



## Becky Dixon

Television Broadcaster & First Woman  
Co-host of ABC's Wide World of  
Sports

### Chapter 01 – Introduction

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**Announcer:** Becky Dixon, president and owner of AyerPlay Productions, began her career in broadcasting at KTUL-TV in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where she was both a news and sports anchor. In just six years, she was hired by ABC Sports and became the first woman to host a network sports show when she joined Frank Gifford as co-host of *ABC's Wide World of Sports*.

Dixon served as a broadcaster for the Super Bowl, Winter Olympics, World Gymnastics Championships, college football, and the Triple Crown of Horse Racing. She also co-hosted the Dallas Cowboys' *Jerry Jones Show*.

Dixon later returned to Tulsa and founded Dixon Productions, launching the television special *Oklahomans*. The show was statewide, promoting and celebrating the achievements of many well-known Oklahomans. In 1994, Dixon joined forces with communications pioneer Ed Taylor to form AyerPlay.

Becky is considered a pioneer woman in the broadcast industry and tells her story on the oral history website and podcast [VoicesOfOklahoma.com](http://VoicesOfOklahoma.com).

### Chapter 02 – 9:05 Ranch Living

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**John Erling (JE):** My name is John Erling. Today's date is June 14th, 2023. So Becky, would you state your full name, please?

**Becky Dixon (BD):** Rebecca Elizabeth Lynn Dixon.

**JE:** I might say that we're recording this interview in the studios of Voices of Oklahoma.com. Your birth date?

**BD:** 4-14-51.

**JE:** Making your present age?

**BD:** 72 years old.

**JE:** Where were you born?

**BD:** I was born in Coffeyville, Kansas, which is right across the border from Oklahoma, because I was raised my entire childhood in Oklahoma, but Coffeyville was the closest town with a hospital.

**JE:** Where in Oklahoma were you raised?

**BD:** Nowata County, so South Coffeyville, Oklahoma. We were just 10 miles – our ranch was 10 miles from the Kansas border, and I was raised on a ranch in Northeastern, Oklahoma, a large family ranch. It's now been in the family for over 100 years.

I went to school, in grade school, in Coffeyville, Kansas, because that was the closest Catholic school, and that was where we – we went to Mass, and then I later changed to Linnepah High School, which was in Oklahoma. So I sort of had two states growing up, because many of the things that we did as a family – and it was a bigger town, was Coffeyville, Kansas, but our address was Oklahoma.

**JE:** So growing up on a ranch, you did ranch work, I suppose? They put you to work?

**BD:** Oh, yes. I was the oldest of five children. We had many hired hands that worked for us, because it was a large ranch, but also my dad made sure that every morning we were out the door, usually helping him with ranch work, as opposed to helping my mom, who had to feed all of these ranch hands and children. But most of the time I was outdoors helping my dad.

**JE:** Did you take your horses and riding horses?

**BD:** Oh, yes. Yes, yes, because there was – there was ranch work to be done every single day. You know, cattle didn't know when Saturday or Sunday came along, so there were no days off. But yes, I grew up – I don't know if you've ever watched Reed Drummond's Pioneer Woman cooking show, and you see her children out helping their dad every day with ranch work, but that was much like my life.

**JE:** Do you think that you – as you grew up, you drew from some of that experience living on a ranch?

**BD:** I think hard work definitely came from my roots on the ranch. I mean, we worked hard every day. My dad, I don't recall him, especially when he was younger, ever sitting down except to eat one of his meals. He was a very hard worker, and on the ranch we worked hard every day.

We, you know, oftentimes, I can remember, oftentimes galloping through the pasture at 5 a.m. and watching the sun come up, because during the summer, especially, we like to do the ranch work early because it would get so hot. And then many times, you know, we watched the sun go down as we put our horses up that evening.

**JE:** When they saw you on Wide World of Sports, they had no idea you were a rancher's daughter.

**BD:** They didn't know I was a cowgirl.

**JE:** A cowgirl, right. Your mother's name?

**BD:** Betty Ruth Lowry was her maiden name.

**JE:** So where did she come from and grow up?

**BD:** She spent her entire life on the ranch. The ranch was her family's ranch. There were four brothers who came with their father from Tennessee and established the ranch in Oklahoma. And out of those four brothers, there were only two children born: my mom and her sister. So they inherited the majority of the ranch.

And when my mom married my dad, he was the 19-year-old farm boy from Kansas. He grew up in Kansas, but he had to learn ranch work very quickly.

**JE:** Your mother's personality, what was she like?

**BD:** She was a saint. She was a saint, and that was her personality. She was not a critical person. You know, she had five children, but she raised us by her example, and she was just a wonderful person. She also was a very hard worker. She was entirely responsible for feeding everyone on the ranch, and she never knew how many people were going to show up for breakfast, lunch, or dinner on the ranch.

She was a wonderful seamstress. She sewed many of our clothes and curtains on the ranch, bedspreads. I mean, she could make anything. She was the Martha Stewart of ranching in Northeastern Oklahoma.

**JE:** Did you pick up on any of those skills?

**BD:** Definitely not the sewing. And no, I didn't really. I think I'm a pretty good cook today, but I learned it more after I left the ranch. I didn't learn it from my mother. Like I said, I was too busy out on the ranch helping my dad.

**JE:** And your dad's name?

**BD:** Harry Charles Lynn.

**JE:** And then he grew up in Kansas?

**BD:** He grew up not too far from Coffeyville, Kansas on a small farm near Liberty, Kansas. And he went to high school in Coffeyville, Kansas. Coffeyville was the larger town of those small Kansas and Oklahoma towns at that time.

**JE:** How would you describe his personality?

**BD:** He was a very hard worker, strict disciplinarian in that, you know, he wanted each of us to do the right thing, and he made sure that we knew what he thought was the right thing. I learned so many things from him. He was a character.

He had many ranch hands come and go on the ranch over the years, and they all said to the person, it was the hardest job they ever had, but it was also the best job they ever had.

**JE:** They learned a lot, didn't they?

**BD:** They learned a lot. And he made sure everyone who was around him learned a lot, and he had plenty to say and plenty to teach. And to this day, I can still open a gate with the best of them.

**JE:** And that takes a skill.

**BD:** Well, if you do it by his book, it takes a certain skill. He had a specific way. He wanted everything done, and that was how he wanted definitely his children to do it.

**JE:** Well, he probably impacted many, many lives beyond his imagination.

**BD:** Oh, he did. My parents were killed together in a car accident in 2005, and over 900 people came to their funeral. We had the funeral together at our Catholic Church in Coffeyville, and many of those who came were his former ranch hands. And that's how I knew how they all, years later, felt about him.

**JE:** How about the accident? How did that happen?

**BD:** My parents were coming home from Coffeyville to the ranch. It's about a 10-mile drive. Somebody was driving 90 miles an hour on a country road and hit them, and they were – they were both killed instantly. It was 2005. What a shock.

I really don't have the words to describe how shocking it was and the grief that followed for our family. Because, you know, it's like a candle being snuffed out, and all of a sudden they were just both gone.

**JE:** Wow. Who stepped up on the ranch then to take over?

**BD:** My oldest brother. I'm the oldest, and then I have my next brother is Charlie, and he runs the ranch. He's worked on the ranch every day of his life, except when he went to college at Oklahoma State. But we still, you know, love to go to the ranch.

It's like my, my husband says, it's like my drug when I go there because it always makes me feel wonderful, and I'm filled with so many memories. I went there a couple of weeks ago. And there's no place more beautiful.

**JE:** Yeah. It's great that it's still in the family, and do you look at the future? Are your brothers, do they have children? Are there youngsters that will probably continue on?

**BD:** We don't really know. My brother has two daughters. I don't think either one of them are interested. We don't really have a next generation that's really interested in ranching. I'm hoping some will develop along the way,

but right now, I'm not sure what the future of the ranch holds, but I know it will always have the most special place in my heart.

**JE:** Well, you and your brother still have a lot of living to do, so. You can enjoy it all.

**BD:** Yes, and he's, like I said, he still works there every day.

### **Chapter 03 – 6:45**

#### **Teaching**

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**John Erling (JE):** Okay, your education. Where did you go to grade school?

**Becky Dixon (BD):** The Catholic school in Coffeyville, Kansas, Holy Name school. I went there up until sixth grade and then switched to Lenape High School, which was in Oklahoma, Nowata County, and the reason I switched is because Coffeyville, a Holy Name school, did not go into middle school and high school.

I think at first they went up to eighth grade, and then there was a shortage of nuns, and so they – I know the school is still there, but I'm not sure what grade they go to now, but I switched over for middle school at Lenape High School.

**JE:** Okay, and your faith in the family must, in your religion, in Catholicism, must have been really strong in the family since they made sure you were attending a Catholic school.

**BD:** Yes, my mother drove, like I said, Coffeyville was, oh, 10 to 12 miles from our ranch house, and, you know, by the time she got to the school, it was probably, let's say, 15 miles, so she drove 60 miles a day just to get us back and forth to the Catholic school.

My father was the Catholic, my mom converted, but yes, it was very important to them that we went to the Catholic school, and then my younger siblings did not go to the Catholic school. My oldest brother and I did. Then, by the time they started to come along, the middle siblings, my mom had to make a decision. Did she leave to take some of us to the

Catholic school in Coffeyville, or she had to get the others to the school in Lenapaw? So at that point, we all switched to the Lenape schools.

**JE:** In high school, what was that experience like for you? Were you active in many activities?

**BD:** I was. It was a small school. There were 50 students, around 50 students, in my graduating class. I played basketball. There weren't a lot of other activities for us. There weren't clubs, so to speak. There was 4-H and FHA. FHA was Future Homemakers. I was not really involved that much with any of those.

**JE:** Was sports becoming of interest to you? You said you played basketball. Was that a part of your life, big part, small part?

**BD:** Not as much as sports that have evolved around ranch life. You know, for instance, rodeos or competing in horse shows, things like that. I was more interested in those, although I did become interested in basketball. My mom had played basketball, so that was kind of a sport. That was really the only sport available at the time for young women at that school, because like I said, it was a very small school.

**JE:** What year did you graduate?

**BD:** 1969.

**JE:** So then what do you do?

**BD:** University of Tulsa.

**JE:** Was that a no-brainer? Did you shop?

**BD:** Well, I never wanted to leave the ranch, first of all. But of course, I knew I needed to and wanted to go to college. So I chose the college that was closest to the ranch, and that was the University of Tulsa. The other one I considered was Oklahoma State University. My mother had gone to Oklahoma State.

So I considered that, but I had a strong history in Tulsa because my grandmother had three or four siblings that lived down here. So we came to Tulsa often. I was very familiar with Tulsa, and I liked Tulsa, and it was close to the ranch. I could go home on the weekends if I wanted to.

**JE:** Let's name your grandmother. What was her name?

**BD:** Her name was Lila White Lowry.

**JE:** All right, so at TU, what will your degree be in when you graduate?

**BD:** Education and a minor in journalism.

**JE:** Okay, and why?

**BD:** Education because I could see myself maybe becoming a teacher someday, but I didn't have a... I wasn't completely sold on that idea. Journalism, because it was something that I... I can't say that I was really interested in pursuing a career in journalism, but I liked reading. I liked writing. I liked the skills that it took to minor in a journalism degree.

**JE:** So there's nothing tracking in your mind right now about what could possibly have been your future. So that's not even in your well house at this point.

**BD:** No, not at all. Like I said, I really thought I would probably end up on a ranch someday, whether it was staying at my own ranch and living there. I was just so happy growing up on the ranch and being with my family. Our closest neighbors were my grandmother and cousins, and they were three miles away, and we were all on the same ranch.

So that was my, you know, pretty much my entire life, and I was very happy there. So I didn't really... I didn't grow up dreaming of a career. And if when you think about it in 1969, young women didn't really track that way, at least the young women in my life. Do you know what I'm saying?

But when I got to the University of Tulsa, I did become more interested in pursuing a career, and I did do my... I did my student teaching at a school here in Tulsa, and I liked that. It was in sixth grade.

I then – I was a teacher for a year in first grade, and – But then I became pregnant, and then I was married and became pregnant with my daughter, and I thought, “I'm not really sure that I can do justice to children all day and then come home and do justice to my own child.” And that's when I started to think about a career in journalism.



**JE:** Okay, I've got to come back.

**BD:** Okay. I know this can be confusing.

**JE:** To cowboy boots.

**BD:** Okay.

**JE:** You were... you must have worn and owned a bunch of cowboy boots.

**BD:** Yes.

**JE:** Do you own any today?

**BD:** One pair.

**JE:** Do you wear them anywhere?

**BD:** I wear them sometimes. I wear them sometimes. If I go to the ranch, I'll wear them. If I go to Pawhuska, I went there recently. I wore them.

**JE:** Sure. Yeah. Well, you deserve to be able to wear them. You earned the right.

**BD:** I think when I interviewed Reed Drummond, I probably wore... I think I wore my cowboy boots that day. It depends on the occasion.

**JE:** And this is a unique experience. You have an interviewer interviewing an interviewer.

**BD:** Yes.

**JE:** And so it... but it works out fine.

**BD:** And I realized we're jumping around a little, but I did not have a linear life. I didn't have... start with the plan and end with the plan.

## **Chapter 04 – 8:00**

### **Becky's Idea**

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**John Erling (JE):** You taught for a year. And then you decided to stay home for a while?

**Becky Dixon (BD):** Yes. I wanted to stay home with my daughter, which I did. And then, like I said, I began to think about a career in journalism because I felt like that would be a little more flexible than showing up and teaching every day.

**JE:** Right.

**BD:** So I literally talked my way – and I came up with the idea of sports casting for a woman because there weren't really any women doing that.

**JE:** All right. So you were watching, obviously, sports on television.

**BD:** Some.

**JE:** And was there anybody you saw or the concept came while you were watching television, more than likely?

**BD:** Yes. Well, I watched Wide World of Sports with my grandmother growing up because she liked some of the women's sports like figure skating, gymnastics, skiing, things like that, tennis. A lot of the sports that, you know, I went on to cover on Wide World of Sports. So there were women athletes at the time, you know, that were experts, let's say, in a specific sport, but not necessarily women journalists covering sports. Do you know what I'm saying?

**JE:** I do.

**BD:** Like, let's say a Peggy Fleming.. Who was a wonderful figure skater. She covered figure skating for Wide World of Sports.

**JE:** Right. But certainly you didn't think, "Wide World of Sports, I'm gonna be there."

**BD:** No. Never. I didn't think that until the day they told me I was going to be.

**JE:** And so we'll get to that. So you have this idea of TV sports. What do you do with that idea?

**BD:** I take it to Channel 8.

**JE:** And who did you, you just, did you call? Did you just walk out?

**BD:** I called Chris Lincoln, who I had met before. But Channel 8 was so innovative at the time. I just thought, I thought they just might buy this

idea. I was familiar with the Lake family that owned Channel 8, and they were doing so many different things in sports.

In addition to the nightly sportscasts that they featured, like everybody else, they also were producing coach's shows, like the OU Coaches Show, OSU Coaches Show, tennis tournaments. They eventually got into horse racing. But Mr. Lake had a vision that was just beyond anyone else's at the time, and I could see that.

And I think, you know, obviously Chris Lincoln as well, who dominated the sports market at the time, Channel 8 did. So I decided to start at the top.

**JE:** That was the era of Ates the Place. Ates the Place, yes. And we have on our website, Nancy Lake, Seven Oaks. We've interviewed her about her father, and then she gave us a interview that Jimmy Lake gave. It's about a 30-minute thing that we have on our website as well.

It's pretty remarkable when he talks about how he brought television here to Tulsa.

**BD:** He, the Lake family, like I said, the Lake, I had the good fortune to work with Nancy as well as Mr. Lake over the years. It was, we were, when I got to Channel 8, and in the ensuing years, we were the number one ABC affiliate in the country in terms of market share.

**JE:** Wow.

**BD:** That didn't happen by accident.

**JE:** No, but they had such great – Bob Hauer.

**BD:** Bob Hauer.

**JE:** Was the sports, I mean the news anchor. Don Woods.

**BD:** Don Woods.

**JE:** I've forgotten some of the female news people.

**BD:** Beth Rangel.

**JE:** Yes.

**BD:** Beth Rangel. And before her, too, there were... Beth was there when I got there. Okay. Beth and then Diana Moon came along pretty much the same time I did.

**JE:** It was one of those perfect storms with all this talent.

**BD:** All the talent.

**JE:** And when I came in '76, I was very aware of all that was happening and of course watched Ates the place. You called Chris Lincoln or said, I'm in the lobby or how did...

**BD:** No, I said, I want to come see you because I have an idea. So he set up a meeting with Tom Goodgame, who was the general manager, and that's another name I have to mention. He was the general manager and he also was very innovative, very creative, very open to big ideas, new ideas.

I'm not saying my idea was the big one, but it was definitely new at the time. And Mr. Lake. So I came out to the station and told them what my vision was. And my vision was, because like I said, I wanted to still have time to spend with my daughter and I thought I was hoping that I could create a position that would give me some flexibility. And so I proposed doing two stories a week for the nightly sports.

**JE:** Okay, and what was their reception of that idea?

**BD:** Okay, well, let's try it –I think was their first idea. Let's try it. And see how it works out.

**JE:** Immediately?

**BD:** Immediately. Yes.

**JE:** Because you came with no experience. No. Radio, television, nothing. And not even hired professionally writing for anybody.

**BD:** I came with an idea and that was it.

**JE:** And they, yeah, so then...

**BD:** But they didn't have that much invested in the idea. They said, we'll try it.

**JE:** Right. But that was a big door.

**BD:** It was a big door.

**JE:** So then what was your first? Did they want you to do an audition? Did they want to see you on camera first? Or how did that work?

**BD:** I don't think so. I think I just did a story. I think I introduced myself in the first piece and told them the things, you know, that I might be covering. And the other idea I had is that I would participate in some of the sports. If I was doing a story on tennis, I might play tennis with the person I'm interviewing.

Or if I'm doing a story on, you know, maybe a girls softball team, I might throw a pitch or it was also my idea was to participate in some of the sports. Mr. Lake loved, get ready for this, bowling and fishing. I could bowl. I could fish.

So I learned that in that first meeting because he thought that there was entirely too much basketball, baseball and football on the nightly sports cast. He wanted to see more bowling and fishing. So great. I thought, well, I can do that.

**JE:** How long were the pieces?

**BD:** A minute and a half.

**JE:** Yeah. And so your first one was about?

**BD:** Me. Like I said, I think I introduced myself and said, you know, some of the, I said, I don't remember. Obviously part of my idea included more women's sports. So I said I would be covering women's sports and participating in sports and, you know, whatever. I can't remember exactly now what I said, but, and then I – I'm trying to think now what my first actual story was. I think it was a Some kind of a high school girls team.

Maybe softball, something like that, but I like to think that the idea worked out okay for both of us and it just sort of evolved And as anyone will tell you in a television station, I'm sure Radio probably was not that different. If you're there and are doing a good job and willing to work hard, you're going to get more work.

Because somebody's are always taking a vacation or somebody wants

time off or somebody's ill that day. So they're you know, there are opportunities for you if you're if you're doing a good job and if you're working hard.

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## **Chapter 05 – 5:37**

### **Madison Square Garden**

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**Becky Dixon (BD):** My first big opportunity I felt came when Nolan Richardson was at TU and was the basketball coach and did such a phenomenal job and that first year they went to the NIT which was a bigger tournament at the time in New York and for some reason none of the sportscasters who were ahead of me: Chris, Carl Arkey, Bob Carpenter, I came about the same time. So we were kind of on equal footing, but for some reason they had other responsibilities and could not go to New York to cover that tournament.

So I got to go and I did a pretty good job. And I think I convinced them then that I could handle live coverage, traditional male sports and so that opened some doors within the station for me

**John Erling (JE):** Well, and then it just so happens they won the NIT.

**BD:** They won. Yes.

**JE:** Remember that downtown celebration?

**BD:** Yes.

**JE:** The town came downtown right there in that square and I was there-

**BD:** And it was a wonderful. It was a bit for Tulsa and for my alma mater to you. And it was you know, it was just wonderful all the way around it. I remember I got to be good friends with Nolan and for some reason I took him he came out to the station and when they got back for an interview and I ended up taking him to the – back to the airport and I remember telling him.

I said, "If there's anything you want at this time now it's a good time to ask

for it. Whether it was, you know more whatever for the team or you know, just just your vision for what you want in the future for this team. You should ask for it now.” and he agreed.

**JE:** I'm just thinking about you and the confidence you must have had in yourself. I could never have done what you did. I mean I just worked my way in, slowly, slowly slowly, but here you are and then then you're in New York. Had you ever been to New York before?

**BD:** I had been once. All right, but it was of course an entirely different situation. I'm at Madison Square Garden, you know the sold-out crowd my hometown watching, I mean obviously I wasn't a part of the broadcast but I was there, you know, to do all of the interviews post game and to do preview pieces before the game.

The first thing I found out the hard way was that Madison Square Garden allowed only union camera operators into the building. We we didn't have a Union camera operator in Tulsa. So we had to kind of figure that out and I think sometimes that it helped because I was the only woman. Obviously they're covering things and I'm not saying I was able to talk my way in because I was a woman. But at least I think it might – I think it might have helped a little bit. I said, “Please we didn't know, I'm from Oklahoma.” I don't know. what excuse –

**JE:** You have a pleasing personality and all and that that worked for you and so they allowed you to broadcast.

**BD:** Mm-hmm.

**JE:** Yeah.

**BD:** Yes

**JE:** Yeah, wow that that was something else and then to walk into Madison Square Garden, which you had never been in.

**BD:** I'd never been, yeah.

**JE:** And to do that you must have gotten lots of good compliments back with Mr. Goodgame and Mr. Lake.

**BD:** Yes. Yes and Bob Gregory who is probably to this day was one of the most talented broadcasters, writers, journalists, that I ever worked with he complimented me when I came back and he was a very gruff kind of person and it did not hand it certainly did not hand out compliments quickly or easily.

And he complimented me and that meant a lot to me when I came back from New York, and I think that gave me a big boost in confidence.

**JE:** If we could hear God speak it would be sounding just like Bob Gregory.

**BD:** Or with that authority, for sure.

**JE:** Yes, I had a good Memory of him going to lunch with him one time and we had a good time. So something must happen then after that experience in New York. Do you get the other assignments?

**BD:** I get more assignments and I think they have more obviously more confidence in me and, being a woman, you know was a unique position and I think they saw that that was beneficial to the station. Unique in that I wasn't just another man covering sports. Do you know what I'm saying? So perhaps maybe people, especially women, maybe paid more attention.

**JE:** We talked about Reed Rumman being a pioneer woman. You are a pioneer woman.

**BD:** People often ask me how I how I felt especially in the early years how I felt about being a pioneer for women and I never really knew how to answer that question because I wasn't sure how many women would follow me.

But today, you know, I'm so happy to say you can tune in to almost any sporting event and see a woman on the broadcast team and that makes me very happy.

**JE:** Oh on ESPN. I watched him every morning at Six o'clock and we've got all that you laid the groundwork for many of them. There's no question about that.



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**Chapter 06 – 5:50**  
**All Three Networks**

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**John Erling (JE):** You're having more and more assignments and let's bring you up to probably something that was pretty important. When an agent showed a tape of your work to somebody.

**Becky Dixon (BD):** Yes, I got a call from Jean sage. She was an IMG agent. That's that was huge agency as a huge agency and she had some really big-name clients when John Madden – I rememberm was one of her clients – somebody had sent her some of my work. I resigned from Channel 8 because again I by then I had my son. I had a son so I have two children.

**JE:** Let's name them. What are their first names?

**BD:** Jennifer Dixon and Dan Dixon.

**JE:** Okay.

**BD:** And I really felt like I wasn't doing justice to my children by that time I was you know, I was working full-time and had other assignments at Channel 8 I also had a daytime news show that was every day called dayline.

And that was a new show and I did three live interviews on that show every day. It was it was their version of a noon newscast So I resigned from Channel 8 and again, I'm thinking I'm I want to continue my career. But I'm what I need more flexibility.

So I thought I can do it. I think I can get some freelance work and ESPN was just coming into being something significant at the time. So I thought well, I maybe I can do some work for ESPN. Maybe I can do – there was another big sports production company called Miss Lou. I'll contact them.

So anyway, I did get some assignments Especially from in the beginning from Miss Lou and one of those was the Senior Bowl football game in Mobile, Alabama, and that was a game, it was kind of an all-stars senior game.

So the top players from that year played in this Senior Bowl and it was produced by the NFL so it had NFL coaches. So that was a pretty big opportunity for me I was the host of the Senior Bowl and did the sideline interviews.

So I think that's where Jean actually saw my work, Jean Sage, and then I think she asked Bill Schwing who was the head of Miss Lou Productions what he thought of me and to send it a tape to him So that's how that came about and she so Jean Sage contacted me.

I love the fact that she's a woman and because there are very few women broadcast agents at the time, but Jean was one of you know, obviously one of the very top and she worked with a lot of sports broadcasters and like I said John Madden being one of them. She called and said I think I can get an interview for you with all three major networks If you'll come to New York.

All three major networks being ABC, CBS, NBC. ESPN, like I said, they were just starting out but they were becoming more and more significant but they wouldn't have been considered one of the top three at the time surprisingly.

So I said, okay, and it just so happened that I had another event. I think it was a women's golf tournament that I was doing for Miss Lou, the company I mentioned in somewhere in New Jersey or Pennsylvania. So I said, "Okay, I'll be on the East Coast this date, could we set up the interviews sometime around this time?"

So, she, true to her word, set up an interview for me with all three major sports networks all in one day so I wake up in my hotel room that morning and look at the sports news and the headlines read, because my first interview was with the new president of ABC Sports Dennis Watson, he had just taken over for Runaw Arledge "New ABC President fires, OJ Simpson and Joe Namath for Monday Night Football"

It's the first thing he did. I thought "Oh great. This guy's already in a bad mood and I have to go meet with him." Fortunately for me though. He wasn't in a bad mood. We had a great interview. He told me later he really

liked me as a person and that was one of my selling points, he said.

And I did have interviews with CBS and NBC, but within a couple of weeks I had my first assignment with ABC.

**JE:** How about the other two networks? Did they come back to you at all?

**BD:** Yes. Yes, but I Because of wide world of sports and I felt there were more opportunities for women there, and that was one just one of their shows and again, I felt like Dennis Watson had some of the same personality and some of the same vision that I had found at Channel 8 in James Lake and Tom Goodgame. He had big ideas for the network.

**JE:** Did anybody have some hesitancy? "We know we're hiring the first female and all this and we don't exactly know how this is gonna go over but we don't care." Was that part of any discussion?

**BD:** I don't recall that as much. Some of the only put I'm going to say this some of the only pushback I got was from some of them men that I worked with because I think they thought that maybe I got more opportunities because I was a woman.

And maybe I was the first one Dennis Watson the new president of ABC Sports hired. Well, let's face it, they were all three looking for a woman by that time to add to their roster.

**JE:** Oh, so the idea was in their head.

**BD:** It was in their heads. Yes. Yes, it was in their heads Gene told me that now that I think back on that. Yes, they were all three considering and this was 1986. So they knew that they needed to do that.

## **Chapter 07 – 6:15**

### **First Female Sideline Reporter**

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**John Erling (JE):** All right, so then you're hired by ABC. What is your first job?

**Becky Dixon (BD):** It was a Wide World of Sports event. It was a made-for-tv event in Lake Tahoe and it was called the million-dollar race. It was a long distance race and somebody had put up a million dollars. There was a million dollars to go to the winner.

And I did a piece a profile piece for the live event and it was a young man in Arizona. They sent me to Arizona to interview a young man, Native American who lived on a reservation and he had stuttered in school and had several instances where he had been made fun of because of his speech and so he would run away from the people who were – the kids who were taunting him and that's that's how he began his running career.

And so they sent me to Arizona to do a piece with this young man who had learned to run because he had felt like he needed to run away from those who that were taunting him. I think I did a good job and that of course was a piece that was so appealing to people because it was just such a nice heart, you know, warming story that something good could come out of something that was a negative in his life but I got to work with some of ABC's top people: Marty LaCourie who was, of course, an Olympic track star, Donna Devorona was there she was obviously swimming at Olympic Olympian and Diana Nyad who was also a swimmer.

So anyway, I got to work with some of ABC's top people who normally and when I mentioned Diana and Donna they worked specifically usually with their specific sports This was kind of a fun event so and it wasn't swimming even those two women were known as swimmers, it was a fun event.

And so I think they just brought in a lot of their people to work on that so I did some interviews and live interviews during their race and afterwards. So I think that event worked out pretty well for me. Then the next assignment I was given for ABC was a halftime piece for college football and it was a scholar athlete of the week.

And so each week I would go to a different campus – University campus and interview a football player that was also not only a great athlete or a football player, but also was exceeding in academics as well. One of those I interviewed was Brian Bosworth.

**JE:** Really.

**BD:** And that's really not I think that's that was not something that was known about him at the time that he was a very very good student. To this day, his personality and all of the other the circus that kind of surrounded him overshadowed the fact that he was a very good student.

**JE:** Right.

**BD:** Okay. So there there we are now. We're at college football season I'm doing halftime pieces. Taped pieces, not live.

**JE:** But did you do sideline reporting then, beginning then?

**BD:** Well I did a couple of games that year because the teams were already set. We had to Broadcast teams for football and we had people like Keith Jackson and Lin Swan and Bob Greasy. So, you know those two teams were already set but it was during the World Series that a couple of these people that were on the football team left to go work on the World Series, so I got to fill in for two games. That's that fall. That was my first fall.

One of them happily was the OU Texas game and Barry Switzer was the coach, Brian Bosworth, a lot of the stories that I had sideline stories that I did pertain to those two characters.

I call them characters because they were. but they were also the dominant Features of OU football at the time. And then the next week I – because we were still in World Series season. I went to Texas A&M and I think it was Texas A&M and LSU maybe.

**JE:** You said World Series season. Oh–

**BD:** That's because the other people were gone. That's right The other people were gone. So that gave me the opportunity and that sort of you know up to that point was a hallmark of my career when people that were ahead of me in line to get an assignment had to go do something else or had other responsibilities and I was called on to fill in. That was those were great opportunities, but they were also opportunities in which I needed to really do a good job with.

**JE:** Were you ever nervous?

**BD:** Looking back. I wasn't as nervous as I should have been. Sure, I was nervous. But like I said, I don't think I was as nervous as I should have been. But I especially early on I think I've I didn't seem I didn't seem to really have nerves those first few games.

**JE:** But when those personalities left and they were sideline reporters, here you become the first female sideline reporter and that was historic when you first did that. Any reaction from anybody?

**BD:** Surprisingly, no. This entire time there was like I said, I think there were I would hear rumblings about it with some of the males That were my colleagues that I worked with. I think even though they they liked me and we got along but they I know there were some rumblings that I would get assignments because I was a female.

**JE:** But somebody at ABC said no, we want a female where we know we're gonna make history here. They had to think that. And so you were doing such a good job. They knew it was time to make history.

**BD:** I think they knew it was time, but they didn't put that pressure on – you know, they didn't apply that pressure to me. They didn't say “Oh my gosh, you're the first woman. So you've got make us look like we knew what we were doing.”

**JE:** No, and I can understand that but back in there thinking “I'm right.”

**BD:** They had to be thinking it.

**JE:** Right, so these assignments came to come along.

## **Chapter 08 – 5:05**

### **Wide World of Sports**

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**John Erling (JE):** Then don't you actually get to be on ABC's wide world of sports?

**Becky Dixon (BD):** So the timeline I'm talking about now, since we're talking about World Series in OU, Texas, this is October. In November, Dennis Swanson Called me to New York and I'm still living. Okay. Here's one of the

things I loved about what I was doing at that time: I could still live in Tulsa and raise my children during the week and usually go off, you know, on the weekends for assignments.

So this is working really great for me. I'm able to do a good job at both of the things that were so important to me and nothing was more important than raising my children and making sure they were okay and well taken care of and that I was able to be there for them.

So this was working great for me, but in November Dennis Swanson called and said "I'd like you to come to ABC, come to New York. I have something I want to talk to you about." And so at that meeting he said "We would like you to host Wide World of Sports this year. All year and Wide World of Sports was from January. This is November the season for Wide World started in January and ran through up until football season up until the 1st of September or end of August.

"And we will put three different co-hosts with you. You'll start out with Frank Gifford the first several months," then the next several months. I think it was Jim Palmer. It was a baseball player and the third one was Al Troutwig who was a journalist – broadcast journalist for ABC that was doing a really good job. He was very creative and kind of had a great sense of humor. But he was very good on air.

So he would be the third host, but I would stay with it the entire season, it was not required that I would move to New York, but I had to be in New York every weekend and that required me to, I think, I would usually fly in on Thursday and I would always come back Saturday after the show. There was one flight I could get back to Tulsa on Saturday after the show.

But this sort of turned my world at home upside down because now I have no flexibility and now I'm, you know, gone from home three or four days a week.

**JE:** All right, they asked you to be on Wide World Of Sports. Can you imagine when you walked out of that building and went out on the street, did you go "Yahoo!"

**BD:** I mean with Frank Gifford – and Frank Gifford is Frank Gifford – at the time, he just married Kathie Lee and there was a lot of publicity about the two of them and and, you know, Frank Gifford, like I said was Frank Gifford.

**JE:** How was he to be around and work with?

**BD:** The very best. He was the best. Such a gentleman, so kind and mild mannered. He was the best.

**JE:** And it's unusual maybe at that point – such a gifted athlete for the New York Giants.

**BD:** Right.

**JE:** And then he also had the charisma to be a performer on top of that. And ABC struck gold again having somebody like that who was very popular and very likable on television. It's nice to know he was very likable off television.

**BD:** Yes, I can't say enough about him and he was, you know, so kind and welcoming to me and he always made sure that I was comfortable with whatever, you know, whatever it was we were doing. I can't say enough about him and it was it was a fun time to know him because like I said, he had just married Kathie Lee and she had her own New York show at the time.

It was not national. It was it was Regis and Kathie Lee, but they were on the ABC Affiliate in New York so and I of course I got to know Kathie Lee and she was – she was very interesting character herself.

**JE:** Well, she must have been interested in you beyond that because you were from Tulsa and she went to ORU.

**BD:** She went to ORU. I'm sure there are some women newly married might have been a little anxious with Frank and I working so closely together and Regis didn't make things easy I know I was in my hotel room in New York one day and I my picture was on the cover of USA Today sports section that day: Becky Dixon and Frank Gifford new co-hosts of wide world of sports and Regis holds up the paper and to start the show and said “Well, there's a new woman in Frank Gifford's life.” And you know how he liked to stir things up like that. But we actually became good friends.



**JE:** So how long does that continue on Wide World Of Sports and the Agony Of Defeat and all that that went well?

**BD:** I stayed with ABC from 1986 to 1990.

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## **Chapter 09 – 6:03**

### **Harassment**

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**John Erling (JE):** So when you were in the business and you're in New York and you were really focused that you were the only female and then you had all these men around you. Were you ever harassed as a female?

**Becky Dixon (BD):** I have a couple of stories to tell that are somewhat related to your question. One was I was at the Senior Bowl game in Mobile, Alabama and this was very early in my career and there was an event the night before – the game was sponsored by a men's club. I can't even remember now which one it was – a men's club in Mobile, Alabama.

And the night before the game there was this big banquet and everybody was invited: all the players the coaches and sponsors and the men of mobile were invited to this event, this dinner and event and all the players would be introduced.

And before that event they told my producer “Now, you know, there's a problem that she,” pointing to me, “..can't come.” “Well, why can't she come?” “Well, because women aren't allowed.” and my producer said “Well, she has to come because it's very important that she knows who the players are because she's going to be the one interviewing these players during the game and it's very important that she gets to talk to them tonight. Maybe learn something about their story.” “No, she cannot come”

My producer, much to his credit, said “Well, if she can't come then the rest of us won't come and we'll just pack our bags and go back to New York.” So the men of Mobile said, “Okay. Well, let us think about this.” So they conferred among themselves and came back and finally said “Okay, she can come but she better not wear a short skirt.”

Of course, my only regret was that I didn't have a short skirt with me. So anyway, that was one instance where I wasn't necessarily harassed but it was a very sexist thing for them to do. Another time – this this story has always been kind of conflicting for me. I was at the final four Basketball tournament and there was a very famous coach there that I was sent down to interview and they said no.

My producer back in New York said “No matter what, you come back with this interview. He's not doing interviews, but you need to get an interview with him.” So we went down there I went up to the famous coach and Introduced myself and I said, “I've got to have an interview with you.” and he was kind of nervous about it, I could tell but he knew my producer.

And so I threw out his name and he finally agreed to do the interview. So we did it in the lobby of where they had been holding the press conference. And he wasn't doing any other one-on-one interviews and all the big basketball broadcasters were there, but I got this interview.

So at the end of the interview, and he was very nervous during it, and you can tell he was kind of uneasy. I don't know if I didn't know why he was uneasy but I could tell that he was. And so I was trying to get through the interview because I had to get – my group had to get it up on satellite and get it back to New York so it could air on the program that was coming up in about an hour.

So anyway, we did the interview and when we got up I thanked him and he kind of patted me on the rear end I don't think he ever really knew what he was doing and it was like he would do this with his team, you know, when they went off back onto the court. Do you know what I'm talking about?

**JE:** Sure do.

**BD:** And so he did it unknowingly. I was in such a hurry that I just kind of went on but I had a producer with me. My on-site producer was a woman – a New York woman and she got very upset about it more so than I did because I felt like he didn't consciously know what he was doing. But anyway, so she told the president of ABC Sports about it And he called me

the next day and he said "I want you to know you don't ever have to put up with anything like that."

He apparently called the head of the NCAA and I think the coach was – I won't say reprimanded, but I think he got a phone call. So anyway, that was another instance. But like I said, I was conflicted about it because I thought he intended to do that, I would have had an entirely different reaction.

But the following year I did another interview with the same coach when we were at his school for a football game and so he didn't want to go the night before my fellow broadcasters that were with me went out to dinner with him and they said he didn't want to go if I was going.

So I said I don't want to go to dinner, but I would like to do an interview with him at halftime at the football game tomorrow so we can talk about the upcoming basketball season so he agreed to that.

**JE:** So was that okay then when he was with you?

**BD:** Yes, and neither one of us mentioned it. So those are two instances where I – you know, like I said, I wouldn't say I was harassed but it was – I did find out later – and I will say this about the coach, that he was very uneasy around women. He did not like being around women because he used a lot of foul language and he felt very uncomfortable that he might slip up and say these words in front of a woman. Those were his words.

**JE:** So out of your entire career, which was quite long and largely then in a men's world, very few instances.

**BD:** Very few instances. I was treated almost entirely with respect. I was really more upset with the men of mobile for being that way about not wanting me to come to the to the dinner and then saying I could come if I didn't have a short skirt on.

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**Chapter 10 – 4:09**  
**Move to New York**

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**Becky Dixon (BD):** The one of the problems that I had was that midway through that first year I could see that I couldn't keep up the pace of flying to New York every weekend and they also added another show called, I think, called Monday Sports Night that they asked me to host. So they added that show it was going to be a I think a summer – just a summer show. But that required me to stay in New York until Monday and then it required me to go out on the road and do a piece for that show.

So now all of a sudden my dance card is very full and I'm not getting to spend enough time with my children. So I talked to Dennis about moving to New York. I said, "I think I need to at least try this because I'm—" and he had said to me actually, as the vice president of ABC Sports Dennis Lewin said to me one day at lunch. He said "You look very tired." and I said "I am very tired."

It was you know, it was a huge role and a huge opportunity but there were sacrifices I was having to make with my family and I've just never been able to make that sacrifice.

**John Erling (JE):** So then does the family move to New York?

**BD:** So we moved to New York. My children and I moved to New York and we live in a great apartment near the ABC Studios. Bob Iger, who went on to become chairman of Disney, was our Vice President for Promotions at the time. He and I were about the same age and had children about the same age.

So he helped me with camps and things like that that I was trying, you know I was trying to figure out a life for my children in New York. So he suggested a camp – this was summer – so we moved up in the summer so I sent the kids to a day camp in Westchester and they would go there for two or three days a week for camp.

But again, then there were a lot of obstacles in raising two children that had grown up in Tulsa and grown up with the ranch, you know, an hour

away and having grass under their feet and now we had nothing but cement under our feet even though we live fairly close to Central Park, so.

**JE:** How old are they about this time?

**BD:** Okay, Dan is three and Jennifer is eight.

**JE:** And then a school how they must have helped you with –

**BD:** Yes, so, there were just so many obstacles to face with that – with living in New York and I decided after that summer actually I decided that we I would go back to Tulsa. That was easier than keeping them in New York.

**JE:** So how long did you live in New York?

**BD:** We lived in New York that summer.

**JE:** Okay. All right, that was enough of a test.

**BD:** That was enough – that was and that was kind of what I wanted to do that was I wanted to test but my family and support system were all back in Oklahoma. Yeah, you know it – back in Oklahoma, I had my mother, my siblings, their dad.

**JE:** Yes. You must have had some help in New York.

**BD:** I had some help in New York, but it was help that you know, we were unfamiliar with. I know the first day I came home from the studio and again it was just the children and myself I had hired somebody from a service that I'm sure Bob Iger had recommended for me. When she got there, she didn't – she wasn't fluent in English.

And when I got home that day Dan was crying and I asked Jennifer I said "What's wrong with Dan?" and she said "I don't know you'll have to ask him." And so I asked him and he said "She froze my men." And so somehow the miscommunication led to her putting Dan's little plastic army men in the ice in an ice tray and freezing them and Dan was crying about it.

So anyway, I have lots of stories like that to tell but – so anyway..

**JE:** It was time to come back to tell it was time to come back to Tulsa

**BD:** It was time to come back to Tulsa.

## **Chapter 11 – 6:30 Sideline Reporter**

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**John Erling (JE):** You know, I know we're jumping around, but at the time you became the only female college sideline reporter. At that time, the National Football League did not allow sideline reporters at all, men or women.

**Becky Dixon (BD):** No, they didn't, and this is a funny story and again we're going to jump around a little bit But when I had my first interview with Dennis Swanson and he had just fired OJ and Joe Namath from Monday Night Football, one of the questions he asked me was "Well, what do you think you'd like to do for us?" And I said, "Well, I think you need somebody on Monday Night Football."

Now, but of course, sideline reporters weren't allowed but he kind of liked the answer, I think. No, there were no no sideline reporters male or female.

**JE:** I've forgotten. Why did he fire OJ Simpson and Joe Namath?

**BD:** he just thought they weren't doing a good job.

**JE:** And who – was that when Howard Cosell came on that?

**BD:** No Howard Cosell was before them.

**JE:** Okay,

**BD:** So that following after he fired OJ and Joe Namath it was just Frank Gifford and Al Michaels.

**JE:** That's right.

**BD:** The following year. He added Dan Deardorff so they went back to the three-person booth. And now of course, excuse me, but you can see sideline reporters on Monday on all NFL football and It's almost always a woman.

**JE:** It is always a female, mostly. Yes. And were you able to get the stories? Obviously that those in the booth didn't have wasn't that make you feel good were the coaches open to you – probably not as much as they are today for you reporting during a game and pick up on information?

**BD:** So that following fall I'm named to one of the College football teams. Like I said earlier, we had two teams the A team was Keith Jackson, Bob Greasy and Lynn Swan. The B team was Gary Bender, Dick Vermeule, who was a Super Bowl winning NFL coach, and myself. I was the sideline reporter. So that year ABC had the Big 10 and the Pac-10.

Most of my games Because the Big 10 wasn't as good as the Pac-10 that that year So the B team got those and I was the B team. Most of my games were in the The Big 10, but we had a lot of Ohio State games, Michigan State was really good that year.

Michigan, of course. And it just so happened John Cooper, who had been at the University of Tulsa, and who was a good friend of mine was the coach at Ohio State.

**JE:** So he was open to interviews?

**BD:** And he was open to interviews anytime I wanted. His wife was a friend of mine also and she was always in the stands. I think I interviewed her one time. I would say the coaches were always really open to talking to me And I don't think they looked at me as a woman as much as they looked at me as someone just trying to do their job.

But normally the coach interviews would come maybe before the game but, for sure, for certain, after the game and again, it would all depend on the amount of time we had left. Sometimes it was 30 seconds, sometimes it could be three or four minutes.

**JE:** As a sideline reporter, then were you trying to – What were you saying? What were you reporting?

**BD:** I noticed they're not doing this as much but we were trying to add a lot of color to the game. You know college football is a big colorful event. There's a lot going on. There's the band. There are the cheerleaders, There are, you know, all these different things going on at a college football game.

So we tried to – there's a lot of tradition to talk about especially in a place like the Big 10 where they've been playing football forever. So we would try to bring a lot of color to the game in addition to Injury reports was certainly something, you know that we were responsible for if someone was coming off the field and had broken a bone, you know, they would look to us to give as much information as we could find out about that specific injury, maybe something we overheard on the sidelines.

Let's think about that OU Texas game and I'll talk about that since this is Voices of Oklahoma. Here are some of the things I talked about during that game and that was obviously the year before because I didn't do it the second year. Brian Bosworth hair stylist because remember he had the rainbow-colored hair?

**JE:** Yeah.

**BD:** I interviewed her good about how that hairstyle came about. I interviewed a young boy that Brian Bosworth – a young boy who had a very serious illness and was hospitalized much of the time here in Tulsa the children's – I think it was then the Children's Medical Center and Brian befriended that boy and would often go to see him. So I interviewed that boy and his father.

So those were the kinds, you know, some of the kinds of stories that would be of interest that weren't necessarily pertaining to the specific events that were happening on the field,

**JE:** Right, but it added a great dimension to the event.

**BD:** It added a great dimension to the event, right. So now I'm in the Big 10. Most of the time I did have one game that year in the Pac-10 and I'll never forget it because it was in October at Arizona State in Tempe and it was 118 on the field. It was hot and I had to be prepared at any given time to cover a game that was maybe snowing and 10 degrees or that was – the other extreme of course was the hundred and eighteen degrees and in Tempe.

**JE:** Were you enjoying it? Were you having fun?

**BD:** I did enjoy that. I did. I did. Didn't like the extreme weather obviously, but yes I liked the college football.



**JE:** There's a tremendous amount of tension. It must have come to you and the public, maybe you go out in the street and whatever and there's Becky Dixon and they want to talk to you and you were in New York – all that went on didn't it?

**BD:** Some of it. Yes. A lot of it. It seems like the student sections, especially in the Big 10 where they all were getting used to me because I was there almost every weekend that that season they would chant my name when I would come around to maybe for the student section where I was sitting.

**JE:** Ask for autographs and all that, it had to be fun.

**BD:** It was a good time.

## **Chapter 12 – 11:53 Superbowl, Olympics, and Triple Crown**

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**John Erling (JE):** I think you also had the Super Bowl experience, Olympics and Triple Crown of racing. Is that right?

**Becky Dixon (BD):** Yes, during my years at ABC we broadcast some of the top sporting events in the world and I'll just start with the Super Bowl, it was the Washington Redskins against John Elway in the Denver Broncos and The Denver Broncos were favored in primarily because of John Elway and his incredible talent.

But the quarterback for the Washington Redskins that year was Doug Williams, who many in Tulsa will remember playing for the Oklahoma Outlaws. And the Washington Redskins won that year and Doug Williams became the first African-american quarterback to win a Super Bowl.

So that had special meaning for me because I had met Doug during his years here in Tulsa. One of the things I will remember most about the Super Bowl was this incredible pregame show and it wasn't as long – and I think now they do pregame shows that last all day long before the game.

Ours was either an hour or two hours, but we featured reporters from

around the world because we utilize some of the ABC News incredible news talent reporters. I've broadcast on the pregame from an aircraft carrier that was in the harbor in San Diego and I talked about how the sailors were getting ready to watch the Super Bowl and they were all out swabbing the deck.

Then we had somebody across the border in Mexico. We were in San Diego. We had somebody across the border in Mexico – we had a news reporter in the Middle East talking about what the soldiers there were doing to prepare to watch the Super Bowl and we had a camera in China outside a bus station – bus or subway station.

But anyway, Keith Jackson and I produced most of the pregame show and wrote some of the pieces but anyway, it was a lot of fun and it was great to see how the entire world was preparing for the Super Bowl.

**JE:** Right, I would imagine you scored an interview with Doug Williams. Did you?

**BD:** No because we did not have time, you know, and so much in television depends on time. No, there was limited time after the game. I don't think that we did any post game interviews.

**JE:** Okay, but you brought up the name Keith Jackson that we all loved. What was he like to be around?

**BD:** He was really incredible. I loved Keith and had the good fortune to work with him during college football. I did several games with him and he was just down-to-earth. He was just – such a solid person I really loved working with him and he of course was so knowledgeable and so well respected in the industry. I mean everybody knew and loved and respected Keith Jackson.

**JE:** I can hear him in my head and the better part of valor says “Don't try to imitate him, John, because you can't.” But we all loved his –

**BD:** And when I say we produce we help produce the pregame show, we weren't listed as the producers but we – I know we worked on it with the producers because Keith was just so talented. I mean he could do anything. He could write, he – you know – had the football knowledge and of course the contacts that he had made throughout the years.

**JE:** You know, we forget that some of them are writers just because they can perform may not necessarily be a writer and we forget that. And so he was a writer.

**BD:** He was a writer. In fact, I think everybody I worked with at ABC Sports focused a lot of their time on making sure that what they had to talk about was written well.

**JE:** Okay, right. Super Bowl, unless there's anything else? Olympics?

**BD:** The Olympics. The Olympics followed almost immediately that year after the Super Bowl in the Olympics. It was the Winter Olympics in Calgary.

**JE:** What year again?

**BD:** This was 1988 the Winter Olympics, Calgary. I had been to Calgary several times before to do preview pieces. I hosted Wide World of Sports from Calgary the year before saying, you know, "It's one year to the day when we will be in Calgary for the Olympics."

And I remember those early visits because I got to utilize some of the, I guess, skills and talents that I had utilized at Channel 8 when because I, as I had said, like to participate in some of the sports that I was talking about. So I remember in that pre-Olympic visit I skied down the downhill mountain very precariously and only turned around and I didn't actually, I never fell, but I did do a 180 and completely turned around one time and it was on one of the easier slopes for sure.

And then at the end of that preview show I wrote in on a horse and talked about the Western heritage of Calgary, but it was night. So the Olympics 1988 it was so cold in Calgary, I wasn't used to that kind of cold and I was there a month. We were all there a month. The Olympics usually last a couple of weeks, but for all of our preparations and pre-interviews we had to be there two weeks early. I covered skiing. I covered speed skating I did some of the color pieces.

I did quite a few interviews and I remember one interview stands out all these years later the most because I opened the show that night with this interview. It was such – it was a really emotional interview for everybody involved. It was with Dan Jansen and he was favored that night to win a

gold medal in speed skating.

He was from either Wisconsin or Minnesota, where most of the American speed skaters were from, but his sister had died that day from cancer and he was really close to her but he wanted to go ahead and skate and skate in her honor. And so we opened the show that night. Jim McKay was our Olympic host and he, you know, introduced me and said "Becky has a very special interview tonight."

He was so emotional as was it, you know in his entire family – most of his family, I will say, of course some had stayed behind with his sister. But most of his family was there so I did the interview and then sadly he fell during the competition and did not win a gold medal that night.

So that memory will always stand out the most and you know as I look back on the Olympics and the Super Bowl and some of those larger events that I covered today I didn't realize at the time, I don't think the significance that they had in the world or in my career because you're so focused on what you're doing at any given moment as you have to be.

But today I look back and I'm proud that I was able to be a part of those events.

**JE:** Oh, yes, but as soon as you said Dan Jansen and I haven't heard that name in a long long time. I knew exactly what you were talking about. That's how much it was impressed on all of America. We remember that story. I'm glad you remember them.

**BD:** That was great. I need to Google him and see how he's doing today. I hope well. Yeah, he was a such a nice young man.

**JE:** So now you brought up Jim McKay. About him, was anything different or unusual about him or he was so good, too?

**BD:** He was so good. And that's – I didn't work with him that much. I did work with him on the Triple Crown of Horse Racing because he was a horse racing fan and he also owned I think some horse races or was a partial owner of some horses that raced.

Frank and I – Frank Gifford and I replaced him on Wide World of Sports so

he was pretty much retired, but he did come back for the Olympics and for horse racing. But again, such an incredible talent. Such a nice man very low-key. Just and very focused on what he was doing obviously.

**JE:** And he would call those races. He was so good at it. He actually granted an interview for me at KRMG

**BD:** Okay.

**JE:** So we could talk about an upcoming race and we had him do a little bit of a call and so forth. So that's how much of a nice guy he was. He could have ignored Tulsa, Oklahoma, but he didn't.

**BD:** No, that was not his personality. He was, you know, seemed to love everyone he met and that's I think that was one of the reasons that he was so popular on the air.

**JE:** We've been talking about you being the only female, a pioneer. So through all this reporting on the Super Bowl and Olympics so far, are you basically the only female?

**BD:** At the Super Bowl, I'm the only female. At the Olympics, I was the only female journalist now we did also have like Peggy Fleming for figure skating Donna Devereaux who worked on all the Olympics who was an Olympic swimmer.

Even though this was the Winter Olympics, she was there to do some interviews. She did some interviews. I'm sure there were others in some of this, you know, some of the specific sports. But I do specifically remember that Peggy was there, Donna Devereaux was there.

**JE:** But they were experts in their field.

**BD:** Experts in their field. Yes.

**JE:** You pointed out you were the only female journalist.

**BD:** Right.

**JE:** So you're still a pioneer woman even even under there. So then under the Triple Crown of Racing, what was your experience?

**BD:** That was the same year. So now we go to May. That was my first Triple Crown Experience primarily I worked on the pregame or the pre-race programming for that. Well, we started at the Kentucky Derby and then went on to the Preakness which is by the way I'll mention the Preakness. It was the only event where I had to have two bodyguards. I remember that.

**JE:** Why was that?

**BD:** I don't know if it was in a – I'm not sure. I think just maybe the area where it was – there had been it was maybe a higher crime area. Now I really can't remember but I'm sure that was probably it and then the Belmont which is one of my favorite races. It was the final race in New York.

I did do a piece for the Kentucky Derby, I'll never forget this. It was a great piece on the long shot who ended up coming in second or third. So that was nice to have that happen.

**JE:** Did we have a Triple Crown winner?

**BD:** No.

**JE:** That year? 1988?

**BD:** I don't think – no. No, I would have remembered if we did. But I remember being with Jim McKay on one of those Telecasts and I can't remember which one it was but I do – I think I still have the video of myself with Jim McCay.

I will say one other thing about the Olympics I was down at the bottom of the ski slope one day at the downhill slope and getting ready to interview skiers when they came down and I heard and it's a very chaotic scene down there there are cowbells ringing, there people and fans screaming in all different languages, and just there's just a lot of noise and a lot of chaos down there.

But all of a sudden I could hear this voice in the crowd say “Becky! Becky from Tulsa! Becky from Tulsa!” and I thought “What in the world is that?” and so I looked around and In the crowd I could see this friend of mine, Brad Petty, and So I went over to talk to him and the first thing he said to me was “I'm so glad you're here. You are here to represent Tulsa.”

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Which I had never thought of it that way but after that, that made me proud that I was there to represent Tulsa. And as far as I know I'm the only broadcaster from Tulsa that has ever been a part of the Olympics and Brad died this past year and I was asked to speak at his funeral and I told that story. So it still means a lot to me today.

**JE:** Yes, and then of course his brother Scott and then we think of Petty's Fine Foods at Utica Square which is no longer there, and I have interviewed Scott petty about the store and that experience.

**BD:** Great family.

### **Chapter 13 – 8:20 Promise of Oklahoma**

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**John Erling (JE):** But then you know, you could have lived in other parts of the country you worked in New York and Los Angeles Why did you choose to return to Oklahoma?

**Becky Dixon (BD):** I've always believed in the promise of Oklahoma. And I continue to believe in it today. But at that time I Wanted to come back to Oklahoma because this is where my roots were. This is where my family still lived and I wanted to raise my children here. I looked around at the kind of life that I had here before I left and this is the kind of education and life that I wanted for my children and I'm so glad that we did.

They both had wonderful experiences here. And even though they live one lives in New York and one in San Francisco. they still try to come home whenever they can. And I think if they didn't live in those cities they would come back to Tulsa.

**JE:** Right.

**BD:** And I still believe in the promise of Oklahoma and I look at our state and I see so many possibilities. But I don't like everything I'm seeing today and I think – I know I can do better. We can do better. We can all do better together. This state is filled with possibilities.

We just need to turn those possibilities into realities and I still believe in them and will always believe in the promise of Oklahoma.

**JE:** What is it you don't like?

**BD:** I don't like some of the things I see in education happening. I had a public school education. I firmly believe in public school, and I think we need to support our public schools. I don't like all the infighting I'm seeing.

One of the things I love most about David Boren when he was our US Senator is that he could work on both sides of the aisle. I don't see much of that today in Oklahoma. And there's no reason not to I mean we should be able to find common ground.

So many of us, you know, we're in our leadership position, are lifelong Oklahomans there should be some common ground we can find.

**JE:** And today with people able to work virtually and they're being asked to come to Oklahoma by the Kaiser Foundation, \$10,000 many have come thinking they were just try it for a year and have stayed. And I think we're probably an area that the rest of the country doesn't know that we are as special as we are and downtown in that Brady district how that is booming is absolutely amazing.

**BD:** Oklahoma's I think the country's best-kept secret and I've always thought that. And when I lived in New York in Los Angeles, Los Angeles, and Dallas and – you know people did not know that much about Oklahoma and I was always so happy to tell them about our state and Oklahoma's greatest resource has always been its people and that's why I would really like to see our people come together.

And you look at some of the people who are in this state Like a George Kaiser who's doing so much to elevate, you know, all of the people here. I was happy to be involved somewhat with the gathering place. I mean what a great idea that was. And then this Tulsa remote and there are other people like George Kaiser around the state who are doing things and and we need to help these people who who are trying to move our state forward.



**JE:** So you've alluded then to that area of nonprofit you have done a whole very impressive nonprofit work, what are some of your special ones that come to mind right now?

**BD:** Well I've always said and another reason I came back to Oklahoma was because I wanted to give something back to the state that had given so much to me and my husband who is as was raised in Texas, he has helped me tremendously with some of the work that we have done.

He is a visionary and he has great vision when it comes to especially nonprofit work and then I had the contacts to be able to work on some of the projects and move some of the projects forward that we were talking and dreaming about.

For instance, Catholic Charities. Today Catholic Charities has an agreement with Walmart and they get a lot of the oversupply that area Walmart stores – you know, has on hand. And that was one of the things that we worked on first. Catholic Charities needed a way to sustain itself.

We helped raise money for a new campus for the organization, but it did need a way to sustain itself and I had a friend who happened to be an Executive with Walmart corporate and we asked her if there was some way, you know, we could partner with Walmart.

And so today there are millions of dollars each year that come from Walmart and goes to Catholic Charities to help provide supplies, you know, whether it's clothing, food, frozen and fresh food, anything that Walmart offers and has an oversupply of has been given to Catholic Charities.

**JE:** That's great.

**BD:** I mentioned the Gathering Place. We were involved with helping to raise money for that and then I did two interviews with George Kaiser leading up to the opening of Gathering Place and it aired on Channel 8 here, the pieces. So I was able to help promote that in that way.

**JE:** I gotta say that's a rarity when George – he did two interviews.

**BD:** Yeah, he did two interviews leading up to the opening.

**JE:** I applaud you for that because he won't do this for me, you know, some people die when we do this. And he says "If I'm going to be interviewed, I'm not gonna do that." He says because he's afraid of dying if I interview him. But anyway, so I applaud you for that. So you've also been involved in other areas.

**BD:** Yes, I was a chairman of the board of the Pencil Box which provides school supplies for students in need and that has been a my good friend Nancy Belsley founded that organization and that has been very successful and she just they just built a new facility too because the smaller facility they had couldn't hold all the school supplies that they were getting.

So I've tried to not focus on any one area, but just when I saw an area that needed help I tried to offer, you know, what skills I had or what vision my husband had. We also were instrumental in raising funds for Arts Alliance Tulsa.

I so firmly believe in the arts and that's one of the things I feel has always made Tulsa so special you look around at the different arts organizations and groups that we have and it's just amazing for a small town.

One of the things we did with Arts Alliance Tulsa when we were raising funds there, we asked the Warren Foundation for help and they provided they have a tree farm and they have provided trees for us to sell at Arts Alliance Tulsa so you can buy a tree for your yard and the funds will go to Arts Alliance Tulsa.

So we tried to also come up, and this is another area where my husband has been really helpful in in coming up with areas that are sustainable, You know after we're not not here to help yeah, so those are just some of the organizations.

I'm chairman of the board of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame now and that is an organization. It's statewide organization and we tell Oklahoma story through its people, much like you do. and I think that's so significant because think how – I mean if you look at the interviews that you have done or the interviews I did for my Oklahoman show or the people that we've featured with induction into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

That's so inspiring to hear these stories.

**JE:** And I applaud you for wanting to be involved in our community. You could easily have said "All right I'm gonna go do this and that." but you didn't and you not everybody gets involved. So I applaud you for doing that.

**BD:** Well the same – I feel the same about you.

## **Chapter 14 – 6:04**

### **Jerry Jones Show**

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**John Erling (JE):** You're in Tulsa and then do you leave that and begin to host a coaches show? The Dallas Cowboys Coaches Show. Where does that come in?

**Becky Dixon (BD):** Okay, that comes in after I leave ABC. Because again, I'm looking for a better fit. I was so glad I had the opportunity with ABC and it was, you know, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. But it was it became just more responsibility than I was able to handle with the responsibilities I felt for my family. And they were my priority.

**JE:** And they certainly understood

**BD:** Yes, ABC. Yes.

**JE:** Who replaced you?

**BD:** Eventually Julie Moran replaced me, but that was two – I think that was a couple of years later. She had been a host of Entertainment Tonight and Robin Roberts, eventually, I think, also. Was on Wide World that maybe a little bit after that and she had started at ESPN Next. Oh, you're talking about the Jerry Jones show.

**JE:** Mm-hmm. How did that come about?

**BD:** I laughed because Jerry is such a character. That came about because Jimmy Johnson was the coach of the Dallas Cowboys that first year that Jerry owned the team. And Jimmy knew me from Channel 8 because we

also produced – he was at OSU at the time and we produced the Oklahoma State coaches show.

So he knew me. He called and said “We're looking for somebody to host Jerry Jones' show and we need somebody like you because Jerry's never done television before and he's going to need some..” I don't know if he said management, but something along that line.

And of course, I didn't know Jerry or really know anything about him. But it sounded like a great opportunity and Troy Aikman had just been drafted as the number one pick and he was a good friend of mine and my husband's, Patrick. Because he had worked for Patrick in Tulsa when Patrick owned the Miller Beer distributors

When he was at OU. So we knew Troy and knew Jimmy Johnson, so I said yes to that.

And it turned out to be a really fun experience. Jerry was great to work with he was very humble that year primarily because they only won one game.

**JE:** And that was his first year.

**BD:** And that was his first year, but I'll never forget what he said after they won that one game. He said he had felt like a puppet had just lifted – puppeteer had just lifted felt like a puppet and the puppeteer had just lifted his head because he could walk down the streets of Dallas now and not be so embarrassed.

**JE:** And he had followed the legendary Tom Landry. He had followed Tom Landry and there was a lot of controversy about Jerry buying the team, you know. He was in a very difficult position made even more difficult by the fact that the team was so unsuccessful that first year, but of course then they went on to, you know, I know, Troy won three Super Bowls two with Jimmy Johnson and one with Barry Switzer.

**JE:** Were you able to coach Jerry Jones? He's been known for saying anything off the top of his head and often getting into trouble. Did you try to say “Terry you've got to do this?”

**BD:** I tried. And one of the first things to happen was he was going to be interviewed by Sam Donaldson. I thought "Oh no, this is not going to go well." Because Sam knows I'm sure how to get Jerry's goat and will probably do so and there's just really no telling what Jerry will say.

There was a young ABC News reporter, Judd Rose. Judd Rose. He's since passed away, but I ran into Judd and he said "Becky, you need to talk to Jerry because Sam is really going to try to come after him because he does not like Jerry." There's something along that line or he really doesn't – I don't know what he didn't like but...

Didn't like the way Jerry was handling things in Dallas or so. I tried to warn Jerry but I think that might have been when he came out with a couple of his more infamous sayings like the cheerleaders were the pick of the litter that might have been that interview.

**JE:** Say that again?

**BD:** The cheerleaders were the pick of the litter. You remember that saying? Had I known he was going to say that, I might have warned him that that probably wasn't a good idea. I don't think any amount of coaching would have probably kept Jerry from saying some of the things he said because they were the things that came off the top of his head and they were the things he was used to Maybe saying in Arkansas. I don't know.

**JE:** Well, it made it compelling to watch, I guess. You never knew what was going to come out of his mouth and certainly one of the few owners in the NFL who would be interviewed. Most owners stayed in the background and let their coaches talk.

**BD:** He wanted to, you know, he wanted to have his own television show.

**JE:** And he still is out there talking.

**BD:** He's still out there talking. Yes, I'm not sure much has changed in that regard and and I'm not sure Jerry wants to change, so.

You know, they did go on to have tremendous success with Troy. I'm certainly happy for the career that he had and Jimmy Johnson.

**JE:** So were you there for Super Bowl victories? Were you not at the show?

**BD:** No, I was not because by then we'd moved back to Tulsa and I started my own production company and I'll get into that because that's kind of the next big phase of my life. We happen to be – now for this is for diehard Dallas Cowboy fans that will remember. We happen to be in the Bahamas with Troy and Jimmy Johnson was there.

He wasn't he wasn't with our traveling group, but he he was there at the time and that's when we first heard that Jerry was going to fire Jimmy Johnson. So and then you know along comes Barry Switzer. So that was an interesting – that was a very interesting time to be Associated with Dallas Cowboys and to continue today to kind of see how they've evolved.

## **Chapter 15 – 16:54**

### **Oklahomans**

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**Becky Dixon (BD):** The next phase of my career, I wanted, when I was doing the Jerry Jones show, WFAA in Dallas asked me if I would do some pieces for them. Because they knew of my work through ABC Sports, and then also because of the Jerry Jones show. And they had a show called Texans, and they profiled accomplished and interesting and successful Texans on the show.

And so it was much like a Barbara, if you remember the old Barbara Walter shows where she featured three interviews of interesting people, and they were profile pieces. Phyllis George was one of the people that I interviewed on Texans, and she and I had a lot in common because she eventually went to work for the NFL today. Not so much as a journalist, but more, she did more just profile pieces, I think.

But anyway, I enjoyed interviewing her. But I came up with the idea. I know Texans are known to talk about themselves. They like to boast. I'm married to a Texan, so I kind of know how that goes.

**John Erling (JE):** And his name is?

**BD:** Patrick Keegan. But in Oklahoma, we're not known to boast. We have more of what I call a quiet confidence. But I started to come up with the idea of why don't I take this concept to Oklahoma?

And at that point, I wanted to form my own production company so I could make my own schedule. And I came up with the idea, like I said, to develop the concept for my Oklahoman show. And I wanted to give something back to the state that had given so much to me. I wanted to inspire Oklahomans of all ages, especially young people.

I wanted young students sitting in a small Oklahoma classroom like the one I attended to see that they could realize their dreams. And I wanted to tell stories about people who could illustrate that to them. And so that's when I developed the concept for my Oklahoman show. That lasted for 20 years.

**JE:** Yes. Remarkable. So that was produced by your company?

**BD:** By my company, Dixon Productions. Yes.

**JE:** So I'm curious about the background. Did you buy equipment and all that? And so your people?

**BD:** I hired Wintercom, which was owned by my friends from Channel 8, Jim Wilburn, who was the top sales executive at Channel 8 when I was there, and Chris Lincoln. So I hired them to do the production. But I sold all the sponsorships and produced the show. They provided a director and camera operators and editors.

**JE:** So was Channel 8 the station who aired all the programs?

**BD:** No. Actually, all three stations ended up at some point over the 20 years, but I started with Channel 6.

**JE:** Okay. Why not 8?

**BD:** I think I went with whoever made the best deal for me.

**JE:** All right. Sure. Way to go. Best deal for me. Your businesswoman, of course.

**BD:** And the other thing about Channel 6 that made it very good for me was that it also aired in Oklahoma City. And Channel 6 was Griffin

Broadcasting, and they owned Channel 6 here and Channel 9 in Oklahoma City.

**JE:** So they played them on both stations.

**BD:** It was statewide broadcast, yes. And I sold it as a statewide... The first statewide television program.

**JE:** So you were a salesman, too, for the program?

**BD:** Yes. But it was actually... It was a pretty easy sale because it was a new concept. I think sponsors saw the value, and I'm sure you see that in what you're doing, of telling Oklahoma's story through its people. And I've always felt that Oklahoma's greatest resource is its people. You know, I started out with... I'll just throw out a few names. I started with those first few years.

Garth Brooks, Ben Johnson, who'd won an Academy Award, and who was also a rancher and cowboy that my dad knew from all those years of ranching and steer roping.

**JE:** You interviewed Mickey Mantle.

**BD:** Mickey Mantle.

**JE:** Do you have any stories about some of these people? Like Mickey Mantle, what was he like at that point?

**BD:** He had mellowed. I interviewed him at his golf tournament in Joplin. Mickey Mantle had great stories. And that was the thing. Each of these people had so many great stories to tell. Mickey Mantle told some interesting... I'll tell a couple of his stories. One was when he was in Little League, the field where he practiced and played, there were houses behind it.

And this woman, always in one of the houses behind the field, always set her freshly baked pies out on her windowsill to cool. And Mickey kept knocking the pies off the windowsill and would get into trouble from the woman and the coach for doing that.

Another story he told was, he was kind of like me. He never wanted to



leave Oklahoma. He wanted to stay where he was in commerce. And he didn't want to go to New York. New York scared him. And he got to New York, he didn't like it. I mean, you can imagine it was overwhelming for him. And he wanted to leave.

And he called his dad and said he was going to come back home. And his dad, who I think Mickey said had never been on a plane before, flew to New York and met with Mickey in his hotel room. And he said, "Look, you're not going to come home. You're going to stay here and see this thing through. I won't let you do this to your career. You can't come home. You stay here."

And of course, the rest of that story is history. But I mean, it could have gone either way. His dad could have said, "Sure, if you can buy your ticket home, buy it."

**JE:** Parents are generally, in so many ways, "If that's what you want to do, Johnny, if that's what you want to do." And he said, no, you're not going to do that. But he also knew how talented his son was.

**BD:** He knew. He knew the opportunity. Garth, I interviewed Garth kind of at the beginning. He was extremely popular, but he hadn't reached that pinnacle that he would later reach. I think this might have been like maybe '92. But it was his first concert in Tulsa, it was at the convention center.

And I interviewed him in the dressing room. His mom was there. His wife was there. He had a lot of relatives from Tulsa that were there. And they were all having, I must say, they were having a very good time. I'd never seen people having so much fun because they were all enjoying this tremendous success of Garth's.

I said, "Do you really realize what's happening to you?" And he said, "Sometimes." He said, "Sometimes we'll be on the bus and the guys and I will kind of look at each other." And then we'll just pinch ourselves and say, "Can you really believe what is going on with us?" And, you know, of course, I'm sure they had no idea just what it would lead to.

**JE:** You know, I always felt as a performer, he was also a great promoter. Lots, as you know, those are two people. The performer is not a promoter, but

Garth Brooks, maybe if he hadn't promoted himself as much as he did, who knows?

**BD:** But he was just such a great personality. He was such an engaging personality. What you saw on stage was really kind of what you got, you know, backstage as well. I remember asking him, my last question to him was, "What do you want these fans to feel when they leave your concerts tonight? These are your fans, your Oklahoma fans."

And he said, "I just want them to know that dreams really do come true sometimes."

**JE:** In your preparation for these interviews, like you said, you asked that question. Did you know you were going to ask that question? Or did you start interviewing and they just started coming to you?

**BD:** Both, both. I would usually have a set of questions that I had written. But as you know, from interviewing, interviews can lead you in various different directions. So I never would try to stick to that script. I always knew that it was very important to listen. And to let the interview take you from there.

Wilma Mankiller, the first female chief of the Cherokees. What a great story she was. I went to Tahlequah and interviewed her there. She had just had tea with the Queen of England. And she showed me the invitation. The Queen of England invites Wilma Mankiller to tea.

**JE:** And we have her story on Voices of Oklahoma. And just about two months ago, I interviewed her husband, Charlie.

**BD:** Charlie. Yes. I interviewed Charlie that day as well.

**JE:** Okay.

**BD:** Yes, Carl Albert. I was able to interview him before he passed away.

**JE:** Great speaker of the House of Representatives.

**BD:** Speaker of the House, the highest political leader in Oklahoman's history. He met with John F. Kennedy. This is a story he told, met with President Kennedy in the Oval Office right before he left for Dallas. And he said that he could still hear the whir of the helicopter as it lifted from the White

House to carry him to the airport to go to Dallas. Of course, he had a front row seat on so much of history.

**JE:** And you had some other names that you interviewed in the Oklahomans. Let's see, like Carrie Underwood, you interviewed her. Anything special about that interview?

**BD:** I interviewed Carrie Underwood in Norman almost immediately after she had won American Idol. She was there as part of the American Idol tour. They were performing in Norman that night. I remember that it was that year because my mom watched American Idol.

I hadn't watched it that much, but she watched it. And she would always say to me, you need to watch it. There's a young woman from Oklahoma who's really, really good, and I think she might win. So I was really happy that Carrie did win and that I was able to interview her. She was very emotional during that interview because I think everything, I mean, it was overwhelming for her, I'm sure.

Here she was from Chakota, and she started on this journey that took her to the top of the entertainment world eventually. But she was very emotional. And I'll always remember the last thing she said in the interview, because I asked her what she hoped people would remember about her American Idol experience.

And she said, and she started to cry, and she said, "I just hope that I made Oklahoma proud." And she was a really beautiful soul, I'll say that. And then I could see that immediately, that she was very thankful and grateful for what had happened to her. And of course, at that time, she had no idea of what was getting ready to happen to her.

**JE:** She really did make Oklahoma proud.

**BD:** She really did make Oklahoma proud. Yes.

**JE:** Barry Switzer must have been a story, huh?

**BD:** Is Barry ever not a story? I love Barry Switzer. And I interviewed him twice for my Oklahoman show. And of course, prior to that, I had known Barry for a number of years because of my work at Channel 8. The first time I interviewed him, it was after he had been let go at OU. I wanted to talk to

him about his incredible record and success at OU, but I also wanted to talk to him about how things ended, which, as we all know, was very difficult for him.

He's so candid. I mean, you can ask him anything. And I remember we talked about his success. And then we talked about getting fired at OU. And he said, "Those people that fired me, they're like a molecule in the universe. I don't really think about them anymore. And I'm not going to think about them."

And I remember another question I asked him was, "You had incredible success on the field, but you had some criticism about the way you handled yourself off the field." He said, "Well, what do you mean by that? What did I do? And I said, "Well, I don't know, wine, women." He said, "I like wine. I like women." And he said, "I like to have a good time. I'm a fun guy." Those are just some of the things I remember from that.

But I was very happy that he was able to have a comeback and go to the Dallas Cowboys and win the Super Bowl. And I interviewed him after that. After the Super Bowl win, I went to Dallas. I'm trying to think of some of the more interesting things he said about, I think he said about, you know, there are definitely second acts in life.

I just will always think that Barry Switzer, I've said that David Bourne was one of my favorite interviews, but Barry Switzer is right up there too. You know, he is back on top and Norman, you go down there and he's like king of the world to everybody there.

And I'm really glad to see that and to see them. And I think, you know, and I'll give Bob Stoops some credit for that and in bringing that Barry back into the OU fold because he deserved to be, and he's just so beloved down there.

**JE:** Yes. And I have interviewed him for Voices of Oklahoma. And we talked about his mother taking her own life and he gets really emotional about that years, years later. Boone Pickens was in the news recently and you interviewed him too, didn't you?

**BD:** I interviewed Boone. Yes, I went to Dallas to his office. I think it might've been somewhere around 2003, 2004. He's the character. He's a little like Barry in that he's very candid and very easy to talk to. He recently gave, in addition to a significant amount of money to OSU recently, he also gave \$2 million to the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. And I'm chairman of the board this year.

So I was there when Jay Rosser, his representative, gave us the gift of the \$2 million. I told the story. I said, well, when I interviewed Boone, he said that he believed that the true measure of a man's wealth can be measured by the number of bird dogs he owns. And he owned like 24, 34. And Jay, his representative who was there that day, said, no, 43 bird dogs. I said, "kay, well, I'm just glad we got the dollars, not the dogs."

But he told another interesting story about how he ended up in the field that he ended up in. He was a student at OSU and he wasn't paying as much attention as he should have been to his studies. And his father called him in, I think before, maybe it was before his senior year, and said, "Son, I don't know what program you're on, but I'm on the four-year program. So after four years, that's it for me. I'm not paying for any more of your education. So you either graduate on time or you figure out a way to pay for the rest of your education."

And so Boone thought, oh, no, I can't let this happen. I really need to graduate on time. So he went to his counselor, guidance counselor, and said, "We've got to figure out a way I can graduate on time." So the only path they could find to Boone graduating on time was if he went into geology. So he did, and the rest of that story.

**JE:** In that moment, quick moment.

**BD:** In that moment, he thought on his feet for sure. Those are some of the memories I take away from that. And it was before he, I think maybe he had just announced at that time, now I can't really remember the year, of his significant gift that he was giving to OSU, you know, in the first big gift. But I remember that he said, you know, in talking about the amount of the gift, he said, "I don't plant small trees." And I don't think Boone Pickens did anything in a small way.

**JE:** No, no, no, no. I'm glad you got him. And to promote, be a self-promoter, we have him also on VoicesOfOklahoma.com.

## **Chapter 16 – 3:00**

### **More Names**

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**Becky Dixon (BD):** But like I said, you know, Oklahomans aren't known to boast, but we have more of a quiet confidence. And I could see that come through so many times in my interviews. And the one thing, and I can say this, and like I said, the show aired for 20 years, each and every one of those people that I interviewed, they were so proud to be an Oklahoman.

And they would talk about that. Without being coaxed by me. They all had still felt strong ties, and many of them had left to pursue their career, like Areva McIntyre. You know, she's, and to this day, and I knew her as a child, because our dads were both ranchers, and her dad had actually worked on our ranch for my grandfather for a little while.

But to this day, I just saw a piece on CNN the other night, and I knew she had done this, but she opened a restaurant in Atoka. And almost everybody who leaves Oklahoma, it seems like they still keep that connection.

**John Erling (JE):** Is there one more name you can think of that steps out?

**BD:** David Boren. Dr. Darrell Bock

**JE:** You interviewed David Boren, as we have for Voices of Oklahoma. What was your experience with him?

**BD:** One of my very favorite interviews.

**JE:** Yep.

**BD:** As someone who did so much for our state in so many different ways. The first time I interviewed him, it was in the early '90s, and there was talk of him perhaps running for president. But as we know, he chose a presidency

of a different kind and came home to the University of Oklahoma, the very best thing that ever happened to OU, in my opinion.

**JE:** What I was impressed with was how shy he was when he was younger, and in college, and the debate, he wouldn't even stand up. And they said, if you don't stand up, you're going to get an F. Yeah.

**BD:** A very modest man, but so smart.

**JE:** Yeah.

**BD:** So smart. Yes, he was one of my favorite interviews. And I always will remember what his wife told me about David. And this was in that first interview before we knew he before anyone knew, or I'm sure before he even knew he would come back and become president of OU.

But she said, "At his very core, he is a If you peel away all the layers of the apple, at its very core, you will see a teacher." And I remember that too, because my daughter was with me. She was in high school at that time. And she was with me on that trip. And when we went to his office, for the first part of the interview, he took Jennifer around, and she had so many different types of memorabilia in his office.

And he explained in detail to her every one of the, you know, every piece of history that he had in his office. And that was just easy to see that his love for teaching.

**JE:** And he taught a class as he was president.

**BD:** Yes, he did.

**JE:** That was important to him to keep doing that.

## **Chapter 17 – 8:45 Businesswoman**

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**John Erling (JE):** So you throw around presidents, presidents, and you became a president yourself.

**Becky Dixon (BD):** Yes.

**JE:** Tell us.

**BD:** I am currently president and owner of Airplay Productions. I joined forces with Ed Taylor in the mid-90s while I was continuing to produce my Oklahoman show. But I became interested in other facets of communications because I didn't know exactly where the industry was going, but I knew it was going in places that we could only imagine at the time.

So I went to a telecommunications conference that was held here in Tulsa. I believe the former company, Willtel, sponsored it. That company was a part of Williams Communications.

And I met Ed Taylor there. I kind of had known Ed and knew who he was, but Ed was a pioneer in satellite and cable communications. And he had recently sold his company for quite a bit of money. And so Ed was retired from the major company that he had because he had sold it, and was looking for some new projects to do.

And he and I were kind of talking about some different things. And I said, well, I might be interested in working on some of your ideas, depending on what they are. And a few weeks later, I got a call from him. And he said, "I have an idea that I think you might be able to help me with. Would you like to talk about it?"

And I said, yes. And so at the time, his idea was for a satellite project. His wife was ill, but she loved listening to radio programs from around the country, whatever she could pick up. So he wanted to form a network that would feature different radio programs, and that we would transmit them via satellite.

So we signed, to make a long story short, we signed people like Dr. Laura at the time, Dr. Harvey Rubin, who was a psychiatrist, is a psychiatrist. So some of the different areas that we covered were liberal politics, conservative politics, health, financial, we had different categories. So we worked on this, trying to develop this idea for several months. But along came the internet and audio, audio on the internet.



There was a software called Real Audio that was being developed at the time. And Ed switched horses in midstream, as my dad would say, and said, I think we ought to try to put this on the internet. Well, that was a very new concept. At the time, there was only one other company putting any audio on the internet.

And that was a company in Dallas, was a young entrepreneur there. He was transmitting via audio, basketball, football, a lot of sporting events. And he was giving the programming away to try to build an audience. We were going to sell our programming. And we had a subscription based product. He had an audience based product, he wanted to build up his audience.

And I got a call one day from this young man in Dallas, and he asked if he could come to Tulsa to talk to us, because he was looking for a potential partnership. And also, I'm sure he was looking for investment money from Ed. And so I talked to Ed and said, "Can he come up and talk to us?" And he said, Yes. So he did. His name is Mark Cuban.

And he and Ed did not see eye to eye on much of anything that day. So we ended up without a partnership. And both companies went their separate ways. A year later, Mark Cuban sold this company for \$8 billion to Yahoo.

We look back, I guess we could kind of laugh about it.

**JE:** You could have been a part of that.

**BD:** We could have been part of that. Yes.

**JE:** And by the way, like, Ed Taylor, I've also interviewed. And so I got his story on the satellite world and all. But then, you know, you guys were going worldwide. Did you realize that when you went on the internet? That was worldwide stuff?

**BD:** Yes. And one of the projects that we did during this period of time that I was most proud of is we joined forces with Harvard University for the first World AIDS Day on the internet. In fact, I believe it was the first webcast live on the internet. I want to say that was must have been around 1995 or 96.

And we didn't have many listeners. But we had some from far and away. I know there were some from Japan, I believe, and you know, other countries around the world. So I think we had no idea at the time what this would lead to. I had no idea. I'll take that back. I had no idea. But I do remember Ed saying to me one day, and he was such a visionary.

And he saw things far and away, things that the rest of us could only dream about. But he told me one time, he said, there will come a day when your entire world will be on your phone. I said, "Well, what do you mean by that?" "Well, you will watch movies on your phone, you will talk to people on your phone, you will," I forget what all he said, but it was just, you know, something that I could not fathom. But that was his special gift was his vision. And he was, you know, had so much experience in the world of technology. And his father was in the same field.

And I know Ed got much of his knowledge from his father, but and he was a voracious reader. Before the internet, every morning, if he didn't come to, there were some days he did not come to the office. And if he didn't come to the office, he would send someone to the office with a pile of newspaper clippings, magazine articles, all for me to read.

And they were, and they were things that he had read, probably just the night before. But that morning, I would have a big stack of things to read. He was a great teacher. I learned so much from him. I think he and I were good partners.

He would talk about ideas. And he would talk at length about something and give every detail. I was able to and he and he credited me with this, but I was able to look at a large piece of information and make it more concise, like for a television broadcast. And he felt like that was one of the talents that I brought to the table for our company.

**JE:** How fortunate you were to be around him. And he talked about Ted Turner and how CNN and all got launched.

**BD:** He launched Ted Turner on satellite with WTBS. Yes. And I was able to go to a conference in Oklahoma City. And Ted was there and I was able to, Ed

was not able to go to that. But I went and I was able to talk to Ted about Ed. He had a great deal of respect for him.

**JE:** And we have cable television. We were one of the first ones in America, I believe, because he lived here in Tulsa.

**BD:** Yes, yes. Ed is, you know, a best kept secret in Tulsa, I think. I know not everybody outside our industry knows about him and the success that he had and the kind of visionary that he was. But Tulsa's very fortunate to have had somebody like him live here all these years. And he's still here.

**JE:** Isn't it interesting how we've been able to be in this business and see things come along. And then pretty soon they start building websites. And you were so amazed by people watching your webcasts from Japan and all. Remember when they unearthed the Plymouth Belvedere that had been buried?

**BD:** You were a part of that, I remember, yes.

**JE:** I was working with Ackerman McQueen at the time. And Angus McQueen was also one of those people who saw the future. And he said, "We're going to do that live." And we got people coming from around the world, watching this car being unearthed.

**BD:** I didn't come from around the world, but I was there. And yes, there were people, I think, that were with us that were from out of town that had come to see that.

**JE:** And I realized then what a website would do because of all these people who were tuning in. I could not believe that. So that's what helped me understand that what we're doing here today is important. And people around the world can listen to it. And we too now get people from around the world listening to Voices of Oklahoma.

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**Chapter 18 – 4:50**  
**Published a Book**

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**Becky Dixon (BD):** So just to sort of wrap up my career thus far, Ed retired in 2013. I bought his company and continue as owner of AirPlay today.

**John Erling (JE):** And what does AirPlay do?

**BD:** Today, primarily, we are focusing on our on-hold messaging product. We have 7,000 clients nationwide. This was part of a company that Ed bought, I think, 20 years ago. And I have employees that have been with us for 20 years. I know one woman who works with us, started with us when she was, she started working when there was shipping to be done when she was very, very, she was a teenager and is still with us today.

So we primarily focus on that. We also did video production for a number of years and are not doing as much of that anymore. I am trying to step back a little bit. And so I feel like I have the company in a position that it can be run with or without my full 100% attention, because the people working with us now have been in the on-hold industry for so many years.

**JE:** Doesn't that make you feel good that at this point in your life, you still have something going? It's a business and all?

**BD:** I still have something going, but I have the flexibility that I always wanted and dreamed about. Of course, now my children are gone.

**JE:** They're gone.

**BD:** Well, they, one lives in San Francisco and one in New York, but I see them as often as I can.

**JE:** Do you have grandchildren?

**BD:** No, not yet.

**JE:** Yeah. Did you release a commissioned book?

**BD:** We did publish a book in 2014, I believe, on the, it was the history of the Liberty Glass plant. And I wrote the book. I had an employee at the time who had a strong tie to Sapulpa. And she asked if, she said, "Would you be

interested in helping me put together a book that tells the history of Liberty Glass?"

She said, "I can do the graphics." She was a graphic designer. She said, "I can do the graphics if you can do written content." And so I approached it much like I did one of my television specials. I interviewed a number of the people who were still living who were a part of Liberty Glass. That's why they wanted to do it at that point, because their employees were getting older, and they wanted to make sure they were able to capture their stories.

And so I interviewed the people and wrote their answers much like I'd write an interview. So I really didn't have any other experience in writing something like that. So I went back to what I knew.

**JE:** You are famous for not having experience, and yet going on and do something. Did you, did you find you enjoyed writing? Do you consider yourself a writer? You're a broadcaster, but?

**BD:** I love writing. I love writing. That was always my favorite part of broadcasting was writing. I love the creative opportunity writing provides. And that was my favorite part of my Oklahoman show was writing.

**JE:** You've received numerous awards recently, wasn't it? You received the Sadie Adwan Lifetime Achievement Award?

**BD:** Yes, I've been very fortunate to receive a number of awards. I think when you stay in an industry as long as I have, they have no choice, but to give you some of the awards. The Sadie Adwan, yes, for Lifetime Achievement from Women in Communications. That meant so much to me, because I was able to work with Sadie Adwan at Channel 8, and she was the first woman general manager. So she was a pioneer, certainly in her own right.

She followed Tom Goodgame at Channel 8 as general manager. So that award meant a great deal to me.

**JE:** In interviewing people, and you go away from it and started thinking about it, was there always that question that you should have asked?

**BD:** Yes, I'm sure there was over the years, especially after I'd get to the editing process. I would think, "Oh my gosh, I wish I didn't ask that." Yes, but I think

that's part of, you know, that's just part of being an interviewer is that there's always going to be things you wish you had asked, because you don't know a person's entire story, obviously, before you interview them. So you can't come up with a specific list that you will always stick to.

You have to always, like we talked about earlier, listen and see where the story leads you.

**JE:** And that always nags me, and it will nag me after this interview, oh, I should have, I should have, I should have.

**BD:** Well, I think we covered. We did. I do want to mention one other honor, because I was able to receive Oklahoma's highest honor, and that was from the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. And that was certainly the high point of my career, was receiving that honor.

**JE:** Right, and you deserve that.

## **Chapter 19 – 5:46**

### **Advice and Most Proud**

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**John Erling (JE):** You didn't know it, but you were a pioneer woman. And what do you say to young people today that are interested in journalism? It sure is far different if they want to get into electronic than it was way back then. But what kind of advice do you give them?

**Becky Dixon (BD):** That's really hard to say, because I feel like the advice I gave young people earlier in my career is so different than maybe I would say today, because the world has changed so much. And the role of being an employee, and I know this from my children, because things that they tell me that they do, you know, in their work or opportunities that they have, wouldn't have been the case when I was first starting out.

Early on, I would have said, do whatever your supervisor tells you to do. They tell you to empty the trash, go empty the trash and do it with enthusiasm. This was back when broadcasting was very hard to get into. And I think it's easier now, but especially for women.

I don't think I told the women to empty the trash, but I would probably have said, you know, do what your supervisor tells you to do, as long as it's in line with the role that you're fulfilling at the company. Make your supervisor look good. These were things that I thought I could have probably done a better job at. And now today, I definitely wouldn't say those things.

**JE:** What would you say today?

**BD:** That was a lesson I learned from my dad. I think if you want to really break it down to something simple, that's what I'd say.

**JE:** Do we have anything else we want to say? Something that's on your head? You could drive away and say, "Oh, I should have said."

**BD:** Well, I would like to say, I really appreciate the role that my family played in my career. My husband, Patrick, has been so supportive and has, you know, gone with me on many of my interviews and just helped to support me. My children are the same.

They, you know, they never once said, you weren't here for this, or you criticized me for not being something, except one time, my son was so disappointed that I wasn't able to attend some of his baseball games. Because he said to me one time, he said, you go to everybody's games, but mine. And that was really an impetus for me deciding I needed to have more flexibility with my career.

**JE:** Well, you're giving advice to young people when they raise families, how much you paid attention to your own, and it was important for you to be there. So that was an example, too.

**BD:** I think I had the perfect career had I had no children. But I never got on a plane that I really didn't feel sick at my stomach for leaving them. I grew up on a remote ranch, and I had a very narrow window on the world. And of course, then I found myself hosting a show called Wide World, and little did I know just how wide the world could be.

I remember being in the Netherlands at the World Gymnastics Championships. It was probably around 1987 or 8. And the Soviets would not allow us to make eye contact with their gymnasts because they were

afraid we might encourage them to defect.

So even while interviewing them, we couldn't make eye contact with them. We couldn't be alone with them. And again, it was because they were worried about their gymnasts defecting because there had been a couple of high-profile defections at the time.

So here I was. I was so naive. I could just see a KGB agent lurking around every corner ready to catch me if I made eye contact because that's hard to do, to interview someone and not make eye contact with them. So there were certainly some experiences with different countries, different cultures. It was a very wide world.

**JE:** Isn't it amazing this ranch you came from and you did all that. You believe in a higher power, and he knew where this was tracking and you didn't.

**BD:** Somebody must have known because there was no way I could have ever imagined the life that I would eventually lead. Somebody asked me one time, did you always dream of being a journalist? And I said, never. No, never. I just wanted to be a cowgirl.

**JE:** What are you most proud of?

**BD:** I'm proud of the fact that I was able to keep all the balls in the air for as long as I did. I always looked at my job as a juggling act, trying to keep my family going and keep my career on track. And I think I did a good job of paying attention to both of those.

**JE:** And I think we would all say we agree with you. It sounds that way. Thank you so much for doing this. We've known each other down through the years, and this is obviously the first time we get to really sit and talk with you. And I really admire you and your career and what you did and the shining example you were. You did things I could never have even dared to do. So thank you, thank you.

**BD:** It's my pleasure, and I have enjoyed following your career all these years. And I'm glad we're both still here in Tulsa and both have made it our mission to show that Oklahoma's greatest resource truly is its people.



**JE:** Yeah, and we're into preservation. You were preserving stories, what you did in Oklahomans, and that's what we do at Voices of Oklahoma. So we're kind of in the same kind of business. Thank you, Becky. I appreciate it.

**BD:** You're welcome.

Thank you for your support as we preserve Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time, on [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com)