

UFA 7

Interviewee: Tracy Caulkins-Stockwell

Interviewer: Julian Pleasants

Date: September 19, 1997

P: We are in the oral history office and this is an interview with Tracy Caulkins-Stockwell. Please tell me your birth date and birthplace.

C: I was born on January 11, 1963 in Winona, Minnesota. My parents were living in a small town across the Minnesota-Wisconsin border that did not have a hospital, so the hospital in Winona, Minnesota, was the closest to our place.

P: When did you move to Nashville?

C: We moved to Nashville in the summer of 1969. It was just before I went into first grade.

P: When did you first start swimming?

C: After I was born, we moved from Minnesota to a small town in northeastern Iowa. My brother and sister joined the swim team. At that stage I was quite young and I took swimming lessons for one year before we moved to Nashville [Tennessee]. I continued to take some swimming lessons when we moved to Nashville. I joined the swim team when I was eight years old, encouraged by my older brother, Tim, and my sister, Amy. They needed one more little girl to fill up a relay spot for the eight and under relay team and I was eight years old. I did not particularly take to the water initially. As a matter of fact, I enjoyed doing backstroke, because I did not like to get my face wet. I liked to be able to look around at what was going on around me. But that first summer, when I was eight years old, we just swam in a country club recreational league in Nashville. It was called the Seven Hills Country Club, and that was where we first started. At the end of the summer, the coach of the team which trained all year round, asked us, the Caulkins kids, do you want to take this a little bit more seriously? So I tagged along.

P: That was your first formal coaching?

C: Yes, when I was eight.

P: How did he recognize you had potential?

C: I do not know how he actually recognized we had potential. Perhaps because we were active and fit children. I was always very cold, because we trained in the morning, and I was just a skinny little thing. I recall sitting on the edge shivering most of the time during the practices, but I guess he recognized that I

had a good feel for the water. I was comfortable in the water. By the end of the summer, I think I had learned to do all of the four strokes pretty proficiently. He probably saw the temperament as something I could concentrate on and focus pretty well for a little person. Basically we, the three kids, were just a package deal, and my brother and sister were both very athletic. My brother, in particular, was a beautiful swimmer at that age. They just encouraged all of us to train a little bit more seriously, which we did, and then I really improved quite rapidly. I would not say I had great success initially. At the city level, I would have won maybe two ribbons, at the city meet, that first year that I swam. It did not take too long for me, and, I think, our coaches, to realize that I had some potential.

P: Did your brother swim competitively?

C: He did. He swam competitively for only five years. He was very good at other sports and I think swimming was a bit boring for him. I think he enjoyed the team comraderie and being out on the field. [He was] very good with ball sports, so he quit [swimming]. When he reached his teenage years, he decided to look at other things and enjoyed other sports. He was a beautiful swimmer. Amy and I often say he was probably just as talented as the two of us if not more so. He did not want to do it and you cannot force a young person. They are not going to perform as well as they can, if they do not want to do it.

P: Recently, I came across the name of an early coach, Joel Cyganiewicz.

C: That is very early. You have done your history. We called him "Coach Cy" and we were called "Coach Cy's Bears." On our T-shirts, our team's name was Westside Victory, and on the back we had bear paws and it said "Cy's Bears." He was very loud and boisterous. He yelled a lot. I think he was a bit of a bear himself. I always wanted to do everything right. I have a recollection, when I was about nine, swimming backstroke, and he was waving a chair at me. He did not think I was going fast enough, so he threw the chair at me into the water. It was at the deep end of the pool, and he just missed my feet. When I finished the length of the pool, I remember he said, now go get that chair. I had the hardest time going down to the bottom and picking it up, but he was very demanding. He instilled a good work ethic [when we were] at a young age. I think we realized and learned the value of hard work, because our team was quite successful.

P: How did you react to the throwing of the chair?

C: It upset me. I think I was more frightened than anything. He scared me a little bit, but yet on the other hand he could be jovial and warm. His way of motivating was to yell and throw things, sometimes.

P: By age ten you were in the top ten in the country in your age bracket, so you must have developed rather rapidly. Why do you think that was the case?

C: I remember watching the 1972 Olympics on television when I was nine. I had been swimming competitively for about a year, a little over a year, and I remember thinking, you know, that is what I want to do. [I thought], I want to go to the Olympics one day and I want to win a gold medal one day. I think all kids dream and you need to have those dreams. I think that [dream] was a real inspiration to me and in the back of my mind, throughout my developing years, that was a motivation. It obviously stuck with me and helped me motivate myself to continue. I became very serious at age ten or eleven, because I realized through coaches and just by myself, that I did have that potential. I did want to work hard and I wanted to be the best. I had a lot of support from my family and teammates, so that the dream became a reality. But I think it was probably watching the Olympics that really inspired me to try and be the best that I could be, to see if maybe one day I could go to the Olympics.

P: How did your parents support your efforts?

C: I think besides the monetary support, and the getting up early in the morning to drive us to training, they never said negative things. They never said, do not be silly, you are not going to go to the Olympics. They were always very encouraging of whatever we wanted to do, and even though they probably did not enjoy getting up early in the morning and shuttling one kid here and one kid there, I never heard them complain. I did not really realize it at the time, but when I look back on it now, I think they put a huge commitment into this sport, just as Amy and I did. They were just fantastic. When we did not do well, they did not say, well, you missed that turn or you did not do your start right. They were just there for us. My dad was a good athlete and had coached different sports. Amy and I used to laugh about it, and we laugh about it now, but my dad used to have a stopwatch, and he would sometimes say little things to help. He was just trying to help, but we told him he should just throw the stopwatch away and just be there for us. [We said] we have a coach. He took that very well. He probably thought, you know, they are right. From that point on, mom and dad tried to go to the meets where we competed. That was important for them, to be there whether we did very well or whether we did not do well, just to be there to celebrate or be there to put their arm around us.

P: Did they push you to excel?

C: I think initially you might have described my dad a little bit as pushy, but he backed off. They just reaffirmed our goals, and we shared our goals with them. If they felt we needed a little bit of a kick in the butt, I think they gave it to us.

[They would say] you know you want to compete, and you said you wanted to break that record, just reaffirming those things. They were excited about swimming. It became a big part of our whole family's life, going to swim meets, and taking vacations to travel to swim meets rather than to the beach. I would not say they were pushy. I would describe them more as supportive, knowing when we needed that little bit of a nudge and knowing when they needed to back off.

P: So if you had said, I want to quit swimming, they would not have had any objections?

C: I do not think so, I never really got to that point where I wanted to [quit]. Amy did, when she was seventeen, she did quit swimming. She had put a lot of work into her swimming, and I think some parents would have tried to talk her out of it. My dad was very supportive and [so was] mom. Dad in particular, because he was there when Amy made the decision. I remember. He supported her in it. You cannot argue with Amy too much. She decided that summer to try out for the U.S. women's water polo team, and in 1978 she went to the world championships in water polo. I was there, [competing] in swimming, and it was really special. That gave her a lot of confidence to follow her dreams and to achieved them. At times it probably was hard for her to have her younger sister [around], who was a little bit faster than she was. Amy initially said, she did not recognize at first that I was faster than everybody else in the world. We dealt with that really well, and she was really supportive of what I was doing and I was supportive of what she was doing. In 1978, it was a real breakthrough for her. Then she went back to swimming, and then came here [University of Florida] two years ahead of me. So certainly I think my parents would have listened and asked questions that would help me to evaluate if that would be the right decision. That is the stand they would have taken, if I had said I wanted to quit swimming. They would have said, well, why do you want to quit swimming? They would have asked, what do you think that means? They would have made me think, instead of just telling me, we think that is a silly idea. They were very good communicators and both had a background in education. I think they were used to talking to kids. I am really thankful for that. I always felt confident that whatever decision I made, my parents would support me, and support that independence--my making my own decision--whatever it may have been.

P: Why did you like competitive swimming?

C: That is a good question. I liked competitive swimming because it was something I could do well. It was something that was a challenge for me, to do the best I could, every day, in training. I would not describe myself, and I do not think my friends and family would describe me as a very competitive person, but yet when

I was in the pool, I became very competitive. I think it is especially important, if one has a gift, that one should strive to utilize that gift and fulfill that talent that one has, to the best of one's ability. There was just that challenge of pushing, breaking barriers and asking, can I be better, can I improve, can I be the best in the world? I recognized that I did have that talent, and I liked working hard, and the sense of achievement I had, every day, in knowing I have done a good job today. Some days I knew that perhaps I did not do that good of a job in my training, but I towed myself off better than anybody else, or I just tried to come away with something positive every day. I think swimming really influenced who I am and who I have become and how I think about myself. It has given me a lot of self-confidence and it has taught me a lot about putting myself on the line and taking risks. Well, I am going to try and be the best in the world. I am going to work hard and enjoy that value of hard work.

Also, people think of swimming as an individual sport, but really I never did. I feel, especially with the training part, that I could never have trained as I did without my teammates being there and without my coach being there. Also, I never could have achieved what I did without the help of my family, and the support of the community in Nashville, and down here at the university. I am happy about the opportunities I have had, and so I am really grateful I found something that I love and something that I could do well in and make the most of these opportunities.

P: Do you miss swimming competitively?

C: Sometimes I miss being so physically fit. In swimming, when you got into training and into the pool, you had ways of evaluating how well you were doing. There was the clock and/or the coach, and I find I miss that a bit. Often now in life, I do not have those gauges, or they are a little bit more difficult to define. I mean, it is a very definite thing if I look up at the clock and know what time I have just swum. I know how well I have done and I could evaluate [my performance]. I think I was focused on my swimming and very much aware of my progress. When I got out of swimming, it was the biggest challenge to not have that daily feedback from the clock or by the coach or the teammates, or how I performed against other people when I raced.

P: So that was reinforcement for you?

C: Yes, I guess so. When I graduated, I looked for the next challenges. I like to look at my swimming career as a staircase. As the eight-year-old, I am at the bottom of the stairs; at the Olympics, I am at the top of the stairs. It was a journey up that staircase. I made very good progress and sometimes I took backward steps. I stayed on step twelve for quite a while. Now, I have new challenges and I have new journeys, and often the progress is a bit clouded, and

my goals are not as clear-cut as with swimming and study. In a way, life was a little more simple when I was training and studying, because I was very clear-cut on what I wanted to do.

P: How did you manage to stay focused all of that time on this long-range goal?

C: I set interim goals and intermediate goals to strive for. I think that dream of going to the Olympics was always there, in the back of my mind, and sometimes more obvious than other goals, but it was a bit daunting when I think of that, four years out. I always did break up my seasons and my weeks and months into smaller goals, so things did not seem so daunting and insurmountable. You tell yourself, I know I can achieve this for this week, and I can achieve that for that season, and then before I knew it, I was several rungs up the ladder.

P: But as you indicated, it is really one more step toward that final goal.

T: That is right. I think in 1982. I took a mental break. I was very motivated, when I first came to Florida in 1981, both in school and in swimming, and very excited by the new environment and the new opportunities. Even though we had not gone to the Olympics in 1980, for a year that did not really bother me, because I had a new experience at Florida and it was very motivating for me. But about a year or two down the track, I do not think I was as focused on my swimming. I was still pretty focused on my school work, but I think I took a little bit of a mental break from being so focused on the swimming.

In the long-run, I like to think, that helped me. I think if I had been intense for so many years on my swimming, without having a little bit of a break, come 1984, I might have been a bit tired, both mentally and emotionally. In a way, I think that was my mind and body saying, enjoy other things and take a little bit of a break. I was very intense with my swimming, and to get the best out of myself, I had to be quite intense.

P: Athletes talk about that a lot, about burn out, where they just cannot sustain that level of focus and work forever.

C: That is right, yes.

P: It becomes too much for you.

C: Yes, and I think at that stage in 1982, I had accomplished everything I wanted to accomplish in swimming, other than going to the Olympics and winning a gold medal. I had been to world championships, and to Pan American games; I had been to nationals, and I had been to NCAA championships. We had won in my freshman year, which was a big high. It was like, well, what else is there? There were the Olympics, but a couple of years away, and I think I just took that

little bit of a break--unconsciously, I suppose. I did not perform really well, but I was still training, but not with the same intensity. As the 1984 Olympics got a little closer that started to get me hungry again and in 1983 that intensity just started to build. I remember the day, and so does Amy, when we knew I was back. I remember the practice in which we were. I mean, I do not know the exact date but it was in the fall of 1983, and she said there was something in my eyes, and I knew that the Olympics were only eight months away, and I had better get going. So I think in a way, that little bit of a break in intensity helped me.

P: Let me go back to your early career. What influence did coach Paul Bergen have on your career?

C: I think Paul Bergen probably helped me to realize the full potential I had, as a swimmer. When he first came to Nashville, to our club program, we used to be satisfied, and the biggest thing for us was to win the state championships for our club.

P: Which club was this?

C: The club's name had changed from Westside Victory to Nashville Aquatic Club. When Bergen came, we were the Nashville Aquatic Club, and for us the big deal was going to the state swimming meet in Clarksville, Tennessee, and beat the Knoxville team and the Memphis team. Bergen came into our program in 1975. He said in a meeting with swimmers and parents, we are going to have world champions on this team, we are going to have Olympic champions on this team, within a couple of years we are going to win the women's national championship. We all thought he was crazy, but he really just took the blinkers off and let us realize that there was a bigger pond out there. Within two years, we had won a national championship, and within three years we had three world champions. He left after that, but we did have two Olympians on our team in 1980. So as I said, he really took any idea of limits out of the picture and really helped us to realize our potential. He was a very hard taskmaster and very demanding, but we had a very close-knit team, and if he said, jump, we said, how high? He made us really think if we really wanted to do it, and he was very demanding as far as his training sessions went. If one did not really want to do it, one would not have lasted, physically or emotionally. He was really tough and without a doubt the best technician. He paid a lot of attention to the finer details of starts and turns and the technical side of training. Our team as a whole could turn and start better than anybody in the world, and that was because he really paid attention to those fine details which made the difference. A lot of races are won or lost by very little and he left no stone unturned in that regard. I think he taught very good technical skills, motivated in a bit of a different way than coach Cyganiewicz. He used negative reinforcement, but he was also a lot of fun.

We had a very close team, which I think made a difference. We were really proud and worked together really well. So he was very influential. He was probably the first real world-class coach that we had and our program just skyrocketed.

P: You learned and liked all four strokes from the very beginning. Is that not a little unusual?

C: Yes, I guess so. It was good, I guess, because if during training there were times when I would do one particular stroke, and I was not doing well, then I could always try another one. I found that if I worked on my weakness, it made my individual medley. It became pretty clear to me that I would be a very good IMer, a swimmer of the individual medley, because I did not really have a weakness, or, if I worked on my weakness, I was quite competitive. It also was motivating because, as I said, I could choose. I had a lot to choose from. I think there was no monotony in my training, because I was doing a variety of strokes and I think that was one thing that kept me going for quite a while.

P: Talk about your first nationals. You swam at age twelve and you lost, but the story is that there was a Tennessee swimmer, named John Trembly, who helped you. Tell me about that situation.

C: I swam in the 100 meter breast stroke and I was this skinny little twelve-year-old in lane eight. I was in the final heat in the preliminaries of the 100 meters and the American record holder was in lane four. I was just standing there, thinking, what am I doing here. There were all these people I had read about, people I had seen on television, people whom I wanted to be like, and I was just a wide-eyed kid and thought I did not belong here, and my performance showed that. I got second to last place. Since the girl who got last place got disqualified, I really had the slowest time of the whole competition. Then coach Bergen introduced me to John Trembly, and also another swimmer, whose name I cannot remember. They took me around and introduced me to some of these people I had read about and watched perform and who represented the United States. I learned that they were just normal people as well, and that I was not too different from them, and perhaps that I could like them. I think it was that sense of John acknowledging me and introducing me to these people, which made me feel that I did belong, even though my performance did not show I did. I think that was a bit of a breakthrough for me.

P: What was your reaction to winning the first national championship in 1977? Was this a very different experience?

C: I guess I knew, going into the nationals, that I had a good chance of winning. If I swam well and to my potential, I had a very good chance of winning. You can never control what other people do, but it still was one of my most exciting races.

P: What was your first championship?

C: My first championship was the 100-meter breaststroke. I barely qualified for the finals. I was in lane eight and had not had a real good morning swim, but then I did really well.

P: I believe you set an American record.

C: Yes.

P: What about the concept of trying out for the Olympics in 1976 when really you were not quite on that level, what was that experience like?

C: It is funny. I thought I was ready and looking back, there was no way I was going to make that team, unless twelve people broke their legs and pulled out of the race. But I did go in, believing that I had a chance, and I was a bit disappointed. I did not swim really well, but what I remember from that competition was that I watched the people who did make the Olympic team. At that stage they took three people in every event. I remember sitting in the stands watching the reaction of those people who had swum really well and made the team. Again, I had the feeling that one day I wanted to be where they were. Now that I talk about that, my mother said she remembered watching the other five people who did not make it. I thought that was interesting. After having competed in the 1984 Olympic trials, which no doubt we will get to, I now know what she is talking about. There was so much, so close. While there were three people who made it in 1976, there were five people who did not. But my focus was on the people who did make it; I wanted to be like them; mom saw the bigger picture, including the winners, those who made it and those who did not.

P: So it was not discouraging or negative in any way?

C: Not at all and there was a young woman who was just about my age, maybe a tiny bit older than me who made the Olympic team and I thought if she could do it, I could do it too. The experience was only one of growing. I did not swim a very smart race and a very good race as I recall which you learn from.

P: So any experience like that helps you for the next one?

C: That is right because I knew then what to expect and I think it was a bit of inexperience that sure maybe I could have been a bit more competitive but I think I was just a little inexperienced. Then at the end of that summer I competed pretty well and had that sense that yes, I can mix it with the big guns and so it

was a year later that I won my first national championship.

P: Then in 1978 in the world championships in Berlin you won five gold and one silver so in two years time you were swimming as the best in the world.

C: That is right.

P: What was the reason for that transition in just a short time span?

C: I made big improvements in that time but I think my confidence I suppose and really believing that I could do it and I trained very hard and a positive attitude by myself and teammates and just getting out of the water every day and knowing that I trained harder than anybody else in the world and I think I got stronger physically and mentally. I think I was able to concentrate really well and make the most of every opportunity in training and at competitions. I think that is probably the best prepared I have ever been for any competition was in 1978. The whole U.S. team did very well. The U.S. women in 1976 won one gold medal in the relay and the East German women dominated. In 1978 a bunch of skinny, scrawny teenagers from America dominated and the East German won one individual gold medal, so it was a complete turnaround. Now we know that a lot of the discussion was that they were using performance enhancing drugs, but those rumors were about. I never worried about that because I thought well I cannot control that and I am just going to beat them anyway. It took some young and perhaps naive in that way girls that said I do not know if they are taking drugs or not but it does not matter because we are going to beat them anyway.

P: Talk about your training regimen. What would a typical training day be like at age fifteen?

C: At age fifteen. They are a little bit smarter now, I think we probably just overtrained back then but we did not know any better. We probably trained five hours a day. Four hours in the pool and would swim between 16,000 and 20,000 yards a day. We would do that six days a week. We would also, every afternoon, alternate weight training with maybe running as well. It was big. I think nowadays they are much more scientific and specific about it but at that stage it was a lot of distance training that was the rage, and as long as your body could hold out which [for] most of us it could, we did that.

P: Did you work on speed or stamina mostly?

C: I would say it was mostly endurance or stamina. Particularly the events that I swam up to 400, the 400 Individual Medley which I consider myself kind of a 200, 400, middle distance to distance. We did a lot of distance training, a lot of

endurance training, which I think was good for me. We tended to sprint pretty well too, but I think now looking back on it, it was a big program for a sprinter to do. But I think Paul [Bergen] also worked on leading up when we tapered our yardage off, he worked on speed. It is a very exact science and he did it pretty well I think.

P: Talk about the reaction to winning Sullivan Award for the outstanding amateur athlete. You were the youngest person ever to win that. Was that a surprise for you?

C: It was a bit of a surprise in that I was the youngest. I was the only female who was nominated that year and again I had read about a lot of the guys that were nominated as well. John Nabor, who was a swimmer, had won it the year before for his outstanding performances at the Montreal Olympics. He had won it for 1977. I kind of thought, oh, they will not give it to two swimmers in a row. I was still just this young little thing and I was a little bit surprised when I won it at that stage. I was just learning to handle the media and the recognition. I was quite shy and quiet. After the 1978 World Championships and winning the Sullivan Award, I got better through experience of talking to more journalists and having to speak publicly and having to say more than "boo" and a couple of words. I think that helped me and almost I had to come out of my shell a little bit.

P: You made the 1980 Olympic team, but, of course, there was the boycott. What was your reaction to President Carter's decision at the time?

C: When I first heard rumors about the boycott, a potential boycott, I thought, oh, it is not going to happen. They are just talking. So I just did not pay much attention to it. I thought I will just keep focused on my training and keep working hard. When they announced that there would be a boycott, I was pretty upset and a bit confused I suppose. I felt a bit helpless because I felt there really was not anything I could do to change a decision. I did not really understand the politics of it all at seventeen. I was angry and disappointed. I had a new coach at the time, Don Talbot, a crazy Australian man, who handled it very well. He helped us to try and stay motivated even though we were not going to an Olympics. He helped us deal with that disappointment. We had some international swimmers training with us in Nashville including Rosie Brown [Australian who swam for UF], Canadians, English folks, Australians, and Argentines swimmers training with us at the Nashville Aquatic Club. We would hear one day, well the Yanks are not going, but the English are going to go and the Canadians are not sure and the Australians are going to let you go if you want but if you do not go they will pay you \$5,000. It was all a bit confusing and in hindsight did no good as far as I am concerned. My dad was very vocal about it. We got a lot of calls from people in Nashville who were saying we will help

you prevent that man from being elected again. I just thought it was not very fair to penalize the athletes and take away that opportunity for so many athletes.

P: So in retrospect you think that was the wrong decision?

C: Well, it took about what, ten years after the fact for the Soviets to get out of Afghanistan, so you tell me. I do not know. If he felt he had to do something and subsequently then in 1984 with the Russians not coming to Los Angeles, which was a natural response I suppose. They said well if you do not come to Moscow, we are coming to L.A. I think it hurt the Olympics and hurt the athletes.

P: The Olympics should be above politics?

C: That is right. I think it should.

P: 1980 would have been, in terms of what you had done before. The peak of your career. How do you think you might have done had you been able to swim at the 1980 Olympics?

C: I have no idea and will never know. I think I would have come away with a lot of medals. I made the team in five or six events and based on my times from our trials. The Olympics actually took place before our Olympic trials, and they were then comparing the times from the Olympics to our Olympic trials. That was a tremendous amount of pressure and I was putting a lot of pressure on myself. Of course, I swam my first race and according to the times, I would have gotten a silver medal. But had I been in a head-to-head competition, which brings out the best in you and you react differently to different pressures. I do not think we will ever know and I do not worry about that at all. I actually did better at that competition in the one event I swam which was not an Olympic event. I did my best time in that event and I think it was because there was no pressure. There was no time comparison. I look at it as a blessing because if I had gone in 1980 I might not have been as hungry in 1984 and so many good things have come out of that.

P: So that might have been the peak to your career?

C: Well maybe because it was obviously always a motivating factor for me and that dream of going to the Olympics, so it was just postponed a little bit.

P: In terms of motivation, what is more important, winning the race or setting a record?

C: I think in terms of motivation, the best thing or the most important thing is doing

your personal best. You can never control what somebody else does and records are there and, as many people say, are made to be broken. I was more interested in doing my personal best and trying to do my best time which if that meant breaking a record, great, if that meant winning, all the better. I can say that now, but at the time I was swimming I think a lot of times, winning was probably more important. Usually I thought if I concentrate on my race, [as far as] strategy, and swim the race the way I want to swim the race. [Be concerned with] the way I prepared, the way I have trained to swim the race, then winning and records would take care of themselves. So I tried not to put too much emphasis on that. There is a lot of emphasis on being number one but I think we can be winners and not necessarily be first place.

P: You could swim your best time and finish third.

C: That is right. I have done that many times. While I was competitive and liked to win, you might be a little bit disappointed if you did not get first or second place, if you got fourth or fifth place. If you did your best time and you swam your race well, then I think that was the important thing. But sometimes it is hard for a young person especially, to realize that because there is so much emphasis on winning. I think I had a very good attitude about it.

P: How did you decide to come to University of Florida?

C: Good question. I have not been asked that question in about sixteen years. I came to Florida because I believed it was a university where I could achieve my academic goals and my sporting goals. It was a place that I could have a well-balanced experience. I came here because my sister was here and in looking at universities, I had the most realistic and best view of Florida, I guess, because I knew a lot about the university, about the people, about the classes. I was at home when Amy called, excited about a class or meeting a boy or doing well in training. I was at home when Amy called home and said Randy [Reese, UF Swimming Coach] is working us too hard or my bike got stolen or that boy broke my heart or whatever. In visiting a lot of colleges, and I did not visit that many, but you know they always project the best. I, originally, when I was looking at schools, did not think that I would come to the University of Florida. It was not until I came to visit on my recruiting trip that I felt really comfortable here with the people. I was impressed with the programs academically and sport-wise that they offered. I felt comfortable, I suppose, when I came here and I think that is really the main reason why I felt I could be happy here. [I felt that] I could do well in school and in swimming--those two things were very important to me.

P: As I understand you got offers from Stanford and Texas, which, of course, are great academic schools, but [also] outstanding swimming schools. Why did you

not gravitate toward those schools?

- C: Well, I visited Texas and Paul Bergen was the coach at Texas. He was recruiting me. I had several teammates from Nashville who were then at Texas. I also had other friends who were there who were on the U.S. teams with me. When I went to visit there, I had two good friends there who I sensed were not happy. They were trying to tell me how great it was and how happy they were, and I thought you are trying to tell me something that I am feeling here is not true. [That was the] attitude of the school and the people that I met. My best friends went to Texas, it is a great school but I do not think they approached me the right way. I think they were trying too hard to impress. I feel I am a very good judge and I like to be treated just like everybody else and I think they really tried to treat me a lot differently than everybody else. I did not feel comfortable. Stanford I really thought, it has a great reputation, and the swimming program was very strong. I went to a high school in Nashville, very classic education and I felt Stanford offered a very classic education and almost prepared people to go to graduate school. I was not sure I wanted to study too long and I liked Florida, especially the journalism program, was very practical. It was a hands-on program. It was different. It was not just a repeat of what I was doing in high school and a classical education. I felt that Florida had that difference to offer as well.
- P: Do you regret your choice?
- C: No, I would do it all again.
- P: You were an excellent student and it is always fascinating to me that you could train five hours a day and still come and do outstanding work. How did you manage to organize your time to achieve high success in both areas?
- C: Well I thought it was easier in college than in high school. In high school, you would be at school from 8:30 to 3:30 every day, whereas in college, depending on your work load, you might have four classes Monday, Wednesday and Friday and only two classes on Tuesday and Thursday, and I found I had a little bit more time and less travel time just to walk to classes. It was easier than high school because of the environment, and because I had that discipline already that I had learned and had to implement in high school.
- P: Your comments on Randy Reese as a coach.
- C: You know I have had some great coaches throughout my career and they have all been very different. Randy was probably the most different. I think Randy had a real gift of helping, and he matched my stage of development. I think if I look back at my coaches, and Coach Cy told you what to do, yelled at you, no

arguments you did it, and I think as a young person I responded to that. Then as I got a little older, coaches sometimes welcomed input and I was mature enough to provide that. I think Randy, with the collegiate swimmers that he dealt with, provided an excellent program. He put the responsibility on the athlete to make decisions for themselves and to perform themselves, and he was there and did not yell a lot and was not a rah-rah coach which I have had, was not a negative reinforcement, negative psychology. He was like a friend who was there providing the best program you could have. He expecting you to make the most out of that program. The environment was such, that you know, I think training with the men and women together was really a benefit to me. He was the kind of person that if you had a question or wanted to talk to him about a problem, you would go into his office and you would sit down and he would say well, what do you want to talk about, and fifteen minutes later you would walk out feeling better and he would not have said two words. You just worked through it yourself, and I think for an athlete I grew most under Randy. I appreciate that from him. When he spoke, you knew you should listen because he did not talk all that often. So either pearls of wisdom were going to come out of his mouth or a good joke.

P: He did you some unusual training methods I understand.

C: Yes, he did. Fortunately some of those had gone out the window by the time I got here, thank goodness. But he did and that was one thing that I really appreciated about his program. He was not afraid to try new things which were, I think, motivating to the athletes as well. If they worked, he stuck with them. If they did not, he was willing to throw them out the window and say well, that did not work very well.

P: Can you give an example?

C: I do not know if you have heard of baskets. If anybody had ever walked into the O'Connell Center early in the morning, it looked like we were in a torture chamber. You had a belt around your waist attached to a harness that went up over a pulley and milk carton basket and he used to throw weights in them. So as you swim, you would have to swim and pull it up, and maintain that and that was quite different.

P: Did that help you?

C: I guess so. I think it was variety. The one thing that I think I probably did that was much different and more intense when I came to Florida, was that I lifted weights a lot harder than I ever had. I would always lift weights, it had always been a part of my program, but never lifted heavy weights. I got a lot stronger and I think also my body was probably ready for that. Boy, I mean, it was

different for me and sometimes frustrating for me being so physically exhausted from lifting heavy weights then to just get in the pool and be able to lift your arms up was very hard. It took me some time to get used to that because it tore my body down. I mean I was tired but at the same time, I sprinted better than I ever had and became stronger than I ever had.

P: When you were here [at UF] were female athletes treated the same as male athletes?

C: No, I would say female athletes were not treated the same as the men and I just talked about that briefly at the J-School [College of Journalism], which suited me well. The differences were we did not have an athletic dorm, so we lived in among the students--the normal students I guess I should say, I do not know--which I wanted anyway because I wanted that exposure to people of all different backgrounds and stuff. We did not have an athletic training table. We ate at the Rathskeller [deli-type establishment once housed in Johnson Hall], which is no longer there. You had to fend for yourself and every once in a while, before a big swim meet, we were allowed to come into Yon Hall and eat in the dining hall there. I think the men and women swimmers were treated very much the same because we all trained together--the difference being the athletic dorm and the Yon Hall situation. But we used to work in a gym, we did not work in the main gym where the football players and the basketball players worked out. When the new gym was put in at the stadium, at the Ben Hill Griffin Stadium, swimmers initially did not use that gym. But now I think they all do. So we had to deal with a dingy but sufficient gym which I thought was fine.

P: But your scholarship, the amount of money was the same?

C: Yes, I think so. When I first came, my first year there had just been the split between the AIAW and Women NCAA. Some universities had stuck with the AIAW which would have been the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women. Some schools like Texas stayed with the AIAW program for a year, and Florida and Stanford and quite a number of other schools shifted to NCAA, and then the next year we all were just NCAA. In the first year, I think, women were all given either a full scholarship or none as I recall. Then it changed. Like the men, they could be given partial scholarships or full scholarships. I think that the number of scholarships, as far as I know, when I was here, for women swimmers and male swimmers I think were about the same. I do not think there were as many women's sports here as there are today and that equity has kind of changed over the past couple of years.

P: Why are there not more women swimming coaches?

C: That is a good question.

P: Would you have preferred to train under a woman?

C: I had never had a female coach, so I did not know. I think, and I hate to say it, at the time when I came to college, I think I probably thought I needed a man coach because that is what I was used to. I think at that stage there had not been a lot of women coaching for very long. There were some very capable women's coaches at major universities but it was a new thing. But I am still disappointed at the lack of female coaches. I know when Florida has had a few coaching changes. They have specifically looked for women to interview. It is sad to say. There have not been that many. My sister should have been one. She even says that to this day, but I think you have to work twice as hard and you work your way up. Amy was not willing to start off, she wanted to jump right into being Randy Reece's assistant coach, and then be a head coach of a major college program, and, I guess, it works that you have to build your way up and get your experience like most jobs.

P: When you look back on your experience at the University of Florida both academically and athletically, what are your thoughts about that experience?

C: Well it was a very positive experience. It was fun and well balanced, and it seems like a long time ago. When I walk around now and see the young students [it really seems like a long time ago]. I feel very lucky though, and the further away you get from those years, the more appreciative [I am] of the opportunity that I had. I am glad that I never took it for granted. I feel more appreciative of that opportunity because living in Australia. They do not have any intercollegiate athletics. I know a lot of very good athletes--swimmers, cricketers, rugby players, and athletic runners--who have either deferred their university studies or decided not to go to college because they could not have both. It is changing slowly, but coming to another country and seeing a different system makes me appreciate the opportunities that I had here. [I realize the fact that was able to] come and study and swim to the best level and get an education.

P: In 1984, when you tried out for the Olympics, you tried out for six events. How many did you qualify for?

C: I qualified for three. I swam the 200 Individual Medley, the 400 Individual Medley and the 100 breast stroke. Swimming the 100 breast stroke I knew I had an opportunity if I was the fastest American to swim on the relay.

P: You did not make it in the 400 Free style relay team?

C: No.

P: Why not?

C: I think because I tried out for the 400 Free style relay at the end of the meet because I did not swim the 100 Free style individually and so they did some time trials at the end of the meet for any Olympian who had made the team who wanted to try out to make the relays. I think I was tired. I really had not focused as much on free style, and basically in some of the events that I swam, for example the 100 Backstroke, I did not believe that I was going to make the team but I did not have another event on that day. I just wanted to stay race sharp and so I swam on that day and I did the best time and I got seventh place. I was happy with that, but I knew I was not going to make the team but I thought it would help me to stay sharp for the whole six days of the competition.

P: You made and qualified in the events that you wanted to qualify in?

C: Three of them I did. There was one other race that I really would have liked to have made the team in, and I had a hard time deciding what to swim, and this is one of the difficulties I suppose and some people criticized me for trying to do too many events, but on one day they had the 200 Butterfly and the 200 Backstroke. I had entered into both of those [races], and Randy said, when it came time to make the decision, he said well which one do you want to swim? It was the hardest decision to make, and I ended up choosing the 200 Backstroke because I thought I had a good chance of making that team. I had a terrible start in the final and I got fourth place I think it was and in hind sight I probably should have chosen the 200 Butterfly because I think I would have made the Olympics team in that event quite easily. I know I would not have won the gold medal in that race because Mary Meagher was just too tough to beat but my main focus was on my 200 and 400 Individual Medley.

P: Tell me about the 1984 Olympics, how did that experience affect you?

C: Well, it was a dream come true. It was probably a little more emotional that I thought it was going to be, because I was not one to show a lot of emotion when I competed whether disappointed or very happy. I was not one to really show that. The Olympics were very emotional, because I had an idea that it would be my last chance at [The] Olympics, if not my last competition. I had not made that decision going in, but I had that feeling that it would be. To have dreamed to compete in it and to have trained for so long and finally that dream was becoming a reality. I placed a lot of pressure on myself and it was quite emotional. It was everything that I thought it would be especially being in L.A. and mom and dad and Amy were there and my high school P.E. teacher was there and I had friends and teammates and that was really, I think, very special. I think my 400 Medley was first, and it was on the first day of competition, and

that was probably my best event but also my most challenging event. My goal there was to do my best time but also to swim the most perfect race I had ever swum before. I knew I was going to win the race and so I was placing a lot of pressure on myself before the final. Before I went to the marshaling area, Randy said I want you to come see me, and I went up to him and I was expecting a pep talk from him, which I should have known better because he is not a man of many words, but I was getting myself all worked up. [I thought he was going to] say we have trained so hard for this and now here it is, it is coming down to this four and some half minutes and I have done all of the work and you can do it. He gave me a kiss on the cheek and he said, well, have fun. I went what, that is all you have to say? But really that was the best advice because it alleviated a bit of the pressure. He reminded me of why I was swimming because I love it and because it was fun and that is how I started swimming and that is how I wanted to finish swimming. There was no more preparation that I could do in the next fifteen minutes that were going to help me. I could not swim any more laps or lift weights or do any of that. All of the preparation was done and it was now time to put it all together and to celebrate all of that hard work and to enjoy it and so that alleviated a bit of the pressure. I was still shaking, I was still very nervous, but I think that was the most special race for me. It was my first race. It was my first gold medal. During the awards ceremony, when they marched the medal winners around the pool, I saw mom and dad. Amy had told me where they were all sitting and I saw my high school P.E. teacher and I had a little bit of tears. Actually what happened is I had a huge lump in my throat as they put the medal around my neck. As the flag went up and the National Anthem was playing, I had a little bit of a tear and kind of trying to sing and could not sing because I was choking up, but as the anthem came to a close, I kind of turned around, took a deep breath and thought. I was pretty composed during that and I turned around, and I saw Amy just out of the blue and she was bawling and I lost it. That was really special because I shared with those people who had helped me, and I could not have done it without them. I think that was the most special moment and most memorable moment of my career and to be able to have had those people there with me, and Randy to remind me that this is supposed to be fun, remember? For the rest, I think I felt like in my other races the pressure was off a little bit and it was not so emotional. I did not realize how emotional and how much I had wanted it for all of those years until all of a sudden I am there.

- P: It must be an extraordinary experience to stand and be awarded the best in the world but to represent your country too.
- C: I realized when I was up there that I was not only representing myself, but I was representing my country and representing all of those people who had helped me, all of those teammates who had swum laps beside me and people who had supported me and so that was real meaningful to me and a chance for me to

recognize those people. They know that they were all a part of that I guess.

P: You won that race by something like 15 yards, it was not even close.

C: I knew I was going to win so like, it was not a surprise and I did my best time. I put together a very good race and I accomplished what I wanted to. It did not sink in right away when I touched the wall. I knew I was going to win but I did not want to kind of live that before it actually happened and I just wanted to live the moment which was very special.

P: When you swim any of these races what do you do in the ready room? Some people listen to music and others try to psych out their opponents.

C: The ready room was not the nicest place usually. There was a lot of tension, people trying to psych each other out. I did not listen to music, I did not worry about anybody else, I just worried about relaxing and just some last minute rehearsal of what I wanted to do in my race and the race strategy and kind of that visualization.

P: Do you visualize winning the race?

C: Over my career I kind of changed the way that I visualized. When I first got into visualization, I used to visualize in the third person like I was watching T.V. and I would see me swimming back and forth and touching and winning. As I got older, I started visualizing more what I would be doing and feeling and seeing. I would get as much emotion and feelings and sense all the senses involved with hearing the crowd and turning to breathe and seeing the fans and seeing touching the wall perfectly and the blue sky turning on my back, so that when I was rehearsing that through years and years and years. When I got into that situation I felt like I had done this before, I have been here before, I have done this a million times and it gives you that little bit of feeling of comfort. It is just like if I got called into Dean Lowenstein's office. I would think oh, my God my heart is pounding. [You would think], what am I going to say, how am I going to sit, what is he going to say. You are nervous, but if you had known that you were going to be called into Dean Lowenstein's office, you could say well this is what I think he is calling me in there for. My heart is going to be pounding and I am going to be sitting there and I am going to be gripping the chair, and I am going to be seeing his stern face. You can prepare, and then when you get in there. You are not as nervous. It is like, O.K., I have rehearsed what I am going to say.

P: So part of it relaxes you some?

C: Yes, because I think it is all about controlling your adrenaline. I knew that the

Olympics were going to get me very nervous, very anxious, very excited, that I had to keep tabs of my energy and save it for the race. My strategy was I have swum this race a million times, I know what I am going to do, I know exactly what I have got to do in each lap and each turn and each stroke. If you rehearse, then it becomes automatic. So when you get up on the blocks you do not have to think. I like not thinking too much and sure I may say one word that would trigger a chain of behavior or stroke but I did not have to say, now I will put my right hand in and pull it out at 90 degrees.

P: You have done that a thousand times.

C: I have done it. I know how it feels. I know what it is supposed to be like. So it is a comfort thing, but also just a rehearsed thing.

P: What was your best stroke?

C: Varied from day to day but I suppose over my career, I would have to say it was my breaststroke. I held the world record in butterfly as well, so I would say breast stroke and probably more than butterfly. My breast stroke was also my most inconsistent stroke because the technique that I had was very important for my stroke. If my timing would get out or if a little bit would not go right [my stroke would be off]. That is what happened in my 100 breast stroke at the Olympics. I just swam my guts out. My breast stroke was perfect on the first day of the Olympics, two days later, my timing was out and it is like a golf swing. Just like somebody who plays a great round of golf and then two days later, their timing is out or some little thing was out that causes them not to be able to play as well. I did have to work on that and Randy said well, look let us just get in the final and we will work on it after that. I just got in the final and my timing was out and I said I am just going to go and swim a gutsy race. So while my breast stroke was probably my best stroke, it was also sometimes my worst stroke.

P: It was your favorite stroke?

C: That varied too. When I was young, it was back stroke. I went through stages. I really loved swimming butterfly. My back stroke, when my back stroke was on, I really enjoyed it. I would have to say butterfly was my favorite stroke.

P: You won the second gold medal in the 200 IM, right? And that was an Olympic record.

C: Yes.

P: When you swam that race did you know you were setting a record? I mean do you have the sense?

- C: Yes, but I was hoping I was setting a world record which I did not do. My goal in that race was I did think I had a chance of breaking the world record. I knew, yes, because I had broken the Olympic record in the morning so I knew I was going to go faster at night. I knew I would break the Olympic record, but I was actually going after a world record and I was maybe half a second off. I was a little disappointed. Even though I won, I was a little disappointed in that I did not go a little faster.
- P: When you are in the race, when you hit the wall, do you usually know if you have won?
- C: Yes, I think 99 percent of the time you know that you have won. Your first reaction is to turn around and look at the scoreboard anyway just to make sure and to see what your time was. I knew when I swam that I had gone about a 2.12 and I had gone 2.12 just a little bit closer to 2.13. I cannot even remember what my time was.
- P: You mentioned your early coaches really stressed the little things like turns, particularly when you swim IM, all of that becomes even more important because you are switching strokes.
- C: You are good. You have done your research, you know a little bit about swimming.
- P: So how often would you practice that sort of thing? For instance how important is the entry into the water?
- C: My attitude was any time I had an opportunity to practice a start or do a dive into the water, I did it as well as I could. I carried on those little things that I had learned from my earlier coaches, particularly Paul. I always still worked on those whether Randy said let us work on starts or not. In training doing turns, you do a thousand turns in a practice. Well, you might as well do a thousand of them very well, rather than get lazy and get into bad habits. I usually tried to [take advantage of] any opportunity. That is what I really liked about training with the men's team because sometimes I could out turn them, and I could beat them on a dive, and that gave me that added competition that I needed.
- P: Did you dive and try to stay under water?
- C: Now they go under a long way but no. I would stay under water quite a while, but nowhere near like what they are doing now.
- P: I also read somewhere that you had a particularly efficient heart, and therefore

you did not get at the end of the race, oxygen deprivation like some of the other swimmers did.

C: I think maybe that is right. I know that when I was in high school we went up to Ohio State University and they did some testing on our lung capacity and on our hearts and on our body fat and all of that kind of stuff, and the doctor commented that I did have a big heart and a strong and efficient heart. I think I have always had good lung capacity. I have always been able to hold my breath, again which over training you can learn to get your body used to not having that much oxygen which makes it more efficient as well. Randy was very innovative and he started doing some blood, lactic acid testing on us which was pretty ahead of its time because they are doing that now a bit. He experimented with that a little bit and my lactic acid levels used to be a bit low and this other guy, Matt Cetlinsky he was a distance swimmer and his [lactic acid] used to be low. Randy used to say you guys need to work harder, you need to get your lactic acid up. You are not creating as much as you possibly could because some of the other bigger guys would produce more and they had more dense muscles. He felt we were not using our full potential and I used to tell Matt, I said do not listen to that, it is just that we are more efficient at getting rid of it and that may be the case. Who knows? I just tried to turn it into a little bit of a positive. I would say, no, no, we are O.K., you and I are just real efficient, that is why our levels do not get up very high. I do not know if that was the case or not but I have to say when I broke the American record at the Olympic trials in 1984, I had the highest lactic acid level reading I had ever had. It was my best time, and a very intense race so Randy said that was good.

P: How important was something like shaving before a race?

C: It is important. I think they have done tests on the actual time it helps to take off. The reason is not to remove the hair so much off your body but to create a new fresh level of skin so you are more sensitive and you feel the water and it is great. You go not shaving your legs for eight months and then shave them. It was part of a psych and the preparation of getting ready for a meet. You would shave your legs and then you get into your sheets [and it feels so good]. Then when you dive into the water the next day and you feel like you could just glide forever. It was more part of the preparation and the psych up than anything.

P: How about tapering?

C: Well that is a very important part of the preparation as well and can be very scientific because I, in my career, have had times where I have over tapered and not swum well. I have had times where I have under tapered and not done well. So it is a real exact science and Randy was very good at getting to know you and your body and how long you could hold your strength. Men generally hold

their strength longer than women, and I lifted weights probably a week before the Olympics, not heavy weights, but just to maintain my strength because I tended to lose my strength quite quickly. My taper was very different from other people [who] would have stopped weights six weeks before I did and could maintain their strength and also let their muscles recover whereas mine would recover with just a little but I had to keep doing some. It is a very scientific process but I used to always try to think that I could swim fast, tapered or not, shaved or not in a two-foot pool in Podunck, U.S.A or in a ten-foot deep Olympic pool. I think it is all about attitude. Some people thought oh I cannot swim fast because I am tired and because I am not tapered, well then you are not going to swim fast. I used to think well, I am going to swim fast anyway.

P: A huge part of it is purely mental, isn't it?

C: I think so, yes.

P: What about food? What would you eat before a big race?

C: I always tried to stick with what I was used to and mom had always given us a very good balanced diet and good carbs. I would eat a lot of carbohydrates in training just to keep your energy levels up. Usually the night before a big meet I would eat pasta but I just ate a very normal, well-balanced meal. I like a little bit of everything, like fruits and vegetables.

P: You would not want to have a pepperoni pizza before the Olympics?

C: Well some people did. I had a real good friend that was a world champion and she could eat a Big Mac, large fries and a Coke, a half an hour before she swam. I could never swim on a full stomach or completely empty stomach. I always liked to have a little bit in my stomach, and again it is just learning your body and what is best for you and then believing in that. I love ice cream and meat and potatoes, so it is just good balance I think.

P: Your third race in the Olympics was the 400-meter relay and what stroke did you swim?

C: I swam breast stroke on that one.

P: When you finished your Olympic participation, did you then decide to retire?

C: It was probably a day or two later. Teresa Andrews was on that relay team and we had become very good friends here at Florida. We both finished after that relay and I remember that night sitting down and talking with her and everybody was saying well what are you guys going to do? And Teresa was like, I am

retiring and I said, well I do not know yet. I knew deep in my heart that I would probably retire because I had accomplished what I had wanted to accomplish, and I thought about swimming one more year at Florida because I had one more year of eligibility left. That was probably the hardest part of the decision was I was thinking well, am I going to let the team down. Randy had said to me, do not feel like you are letting me down, do not feel like you are letting the team down. Like you have done a lot for this program and you do what you want to do and he actually recommended that I should retire and I felt like I did not want to do something half-assed. I felt like I did not have the motivation to put as much into it as I would have wanted if I had decided to do it. That decision felt right and I do not regret that decision. It was nice too that I was not graduating from college and finishing swimming all at the same time. I had one more year of school and I think that was a nice gradual transition for me. I think it would have been a little bit more challenging and a little bit more difficult if I had stopped swimming and graduated at the same time and boom, thrown out there. At least I had that year to concentrate on my studies which I did not do any better probably a little worse than I had when I was swimming because I thought, I am going to have all this time now and I did not. When you are swimming and when you are busy, you know you have to use your time really wisely. That last year was really fun and I think a good transition for me.

P: What impact did the Russian boycott have on the 1984 Olympics? How would that have affected your race?

C: I do not think the Russians would have affected my races but the East German women. The main competitors that I had raced against and the world record holders were from East Germany and so I missed them. I wish they had been there.

P: Did you profit financially from winning gold medals?

C: Yes, I would say so. I think what it afforded me the opportunity to do a variety of things. When I finished in 1984, my main focus was my studies, but I did a lot of traveling. I did some television work and some public speaking and clinics and media tours and some promotional work which I really enjoy because I did not know what I really wanted to do career wise and I was able to make a living as well. So for a couple of years, I think I profited from the Olympics but I think overall it gave me that opportunity to stay involved in swimming without competing. I did not want to compete anymore. I was still involved whether it was doing television commentary or attending meets doing promotional work for companies. It was a really nice to have the opportunity to remain involved with swimming which had been a big part of my life. In 1984, there were a lot of American athletes that did very well and a lot of personalities. It was a very competitive market for Olympic athletes to get financial rewards from [their

swimming]. I feel I did well. I had a lot of opportunities. It gave me time to figure out well, what do I want to do.

P: Were the Los Angeles Olympics too pro-American, too chauvinistic?

C: I do not know. Being in the middle of it all, I did not think so. Now that I look back I think they were probably very commercial. Then, I did not see all the press that was outside, I did not see the broadcast because we were there. I think the Americans did very well. They were profitable for a change. I think it was really good for the Olympics. I think it was what the Olympic games needed was to be a profitable, well run--the Americans know how to do that.

P: Are they too commercial now?

C: I think so. But I do not think Sydney will be and I think that is an opportunity that the Australians have. I think it will not be as commercial, number one because so many of the world headquarters of the international sponsors are not in Australia. And it is more costly to take so many corporate people guests there. Mark and I were in Atlanta and I thought it was a little bit too commercial. Then again I was seeing it from that angle and it was the first Olympics we had been to since 1984. We still could remember what it was like going to the Olympics as an athlete, but yet we were there oftentimes as guests of a corporation which we appreciated that opportunity. Because I saw a lot of the tickets and a lot of the seats were given to the corporate sponsors which is great because the games would not take place without them. I also saw a lot of families outside the gate wanting four tickets. Some things are a bit too commercial.

P: Five time world champion, sixty time American record holder, forty-eight national titles, three gold medals, Hall of Fame, all of that. Which accomplishment is most important to you?

C: The Olympics, I suppose, but I will tell you my most memorable times have been my first national championship. My freshman year here, the NCAA Championship as a team was very memorable and very important. And, of course, the Olympics.

P: So team championships are really important?

C: One of my most memorable national championships, other than my first one, was a relay team that swam together at that same meet. Amy was on that team, and our coach, who may be using negative psychology or what, said we could not win because my timing was out and my sister said well, we are going to show him. It was really exciting. I think at the Olympics my most enjoyable race, I was most pleased with the 400 Individual medley and that was memorable because it

was my first race and my best and most challenging race. But my most fun was probably in the relay because I swam with three friends, I always liked relays. I remember standing on the victory stand and hearing Mary Meagher sing behind me and being there. I always liked relays, I always liked team events and I think that is why people say swimming is an individual sport. Yes, I suppose it is, but I like to think of it as a team event.

P: It is extraordinary that forty-eight national titles, the most of any swimmer in history, male or female, is an extraordinary accomplishment.

C: Well, and that one, strangely enough, in 1981, I came to the nationals. I was still in high school, and I came to the national swimming championships with the Nashville Aquatic Club here in Gainesville at the O'Connell Center. I did not even know there was such a record, and the media said to me, if you win you are going to tie Johnny Weismuller's all-time national record. I said, well what is that? I did not know, and at the stage it was thirty-six national championships and I did that and I went on. I guess I am proud of that and it is important. It encapsulates me in that I swam a lot of different events, I had a variety. I swam more events at a national championship than most people would, and my diversity and longevity. I suppose in that way, that record, while it was something I never even knew existed, it is something I am very pleased about. Janet Evans nearly broke it, and I thought she was going to break it, but she retired. Greg Louganis actually won about forty-five diving titles which is very extraordinary. He often said to me he nearly dove one more year because he wanted that record. Here I was, I did not even know that record existed. I always wanted to swim all the strokes, even from the time I was probably twelve. I said to Mr. Bergen, I want to make the national qualifying time in every event. I set out to do that and I had to work on my weaker strokes, and all of that I think then helped strengthen my individual medley. So, some people would criticize me and say, you tried to do too much. You should have specialized, but I liked doing all of that. I liked having the variety. I liked competing in a lot of different events.

P: On that note, thank you very much Tracy.