

**Oral History Interview of
Michael Roberts Greer & Marti Greer**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez
January 14, 2009
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Sports Interviews***

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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 Michael and Marti Greer as they discuss the Buffalo Springs Triathlon. In this interview, Michael and Marti describe how each one of the got into Triathlon races, and how they plan and implement the Buffalo Springs Triathlon race.

Length of Interview: 00:53:01

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Introduction; Michael's background information	05	00:00:00
Marti's background information	10	00:09:42
Michael's fondest memories from the early years of the Buffalo Springs Triathlon	13	00:20:57
Transitioning from Michael being the race director to Marti being the race director	15	00:26:21
The next level to reach	19	00:37:15
What Michael plans to do after leaving the triathlon board; donating things to the Southwest Collections	26	00:47:56

Keywords

Sports, Triathlon, Athletes, Buffalo Springs Triathlon

Daniel Sanchez (DS):

Well start off with a full header at the beginning and that's just to let everybody know who we're interviewing and what this is all about.

Michael Greer (MG):

Right

DS:

Hello my name is Daniel Sanchez, today's date is January 14, 2009, and I'm at the Southwest Collections interviewing Mike Greer, his wife Marti Greer will join us in a few minutes. And Mike, began the Buffalo Springs triathlon. When did you begin that?

MG:

Twenty years ago.

DS:

Twenty years ago.

MG:

Twenty years ago, today. Or this year.

DS:

Okay. Well Mike, let's start off with a little background information on yourself. What is your legal name?

MG:

Michael Roberts Greer.

DS:

Okay. And when and where were you born?

MG:

I was born Chanute Kansas, December 16, 1938 lived there for three months, and then moved to West Texas.

DS:

And you obviously have an athletic background, tell us about your parents. Did they come from an athletic background also?

MG:

Yeah as a matter of fact my mother didn't, but my father did. He was a football player up in the panhandle, actually played one year at West Texas State, back in a long time ago. My parents other [coughs]—excuse me—siblings, I'm not sure what they did, but he played football, and his brother played football. So then I was raised in Littlefield and I played football, and ran track. And went to college on a football scholarship, was actually offered a scholarship here at Tech and didn't take it and went to the University of Houston, and played down there.

DS:

What year was that?

MG:

That was in 195—my senior year was 1956—football year and then my freshman year in college was 1957. And I played there for two years and left during the third year and played the rest of my three year eligibility out at the University of Texas at Arlington which at that time was Arlington State, and they played football then they don't play now. So I played five years total, and ran track four.

DS:

And what was it like for you trying to balance you know being on the football team and being a student?

MG:

It's a hard balance, and it's a—as I look at the guys today and the big programs today [phone rings] I was wondering how they do it. I'm going to see if that's her.

DS:

Okay.

MG:

Hello?

DS:

Want to step out in the hall, see if you can reach her easier?

MG:

She's--

DS:

Go up there? I could put everything on pause and that way you can help her get squared away here.

MG:

But back to the question, it was difficult being on full scholarship and playing football, and then on top of that of course I got married my third year. It is difficult and even playing—and the University of Houston course had a program the size of Tech's. UT Arlington was not quite that size, but it was still football. And it was still scholarship, and it was still academics. And I wasn't particularly good academician at that point [laughter]. You know I hadn't figured out how important the education was and that was back in the fifties, and I came out of a football mill in Littlefield, Texas where they—we win a lot of football games over there.

DS:

They still do.

MG:

They still do. [Laughter]

DS:

Did y'all have a chance to win any state championships while you were there?

MG:

We went to the semifinals. And the quarter finals. But we never got to state and everything over there is measured by going to state, it's not measured by winning district, and it's not measured you know. They've gone to state here in the last few years and this year went to semifinals I believe. So I came out of that and football was king and then my dad wanted me to go to school here because we lived in Littlefield and he could drive over—he used to bring me to the games when I was a kid you know and all that. He loved Tech. And so—but I wanted to get away, I wanted to get away from home. [Knock on door]

DS:

Go ahead and come on in.

Marti Greer (MAG):

Hi.

MG:

I told him you were on the loop. [Laughter]

DS:

I'm going to turn this off and do some restaging. [Laughter] I'm going to give you the corner just for that Marti.

MG:

As long as I don't get in trouble.

MAG:

Yeah we should go ahead and come to our house [laughter].

DS:

As you can tell, we've had some restaging and joining Mike and myself is Marti Greer. And Marti, could you please state your complete legal name?

MAG:

Marti Leah Griffith Greer.

DS:

And where and when were you born?

MAG:

September 14, 1968 in Fort Worth.

DS:

Okay, and what we're doing right now is we're covering some of Mike's previous career as an athlete and we're talking about his football years and so we're going back to that and then we'll swing back to you and then we'll go on to the Buffalo Springs Triathlon.

MAG:

Okay.

MG:

Let's see where were we. Oh okay.

DS:

Talking about—

MG:

Playing football and—so I played the five years I was red shirting here so that gave me five years of total time. Got my degree and then went on to active duty as a second lieutenant in the army.

And served nearly three years on active duty. While I was on active duty I played one year of army football, and it was a lot different than college football. A lot different. And I found out then how much the body deteriorates with age as far as getting hit, lot of contact. But at any rate then I took up handball and so from that point on, from time I got off of active duty for twelve years I played competitive handball. And played tournaments and stuff like that and stayed in good shape and then started endurance athletics after that. And ran marathons and then—ran marathons for nine years actually. Then started triathlons.

DS:

And what prompted that change from hand ball to endurance?

MG:

A lot of it just has to do with physiological demands of the body. With any given sport, like football obviously, you play football as a young man, these guys that play in their thirties I don't know how they do it, figured it out, except must take a lot of drugs. But at any rate it's a transition of the body as it ages and so forth. And handball, what I found is a—it's anaerobic exercise. And you don't run over five, six, seven yards any given time, or actually—yeah yards. And it's all eye and hand coordination and being at the right place at the right time. But it took a tow on the elbows and the shoulders, and my knees were fine. So I started saying, "I think I want to do something that doesn't do any kind of impact like that." So I went out one day and ran two miles and kind of liked it, and then—because I was a sprinter in college I never ran beyond—you know my pole event was two hundred yards. So I went out into that and then day I went five miles and then is said, "God that feels good," and I got this runners high and all that. So then I did ten miles, and then I was hooked. So then I got off into 5ks, 10ks, ten milers and then half marathons and then marathons. I've done forty-four marathons since that time. So that's how I got started in that and then—the same thing, the same transition happened physiologically from running to triathlon. In that I've been told that if you cross train, you're going to last longer. And so I got over and I said, "Well, I don't want to swim." I could swim good, but I wasn't a—endurance swimmers just wasn't my thing. And, while the running is already there, and bicycling, I'm pretty sure I'm going to like that. So finally I tried it, and I loved it. So, I still ran marathons occasionally but, then I went over to triathlons, and so I've been with it ever since. Now this will start my twenty-sixth year doing triathlons. And I'm still doing them, I turn seventy in December, December 16 so it proves I think—I think it proves that as your body changes physiologically then you have to recognize that and accept it. And I'm not as fast as I was when I started triathlons twenty-five years ago, but I wasn't very fast then [laughter] actually. I was fast when I sprinted for a hundred yards but going five miles, eight miles, ten miles, hundred miles—the army triathlon is a hundred and forty point six miles and I didn't do that very fast, but I did seven of them you know. And still plan to do some more. But, so that's kind of where I came from. Marti's background—you're really going to find hers is contrast—it's the same type of we became athletes at the same age and all this kind of stuff even though

she's much younger than I am. But her transition was because of basically some of the same things I've talked about, but her sport was totally different. Totally different.

DS:

And with that, what we'll do is we'll bring you up to speed and then we'll start talking more about Buffalo Springs. Let's first start about your background—was anybody else in your family an athlete?

MAG:

Well, my father went to the University of Houston, which strangely enough is where he went. And he was a kicker on the football team.

DS:

Okay.

MAG:

Yeah. Which was—he's the head cougar and he's the running cougar. And my brother played football, baseball, basketball, was an excellent gifted athlete and quit. Had no drive whatsoever, he just didn't. So then I was a baby and a little girl and the jock and dad loved me so I did everything. But I started out in everything but then I centered on swimming. So I was a competitive swimmer since the age of eight and then went all the way through to age seventeen, but you get kind of sick of it in between there, but held a bunch of records and all that kind of wonderful stuff but then I fell in love with gymnastics. Because you weren't just having your head down staring at a black line in a pool all the time, you got to create something. So then I became a competitive gymnast all the way through my high school years and got college scholarship and won two national championships, and then our team also won the national championships and collegiate hall of fame and all that stuff. And then, through gymnastics—it's not a contact sport with other people but it's a contact sport with your body against everything terrible. So I ripped my Achilles tendon and didn't want to stop doing athletics so I went back to swimming. And then through that I saw the iron man on TV—I'm the typical saw her throw up and crawl across the line you know, Jillian Haas do that and thought, "Oh my God that looks cool." Not sure why I thought that was cool with her dying as she was going across the line—she didn't really die—but that got me very interested in I want to try to do that but I didn't think I could because I didn't think I could run after having torn my Achilles tendon. So then I got involved with some people who had already done the iron man. Some triathletes and once you make friends with some triathletes then you'll start realizing they're all just hooked on endurance events and they just want to do them and it's just your lifestyle, and so you just slowly gradually get in there. And they're like you can run you just need a new pair of shoes. So it took a while and my running is still very slow and very painful—but the reason my Achilles tore wasn't a

weak Achilles it was for a lot of other things that were I was as damaged in gymnastics, so gymnastics is a wonderful, beautiful sport it's just brutal on the body.

DS:

Yeah, in fact I just want to ask you more about that because we talk about impact sport that's got to be one of the high impact sports there is. Especially on the women's side with—

MAG:

Actually—

DS:

The beam and floor exercise.

MAG:

I actually broke my back in 1976 and didn't know it—I just thought I had a minor injury and that was before I went to college. So I still went to college on a college scholarship and won two collegiate national championships. So you can still do quite a bit of stuff as long as you're taken care of real well. And that, I think is where we came together on the point of if you start doing cross training—like right now if I swim, bike, run and do weights and then not just run but do the elliptical, do water running then I can take care of my body and keep doing triathlons. Where there are some sports that you can't keep doing it. You know—but this one you can if you're really careful. And I just deal through the injuries with good care with massage and chiropractic's and stuff.

DS:

When you were a gymnast, where you at the level of going to the Olympics? Where you—

MAG:

Um-hm. That was the next level that I would go to. But I was—I'm five-six.

DS:

A little tall.

MAG:

Yeah [laughter]. So when—yeah. When the sport went to the next level—you'll see on TV where they're swinging between the bars, I mean you couldn't put the bars that wide you know for somebody five-six. So I was still at that time standing gymnastics where we were having contact with the bar in the middle of your body, but you know. But then from the injuries and stuff I just moved on. But it was a great college career sports that are fabulous.

DS:

Okay, and you know we were talking about your experience to become a triathlete, when did you first come down to Lubbock and—

MAG:

I was thirty-seven, and I'm fifty, so that was thirteen years ago, oh, that I came down first to visit, and helped him with the race at that time. And then after we got married I was afraid I would be bored and wouldn't have anything to do [laughter]. And he said, "You'll never be bored." So he like said, "Okay here's the race so you take it over." You know because he's an entrepreneur he created this gorgeous thing he said you take it over. And I was scared to death but, okay. So that was—it was a lot of fun. A lot of digging a lot of trying to just take what he had created, this wonderful thing and make it grow for him.

DS:

We'll let's talk about that creation, because we talked you created it, and the sport itself was fairly new in it's infancy at the time. And let's talk about what it was about this unique sport that not only made you not only want to become a part of it but help it grow.

MG:

I knew how well I felt doing the sport itself and as an athlete. So it became a lifestyle. And it's one of the few sports that actually becomes a lifestyle with what you do every day. And it integrates with what you do every day and then it helps you feel better with what you're doing every day. So that was part of the motivation. And then I started traveling—and the funny part about all of this, around Lubbock is—I'm basically known as—I'm know by two things. The triathlon guy, or that iron dude. I mean I'll walk into some place and—depends on the age of the people—and some guy will say "Yeah you're that triathlete. You put that triathlon thing on out at Lubbock." Well actually what I made living in, in Lubbock, was in the manufacturing business. You know manufacturing cotton module hauling equipment. And we took over first place in that industry in product—our product that we manufactured after two years of the business and sold to seventeen cotton states in three countries but no one knows that. Everybody knows me from the triathlon thing so I put the race—and what motivated me was that Lubbock had—we had a nice triathlon here. It was put on actually at Texas Tech at the aquatic center. But it was a pool swim, it was a flat course, five mile—fifteen mile bicycle ride out to Shallowater and back and around the campus. Well done race, very safe—gave you a feeling that your starting triathlon you know and all that. But I saw the lake out there and I said, "That lake's a perfect triathlon lake." It's big enough to accommodate everybody, but it's small enough that it's just not overwhelmed with water and overwhelmed with water sport. So I went out there and talked to them I said, "Would you be interested in us putting a triathlon on here." And the guy said, "What's that?" You know, so I told him. And so that's how that started, and it was part of my business entrepreneurial background, my dad was an entrepreneur, my grandfather was an

entrepreneur in West Texas, so it was just a natural thing. So I started putting it together and then I went to the Parks and Recs department city of Lubbock and said, "Would you be interested in doing some type of support on this?" So that's how that all happened. And the good news is that it was successful and it started gaining more success, and then I had the opportunity to get the iron man qualifier status in the southwest. And that was a big deal—I mean I knew it was a big deal but was a bigger deal that I even thought it was going to be. And so that started giving it prominence, it started giving it international exposure, and all that. I'm typical entrepreneur in that I'll take something to a certain point and then I don't particularly get bored with it but I'm getting itchy to look at something else or whatever. And so Marti came along and I was blessed—came along just at the right time, we met and turned out she and I had both been single for about the same amount of time, five or six years whatever it was. And one of the killers, when I would go out with someone—one of the killers would be to triathlon log time. Because they saw how of work it was, and they saw how dedicated I was to it, and they saw what the sport was and so that would just all of a sudden just kind of—it just kind of slacks off, it kind of end the deal. But she was just the opposite. And so the only thing that I ask of her, the only one thing I ask of her, I said, "All I want you to do is make it better than I've made it. You take it to the next level." And that's what she's done. And so, I'm thankful for that, because I didn't have the patience to probably to do it, I just left it at the level it was, which still be out at the lake handing out awards instead of going to a beautiful awards ceremony in town, or dress up type thing and real nice—you know that's the next level. We take particular attention to our course for the safety you know and all that has to do with the sport because it is at times can be not a safe sport you know. If you have bad weather and all that, you got people riding bicycles at twenty-five, thirty-five, forty miles an hour down hills all that, but she done a great job at it. The funny part about it is you know a lot of times married couples in business together that's the kiss of death with the marriage. It might not be the kiss of death for the business. And so we've been able to figure out how to balance that but sometimes we are—you know we're human. I'll put it that way. But that's part of the legacy of Buffalo Springs. When it goes down, and we're sitting here twenty years from now, and I'm ninety and she's seventy and someone's in here looking at this going God look at this. There was a triathlon here, twenty years ago. The legacy of it is going to be the start of it and the next step that she took it to. That's the legacy.

DS:

I want to talk to Marti about that, but now I'm going to ask you a question. In those early years, what was one of your fondest memories?

MG:

I think the fondest memories would be just seeing that first event happen. I went out, I stayed out there I had—I actually drove a BMW then, which was furnished to me by a company that I represented. And so I was sitting out there—it's not a typical car. Four door BMW is not a typical car to see a race director have, usually it's a pickup or something. I set out on the side of

the transition area in that car all night. And during the night—a West Texas windstorm came up and blew everything down. And we didn't have that many entries that year but it was over a hundred. And so one athlete showed up at three o'clock. And he came in there and said, "What are you doing here and what happened?" And I said, "Well, I'm sitting here wondering what do I do next. What can I do to make this better?" And so I said, "And then the wind came along and blew everything over." He said, "Well let me help you put it up. Put it back up." And so this guy helped me put it back up and so then the start of next morning we had a problem with swimming back into the sun. I didn't know. I didn't realize it. And it was terrible. Of course we corrected all this but these are some of my memories. The other would be once the legendary athlete, triathletes, the guys that are the Arnold Palmer's and the Lee Trevino's [0:22:42.6] the older guys, they were young then. But they would come here and race this race and say how much they loved it and all that, so that's another part of it. The other year was the year she encouraged me to do it. [Laughter] And I'll never forget that year, I liked to never have finished, but I did finish. It was a hard day you shouldn't race direct and race too. It's just hard.

DS:

Yeah cause you're in your own event, it was hard for you to be in the water and—

MG:

Yeah and I went—

MAG:

And he knew it was all taken care of but—

MG:

Yeah I knew I was all taken care of but—I mean a race director when you go to a race, you see the race in a different eyeball, in a different mindset than if you're not racing. Or if you are racing, truly racing you're not race directing. It's just a call to get a different—now when we both race, we evaluate a race and I've even had race directors contact me and say, "Would you give me a critique of our race? You did the race, you're an experienced race director, what do you think?" You know and I did—we did that—I did at elephant man. Which is over at Elephant Butte, New Mexico, and when I wrote her back, she wrote me back and said, "You weren't hard enough on me." And I said, "No. I'm fine. I point out the things that I think I think we need to do better and all the things you did great." Because I mean I don't want to just criticize somebody you know [laughter].

DS:

In fact you kind of read my mind because I was wondering you know being a race director and also a competitor in other races you know, how did your course compare with other courses?

MG:

Well our course is completely unique to the whole triathlon world. People don't—when they just go out there and look at it initially, they don't get it. But then when they're throwing at 32,050 foot elevation, they're throwing with a fifteen, twenty mile an hour, twenty-five mile an hour wind normally prevailing southwest, normally. When they're given eight hills to climb up to 9, 10, 12 percent grade, when they're given heat that's sometimes beyond comprehension you know because it's dry heat and then sunlight. When you're given all those different aspects it's just—there's not another course like it. The only course that it's been compared to is the course in Kona, Hawaii. And the reason is because—and the other thing is unpredictability. This past year the temperature was sixty-seven degrees, we had a driving rainstorm for three hours, and the wind was at twelve—it was actually ten to fifteen miles an hour. It wasn't real twenty-five miles an hour. So it makes it—of all the courses I've been on, there's just nothing that compares to it. Fact is when I want a course—if I want an easy course to do I don't go out here and do this one. That's the other thing. It's a very difficult course. It's a course that top triathletes will come in here and they'll look at and they'll go, "It's all flat except for you got those eight hills, there no big deal. I'm from Colorado." And afterwards you'll talk to them and they'll say, "That course kicked my butt. But I'll be back. I'll be back." So that's the main thing. It's just the different variances, the diversification of course, their unpredictability. You know normally you can depend on the high temperature that day being at least ninety-two, last year it was sixty-seven. That's never happened in nineteen years but who knows what's it going to be this year.

DS:

And I guess this year, since it is one of year now, let's talk about that change, that transition that Mike was speaking of earlier about you know he's going, Here I'm going to give you my baby but you got to make it better. What was that like, and what have you done since then?

MAG:

I guess I should've been a little more afraid but I wasn't at all. When I went to school, that's part of what my degree was. Was event production but I never really payed that much attention to it because I didn't think I would ever do that. We were talking about doing races and then looking at them and critiquing them, one of the things I always try to critique is did they pamper the athletes out on the course. Was everything there before you needed it? Or did you know where to turn without even thinking. Did you know where to stop? Did you have any problems? Was there garbage on the road, was there—just every little detail of was the athlete totally pampered? That's what I look at. And so then that's what I'd try to make happen at ours. So when they come all they have to have is have their stuff on their body, and have their own goggles and their own sunglasses you know and they're just ready to go. They didn't have to worry about a thing. Everything they need to hydrate themselves, feed themselves, the police are there, the sheriffs are there, the medical is there, everything is taken care of. That's where I look at it, so that was

where a lot of my thought process went, making sure every little detail is in place. So I try to keep improving on that every year.

DS:

What kind of changes have happened over the past few years. Like you mentioned you know, you corrected swimming back into the sun so you probably changed direction the next year, or location, you had anything else you needed to tweak since then?

MAG:

Oh a lot of things we had to tweak as far as the water, how the water's distributed, the Gatorade, how the Gatorade's distribute out on the course, where the sheriffs took lights [?] [00:28:15] and how attentive they are or not. Sometimes on the course there's some, they're not really slick areas but with the ways they pave roads in West Texas and the heat they can get slick. And caution areas around there. As far as the way that our volunteers are out on the course that's just improved every year because the quality of people who live in West Texas. The fabulous people that live here. So they just totally take those people under their wing and take care of them while they're out there on the course. The West Texas running club and then all the bicycling clubs here they do that for us. We've changed the bike course twice. He's added hills both times. He wants to add the hill in Ransom canyon but we just can't do that. There's absolutely no way because we have qualifying spots for Kona and then for the 70.3 championship and the hand cycle people couldn't get up that hill. There's no way. That hill is too big, too hard. And then we've done a lot of things in the way that we pamper the athletes. When the race is done, we give them time to come back to the hotel get themselves cleaned up and then we serve them a great dinner. And they get to sit down and relax with music and have the awards. And just little things we've improved all along. How they can take up their packets and making that easy, making it less complicated, less lines, just every little small detail that you don't usually think about.

DS:

Do you typically survey the participants to find out what they like for their—

MAG:

We have done that, mostly if you're talking to them. And sometimes when you survey you'll have a person say, "Man those volunteers were absolutely awesome," and then you'll have another person say, "What volunteers? I didn't have anybody out there, I couldn't find anybody." So you'll just have this variance where a person may have been brain dead the whole time. If you know—like for instance, with our different personality types and our gifts, he on race day is there when we start. Then he gets on the motorcycle and goes down on the course for me. So I've got _____ [00:30:37] on the course, I've got sheriffs on the course, I've got volunteers on the course, and then I have him on the course to tell me, their in their place, everything is

happening as it should, oh my God this curve is terrible or you know. So I know. And then I can send the other people out there that need to go out there at that time. And then on the run course we have the same kind of thing happening, so we know. But I stay at the central command and he goes out and kind of is the eyes out there.

DS:

How far out do you start planning the event?

MG:

If not the day after the—

MAG:

Well actually, this year it started the month of it. Like in June we started the twentieth anniversary one, and it made it easier. It made it easier to do so many things ahead of time.

MG:

Yeah one of those things that she's done that's really really helped her—the key to the—the difference between a mediocre event and a great event is your volunteer base. So what she's done is not only kept our volunteers, but she's nurtured them. There's a secret to that, it's an art. It is what it is. So we got people coming back to give up their time to come out there and help these athlete from all over the country and they keep coming back. They keep coming back.

MAG:

They like it.

MG:

And so she's been able to—I mean the only people we've lost over these years are just people who have moved away. They moved up somewhere else. You know so they don't live here anymore. But that's the secret. And the other thing is the last thing that happened here in the event or what people really remember, the awards ceremony that she talks about, they leave here with a full stomach and a nice awards and you know have been treated like royalty. And so they remember that. But they remember it out on the course where that volunteer has just done everything they can to help the athlete. Maybe the athlete's got cramps or maybe they got a flat tire or something. And the volunteer just goes beyond you know reproach of helping, so they remember that. And we got our evaluations, I used to do a survey that you asked about and I had the same answer, I'd say, "How did you like our mile markers?" and one would say, "What mile markers?" and the other one would say, "The best I've ever seen." You know because they are they do go brain—endurance athletics you have the tendency to go brain dead. Shanna walks around brain dead all the time [laughter]. We're the ones that started Shanna in the—

DS:

She's the one that told me that I needed to talk to y'all.

MG:

She borrowed—her first bicycle is my bicycle.

MAG:

Dave Scott bike wasn't it?

MG:

Yeah the Dave Scott bike, and she—we actually sponsored her for the first three years. She rode with us—she's like one of our kids who rides in the back seat still be hanging over blah-blah-blah-blah, you know, talking. But at any rate that's one of the keys to a successful event like this is you got to have those volunteers out there. And then the West Texas folks—it reminds me she and I had done the New Zealand iron man. And the New Zealanders they're very much like West Texas folk.

MAG:

Yeah.

MG:

Just nice as they could be. And I—I went into our hotel and I asked this guy I said, "You know you guys are so nice, what's the deal?" And he said, "That's what we're—we're raised that way." I said, "I like it." So that makes—and West Texas is—when you look on the iron man marquee. And it says Nice, France, and it says London, England. And it goes all these different events that qualify people for Kona and then you go down here at all these places, Cancun, I mean you name it. California, Florida, you know Lubbock, Texas you know and people have asked us, "How do y'all do that in Lubbock, Texas?" And I said, "First of all you need to come see it to believe it. And once you do and you see those canyons, and you see the mystique." I mean there's still a great spirit in those canyons from our Native Americans and you know it's just there. You can feel it. I mean I feel it on race day just all over me. So that's part of it. Once we get them here, once we get them to Lubbock, I guarantee you—

MAG:

They love it. They do.

MG:

They love it. And then we treat them nice. You know. But her nurturing of—I mean we'll have a nice little social just for our coordinators. Just for our volunteers. They come to it and we pat them on the back and we give them prizes and we do things for them. We got some that have

won even—or we pay for a trip for them to go to Kona to the iron man. And we ask them to do nothing when they get there, do nothing but enjoy the island, you know.

MAG:

They love it.

MG:

And they say, “Well, can we come over and help you do this or that?” You know. “We don’t even care whether we see you or not.” You know. We had one that we got there one year and we didn’t see them until they left [laughter]. And that’s fine, because that’s what we expected. We want them to enjoy the islands, you know. Not too many people get to go to Hawaii. You know.

DS:

And I think that’s important, I’ve been with several organizations. I used to be the president of our local Latino organization here on campus and for—last year I’d decided we need an awards ceremony and wanted to recognize the founders. And then this year I also wanted to recognize our member of the year. But I told the university executive what we’re doing, and I’m going, “But no executive board member can be up for. This has to be to the rest of the members. To give them a reason to be up.” I go, “As an officer. It’s their duty to do what you’re doing.” for them to come in and give up their weekends to come and help sponsor an event or whatever, we need to recognize them. Give them a pat on the back.” So I’m glad to hear you’re taking—

MG:

Yeah.

MAG:

Oh yeah.

DS:

A few levels higher than that but you know, it need to be done.

MG:

Well I mean—

MAG:

You wouldn’t believe what they do. I mean, it’s more than worth that. You know. It’s more than worth that.

DS:

So what’s the next level [laughter] to reach?

MAG:

I personally—I keep saying this over and over again, I don't if it'll ever come through but I'm going to keep saying it until I'm flat turned down, "Absolutely not." I would love to see iron man Texas. In Lubbock, Texas. The city deserves it. The quality of the people and the race that the people here can help to create would be worthy of iron man Texas. And there is no other place in Texas that would make it worthy. And it would be fabulous. So I keep pushing to get—I don't know if it'll happen and if it doesn't happen then we'll just keep taking this one to higher levels that we can think of. This year in fact for the twentieth anniversary we're going to do something really fun for the athletes. Don Caldwell has offered to do a show for us. At the Cactus Courtyard.

MG:

It's going to be specially designed just for Buffalo—

MAG:

An actual show. And it's going to be really cool. And of course there'll be the awards dinner and everything, but then that with it.

DS:

That's great cause we have Don Caldwell's all his recordings from the Razzle studio and all that, we have that whole collection that he donated a few years ago and in fact y'all probably know Andy Wilkinson?

MAG:

Um-hm.

DS:

He's an artist and residence here and he also does interviews but on the music side.

MAG:

Yeah.

DS:

And so, I won't be surprised if we show up there—

MAG:

Oh good.

DS:

And videotape or something. In fact I was going to ask if we could maybe run out there with the video camera or something and tape the event this year and—

MG:

We'd love it.

MAG:

You should.

MG:

And let me tell you, there's another event that—we're not the race directors for this event but we facilitated bringing it here, and that's the USAT USA triathlon national collegiate championship, and they'll be about 120 universities here in Lubbock.

DS:

Wow. When is that?

MG:

April eighteenth.

MAG:

April eighteenth.

MG:

And—

DS:

Would love to be out there.

MG:

We would love to have you. I mean this is in a way it's historic, because to my knowledge, Lubbock has—and Tech has never hosted a national championship. of any kind. Could be mistaken on that, but I just don't think so. I mean we had some regional things in here in basketball, we've never had anything in football that I know of, and we used to have the All American Coaches Football All Star game here but we never had anything in golf, and never had anything in tennis, nothing. And we started trying to get this thing done, putting it together in April of last year. And I started doing it then on my side, that's what I really do.

MAG:

Yeah, he again had the original idea and I just was like foaming at the mouth with the idea. I thought it was great.

MG:

And I knew they were—they were at Tuscaloosa at the University of Alabama, that's where it was for two years and I knew they were going to rotate it. So I just went to the executive director and I said, "You know, where are you guys going with this?" And he said, "Well we're entertaining bids." And I said, "Okay." He said, "Right now, there's two cities in California that are probably at the head of the list." And that was Sacramento—I'm sorry not Sacramento.

MAG:

I don't remember. I just remember somewhere in California.

MG:

Anyway, San Diego was one of them, but there was another one up north—San Jose up north. And so he said, "They've kind of got the inside on getting their bids in and all that kind of—" and I said, "Well, what do we do?" And so he told me and I came back went to our sports authority and it's basically between the city and USA triathlon, and then city hires us to facilitate it. And to make sure that everything is—all the details. She does that. And so we started working on it and we actually got it in—I think it was September wasn't it? September. So it's a major deal. And we probably have a hundred and twenty universities in here competing for the national championship.

MAG:

That's another fun thing we got all our volunteers and athletes are calling us asking to volunteer to this one. So it's fun.

MG:

Well the other thing—and it goes back to patting Buffalo Springs on the back because if we hadn't had that heritage, and we hadn't had the legacy that Buffalo Springs has built in the triathlon world because everybody knows this event. I don't care—you can talk to anybody. You can go in an airport and go up to an athlete or some type of athlete and say if they have a triathlon t-shirt on you say, "Have you ever heard of Buffalo Springs?" They'll say, "Yeah." I don't care where they're from. And so USA triathlon—of course I've been on the board—I'm on the board now. The national board, and I was president of the board in 94' so I've had a lot of activity with USA triathlon. But that's not the reason we got it, the fact is, I thought at some point it might be detrimental. You know because I didn't want to get into any conflict of interest and anything like that. And so they said no that's no problem at all.

MAG:

I think our city is one of the reasons we got it because Val [?] [00:42:22] Harrison worked so hard to make sure it came.

MG:

Yes, yes the city was just—when I—when we went in and talked to Scott we said, “Okay, we’ve got a chance for this, here’s what your budget going to have to be approximately and are you interested?” And he said, “Well of course.” And so then he got the budget approved—some of it had to come from the Mayor. So he got his budget approved and I said, “Okay. Let’s get y’all together.” So we brought them in Colorado Springs, they got together and made deal.

DS:

That’s great.

MG:

Yeah.

DS:

And, and you know what it reminds me of is, we have a clear the wheels in North American sports, studies sport historians annual convention here in Lubbock. And part of it was because you know, sports authority—women out there saying we’ve got these ideas they—we’re going to work with them and bring them those guys in.

MAG:

That’s good.

DS:

They’re amazing. You know what I’m thinking since you have these connections at the national level of the organization, do y’all have y’all’s material archived anywhere?

MG:

No. everything is up in Colorado Springs.

DS:

We would love to be the archive of record. Pay for correspondence whatever. Photographs, whatever documents the event and the—not just your event but the entire sport, I think would be great addition to our archives here.

MG:

Yeah.

DS:

And because we're unabashed about saying we want to be the sports archive of the nation.

MAG:

Oh.

DS:

We want to be—when people thinks of sports, they call us, and in some areas, ESPN already does that, when they want information they call us.

MAG:

Well maybe we can arrange a meeting with you and Jeff Derrek. And that would be good. He's the person who's in charge of the national events.

MG:

I'd rather move it to a higher level than that yeah.

MAG:

Oh get him to go ahead and talk to Skip?

MG:

Well these are both the executive director—or no less than Tim Young.

MAG:

Tim Young.

MG:

He's a senior vice president.

MAG:

That's a great idea.

MG:

My brother get it on their liable.

DS:

And in our area—that's like to have our—the deputy director that I work with Bill Tydeman involved with that because you know anything—

MAG:

Great.

DS:

The special things that we need to you know to let's say okay we'll approve that, he'll be there to make those approvals because it's his prerogative to do that.

MG:

Right. Well, let me ask you this. If you could—how about sending me a letter.

DS:

Okay.

MG:

It'll have the letter of Texas Tech logo and all that stuff on it—letter head. Send it to me, to that address and say here's what we would like to do. You know, do whatever preliminary pleasantries you want put in there, whatever. But here's what we would like to propose. And then let me—you know if you'll get that to me, then I'll take it from there.

DS:

Okay.

MG:

And see what we could do with it.

MAG:

That's awesome.

MG:

Because I know the—there's nobody doing that. Nobody doing that. And it'd be very intriguing. I think if I were in your job it'd be something that's really intrigue me to do this, because I can tell—and I can tell you some stories of the early days of the sport were a guy by the name of Walt Stack was actually, probably the original triathlete of the United States of America. There's no question he was, unofficially. You know there's no declaration that Walt Stack was, but I'll bet a dollar to a donut that he was. And what he used to do is every morning he'd get up and run across the bridge in San Francisco, the golden gate bridge. Then he'd get in that cold water and swim, and then he'd get on his bicycle and ride. Well he did this up until he was eighty-nine. What he started doing triathlons, when they organized them. When they started calling them triathlons. So Walt Stack was one of the original. He did the iron man in Hawaii, and he has the distinction for being the slowest finisher, that's ever finished in twenty-seven hours. It wasn't

because he was slow, it's because he enjoyed it so much. He liked to drink beer along the way [laughter]. He liked to make friends. And then they didn't have a cutoff.

MAG:

Yeah.

MG:

See then they didn't have a cutoff of seventeen hours. But so—I met the guy. He's an interesting guy, he's dead now, he's diseased. He died in eighty—it was either 89' or 90'. But I know a lot of these—I've met a lot of these people along the way because I started back far in it. You know so I know all the legends that are in it now, that are now no longer competing because they're—God forbid they're in their forties [laughter] you know—

MAG:

Yeah. Might be—

MG:

Their early fifties and you know so. Anyway, but if you'll send that to me, then we can take it from there and get stuff done.

DS:

Surely I'd like to do that because I think—I mean it goes well—you know because we're the elected repository record for the whole southwest conference record, when that folded you know. We've been in contact with them, and so it's like, Has anybody got y'all's paper work? We go, Duh. [00:47:24] we got Bo Harder on the horn, and worked out a deal quickly with him, so we're out there picking those up in April of 96' about over four hundred boxes of records. And that's kind of what lead to us doing more oral histories in sports is because we've had all these office records and everything, but we didn't have the personal one-on-one conversations.

MG:

Right.

DS:

And so we started going back and interviewing some of those coaches and athletes, administrators that have been involved, and even like this sports writers that were involved with the interviews of some of those people.

MG:

Well what I can do, even as a—because this type of thing interests me and I was never history guy when I was in school, but I've become a historian to a degree in that I've studied American

presidents. And then other things have interested me. But what I can do is I'm going to be—I'm going to be off the board after this year. I don't want to be on the board anymore, I'm not running again. And so what we can do is spearhead it while I'm on the board, and then what I can do is act as a liaison and I'll volunteer to be—nobody will volunteer for it. And I'll volunteer to be the liaison. And so that way we have a connect—we're right here in Lubbock together.

DS:

Oh yeah.

MG:

And then I'll still be connected with the tria—the sport. I just won't be on the board. But it'll give me more time to do something like this.

DS:

And I think that's great because also, you mentioned earlier the conflict of issuing—the conflict issuing you know. And if you're you know not on the board they can't say well he's driving it all.

MG:

Oh no.

DS:

You're just a coordinator.

MG:

Exactly. And that's another reason why I want to get off of the board so I can do some other—I've got some other creative things on my mind. And that too. So I'd rather be off the board and plus I'm tired of meetings and stuff.

DS:

Okay. And in the interim do you have anything concerning y'all's event that y'all would like to either donate or loan us for copying? Any scrapbooks-

MG:

Yeah. Let me—we've got a—we've got tons of stuff that's just not as organized, it's more organized when she came in and me. But we've got endless, endless—the AJ has been so good to us. And that's one thing, I mean the AJ have done it from the very beginning. The very first event of—Sam Scott was the sports writer. He was assigned to do the event, and he competed in it. But he didn't finish. He did the swim and he did the bike, but he couldn't do the run. And I went out and I went to the spirit department out here at Tech and I got the pom-poms out there.

And they were—they just felt—my daughter had to be one of the poms and they just fell in love with it. And so this is the story. I mean he wrote one of the best stories that's ever been written. And then when he was still there but not assigned to the triathlon in the following years, I go to him and I'd say, "Sam, you know what would be a beautiful follow up story? If you could come back and finish." I said, "Then you can wait, I mean like five years later." Or four years later, whatever it was. He never did that. The fact is he left, he went to a bigger city. Bigger newspaper, but I thought it'd be a great story. But what I found was with reporters, you tell them what you think is a great story, if they don't think it's a great story they won't do it. You can't—writers are just that way.

DS:

Oh yeah.

MG:

But anyway, it was a lot of fun and we've got all these. If you just give us a little time I can put it together.

DS:

Yeah we're not moving anywhere soon [laughter].

MG:

Good so—

DS:

And that's—

MG:

And now we know how to get here.

DS:

And that's the thing we can promise you is you know a few hundred years from now, those records will still be persevered. Maybe not the same format we have now, but it'll be migrated to whatever format—

MG:

Right.

DS:

So it'll be accessible.

MG:

Man that'd be cool. I didn't even know this was here. I mean there are so many things that a university of this size that you just don't know what's there. I mean I discovered something—seems like every couple of three years I discover something at Texas Tech that I didn't know about. You know and of course I didn't go to school here so—well I did, I went to summer school. But—

DS:

Well this entity was started in 1955. And it's been in various locations on campus and before this building we've been in the math building. As you came in the math building on that east side and went up those stairs, first door on this side that led into what was our office. That used to be the library for Texas Tech. And so that's where we were at and our basement is where we kept most of the student staff and I was one of those and we had a real small tight stack area. And then this building had been in the works for fifteen years, and finally in 96' they got the money and decided—then they redid the plans, and what happened was there was an architect, that he was already associated with the university and the Southwest collection and he goes like, "I want to design their building." And so he made sure to put little touches on it where it's a little special and he went and integrated some of the old West Texas culture and look of the university into this building. So if you walk around you'll notice how it's a little different.

MG:

Yeah. It is. Really is.

DS:

Well thank y'all. Most likely—

MAG:

Thank you

DS:

I know that y'all got a busy schedule, heading out to—is it you're going to a meeting tomorrow?

MAG:

Yeah.

MG:

We're going to Colorado Springs for a board meeting and a race director's conference also.

DS:

Well, when I learn how to swim I'll enter.

MAG:

Good, well you get to a team and just be out front,

MG:

Get the hang of it. I've got a bicycle, I've got a bicycle [laughter].

End of Recording

