

**Oral History Interview of  
Amanda Banks**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez  
February 18, 2016  
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:  
*Sports History Initiative***

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## Interview Series Background:

The Sports History interviews encompass interviews conducted by members of the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library staff. They hope to document the evolution of sports and the role of sports in the social fabric of this region.

## Transcript Overview:

This interview features former Texas Tech track athlete, Amanda Banks. Banks talks about her involvement in high school sports in El Paso, attending Texas Tech where she participated in track and majored in sociology, and her continued involvement in track and field after graduation. Banks highlights her accomplishments in track and also talks about getting her PhD and pursuing a career in counseling.

**Length of Interview:** 01:02:48

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### Keywords

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**Daniel Sanchez (DS):**

My name is Daniel Sanchez, today's date is February 18, 2016. We're at the Southwest Collection, and this morning we're interviewing Amanda Banks. Amanda thanks for being here.

**Amanda Banks (AB):**

Thank you.

DS:

Could you please state your complete legal name?

AB:

Amanda Lee Banks.

DS:

Could you spell that?

AB:

A-m-a-n-d-a, Lee, L-e-e, Banks, B-a-n-k-s.

DS:

All right thank you and what's your birthdate?

AB:

11/14/67.

DS:

All right and where were you born?

AB:

I was born in Anchorage, Alaska.

DS:

Anchorage, Alaska? Okay that's going to be an interesting story to get you to Lubbock, right?

AB:

Military brat.

DS:

Oh okay and you mentioned military, so was that your dad that was in the service?

AB:

Yes.

DS:

What's his name?

AB:

Richard Macklemore.

DS:

And when was he born?

AB:

He was born September 15, 1943.

DS:

Where?

AB:

Irmo, South Carolina.

DS:

Wow, where's that at?

AB:

Right outside of Columbia, South Carolina.

DS:

Oh okay wow, and so you mentioned your dad was in the Air Force was he always—?

AB:

Army.

DS:

The Army. Was he always in the army or—?

AB:

I want to say he joined the Army at the age of eighteen, so yeah.

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DS:

Wow so did he know—?

AB:

Nah I said eighteen, I don't think he went in that early.

DS:

Okay.

AB:

But he did make a career of it.

DS:

Okay. I was going to ask, so did he meet your mother before or after he got in the service?

AB:

After.

DS:

And what's your mother's name?

AB:

My mother's name is Edna Macklemore, born August 20, 1945 in Nelson County, Virginia.

DS:

Wow and so when did your parents meet?

AB:

Daniel!

DS:

Do you know?

AB:

Nope.

DS:

You don't know. What was your mom's occupation?

AB:

My mom was a chef for the military

DS:

Wow.

AB:

Yes, and so she made a career of that, retired 2011 I want to say, hasn't been too long, but yeah, thirty plus years—well actually, I'll say close to forty.

DS:

Wow. How many siblings do you have?

AB:

I have two brothers, two sisters.

DS:

Are they older, younger?

AB:

My brothers are younger; we're all two years apart, and my sisters are older. I'm middle.

DS:

Just for the record, state everybody's name.

AB:

Wow. Let's see we have Janet, Diane, then it's me, then Rob, and Dwayne.

DS:

So what was it like growing up—well first you started off as, you know, you were the baby and so you had two older sisters. What was that like, do you recall those early years?

AB:

You know I'm not going to sit here and act as if, well yeah I remember it all, but I don't know. You know people talk about the whole order of birth, the birth order thing with siblings and the middle child feeling stuck out. Well, I don't think I really felt that, just fun days, I don't remember Anchorage, but of all of the other places that my dad was stationed, I do remember those: Florida, Germany, Rhode Island, of course El Paso but—

DS:

Wow, is that the order they went in too?

AB:

Nope. The order actually was Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Germany, Florida, and then Texas.

DS:

Wow so you've experienced many places?

AB:

Mm-hm.

DS:

So how often were you all moving?

AB:

Well, let's see, went to pre-k and kindergarten in Rhode Island. I actually remember the school, it was Mary Fogarty and then Lexington Elementary, and then Germany was Hanal. Florida was Naranja Elementary and that was—we were there I think two years, well actually no—yeah about two or three years, and then El Paso, and so most of my schooling was in El Paso at Parkland Elementary, Bliss Elementary, Terrace Hills Junior High, and then Andress High School. So of course El Paso was the longest duty station.

DS:

Well I have to ask, did you pick up any German while you were in Germany?

AB:

No.

DS:

No? You were young and just doing what—

AB:

I wish I had. (laughs)

DS:

Yeah, where'd you learn it? From the real people.

AB:

I wish I had, but no.

DS:

So when did you become interested in athletics?

AB:

You know I'm going to say I was somewhat of a tomboy (laughs), just always enjoyed all sports, but in fifth grade, this is really something, I remember in the fifth grade during P.E. one of the high schoolers came over and she was a triple jumper, Gwen McCray, came over, taught us how to triple jump, and you know pretty much just taught us the phases in it, at that time everyone was calling it hop, skip, and jump. And it actually—I caught on, and I thought wow. And then you know, we played basketball at times and things like that, so like I said I really enjoyed all sports, played volleyball, but I really just played it because I just liked—I wanted to do something, some type of sport, but that, volleyball really wasn't anything that I said, Oh I really want to do this. But nevertheless it was something because then once I came to Tech, I recall looking at a media guide, and there was Gwen McCray who then had come here to Tech to play basketball and also ran track, but she did the long jump and I thought wow. And I can remember too, my oldest sister ran track, and I remember during her high school years Gwen McCray being one of her top competitors.

DS:

Wow.

AB:

Yes, and so I thought, wow one of these days I'm going to meet her.

DS:

Are you?

AB:

Yes, I plan on it, one because I think she's going to soon be inducted.

DS:

So when did she come to Tech?

AB:

I'm going to say it was the, probably '79 or '80, somewhere in there.

DS:

So about four or five years ahead of you?

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AB:

Yes. Well five or six perhaps, but yeah.

DS:

Okay, wow.

AB:

How ironic, huh?

DS:

Really, and she's the one that got you interested in the sport right?

AB:

Yes, and the event for certain.

DS:

In the event yeah, wow—and so how old were you when—you mentioned that she came over, how old were you?

AB:

I was in fifth grade.

DS:

Fifth grade, wow. So did you choose track then or what were you concentrating on after that?

AB:

You know I really didn't choose it then, but I did know that, Wow I really like the triple jump, and so then two years later in junior high, I can remember, Okay think back hop, skip, jump, and the pictures and the images of her helping us out really came back to my memory so—

DS:

Wow, so your mind is just like that, that you can remember—

AB:

Well it was then. (both laugh)

DS:

You mentioned your oldest sister was a track star also. Did that also kind of get you interested?

AB:

Now that did, and really I believe she was a better track star than I was. She, I think, went probably I think it was nineteen or twenty feet in high school in the long jump.

DS:

Wow.

AB:

That was not me, of course I didn't—I long jumped but I really was not that great of a long jumper, and she was an excellent sprinter. Unfortunately she didn't complete her high school career in track and field. Coach left and that pretty much for her and some of the others ended their career with not having a coach and then getting a new coach, and I think just the whole difficulty in transitioning, but great athlete. I remember her going to Lubbock for regionals and at one point thinking, okay what's the big deal? Well hmm, then I finally realized what the big deal was.

DS:

Wow. So were your parents athletic?

AB:

Well, I'm going to say yes. I don't know early days in terms of competing in high school or anything like that, but I remember in Florida and in Germany where on the military base they would have different—I don't know if it was a battery against another battery or what have you—but I remember vividly all of these different teams I even—my mom still has pictures of them playing in different softball games, and I remember my mom, I'm like, dang she can run you know, or even just her ability to bat and catch the ball, and so I don't know, like I said, in terms of organized sports, but I can remember different team competitions of seeing her competing and thinking, pretty athletic.

DS:

So you actually had it in your family background, huh?

AB:

I'd say so.

DS:

Well, that's cool, and how about your dad? You mentioned your mom was—

AB:

I'm not sure.

DS:

If he had done anything, okay. So how were your parents once your sister started competing and then you, did they—?

AB:

You know, the one thing that I hold near and dear to my heart is the level of support that they gave us. I remember them being at all of the events, good, bad, or indifferent, you know, in terms of us placing or what have you. But it didn't matter if the track meet or if the game was in El Paso, or if coming here to Lubbock, or even I remember—you know in El Paso there's so many schools so you don't travel a whole lot, but I do remember you know we would go to Odessa for the West Texas Relays, and they had a big meet at the time in Amarillo and they'd go. And then even in college, they traveled and just the support, the emotional, physical support was just amazing and that I will never forget.

DS:

Wow. Well let me ask this, you know because El Paso is so much bigger than the other communities you mentioned, what was it like for a teen from El Paso to travel to Lubbock or Amarillo or to Odessa?

AB:

Wow you know that really was an eye opener, especially for us you know there being so many schools in El Paso. Okay so when you're good, you know of course that's a great thing, you're going to get to travel and experience competing against all of these other schools. But then there's also that rude awakening that you're not the only great athlete in the sense that man, there would be—we'd go okay so we're good but we can't just be good for El Paso because there are other great athletes, and you could tell that to some of your teammates that were younger or perhaps had not gone to regionals or you know traveled to some of those other meets prior to, but it was one of those things you really had to experience for yourself to see because man, West Texas has some great athletes, and it didn't matter whether it was Odessa, Amarillo. I mean I can still remember Amarillo High having great athletes and Odessa—Permian-Odessa or Odessa-Permian having great athletes, and some that I competed against in college and some that just happened to come to Tech and weren't student athletes, but it was really a great experience that there are times I'd go, Man what are they eating? It was like, my goodness. And then for me, I was never the biggest or strongest athlete, and so for some I was like, man what are they really eating because look at them, but so—

DS:

You know, and you mentioned Gwen McCray was like the early person that came down and you saw, but who were your coaches during those days?

AB:

Abe Brown and Jarvis Scott, still I believe two of the greatest coaches, not only to have graced Texas Tech's campus but collegiate coaches.

DS:

So then who were your high school coaches?

AB:

My high school coach was Lucy Niemen, still in El Paso, has since retired but—

DS:

What was she like?

AB:

You know disciplined, so that's never been—I've never been at a loss for disciplined coaches. I think I've been really fortunate to have had great coaches, even in junior high, Phelps, Coach Phelps, but nevertheless all really great coaches. Coach Niemen, she was the type that she was going to make sure that you warmed up, didn't matter if it was ninety degrees outside, you were going to warm up and you were going to warm up correctly, you were going to keep your sweats on until your event, and some of those same things were carried on even in my collegiate career, just all dedicated coaches that I wouldn't trade for anything.

DS:

And how successful were you in high school?

AB:

I was successful in high school, interesting, I don't think I realized the level of success I probably understood it more—no, I don't know that I understood it at all because I enjoyed the sport so much, and so as I said, I played all three sports. Surprisingly, or to some, I was actually more successful in basketball than I was in track and field, but I enjoyed track and field more so, and I did not triple jump until my senior year at the district meet, in the triple jump, but I always wanted to, and so the events I really excelled at in high school was the 200 and the mile relay, 800 meter relay, and the 400, and long jump, but again as I said, I wasn't really a great long jumper. But we went to state all four years in the mile relay, we won regionals, and we were in 5A, so we won regionals, but triple jump was the event I wanted to do, and we had some really good triple jumpers at the time, and I remember it was a week before the district meet, I went to Coach Niemen, and I said, "When are you guys going to let me triple jump? I just want to try it." And she said, "Well you're going to have to challenge the other jumpers to a jump off," and I was like, fine. I mean what I had to lose, and so she said, "Okay let's do it," so we had a jump off, and to their surprise, oh wow she can triple jump. So I got to triple jump at the district

meet—that was my first time triple jumping—and I won, jumped a little over thirty-seven feet, and so went to regionals, came here to regionals, and I got third place, I was sick because only the top two finishers went to state, and I missed out by a quarter of an inch. I jumped I think it was thirty-nine two and a quarter, or a little over thirty-nine feet and a quarter and lost out that way, and I was like, now you see? Had I been jumping earlier on in the year or what have you, but as much as it hurt me, I think it also helped me, but yeah.

DS:

Who had more regret? You or the coaches?

AB:

You know that's interesting because that was never really a conversation that came back up, but I'm going to venture to say the coaches.

DS:

So they didn't know what they had there, right?

AB:

That's right.

DS:

And had you asked before?

AB:

Yes. Oh I really wanted to triple jump bad, of all of the events, I mean now I loved to be in on the mile relay because we really were a great team, but I really wanted to triple jump and so—and I really don't know what it was, there was something in me that knew that was my event.

DS:

Well maybe as a fifth grader you realized it, right?

AB:

I'm telling you. (laughter)

DS:

So the irony of that, you know, as a fifth grader you saw somebody, you learned how to do it, and you didn't really get a chance to do it again until the very end of your high school career. Wow.

AB:

Yes, the end of my high school career, and what's interesting is, you know, when I came to Tech—two things about that, one that that was the only time that I recall ever laying eyes on Gwen McCray, and then finding out years later that she too competed at Texas Tech, and then the other part was then coming to Tech, and you know, the facilities and the number of coaches, there's been so many advancements, but even at the time when I competed at Tech, we had one coach. We had one coach on the women's side, and the men I believe had two, they may have had a grad assistant, but I just remember two full time coaches Corky Oglesby and Abe Brown who helped with the horizontal jumps with the women, but there was—we didn't have a team just full of All Americans and all of these coaches, and so I was really spread thin in terms of doing a lot of events, and so it was really something because it really wasn't until my junior year that the triple jump became my sole focus, and so perhaps that in high school was preparing me to be able to deal with—

DS:

What events were you doing at Tech?

AB:

Oh, what events didn't I do? Let's see there were times I did the, anywhere ranging from the 55—I don't recall ever doing the 100 meters—but the 55 indoors, I did the 200, 400, mile relay, long, triple, and sprint relay.

DS:

Wow. Were you competing as a freshman?

AB:

Yes.

DS:

Do you remember the first time you stepped on the collegiate field?

AB:

No, I don't.

DS:

Your first Southwest Conference meet or anything?

AB:

I remember—I do recall the first Southwest Conference Championship, the Southwest Conference Championship indoors were always held at Fort Worth, and I remember the—I can't

remember the name of the arena—but it was a wood track, and it was banked. Of course, they don't run there anymore, but in terms of just specifics like this meet and that meet, no.

DS:

How about competitors, do you recall who you were always competing against?

AB:

Oh I remember competing against Karen Nelson from the University of Texas; she was a hurdler and triple jumper. I remember competing—I can't remember her last name, but, oh was it Oklahoma State? It was the girl that beat me in the triple jump in high school who got second place when I got third, but she never beat me again after that. (laughs) Carrie—oh what was her last name? I want to say it was—oh it'll come to me, the school, because I wanted to say Oklahoma State but I'm not certain. Then let's see—I'm not recalling last names—Texas A&M had a great jumper, Yolanda—see this is where my homework would've come in helpful.

DS:

Well that's all right, we'll just make our researcher have to pull out those old media guides.

AB:

Oh man, let's see. West Point had a really great triple jumper, Diana Oranje, and she ended up being a '96 Olympian I believe. Then there was another triple jumper from the University of Texas—you know they always had great jumpers. Oh what was her name? I don't know I'll figure it out and get it to you.

DS:

You'll figure it out? You're what?

AB:

Man.

DS:

So you're going to Google this while we interview? Okay, well, you know while you're doing that, let's talk a little bit about—you know you mentioned in high school you were actually a basketball—could you just talk about that career? What position did you play and—?

AB:

I was a guard.

DS:

You were guard?

AB:

Mm-hm I was a guard but I was a great rebounder.

DS:

Wow.

AB:

Yeah, even did the—at times did the jump ball at the beginning of the game.

DS:

So your explosive jump helped in all of that?

AB:

Yes it did, wasn't the greatest free throw shooter but I was quick on my feet, pretty good defender, and just loved it.

DS:

What's your height?

AB:

Five-five.

DS:

And you were a rebounder, huh?

AB:

Yes.

DS:

So what's it take to be five-five and go in there and get the rebounds, what's it take?

AB:

Some grit. I think it takes grit, I think it takes—definitely takes some mental toughness and confidence.

DS:

Did you have a knack for the ball, know where it was going?

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AB:

You know, I don't know that I had so much a knack for the ball just as much as I had no fear. If I were going to get boxed around or pushed around I didn't care I was just going to get in there, you know, so never really allowed my height or my size to be a hindrance or an excuse for not trying to be my best.

DS:

Yeah, well, you keep mentioning you know, your other size, your weight, so I'm assuming you were pretty small back then too?

AB:

Yeah, haven't gotten much bigger, let's see I was—my senior year in high school, I was 112 pounds, and when I left Tech I was 120 pounds.

DS:

A whole eight pounds, huh?

AB:

A whole eight pounds, can you believe that?

DS:

Probably all of muscle too, right?

AB:

You know I wish I could say that, but I mean, perhaps so.

DS:

Perhaps because I mean you were an athlete and you were improving every year.

AB:

Yeah, but yeah I definitely was never the biggest for any particular—

DS:

So were you recruited by any colleges in either sport or—? How did you wind up at Tech is what I'm trying to get to.

AB:

You know, it was my senior year at the regional meet, and I had received some offers but it's really something because as much as I loved the sport, I wanted to go to college, but I didn't want to compete. I didn't want to play basketball; I didn't want to run track. I just wanted to go

to college and get my degree, and I remember it was the end of the triple jump, and Maria Medina, who at that time I think had just finished her collegiate career at Tech in the—she was a 1500 meter runner, and she was from El Paso—now I didn't know her prior to that meet, but she was like, you know you should consider coming to Tech, and I was like, Okay but you know never really took it seriously, and lo and behold ended up coming to Tech. I ended up meeting Coach Scott, and it wasn't face to face, it was over the phone. I never came to Tech for a visit. At one point thought, No I really don't want to do this, and January of '86, stepped foot on campus as a student athlete.

DS:

Wow, January of '86. So what was that like for you coming to Tech? I mean one, did you know much about Tech, and two, is that the school you had thought you were going to go to?

AB:

I knew nothing about Tech outside of it being the site for the 5A Regional Track and Field and the Regional Cross Country meet—that was it. I remember walking—at that time there was another former high school teammate that was here, Ivan Campos, and so I got here—and really pretty much oblivious to really what was in front of me, you know, I'm a first generation college student, and so it was really just, here we go, let's do this, whatever it is, you know, so no I had no—didn't know much about Tech at all outside of the visits for the regional track and field and then the cross country meets.

DS:

Okay so when you got here, you know, did someone take you under their wing in both in athletics and academics to—?

AB:

You know that's really something that I think now, most—I wish student athletes recognized is a gift to them because the person that took me and our other teammates under their wing was Coach Scott, we didn't have—yes they had advisors at the time, but the degree in which advisors are involved in student athletes day to day lives is not—was not what it is today and so she was it. There were older teammates who at times tried to fulfill that role, but for her to have done it for all of us, I really don't know how she did it. Because other than that, there weren't the—you didn't have Mentor Tech; there weren't faculty and staff around to say—you know there weren't these organized groups of here's a mentor, or here's someone who's going to guide you academically, or here's someone that you could look to if you want to major in this or if you're looking for a career in this particular field; you were pretty much out there on your own, and Coach Scott didn't have to do it either but she recognized the need, and so she's the one that took us under her wing, and for that I'm eternally grateful because had it not been for her, the transition would have been much more difficult, that's for certain. As I said we didn't have the

greatest of athletes, you're not going to hear anyone talking about Texas Tech track and field as a whole that the team in the eighties or anything like that as being Southwest Conference team champions or anything like that, but what you will find is a group of women, student athletes, that talk about the nurturing, the level of fostering our overall development, and helping us to become who we are today regardless of the field that we're in, whether it's teaching, whether it's social work, whether it's the field of law or medicine, whatever it is I really truly believe that each one of us could go back and credit Jarvis Scott for what she did in helping to facilitate our overall development and helping us to become the women that we are.

DS:

So you had mentioned earlier before when we had talked at one point about Jarvis Scott's own accomplishments in the realm of athletics and—but you're also talking about her now as a person so how did she mesh those two to combine to help you along the way?

AB:

You know I believe that everything—I mean such phenomenal woman, '68 Olympian, grew up—she went to UC Berkley—grew up at one point in Watts LA, and so she saw a lot during her young adult life, and I think that she took those obstacles and those trials, and those accomplishments and used them to better the lives of others. It wasn't so much just about her, okay I've got mine and now you get yours, but I'm going to use these tools to better the lives of other young people, and she did that. It wasn't—I've had so many conversations even recently with parents talking about the difficulty in trying to navigate the paths of their children when it comes to being a student athlete, and does academics really take precedence? Well, with Coach Scott it really did, academics came first and it wasn't just words, you know, she walked the walk and she talked the talk when it came to academics coming first. But even more so it was that she instilled a sense of discipline and finishing through in us on the field that really, really carried us through in life and maybe at times we didn't see at the beginning or we didn't see it when it was taking place. But she was giving us tools and teaching us things not only for that moment but more so for life, you know, for example while at practice or even at meets, she would always tell us, don't stop at the finish line. Well to some, especially those on the outside would think, Okay what's the big deal? Of course yes, you want to cross the finish line but—and so we would. It's not that anyone would literally stop at the finish line, but they would slow down at the finish line at times or—and so she would say, run past it. Well, if we didn't, and it didn't matter if it was at practice or at a meet, she would say keep running, so if it were at practice and you slowed down, she'd go, "Well keep running, I'll tell you when to stop." Or at a meet, I can remember so vividly, we were at a track meet at Abilene Christian, and one of my teammates Kelly Malacara stopped at the finish line. After the race she took her on the other side of the field and she created a harness out of her jacket and made Kelly just run over and over and over, and there were no stands on the other side and so everyone sitting in the stands going, what's wrong with that woman and look what she's doing to her and then you know our teammates are going, Oh Kelly

she stopped at the finish line. And so she was creating this resistance for her, and she told her, “Go!” But she’s pulling her back while she’s running, and so she’d say, “You’re going to understand this later, you’re going to understand this later.” So it wasn’t about that particular race, but she was trying to instill in us this sense of not giving up and not quitting before the end and to make sure that whatever task that we begin, that we see it through and that we finish it all the way or just don’t do it at all. If you’re going to do it, if you’re going to start, then finish it and finish it all the way.

DS:

Yeah because you don’t want that regret, because I mean we’ve all seen so many—especially like sprinters who’ve slowed down before the end, and they’ve missed the world record by a couple hundredths of a second. It’s like, had you run through it’s—you know.

AB:

That’s right.

DS:

And you know it applies to life, like you say, you know beyond that. What a wonderful lesson.

AB:

Yes. You know, there’s a—I’m telling you, there’s a quote that we say sometimes with our youth at church, “If a task has once begun, never leave it until it’s done, be it’s labor great or small, do it well or not at all,” and so when I hear that I think of Coach Scott because it’s not about just the task at hand, but it’s about finishing that task and giving it your all in whatever it is that you’re going to do, regardless of what it is.

DS:

Yeah, you know, and y’all are a bunch of young student athletes. How hard was it to stay focused on the athletics and the academics and avoid everything else that’s going on in your college life?

AB:

You know, definitely not an easy task, and I know for some they like to look at student athletes and say, “Oh well they’re just so privileged, and they have it all, and all they have to do is go to practice every day and then do their work and that’s it, while I have to go work and I have to do this.” Well the job of being a student athlete is no easier and at times perhaps more difficult because you are having to juggle the two. So I may not be going to Express or New York & Company or what have you, to a restaurant to put in my hours, but I’m putting in my blood, sweat, and tears on that track and field or on the basketball court or on the tennis court or what have you. So that is a transition in of itself because then you’re dealing with teammate issues,

you're having to learn and facilitate the whole deal of communicating with one another, with wrestling with academics and athletics. Then too dealing with those perceptions and misperceptions of a student athlete, because there are those who believe you're just so privileged and you have it all and so as soon as you walk into the classroom, oh well you're a student athlete you must be this, or you're only here because of that. So many may not want to talk about it, but there is still those stereotypes and misperceptions that student athletes, and especially student athletes of color, that if you're here, you're only here because of your athleticism and not because of your academics.

DS:

That's an interesting point. What were you majoring in?

AB:

I majored in sociology.

DS:

Sociology, what was that like as an academic career?

AB:

You know, I've always been interested in just relationships and studying people, and what makes people do what they do, and just the environment as a whole, and so that was really something that I enjoyed, I love—I can remember a lot of my classes in terms of the professors, Dr. Lowe, and we had sociology of American sport, criminology with Dr. Peak, and those classes really, I really enjoyed it. I absolutely enjoyed the classes that I took in sociology, and it was really those courses that, and then going on to work after I graduated, that really led me into the whole field of counseling.

DS:

Now, and we're talking about graduation, but before you got there you had a few things that you did. Talk about some of those accomplishments you had as a track athlete at Tech.

AB:

Well, I won the Southwest Conference Championships indoors and outdoors, did I? (laughs) And then I became—I was an All American in the triple jump and so really had some successes that the words of Abe Brown really do come back to me because I recall him telling me many times, “Banks, I don't think you really understand this, I don't think you really understand your accomplishments, but maybe you'll understand it later,” and he's so right because I didn't.

DS:

So well let's talk about, you know, like your first Southwest Conference championship, your first national title. Do you recall those, what was that like for you?

AB:

No, I didn't win a National title, I got second place. I do recall that meet, it was at BYU at the outdoor championships in '89, and after the first round of the—yeah it was the first round, and I was injured, and I remember going back to see the trainer in the tent, and I really thought, Oh well, this is it, and Coach Brown was like, "Banks, are you hurting that bad?" And I was like hurting pretty bad, and he was like, "Well can you do this?" And I was like, "Huh?" Because I pretty much thought that was it that I wasn't going to make it to the finals or what have you, and he's like, "You have three more jumps!" And I was like "Oh." He was like, "So I need you to get out there and do it." Coach Brown, he didn't beat around the bush about anything, so he's like, I just need you to get out there and do it. Okay. And I did, I believe I was probably, I want to say I was in sixth place going into the finals and ended up getting second place, jumped forty to elven maybe and a half or something like that. But got second place and so All-American and a top two finish, and so he was like, "You still don't understand!" And I remember him saying, "Banks, if you knew what you looked like standing up there with all the other athletes—" Because again, I was never the biggest or the strongest, but I was a great technician. Coach Brown was a phenomenal coach when it came to—amongst many other things—but the technical aspect of the triple jump; no one can beat that man. I can think of maybe one other coach that I would—not like I've just experienced all of these coaches, but I mean the man was a master at coaching the triple jump. So five-five here I was, maybe a 120 pounds at that time, and not the strongest, definitely not the tallest, but I had technique, and he was like, "If you knew, if you could only see yourself out there standing next to those other girls.

DS:

Since I can't see you there, can you just give us a visual? Tell us about, what was the average height or size of those girls.

AB:

The average height of the triple jumpers during that time, for the most part, I'd say about five-eight to five-nine, probably 150 maybe even 160. There were a few others that—there was only one other triple jumper, phenomenal, one of the greatest triple jumpers ever, I believe, that had my frame, and that was Sheila Hudson, a tad bit older than me but had a wonderful, incredible career. But there were jumpers, five-ten, five-eleven, and that was not me (laughs) so—

DS:

You know you mentioned you had come to Tech and you'd always planned on getting that college degree and you were always now an athlete. So as you're in school, what're you thinking about, what's going to be the next phase of your life after college?

AB:

What was I thinking about then?

DS:

Yeah.

AB:

That I was going to just go to work, and then I had an opportunity to run with a track club, and that went okay, but I still thought, okay I want to put this degree to work, and so I went to El Paso, worked at Sun Towers Behavioral Health Center doing group work with adolescents and adults on a substance abuse unit and decided then that I really wanted to go into counseling, came back to Tech to get my master's in counseling, and then began, at that point, started kind of tinkering with going back into—well just going into the professional track and field world, kind of had a little rocky start but ultimately ended up going back to El Paso. Coach Brown connected me with another coach and former Olympian Norbert Elliott, and that pretty much thwarted my career, and I did that while in graduate school, back and forth in graduate school.

DS:

What was it about track that pulled you back like that?

AB:

My love for the triple jump and really just not wanting to have any regrets of perhaps I could've, should've, you know, just finished it out to see where it would end but just loved the triple jump.

DS:

Yeah and were you still thinking maybe a chance of the Olympics at some point?

AB:

I was and was fully prepared, went to the Olympics trials in Atlanta in '96 and fell short, got injured in the prelims. I was in the best shape of my life, had just come off the best overall year in '95, was ranked fourth in the United States, and so I was ready. Got injured in the prelims, and I made it to the finals but ended up with a sixth place finish.

DS:

So what's that like when— I mean you know you mentioned you got injured in college, what's that like when you get an injury while competing?

AB:

I'll tell you, of my entire career that was the most devastating because I was certain that I would make the team, as I said I really was in the best shape of my life, everything was coming together and had come together up until that point, and so it's really one of those things that— it's a tough pill to swallow, haunted me for a long time (laughs) it really did. But as much as it hurt, it's still one of those instances that I believe it was meant to be to help me in other areas of my life. It was an injury there, but it could be another obstacle somewhere else, you know, whether it's in my professional career because you're not going to, regardless of what the sport is you're not going to be doing that for the rest of your life and so you've got to take those obstacles and those trials and try to use them to better yourself or help you deal with other obstacles that are going to come up in other areas of your life, and that's really what I tried to do. Didn't feel good at all at that point, I was hurt, I was crushed, but—

DS:

What was the injury?

AB:

It was my shin, had the worst cramp ever that no matter what the trainers did it just locked up so hard that I could run down the runway, but could not run at full speed, could barely walk on it.

DS:

Wow.

AB:

Yes, and it'd be—you know it's one of those things most jumpers could relate to in the sense of in a race, you just have that one race. In the jumps, during the prelims you have three jumps and in the finals you have three more, and so if you're going to get injured you would like it to be on your last jump or something and not when you have all of these jumps ahead of you, and that's what it was, so I went into that, into the finals injured, having all of my jumps.

DS:

So did it happen during the run or one of the phases?

AB:

During the run, and the thing about that is, I remember never even looking at my mark because I didn't want to know. All I knew was I didn't make the team, and it was not until two years later

that I actually looked at the results, and it actually was a pretty good jump, it was actually one of my best jumps, and I thought, My goodness I did that while injured. So you know some had told me, oh your jump was this or your jump was that, and so it's also one of those things that you have to try to take some good out of it, and so what I took out of that was that regardless you were able to do this, or look there were so many others before you who didn't even make it to the trials, or who didn't even make it to the finals, and so regardless you're still one of the best.

DS:

Wow and so you jumped after the injury, right?

AB:

Yes.

DS:

So what's that like, jumping knowing your injured? How do you treat the takeoff and the landings and all that, especially when you have to do it three times in one jump?

AB:

You take the pain (both laugh), like literally it's one of those things where you really have to—you have to put it out of your mind because if not you'll just quit, and so you really have to run past the pain, or jump past the pain, and that's really what I did, and I'm sure there are others who have done the same thing at some point or another and some that are still doing it.

DS:

Yeah because I mean even in other sports we can think of like gymnasts who've had injuries and you know they have and they still knock it out of the park. Mary Lou Retton, like for example in the '84 Olympics when she had that injury and she still got the ten on that she needed; it's just will I guess. Will and grit.

AB:

That's right you just have to—whatever it takes you just have to do what you have to do.

DS:

What is it about your nature that made you so strong?

AB:

You know I'm going to say one, I've really just had a strong support network. My mom is one of the most resilient people that I know, so I'm going to say I'm a product, for sure, of my mom in that sense, just resilient, and then that, what she deposited in me, was further nurtured by Jarvis Scott, Abe Brown, and Norbert Elliott.

DS:

Wow. So we've already gotten you up into your pro career, and so after that injury did you continue on in the sport or is that when you pulled away?

AB:

No, no I wouldn't have done that. Let me see, let's see that was '96, so I did compete a few more years after that. I took off some because as I said I had not—I was in graduate school, so I came back to Lubbock, finished out my master's and then got my PhD, and so I was still competing even while getting my PhD, but it became a little more difficult because my coach was no longer here, and so as I said I just did it a few more years and then decided to just focus on my doctorate and the—

DS:

So there's nothing on your plate there, working on your PhD and trying to be a world class athlete? (both laugh)

AB:

I know it.

DS:

How many hours a week were you working on either school or track?

AB:

I worked full time and—while in graduate school and competing, I don't know how I did it.

DS:

Wow, superwoman I guess, right? (both laugh)

AB:

Yes.

DS:

So when did you finally finish your PhD?

AB:

I finished my PhD in May of ninety—May of 2005.

DS:

So once you finished what then?

AB:

And so since then I've—wow, I've really been working just in the community, in the field of community counseling, community engagement. I worked athletics, did academic advising for men and women's—well women's track and then men's basketball, had the opportunity to work with Coach Knight which was awesome, and then after that, doing some community engagement work, addressing institutional racism and the disparities with state agencies.

DS:

Now you mentioned, you know, working with student athletes. Did you find yourself playing a role real similar to what Coach Jarvis had done with you?

AB:

You better believe it, absolutely. Because we all need that, you know student athletes come from so many different walks of life, and for some, as I said, there are some who were told or even if you didn't say it to them, it was the way in which they were treated they were told, you're not going to make it or you're only here because you're on the basketball team, or you're on the track team or what have you, and so someone did it for me, and I was going to pay it forward and do it for someone else.

DS:

Now we talked earlier a couple weeks ago and you mentioned some of the stuff that's going on now, some of the stuff you're involved in, can you get us up to speed on some of those activities you're working on nowadays? Like with the voices and all of that—

AB:

Okay yeah, so the voice project is a project through East Lubbock Promise Neighborhood, and what we're doing is one, collecting stories about East Lubbock residents because we want to share that strength, richness, and those inspiring stories that come out of East Lubbock or those individuals who have impacted East Lubbock in a positive way, and so not only just sharing those stories, but through sharing those stories we also want to provide leadership development, training to individuals in East Lubbock to help equip them with the tools and skills necessary to be able to one, feel empowered, and two, feel equipped with the skills to be able to advocate for themselves regardless of the issues, whether it could be transportation, the lack of businesses or economic development in East Lubbock, or even educational disparities.

DS:

Cool, so you know, you came from El Paso in a roundabout way to Lubbock, and you've been here basically since then right?

AB:

Yes, yes.

DS:

What is it about Lubbock that keeps you here?

AB:

You know, interesting, for a long time I said I'm leaving, I'm leaving, I'm leaving, and then I realized, no you keep saying what you're going to do, but until God says otherwise you'll be here. Lubbock to me one, the cost of living is great, it's close to El Paso, my mom still lives in El Paso, and so I don't want to be too far from her, I can at least jump in the car and go see her if I need to. You used to be able to get flights back and forth, and now you have to go through Dallas, so you may as well drive, but you know I don't have any complaints I'm not going to say it's, oh it's just the best city ever, but you know what I'm here so I'm going to make the best of it, it's the place I've decided to make my home, and so until God says otherwise, this is where I'll be.

DS:

Wow. Cool. Well, do you got anything to add that I haven't asked?

AB:

No, not that I can—

DS:

Well because we've gone just right at an hour, amazing how fast that went right.

AB:

I hope I got these facts right—

DS:

Well, if you think of something else you want to add on we can always do another interview, add on some more. How's that, we'll make that a deal?

AB:

Great.

DS:

All right, thank you, Amanda.

AB:  
Thank you.

***End of Recording***



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