 into the rest of your life, leaving competitive swimming behind?

JBB:

I was brought up in a wonderful, wonderful family. And in my mind, I thought that was what I did. That's a chapter of the book.

Now I had to find something else that I wanted to excel at. You know, it's not like today when the athletes are pretty, you know, they get, they look for money and support. We didn't have any of that.

And I never expected it. So for me, I just thought to myself, well, now it's time to move on to something else.

DH:

Well, that makes sense.

JBB:

And that's what I did. I finished college and wanted a teaching job, still always loved swimming and watched it like a hawk. But it just seemed like a natural thing to find something else to do, not looking for anything.

And now they're contacting us as former Olympians to contribute to a fund for Olympians that don't have jobs. And it seems a bit strange to think that we underwent the same thing, but we moved on. It's sad, but that's what's happening now.

DH:

What advice would you give to recent former Olympians? So, you know, somebody that was in the 92 games or 96 games. What advice would you give to those Olympians about transitioning into the rest of your life?

JBB:

I think what I would say would be to, you know, start thinking even before the last swimming event of their careers to what they want to do, especially because a lot of the people are older now to kind of get some ideas so they're not left without any ideas of what they would do. Um, but, you know, that's just what I would do. I mean, I was already thinking as soon as I made the 72 team, I had planned out what I would do with the rest of my life without swimming.

And I just had to do that. But that's kind of, it's not an easy thing to do, but I had college in front of me to finish. And I wanted to be, I didn't want to be dependent on my parents.

So then I thought I'm going to finish college. I'm going to get a teaching job and that's all there is to it. I'll do it.

So it sounds pretty easy, but I think you have to have a plan because the heroism that you feel through being an Olympian, it's always going to be there. You're always an Olympian, but you have to, can't live upon that. You have to have other plans to take care of yourself.

DH:

What about amateurism then in 68 and 72 versus after, afterwards, what amateurism was, what are your thoughts and feelings on that?

JBB:

In terms of swimming and swimmers?

DH:

Sure.

JBB:

Or in general?

DH:

I guess both, whatever you feel most comfortable talking about.

JBB:

Okay. Well, with swimming, you know, it was just, there wasn't a whole lot offered after 72. I had a chance to do a Lane pantyhose commercial, don't laugh.

And yet I was in college and I was going to be paid \$50 a day, which was a lot of money then. But I wasn't even thinking twice about doing that. I had to finish college, but after that, you know, came scholarships, women's scholarships.

Didn't really happen until, I want to think the mid seventies is when that all came about. But in terms of swimmers then being given money, it wasn't happening much then at all. Today it's different.

And I believe that at different times athletes have been paid money for getting a certain number of medals. I'm not sure you can check on that. We would hear that, whether that was true or not.

I'm not positive, but that's kind of hard for me to imagine because to me, you've got what you deserve by the experience and your medal. You didn't need to be paid more on top of that form of dollars, but it was happening all over the world at the time. And I'm sure that the American governing bodies of sports, they wanted to treat the American athletes the best they could.

And that was started right around that, if I'm remembering correctly. My feelings in general, I mean, a lot of good swimmers over the years have put that, either put money in a trust fund or flat out refused it. And you look at the sweetheart is swimming today.

This is really crazy that I'm not remembering her. She did call me, maybe, you know who it is, I'm sure. But I can't think of her name.

That's terrible. She doesn't want anything right now. She's going to USC.

I'm sure on a full scholarship and she's doing, I did notice her on a commercial for, it might've been the Diabetes Association, but thank goodness, you know, she stood out and said, I want to keep swimming for a team. I don't necessarily want to accept money at this point. I don't know what Michael Phelps has done with his money.

He's certainly done a lot of advertisements. I heard nothing about Dara Torres and what she's done from the financial benefits she's gotten. That makes me kind of sad because there's so many people hurting in the world that I'd like to think that the athletes, whether they're swimmers or they're soccer players or whatever, are giving some of their money to people that really need it.

I hope that's happening more than I know.

DH:

What has been the impact of being an Olympian on your life?

JBB:

I think it's made me understand better what it takes to achieve something that you really want, for one thing. It's made me feel like I have a bond with athletes of all sports to know how much work you put into it, but also an understanding of how hard it is to lose. But the message that rang clear through my family and through the experiences I had swimming in the Olympics is, and I say this now more and more to people, that you have to just do the best you can do.

You have to be the best you can be, and you may not finish on top or even make an Olympic team, but just know that you did the best you could and do it for yourself, not for your

parents or to be with your friends. Do it because you know it's what you want to be doing and that you love the time that you're putting into it. I think that's all.

That sounds really silly.

DH:

No, that sounds wonderful. My next question was going to be what advice would you give to today's Olympic hopeful, but that sounds like great advice right there.

JBB:

I guess the other thing I would say to both parents and kids is not to be so quick to say I want to make the Olympics someday because it puts a lot of stress on you and your family. You should dream and have those hopes and wishes, but I'm a little leery of people that have, you know, somebody that's 12 years old that's already talking about the Olympics or even about college scholarships because it puts a lot of pressure on that individual to be saying that now. Instead of saying I'm going to do the best I can, if I do the best I can, I'll reach my goals.

That's just me. That's not necessarily what somebody else would say to you, but I didn't have that problem because I didn't go around telling people I was going to make the Olympics. I think it was my family just saying, you know, it's a dream, but keep it close to your heart because I was so very leery of people in my school thinking I was conceited.

That was a tough thing because I wanted them to like me and know me for who I was. In 1968, you were kind of shown that you had big shoulders. That's a whole other story.

Not like today when it's cool to be buff. That's another thing I forgot about that you probably wouldn't know to ask, but back then that was different. Tell me a little bit about that.

A guy said to me that I was thinking in eighth grade that I liked. He was telling people I wouldn't go out with her anymore. She'd beat me up.

I took it very personally. I think it took me a long time to get over the fact that either he was joking or I just needed to go with it, that big shoulders and muscles. It was cool to be that way, but it wasn't accepted like it is now at all.

It was kind of frowned upon. People didn't understand. When I quit swimming altogether, I really wanted people to know and love me not only for what I did in swimming, but because of the person I was inside my heart.

That was a goal for me to just let people see who I was on a regular basis, not underwater.

DH:

Well, for the sake of the recording and just completing the end of the interview here, can you tell me just some of the highlights about your life after your time as an Olympian?

JBB:

Well, I got to carry the torch on the way to Atlanta, so that was a wonderful experience because I met everyday heroes that weren't necessarily Olympian. The community chose to have them carry the torch for a portion of the road to Atlanta. That was a fabulous thing.

But even before that, having three children in 84, 87, and 88 has to be the thing I'm the most proudest of in my life. It's certainly not the easiest, but it's the most rewarding of anything I've ever experienced. Now, teaching first grade.

I've taught for 15 years between kindergarten and first grade. I love that. I've taught a lot of swimming lessons over the years.

Last summer, I taught 200 at least in the course of the summer. I love still doing that. I miss coaching terribly because I coached three years at the University of Tennessee and then six years at Princeton as a women's coach.

I coached with my former husband, Peter Brown, a fabulous coach in person, one year at Old Dominion, and 10 of his 17 years, I was his assistant men's coach at Penn State. Loved every minute of that. Plus, he went on to Brown University where I was an unofficial volunteer assistant cheerleader for a few years and absolutely loved that, too.

But that's only a few of the highlights. Traveling with swimming, staying in touch with the people that I met through swimming all these years, going back to reunions. We were honored at the 2012 Olympic Trials, presented to the crowd.

Several of us went back for that. The list goes on and on.

DH:

Well, it sounds like even though you left competitive swimming yourself that you still stayed very much involved and connected to the sport.

JBB:

I do. I love it. I think I have chlorine in my blood that just hasn't gone away yet.

I love correcting stroke technique on young swimmers, but I also teach two and a half to 55-year-old people. It's like teaching a child to read, like where I am right now in my educational aspirations. It's totally rewarding.

I feel like with swimming, I'm giving back a little bit of the wonderful benefits I received from my family support and my coaches and swimming teammates all those years.

DH:

What are some of those benefits that you can talk about and the benefits of having swimming in your life?

JBB:

I know it made me a stronger person for years. I know from my family that I grew up somewhat due to some extenuating physical situation, not death-defying, but I was deaf in one year in elementary school. I kind of got intimidated by a teacher that didn't understand that.

After that, I was seeking reinforcement to make sure I was doing well enough in whatever I was doing. Finally, it took me a long time, but I think swimming gave me back the reassurance and having good friends and family around me. With that Olympic experience, I know I'm doing the best I can.

I don't question that, but it might not have happened if I hadn't had the success I had with swimming. My parents might have made it happen through other avenues, but that benefit has certainly come to light after losing two sisters to leukemia and losing my parents within 10 months of each other. The competitive spirit in me lives on, sometimes early, so that's a benefit that's also not a positive one because as you age, you can't be quite as competitive in some areas as you used to be.

I'm more outgoing. I feel I'm less shy than I might have been in 68 compared to 68 and 72, so it's a huge difference. I had a compliment given to me after the 72 presentation in 2012 at Olympic Trials.

One of the male members of the team said that in 72 I could have been called maybe if that song was around, just like Missy Franklin did. We were similar. I was not anywhere near the swimmer she was, but there was a scene on television when she greeted her family outside the village, and that was almost an identical scene to when I greeted my mom and dad and my sister in 68 after I had swum.

Now I'm just nuttier, so that's why those people said, you can do call me maybe because I'm so rather loud and cheery, I guess. Benefit-wise, not financially, but I wasn't looking for that ever. Sometimes people expect a lot of you because you're an Olympian, and that's good and bad.

You're still human. But for the most part, there's not been any disadvantages ever. It's only been positive things.

DH:

Well, before we close the interview, is there anything else that you would like to get on record or anything else you'd like to tell me about?

JBB:

No, but I hope you'll send me what you finally do.