

## Barry Switzer

This football legend rose from an unconventional childhood to Super Bowl royalty.

### Chapter 1 - :30

#### Introduction

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**John Erling:** Former Oklahoma University football coach Barry Switzer has one of the highest winning percentages of any college football coach in history. He is one of only two head coaches to win both a college football national championship and a Super Bowl. In this interview he talks about his life growing up in Crossett, Arkansas. His father was a bootlegger and his mother took her own life. His college career started with a football scholarship to The University of Arkansas and his coaching career placed him in the College Football Hall of Fame. Now Barry Switzer tells his own story, underwritten in part by The Helmerich Foundation for VoicesofOklahoma.com.

### Chapter 2 - 4:27

#### The Beginning

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**John Erling:** This is August 17th, 2009. I'm John Erling.

**Barry Switzer:** My name is Barry Lane Switzer. I was born October 5th, 1937. I am 71 years old. I live in Norman, Oklahoma near the University of Oklahoma campus. I live here with my wife Becky Switzer and my two stepchildren.

**JE:** We are here in your home doing this interview. Where were you born?

**BS:** I was born in Crossett, Arkansas. It's a small, textile paper products community. It's located in the piney woods of south Arkansas. It's in the central part of the state, between two cities probably more known El Dorado, Arkansas and Lake Village, Arkansas. It was a town of about 3,000 or 4,000 people at the time. It's very close to the Louisiana line. My first home after being born was I lived on a houseboat. My daddy was a tollkeeper on the Arkansas River that was named the Ouachita, spelled differently than what we have here in Oklahoma. It's spelled with an "O" O-u-a-c-h. He was a tollkeeper for the state and we lived on a houseboat underneath the bridge.

**JE:** Your parents' names?

**BS:** My father's name was Frank Mays Switzer. He was born also in Crossett. My mother was Mary Louise Wood, also born in Crossett. My father was born in 1908 and my mother was born in 1914. Both are deceased today.

**JE:** Do you have a brother?

**BS:** I have a brother named Donald Kent Switzer who is five and half years younger than me. He was born in Long Beach, California during the war years when there were all of those people from Texas and Oklahoma and Arkansas going to California to make a living during the war working in aircraft factories and shipyards. My daddy was 4F. He wasn't eligible to serve. He was partially deaf and he worked in the shipyards at Terminal Island in San Pedro, California and my mother worked in a cafe called Arky's Café. We lived in Long Beach about four or five blocks from the ocean.

**JE:** In Crossett, you lived in what they called a shotgun house?

**BS:** Yes, truly it was a shotgun house because it was built up on stumps and logs and bricks. It was at least three feet off of the ground. I always thought shotgun houses were built so the dogs, cats, hogs and chickens, had to have a place to live. But it was called a shotgun house because you could shoot a shotgun through the front door out the back door, and you wouldn't hit anyone unless someone happened to be walking across the house from one room to another room.

**JE:** How spartan was that? Did you have electricity?

**BS:** No, but that was typical at the time. When you grew up in rural Arkansas, or the rural south, I think Arkansas was no exception to just the rural south. This was in the '30s and '40s. There was no electricity. There were no amenities like today that we take for granted. Everyone lived in shotgun houses. We grew our own gardens. We had our smokehouse. There was no plumbing and no electricity. You got up in the morning in the winters and you go back and you break a thin layer of ice on a bucket and dip in it a porcelain pan that you'd go put on a wood stove to heat it up. Daddy would do that every morning and I would do that to wash my face and to brush my teeth. Then you would rush to the fireplace or to the wood stove in the kitchen because that was the only means of heat. So, it was a totally different era. You took a bath in a No. 3 washtub, seriously, you really did. You bathed from a tub and you heated your own water and you didn't bathe as much as you do today I can promise you.

**JE:** Your elementary schooling that started obviously in Crossett?

**BS:** Actually, it was in California. When we went to California, it was in 1941 when the war broke out. My Dad was a ship painter in Terminal Island in the San Pedro shipyards. I started attending grade school a couple of blocks from the little rented home we were staying in. It was about 600 square feet. It was called Horace Mann Grade School. It still

exists today. I drive by it and see it every once in a while when I am out in California, I'll take an opportunity to go down and revisit the neighborhood. But I went to first, second and third grade there. Then after the war was over in 1945, we moved back to Crossett, Arkansas and I continued my education in the Crossett elementary schools in the fourth and fifth grade.

### Chapter 3 - 4:22

#### The Neighborhood

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**John Erling:** In Crossett, was that a mix of blacks and whites that lived in that area?

**Barry Switzer:** It was a large white and black contingency, it as equal, probably about 50/50. Crossett was a mill town, a sawmill town. People worked in the woods. They cut pulpwood. They cut trees for timber and to produce paper and charcoal. Every home in the city, black and white, was painted Crossett gray. They were all shotgun houses. They all looked alike and were owned by the company and rented to employees.

**JE:** Chances are most of your friends were black and white or mostly black, or?

**BS:** Well, my Dad being a bootlegger, his profession of being a bootlegger, when he came back from the war he couldn't get a job. But prior to going out there (to California) he had various jobs with the state government. As I told you he was a tollkeeper on the bridge between Crossett and El Dorado. It was on the Ouachita River and it separated the two counties, Union and Ashley County. When we came back after the war in 1945, there were no jobs. There was an influx of people coming back to Texas, Arkansas and Oklahoma and they were all seeking employment and there just weren't enough jobs. So Daddy started bootlegging whiskey to make a living. He had six or seven black gentlemen in the black quarters that worked for my father that were agents for my father I guess, selling and bootlegging whiskey in the community. And I was known as Mr. Frank's boy in the black community. So we lived way out in the country past the black community and down a gravel road and then about 100 yards off a dirt road. It was one home up on acreage and that's the way daddy wanted it so that's where we lived.

**JE:** You even picked cotton for a black man?

**BS:** Well, yeah I did. In my book I wrote about it. There was a lot of sugar cane raised for molasses. People had mills that would grind the sugar cane that would make the liquid form that was used to make molasses and sugar. They would have one single mule in a circle pulling and grinding, as you would feed the stalks into the mill. The black gentleman also had the cotton and he would pay us, or a few of the boys, black and white to help pick cotton. So I picked cotton early on, it wasn't like a full-time job, it was just when we

could help out. I did it and he would pay us for doing it. I think it was 35 cents an hour or something like that.

**JE:** Back in those days, for you to be with blacks and whites, that combination was a very natural thing for you?

**BS:** Oh yes.

**JE:** Probably some of your better friends even were black?

**BS:** Well sure, up the road the closest community was a black community and down past me was a ground hog sawmill that contained about 20 families and there were some young children there that I could walk down to the mill that I could play with them. But less than 100 yards from where I lived was a black community. Sam Lawson had a black store and what you'd call a juke joint and on Saturday nights there was partying and dancing there and most of them were drinking daddy's whiskey. They would have bands come in and play and I would listen to the sounds of the music at night travel through the woods. I lied many a night in my bed and listened to the music coming from Sam Lawson's Cafe up the road. But every morning during the school year, I would walk 100 yards up the dirt road to the gravel road and wait for my yellow dog school bus to come along to pick me up. And I would stand there with several of my black friends and buddies that I played with, and they would be waiting for their bus to come along to take them to their segregated school. At that time, I didn't think much about the difference in integration and segregation. I didn't think about the significance of it. I was too young. Sure they went to separate schools, but they were friends and their bus would come sometimes sooner than mine. They would get on it and I would tell them, "I'll see you this afternoon." Or mine would come along and if I had to go to the bathroom, several times I'd be off in the woods and my bus would come along and they would see I wouldn't be there and they would continue and I would miss the bus and have to walk to school and that happened many times. (Laughter)

## Chapter 4 - 6:00

### Barry's Daddy

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**John Erling:** At the end of your fifth grade school year, your mother took you and Donnie and moved to El Dorado?

**Barry Switzer:** Yes, El Dorado, Arkansas. The lifestyle that my daddy lived...I lived him dearly. He was a man that taught me many values. He was a man of his word and of his honor. He taught me a lot of tremendous intangibles that carried me through life and that I am appreciative of today. My daddy was well thought of in the black community. He was a

guy who took care of many, many families who were destitute or their mother or father was killed, for whatever reason. He would take children and place them with other black families and provide the welfare or the money or the assistance that they needed if these families would do that (take the kids in). I know he did that on many occasions. My daddy sent a lot of kids to school. When later on in life, I'll never forget some of my proudest moments John, would be traveling to see my son play at an all-black school. My son, Doug Switzer later on played at the University of Arkansas - Pine Bluff that was at one time known as the University of Arkansas AN&M at Pine Bluff. It was an all-black segregated school and it still is today. Doug went to school and played quarterback. He was the only white in school and was the starting quarterback on the team. He was the only white player on the team obviously, being the only white in the school. I was coaching the Dallas Cowboys and I would fly Jerry's jet in to see games. They would play Grambling, Alcorn A&M, Jackson State, teams like that in the SWAC Conference. And I would be sitting in the stands and I would go to the concession stand for a Coke at half-time and I would have black women and gentlemen walk up to me and introduce themselves and say, "I am from Crossett, Arkansas, I am a principal, or a vice principal" or some other profession and they'd say, "I want you to know your daddy sent me to school. Your daddy helped me get my education, he helped pay for my education. He paid my tuition." And that of course made me tremendously proud that I had never seen these people before and I have never seen them since. I was in the Atlanta airport one time John, and I had a black gentleman walk up to me in the airport and say to me, "Barry, I read your book and I am one of those people that your dad sent to school. I am a warden at a federal penitentiary. I'm from Crossett, Arkansas, and your daddy helped educate me." I got a little ahead of myself in talking about what dad accomplished, but back when I was in the sixth grade my mother and father...obviously the lifestyle that my daddy lived...he was kind of a rogue. He was a man's man and in those days people did carry guns on them. My dad always had one in his car, or he carried a pistol on him because he had a lot of money in his pocket. And he was, I guess, what you would consider a loan shark today, because he loaned money to people that needed money. You see a lot of these cash advance stores today where you can go in and get \$300 or \$400 or \$500 hundred dollars. But back then, people wanted \$20 and no more than probably \$40 at the most. Daddy had a lot of \$20 and \$40 loans out and you've got to understand people were working for \$40 a week or a \$1 an hour. You know, at a 40 hour a week job you only made \$40 before they took out taxes and all. Daddy took care of the black community and loaned a lot of money out. Also, he sold whiskey and daddy liked to gamble and stay out late and we lived in a very isolated area. My mother was not given very many opportunities to socialize. Her world was a world of fiction. She read a lot and she was an

avid reader of fiction. A lot of novels she told me I should read and I did and I read them early on because of her suggestion. She was very intelligent. She was valedictorian of her class. Finally, because of that lifestyle and the way we were living, she packed my brother and me up, and we moved to El Dorado. She separated from my father and you know at that time I didn't know what that meant. I just knew we were moving to El Dorado. That's when I started football in sixth grade in El Dorado. We went to a school that doesn't exist today called Retta Brown. But Yocum does exist, and I went there in the seventh grade and played football. And the amazing thing about playing football there at Yocum in the seventh grade, I started at Retta Brown, but at Yocum I played with players that I played years later with at the University of Arkansas, we were all teammates. Dwayne Harris, Buddy Routers, Dickie Mayes, guys I got to know, Jim Moody was an all-American running back. I got to know these players. Bobby Bates, I could name one after the other. We were all recruited to go to the University of Arkansas and we ended up later, years down the road together at Arkansas playing together. But this was in the seventh grade. We were there (in El Dorado) for two years. My mother ran a cafe called The Coffee Cup. It was on the northwest highway in El Dorado, near the Boys' Club where I spent a lot of time. A young man named Alva Waddell was instrumental in getting me to join the Boys' Club. He took an interest in young men's lives. He was an influence in a lot of people in El Dorado and getting them to join the Boys' Club and interested in sports. There were a lot of coaches and volunteers that helped.

**JE:** So that would have been a big influence then in your life that Boys' Club?

**BS:** Yes, that was a big influence in my life the Boys' Club in El Dorado was certainly. And a lot of those people are alive today...I go back to El Dorado because I have a lot of cousins there and that's where my mother is buried is in El Dorado. My father is buried in Crossett. But at the end of seventh grade we moved back to Crossett. Mother and daddy got back together so I went back to the eighth grade in Crossett and completed my high school education in Crossett, eighth through the 12th grade.

## Chapter 5 - 5:28

### Bootlegger Stigma

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**John Erling:** About your father being a bootlegger, you started to realize that maybe there's a social stigma that came with being a bootlegger's son?

**Barry Switzer:** Well, early on, I didn't think anything about it. But, I realized later on, and you've got to understand, you are in the Bible belt in southern Arkansas. But most of the guys that worked at the paper mill, a lot of them were dad's friends, and dad played

poker with them, and most of them bought whiskey from daddy and they fraternized and were associates of his and spent a lot of time with my father. But, there were those in the community that didn't maybe respect my dad's profession and therefore affected my social life. I was puzzled. I thought I was a pretty good-looking guy and I was a football player and the best player that they had there, and (Laughter) some of the girls wouldn't date me. They eventually told me it was because their mother and father didn't want them to. But I always would have someone go up to the front door and pick them up. I would be waiting out in the car, you know, we got around that. We were smart enough to figure that one out and do a really quick maneuver around that one.

**JE:** So you would have maybe had an inferiority complex about that?

**BS:** You know, I think I maybe had that later on when I went to the University of Arkansas. I didn't have an inferiority complex when I was in Crossett, because all of my buddies that I played with and I grew up with, they didn't care. I had a great relationship with them. I was the captain of the team and I was one of the better players. I played during my sophomore and junior and senior year in Crossett. I had a great relationship with those players and those students. So, I didn't have it (an inferiority complex) until daddy went to prison. Daddy was incarcerated at Cummings State Prison Farm, which is Arkansas's state penitentiary. If you've ever seen the movie *Brubaker*, starring Robert Redford, that was about the Arkansas State prison farm in Cummings, Arkansas. Prison reform was the theme of the movie. That was where daddy was incarcerated and every Sunday I would drive my mother to the prison farm and we would wait for hours for them to be able to check our cars out and check the baskets and the lunches all out before we could go into the prison on one single road. Daddy lived the barracks and I will never forget...we've all probably seen the movie, *O Brother Where Art Thou?* with George Clooney and John Goodman. And it was a good movie. It depicted prisoners with black and white striped uniforms. Those uniforms did exist. That was what was worn in that era of the 1940s and 1950s. As we would drive up, you would see in front of the prison farm tens of thousands of acres of cotton. And clustered out there with big flatbed trailers would be prisoners pulling sacks of cotton and picking cotton and they would be surrounded and circled by trustees sitting on horses with 30/30s sitting across their laps. Daddy didn't have to pick cotton. He told me sitting on a bunk in his barracks that his job, was one of the better jobs in prison, it was to raise rabbits. He said, "Those guys out there picking that cotton have got to have a lot of protein to pick that cotton." (Laughter) He said, "We raise rabbits." And the reason you raise rabbits in a prison is because chickens take too much room and too much acreage to raise chickens on. Rabbits can be raised in a cage and chickens can't be. So, they raised rabbits and daddy helped do that.

**JE:** How old were you then?

**BS:** I was a junior in high school when daddy was incarcerated.

**JE:** Were you around the day he was arrested and were you a part of that?

**BS:** Oh yeah. I've seen my daddy arrested several times. He was never arrested by the local community. And he was never arrested by the County Sheriff. He got the County Sheriff elected because he controlled the black vote in the community. The Sheriff and my daddy were friends, they played poker together and they drank together. All of the local politicians knew that they had to have daddy's support and friendship to be able to influence their political success. There have been many times that my father asked me about certain young people that were running for office that he didn't know, that he knew I knew better because I had gone to school. And later when I was in college, daddy got out of prison and went back to bootlegging. Daddy was still what he had always been. So, it was something to see because dad was always what he always was. He was never a hypocrite. He would never change.

**JE:** How long was he in prison?

**BS:** He was in there a couple of years. He never got to see me play high school football my junior and senior year. And when I got out, we were talking about my inferiority complex, I think it was after that and then when I went off to college that I had one. I was around strangers now, other football players from all around the state of Arkansas and other places. All of sudden I'm thinking that probably everybody knew that my father was incarcerated and in prison. I didn't realize until later on in life that people don't have enough time to think about anyone else other than themselves. They spend about 30 seconds thinking about you and then the rest of the time they spend thinking about themselves. (Laughter) It took me awhile to figure that out. So, I realized later on that those things don't matter and people respect you for what you are and evaluate you based on your relationship to them. But early on, that was one of things that you had to deal with.

**JE:** Yes.

## Chapter 6 - 3:00

### Barry's Mother

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**John Erling:** But this all affected your mother?

**Barry Switzer:** Tremendously. My daddy kept her isolated because of the lifestyle he lived. He didn't want her following him or chasing him. He would not let her drive. He would do the shopping. Mother's world, as I said early on, was a world of fiction. She read many, many books. She had me read, *Gone With The Wind* early on, Margaret Mitchell's only book



she ever wrote. She had me read *Atlas Shrugged* and *Fountainhead*, books that young men don't read when they are in high school. I remember well today and I talk to other people about reading the books that I read, William Faulkner *Tobacco Road*, Erskine Caldwell, books that you just didn't read. My mother had read all of these books. Then I started reading *The Hardy Boys* books. I finally got into books that were written for me. I read some Nancy Drew and I probably read every Hardy Boys book that was ever written by Frank Dixon. But, you've got to understand there was no television. We had no electricity. We had a battery-powered radio. On Saturday nights I would listen to the Grand Ole Opry. I would listen to all of the commercials that they would have. I listened to Louisiana Hayride, Hank Williams, Roy Acuff, you know, those were standards. Those were the people that were on the radio all of the time. So I grew up listening to country music on a battery-powered radio, a coal lamp to study by and to read by. My mother's life was a life a fiction as we get back to that. But she did give me an interest in literature. But then, alcohol and barbiturates became a part of her life. There were many, many nights that I would come home and I would find her in a comatose state. My younger brother could not do anything about it because he was too young. But I was a junior or a senior in high school and I could and I would spend most of my time with my buddies and I would stay with them in town. My daddy never worried about me because he knew in that area I was safe and I could take care of myself. I kind of grew up on my own. A lot of values can be learned in the pool hall. I spent a lot of time in the pool hall with the rest of my buddies.

**JE:** Your dad, was he dependent on drugs or alcohol?

**BS:** No, you've got to understand there was no such thing as what we know today as street drugs or recreational drugs they call them or the hard drugs that we have today. In that era it was barbiturates and prescription drugs. It was drugs that a doctor would write for sleeping or depression or whatever. And you mix it with alcohol and it was dangerous, and it had a tremendous adverse affect on a human.

## Chapter 7 - 5:00

### Barry the Student

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**John Erling:** So, that's kind of the setting at home. We get you out of high school and you were recruited to play for the University of Arkansas.

**Barry Switzer:** Correct. I was recruited under Bowden Wyatt. Bowden Wyatt was the head coach when I was a senior in high school. He was recruited away to the University of Tennessee. He left and then went to Tennessee and then there was a coach that was an

all-American quarterback at Oklahoma named Jack Mitchell that was hired from Wichita State University to go to Arkansas in 1955, my senior year that I was graduating. And he sent an assistant coach named George Cole who came to see me. George Cole took me out to Wagon Wheel Cafe in west Crossett, we had a chicken-fried steak and over that meal he said, "Barry, we are going to offer you a scholarship. I've got a bed for you to sleep in and a plate for you to eat out of. You're going to have to make your own bed and as long as you're good I won't break your plate." I said, "That sounds good to me and I want to become a Razorback." And so, that's how I was recruited, it didn't take much.

**JE:** Position? The position you were playing?

**BS:** In that era, you've got to understand, it's different than what you have today. We have specialization today. People play one side of the ball or the other. They play offense or defense, or they play a kicking game. In my era, you had to play all three. It was platoon football and you had to play offense, defense and the kicking game. Players were selected by their defensive ability, because defense was so emphasized. Scores in games back in the early '50s were 7-3 or 10-3, 10-7, 7-0. They were low-scoring games and it's because the offensive playbooks weren't that big and they were pretty basic. You played defense first, you kicked the ball and you played for field position. You tried to score a touchdown or two. And if you could get a fumble and put the ball in the end zone and play great defense, you win the football game. That was the way people coached back then and that's why scores were what they were. There weren't many high-scoring games at all in my era and you had to play both ways. I was a linebacker on defense and I was a center on offense. I was a 213-pound freshman, one of the heavier freshmen. I played at about 200 pounds in shape and in great condition. Probably one of our heaviest linemen was about 212 pounds at tackle, but we all could run, and we all had quickness, could get up and get down and move and had lateral speed, and could chase the ball and tackle.

**JE:** Were you interested in any other sports?

**BS:** No, I was a track guy and I threw the shot and discus. I was good enough to win district and I was second in the state in shot, but I had no distances to brag about. I think I was second in the discus and second in the shot.

**JE:** It was then in school, you became socially involved and it really gave you some confidence.

**BS:** You know, I was never a great student and I look back at my years and when I have had the opportunity to talk to young people in schools and grade schools, I try to encourage them to compete in the classroom like I competed on the athletic field. I made a tremendous mistake. I didn't do that. I competed only on the athletic field. I didn't compete in the classroom. And I look back at that era and we weren't challenged in that era. There were some students that did well academically, although most of us just got by.

We did what we had to do to make a grade that had to be made. I went through college that way. I crammed for tests. I would stay up all night or for a couple of days and I would pass the test. I'll never forget in telling these students when I would talk to young people, I would tell them, the greatest feeling I ever had in college, (and they would expect me to talk about something that happened on the athletic field) is not playing in football, it was realizing why I was in school my junior year. In realizing that if I was to graduate from college I had to become a student and prepare myself. I started studying and really spending time with a group of students who had that ambition and were dedicated to being students and all of a sudden I became a pretty good student. I made the Dean's List three semesters. My grade point was raised and all of a sudden the greatest feeling that you can have is to walk into a classroom thinking I don't care what you ask me, or what test you hand out, I'm going to pass it because I am prepared. That is the greatest feeling I ever had is to be able to know hey, when I went into a classroom, give me what you got because I'm ready.

**JE:** So your message then is it depends of whom you hang out with that really makes a difference?

**BS:** You bet. I made some changes and it influenced my life.

## Chapter 8 - 4:00

### Frank Broyles

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**John Erling:** A gentleman by the name of Frank Broyles became the head coach at the University of Arkansas in 1958?

**Barry Switzer:** Frank Broyles came from Missouri in 1958. Jack Mitchell, whom I played for, for three years, left and took a job at the University of Kansas. Jack died this year (2009). I just recently attended a memorial for Jack Mitchell no more than two weeks ago in Wellington, Kansas. At that memorial service were Kansas football players, Gale Sayers who played for Jack, and John Haydel and Curtis McClinton. They were great players. These names might not mean much, but they did to me because they were all-Americans. They had great professional careers and they are in the NFL Hall of Fame. They were wonderful athletes in my era. I was asked to come because I represented the Arkansas contingent that Jack had coached. But Jack had come and stayed for three years and then left. Then there was a coach named Frank Broyles who had played at Georgia Tech University for Bobby Dodd who had come to Arkansas who was the coach and athletic director for Arkansas for 50 years and had more impact than any man on Arkansas athletics that has ever lived. Frank, had he not come to the University of Arkansas, we

might not be doing this interview today because he had that impact on me. And, he was the one that directed me into the coaching profession. He gave me the opportunity to become a coach on his staff after I graduated. He also brought with him my mentor, a person by the name of Jim Mackenzie, a person that had a tremendous impact and influence on my coaching career and my life who became the head coach of Oklahoma in 1966 and brought me here. I was the first coach he hired. I came with him in January of 1966. But Frank came in 1958 and in 1959, my senior year, I was captain of the team that won Frank Broyles' first Southwest Conference Championship. We had a team that went to the Gator Bowl and defeated Georgia Tech for the first time. It was the first time Georgia Tech had ever lost a bowl game. So, 1959 was a great year for us and it was a great year for Arkansas. Frank considered me a leader of his football team and he saw something in me. After I did my service in the United States military, which all students had to do at that time, we had a military obligation to perform for our country. After I completed mine, I joined Frank's staff in the fall of 1960 and I became an assistant coach and I coached seven years before I came to Oklahoma.

**JE:** Times were good for you, but then what's going on back home while this is all going on?

**BS:** Well, back home my mother and my younger brother were still living the same life, the style that I had remembered that I had grown up in as a young boy. And it had probably gotten worse as my brother tells me. I talked earlier about me not competing in the classroom, my brother had made a decision early on that he felt like he would not be the athlete and accomplish the same things that I had. As a younger brother seeing his older brother be an athlete in high school, he did not know whether he could be that, so he took a different path. He was going to accomplish something in the classroom and compete in the classroom like I had competed on the football field. My brother became an outstanding student and was accepted to Dartmouth College and graduated with honors Cum Laude and was accepted to Duke, Virginia, and Vanderbilt Law Schools. He went to Vanderbilt Law School because it was closer to home and he graduated from Vanderbilt.

## **Chapter 9 - 3:50**

### **Mother Ends Life**

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**Barry Switzer:** But my brother grew up in a time that I didn't see. But when I did come home, very seldom, a lot of times I didn't come home at all, I'd go other places because I knew what was at home. But on one occasion, I was at home in the summer while I was in college. I told my mother, she came in one night and I saw the condition that she was in,

and I had told her that I would rather know that I would never see her again the rest of my life and know that she was safe and taken care of and not in the condition that she was in. (Pause) And my mother walked outside and took a gun and shot herself and killed herself. I often live with guilt of saying something that I meant. I was truthful because I was concerned for her and maybe those words were so hurtful. But in a condition of being on drugs and in a stupor of alcohol, I have been told and I know today that she was going to do this at some time or another. My brother, younger than me by nearly six years, was living at home every day. I didn't, I was away at college. My brother found a suicide letter that had been written. My mother had been planning this. She probably was going to do it sometime, but that was the night that she did it. I never knew about the suicide note 'til 30 years later when my brother and I were doing a book, an autobiography that I wrote, *Bootlegger's Boy* after I had coached at Oklahoma for many years. And I realized in our doing the book together, Donnie told me for the first time about the suicide letter because he had found it and shown it to my father and my father destroyed it and he said that he didn't want him to ever tell anyone about this. So, I never knew about it and no one else had ever known about it.

**John Erling:** Obviously it was a horrible scene for you because you were the first person to get to your mother after she shot herself, is that true?

**BS:** I was the last one to talk to her and I was the first one to run to her body and pick her up and carry her into the house. Of course my father wasn't there. And I waited outside in the dark. I stood outside the house and waited until I saw his lights come up the road. It seemed like hours before it happened. And he met me and of course he knew something tragic had happened because he saw the condition that I was in. And, by this time we had electricity and a telephone and I had called my uncle and he was there with me before we called the coroner or whomever we were supposed to call at that time. In the 1950s it was done differently than it is today. But she was killed instantly.

**JE:** It had to take you a long time to get over that and any feelings of guilt that you may have had, and as you have already said, you talked to people about that.

**BS:** Well, I think at the time I had tremendous guilt. But, I've lived my life and I understand that my mother intended to do this. I hated to see her in the condition that she was in. Donnie lived in it every day and had to live in it longer because he was younger. I was able to escape it and get out of it. I escaped it in high school because as I told you, I stayed in town with my friends. My best friend Bill Holder, he and I spent time together and I would stay with him. My father knew that I was okay. He never worried about me. If he needed me, he knew where to find me.

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**Chapter 10 - 4:11****Barry in Church**

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**John Erling:** The fact that you didn't get into trouble, because you could have easily done that as a child, was it because you played sports or was it because you were born with a compass and you just knew the right way?

**Barry Switzer:** No, I think we were raised the right way. We all had discipline. I was raised in an era...I call it the John Wayne era. It was an era where we were all patriotic, and said The Pledge of Allegiance, we all had respect for authority. We said, "Yes Sir, No Sir, Yes Ma'am, No Ma'am." We were disciplined that way. My father demanded that. He demanded respect for your elders. It was just a different era. We weren't tempted by drugs. There was no such thing as marijuana or cocaine, or heroin. Those things didn't exist. A quart of beer in a bottle was what we were tempted with and you know, obviously we had a few beers when we were in high school. The 45 record was coming out then and before that was the old 78. And the music we listened to on the radio station was quartets singing gospel hymns. We would sit at 12 o'clock at night at gas stations with our cars clustered together and we would listen to Randy's Record Shop in Gallatin, Tennessee. We would listen to Etta James and Joe Turner singing "Shake Rattle 'n' Roll. We would listen to Little Richard. We would listen to black music and we were listening to the birth of rock 'n' roll. This is before Elvis and this is before all of the guys out of Memphis started, Jerry Lee Lewis and these guys that brought on the birth of rock 'n' roll, Carl Perkins and Roy Orbison. This was an era when Fats Domino and these guys weren't played on white radio stations and we had to listen to their music late at night when it was played.

**JE:** You made some reference maybe I think to church. You actually went to Baptist Church didn't you?

**BS:** I went because of a girlfriend. My daddy was a devout atheist and he wouldn't let me go to church. Well, it wasn't that he wouldn't let me...it's just I wouldn't let him know if I was going to go to church. I didn't want to deal with his comments or his wrath or whatever. Then, because of a girlfriend, I did go to church and it was a horrible experience. It really was. They found out I was in church, the word spread and the minister sent for me. They took me to the back and I got down on my knees and 30 people gathered around and they prayed for me, and hugged me and kissed me and cried and loved me. All I wanted to do was break and run. I thought it was such a spectacle. I thought it was so phony. There was no transformation over me. It was that they were just making something out of me being present in church. And I did it for one reason, because a girl had asked me to come that I had an infatuation for.

- JE:** And the fact that everybody knew you as the bootlegger's son, they thought that certainly you needed to be changed?
- BS:** There was certainly that reason and it was a horrible experience for me at that point in time in my life.
- JE:** Did that turn you off to church then for the rest of your life?
- BS:** Well, that's not what it's about. It turned me away certainly. It made me realize that some of the things my dad was talking about, of how hypocritical people are. He told me about black maids and butlers coming out to buy whiskey from him. Daddy would say that he knew that wasn't for them. He knew whom they were taking it back to. He saw the hypocrisy. He saw the deacons of the church. He knew who they were. He gambled with them and drank with them and all. But, they had to do that, so daddy wasn't a hypocrite. It was just that he had his own beliefs. It obviously had a tremendous influence on me early on. I've made my decisions and I've moved forward in my life, but that was the way I was brought up and the world I lived in.
- JE:** Did it turn you off completely to church for the rest of your life?
- BS:** Well, yeah.
- JE:** It did, okay.
- BS:** It did when you saw the things that...I grew up in the tent revival days. It was an experience that made me look at it maybe differently. It made me look at it through my dad's eyes.

## Chapter 11 - 5:30

### On to Coaching

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**John Erling:** The town of Crossett honored you with Barry Switzer Appreciation Day and it was on that day that you said publicly that you would like to go into coaching.

**Barry Switzer:** Yes, I probably did and I can't remember the exact quote. They gave me an Appreciation Day and it was in 1960. Frank Broyles came and he spoke and there was banquet. I remember they held it at the Rose Inn Hotel in the banquet room. I spoke and thanked them and told them I would like to go into coaching. I was actually thinking about, as I got out of the service, I was going to go to law school. At that time all it took was 90 hours in business school to be able to get into law school. I already had a business degree and I was thinking about entering law school. Frank had asked me to join his staff and live in the dormitory. I was single. I was paid...I think it was \$400/month. I got to live free. I had free room and board. I got to eat in the chow hall and live in the athletic dormitory. I had a brand new car. I had just gotten it when I got out of the service,

a Chevrolet. I thought it was a good life. I had been there for five years as an athlete and so I thought I would go back as a coach, so that's what I did.

**JE:** Yes, that really was the thing that set you on your career path when you became the assistant coach for the Razorbacks.

**BS:** I became an assistant coach and Frank told me, he said, "If you don't like coaching you can always go back to law school next year." And as young as I was, I realized that I would be given that opportunity. But what happened at Arkansas was so good. Frank, I remember it was 1959, my senior year, and we had won the Southwest Conference Championship. Well, now, Frank had recruited well enough and was a good enough coach and had a good enough staff that was around him, that they were very competitive and they were going to contend for the championship every year. So in 1960 again they won the Southwest Conference Championship. And in 1961, and in 1962 we were playing in the Sugar Bowl and we were playing in the Cotton Bowl. We were a national contender. So I got swept up in coaching and with the success that we enjoyed, law school was never thought of again. I was enjoying coaching. I was under the mentor-ship of Jim Mackenzie and the outstanding staff that Frank had at that time. Doug Dickey who went on to Tennessee and offered me a job to go to Tennessee with him. Johnny Majors joined our staff, Wilson Matthews and Bill Pace was on our staff. Later Bill was the head coach at Vanderbilt. We had an outstanding staff and every coach that I've ever been around has given me something and I've learned so much from all of them. But Jim was the guy that really kind of took me under his wing and I became really close to him not only on the field, but also off the field in social settings with him and his wife. Merv Johnson was also on the staff. Merv who is now here at Oklahoma for now 50 years came with Frank, that's when I met Merv for the first time. I guess he's been here longer than anybody now. I met him first in 1958 when Frank come from Missouri. Frank brought him as a young assistant coach and Frank gave me that opportunity a few years later. So Merv and I had identical careers starting out under Frank. But, Jim Mackenzie was my mentor and as I said early on, when he was given the opportunity to go somewhere as a head coach, I knew that I would be going with him and that's what happened.

**JE:** Back in Arkansas you won 22 games in a row and two Southwest Conference Championships?

**BS:** In 1964 and 1965 we won 22 in a row. We went undefeated in 1964 and we went undefeated in 1965 'til we lost to LSU in the Cotton Bowl. That was the last game that Jim and I coached at Arkansas was January 1st, 1966 when we played LSU. Jim left for Norman, Oklahoma the next day and I came January 3rd, 1966 to Norman for the first time. The town was 30,000 people at the time and had one hotel downtown and it had a Holiday Inn out on I-35.



**JE:** Some famous names that were on that Arkansas team in 1964 and 1965 in there playing for you as an assistant coach?

**BS:** We had some great players. I think that early on Wayne Harrison was one of the greatest linebackers to play at Arkansas. Then we had Lance Alworth who was 20 years ahead of his time. He's in the NFL hall of Fame today. He was one of the great receivers in professional football. Lance was from Brookhaven, Mississippi and was one of the outstanding high school recruits that Frank recruited at that time. Lance had a great career in professional football. Jim Moody was an all-American, the first all-American running back for Jim Mackenzie in 1959. Then, Jim recruited a lot of great players. In 1964 Lloyd Phillips won the Outland Award. He was from Longview, Texas. We had Billy Moore, an all-American quarterback and Jerry Jones who owns the Dallas Cowboys today was an offensive guard. Jimmy Johnson who coached the Cowboys was a defensive nose-guard. We had many good players, but it was Frank's coaching and his staff. We probably out-coached a lot of people more talented than we were because of the way we played and the effort that was given.

## Chapter 12 - 4:40

### Barry Now a Sooner

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**John Erling:** In the meantime, in 1965 Oklahoma University went 3-7 and Gomer Jones was out as coach.

**Barry Switzer:** In 1964 and '65 Gomer was the head coach after Bud Wilkinson who ended his reign and entered politics. Bud coached his last year in 1963 and I think they had an 8-2 season. Then Gomer took over and I can't remember exactly, probably went 6-5 or 7-4 and then in 1965 I think they were 3-7. They had a very poor year and had a losing season. Gomer Jones was replaced by Jim Mackenzie. They (OU) hired an assistant coach. Many people here (in Norman) wanted a head coach to get the job. Obviously they all wanted Darrell Royal to come back from Texas because Darrell had built a national power and won a national championship in Texas. Darrell, obviously, having been a player that played here at OU was the favorite, but he declined the job. And as I wrote in my book, President Cross had told me that he had made the job such that there was no way Darrell could have taken it. It wasn't attractive enough to him to make the job something that he would take. President Cross, he wanted to hire an assistant coach. He didn't want a strong personality to come in as the head coach.

**JE:** Then, Jim Mackenzie is the head coach and that's when he asked you to join him. So in 1966 you came here to Oklahoma and became a Sooner. In the fall of 1966 and the spring

of '67 you began to lay the foundation for Oklahoma football. One of the things you did is you actively started recruiting blacks.

**BS:** Well, in the late '60s, what I think in history is called now The Black Revolution in Sports occurred. Sports Illustrated did about seven or eight weekly articles on The Black Revolution. It was an era when schools started recruiting black athletes but they were on a quota system. It was always where they would recruit the skilled athlete. It was always the runningback or the receiver. In basketball, all teams would have one black starter and four white starters. And I always made the comment that isn't it amazing that you watch basketball and there's only one black to ever make the team. And obviously it's a quota system that the coaches were under and they felt pressured. Don Haskins in 1968, he went against the quota system because he started an all-black team against an all-white Kentucky team and won the national championship and the NCAA tournament. I was influenced in the fact that I was going to recruit the best athletes in all positions. That's what you should do regardless of who they were, whether it was a quarterback or an offensive guard or defensive tackle, go recruit the best. If you're going to be the best, then go recruit the best. So Chuck Fairbanks was sort of this philosophy. He never said it publicly, but we started recruiting more black athletes. We started recruiting from Texas heavily because Texas had so many high schools that played football and there were so many good athletes in Texas. A lot of the black athletes were going north to the Big 10 and the Big 8 area. The Southwest Conference was not recruiting the black athletes and Texas was in the Southwest Conference and all of the schools in Texas were in the Southwest Conference, so it was fertile recruiting ground for the black athlete. When I became head coach in 1973, I told my staff in my first meeting, "We will recruit the best players at all positions. If any coach has any problem with that, he better let me know now because that's the way it's going to be and he needs to go coach somewhere else if he disagrees with that. And I mean all positions, including quarterback, we are going to recruit the best players." So we all, in that era of the late 1960s and early '70s realized that discrimination in athletics, those walls, those barriers were being torn down my coaches who had a philosophy like mine, who believed that those athletes should be given that opportunity if they qualified academically.

**JE:** So you then recruited quite a bit in Texas, is that true?

**BS:** That's true and Bob Stoops does today, I mean that's the fertile recruiting ground. You always recruit from Texas. Today, Texas has 1,600 high schools that play football. Oklahoma has a little over 200 that play high school football. Texas produces the best collegiate athletes in the country. If you can get the top 20 or 30 players out of Texas you're going to contend for the national championship every year.

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**Chapter 13 - 4:30****Chuck Fairbanks**

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**John Erling:** But Texas wasn't recruiting blacks at the time?

**Barry Switzer:** Well, Darrell's was the last all-white team to win a national championship. He did that in 1963. Darrell started recruiting the black athletes in the early 1970s, but he was doing it under a quota system. He was recruiting only skilled athletes like Earl Campbell. When I say skilled athletes, I'm talking about receivers. People that will touch the football and run with the football and make plays with the ball probably better than the white athlete could at that time and still can today.

**JE:** Jim Mackenzie (coached) for one year because he died at an early age?

**BS:** Jim Mackenzie died of a massive coronary on August 26th, 1967. I'll never forget that. He was going to Amarillo, Texas. He was going to see Monty Johnson who was quarterback at Amarillo-Tascosa. Monty Johnson ended up going to Texas, transferred to Oklahoma and ended up playing here. He played at Texas and he played at Oklahoma. I think he's the only athlete to ever do that, to start at both schools. Jim Mackenzie was in my office and the last conversation that I had with him was that afternoon and then he got on a private plane and flew to Amarillo to Tascosa, visited in Monty Johnson's home that night and he came home and had a massive coronary in his home. I got a phone call that night from Ken our trainer, and I knew when Kay answered the phone something terrible had happened. Ken told me that Jim was dead and that he had died of a massive coronary. So I went to Sue's house with Chuck Fairbanks and Pat James. Jim Mackenzie's wife was named Sue and we drove to their home about 12 o'clock at night and we were there for a couple of hours.

**JE:** Then Chuck Fairbanks became the head coach of Oklahoma football.

**BS:** Chuck became the head coach in 1967. Chuck made me the offensive coordinator. I became the assistant head coach and his offensive coordinator. We had some good players recruited. I've often regretted the fact that Jim Mackenzie missed out on this opportunity and he never got to enjoy the success that he would have had and that we had. We won the Big 8 Championship the first year under Chuck in 1967. We had a very good football team and we ended up going to the Orange Bowl. We defeated Tennessee in the Orange Bowl and we ended up Number 2 or Number 3 in the nation. We were 10-1. The only game we lost was to a team we should have beat. We missed a couple of field goals and dropped a pass in the end zone that would have defeated Texas. We lost to Texas 9-7, our only defeat. Probably, had we not lost that game we would have won the national championship.

**JE:** But under Chuck Fairbanks, you would soon introduce the Wishbone to the coaches?

**BS:** Well, Texas, under Emory Bellard, their offensive coordinator, Darrell Royal had believed strongly in the running game. Emory Bellard took a philosophy of a three-back offense that used the Houston Veer. What Bill Yeoman was doing at Houston was running a unique blocking scheme and running a triple option out of a two-back offense. Emory Bellard took three backs and did the same thing with the same blocking schemes but he added the extra back which gave you the extra blocker because it was a three-back backfield instead of a two-back backfield. Darrell was having tremendous success. He was running up and down the field scoring at-will on people and rushing for tremendous amounts of yards. I knew that the talent we had on our football team was better than what Texas had. We had more speed. We had the black athletes. We had the Greg Pruitt and we had the Roy Bell. We had the Joe Wylie and we had Jack Mildren at quarterback. I knew that if we would change from the Houston Veer, which we were struggling with, we would be able to have success. I was convinced of it. I watched so much film of Texas and I studied their offense. I knew that this was the right thing to do. I was the assistant head coach and I talked with the offense and defensive staff and they both agreed that they would support me in talking with Chuck about making this transition, this move.

## Chapter 14 - 3:30

### Wishbone

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**Barry Switzer:** So Larry Laceywell, who was coach of the defense and I went to talk to Chuck about a switch on this open date to the Wishbone. Chuck was a little reluctant. He said he wanted to think about it overnight. He said he didn't want to make a hasty decision. I knew he would call his ex-coaches at Michigan State and the people that played for him and I knew what their comment was going to be. If you would stick with what you are doing you'll improve and all of that and give him positive feedback. I was hoping Chuck would do this and that next morning Chuck called me into the office and he said that he had thought heavily about it. He said, "Let's make the move. Let's do it." So we, in that open date, changed to the Wishbone. Players are going to do what you want them to do. They are there to play and they are going to believe in the coaches and I had convinced them that this is what was the best thing to do offensively. The defense wanted us to do something to help them out because we were struggling on offense. Jack Mildren was probably the one I was more concerned about than anyone. And Greg Pruitt who was playing split receiver for us, I was going to have to move him back to running back because we weren't going to be able to get him the ball at split receiver as much as we could at running back and I wanted him to be able to touch it.

**John Erling:** Chuck was under some pressure when you went to him.

**BS:** He was under the “Chuck Chuck” bumper sticker era I called it. I told Chuck, I said, “Chuck if you don’t do this, we’re all going to get fired. We’re all going to be looking for a job next year and you won’t be the head football coach. I think Chuck realized this was true. Chuck was under tremendous pressure. We started off very poorly that season. I was a factor in it. We were trying to run an offense that I didn’t believe in, and I didn’t understand, and our coaches didn’t understand. It was a Bill Yeoman offense and Chuck wanted to run it because Chuck came from Houston. He was on Bill Yeoman’s staff when he innovated the Houston Veer. So, Chuck wanted to copy this and was influenced by this. If we had brought Bill Yeoman with us to run it, we would have probably been more successful. But he was the head coach at Houston and that wasn’t possible. But Chuck realized as I did, that the Wishbone gave us a tremendous opportunity and we went to the Wishbone. It was disastrous our first game. The score was disastrous. But I saw in our first game against Texas after the open date that we were going to move the ball and we were going to control the ball. I knew that we were going to be successful and that we would grow with it and that’s what we did.

**JE:** 1971 was a good year. You had the Selmon brothers. You also had Joe Washington in there?

**BS:** And Greg Pruitt led the nation in rushing. Jack Mildren and Greg Pruitt both rushed for over 1,000 yards. That team, that year, rushed for over 5,000 yards and averaged 472 yards a game total rushing offense. We set the national record in total offense and we still hold it today in rushing offense. No team has averaged 472 yards for 11 games since and never will. It’s a record that will never be broken because of the style of offenses that are played today. No one runs the option or believes in the option and believes in the running game like we did then. We completely dominated college football and we controlled the football and we were probably the best team in college football that year.

## Chapter 15 - 5:40

### Father Shot

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**John Erling:** But while all of this good was going on, it would have been 1972 you received the news about your father.

**Barry Switzer:** In 1972 we were undefeated. In 1971 we had lost one game and we were 11-1. We lost to Nebraska in a very close game here. We ended up being Number 2 in the nation. We were very good again in 1972. My father was shot and murdered by his black girlfriend who caught him with another black woman and in a fit of rage and passion shot him. That occurred on November 14th, 1972 before I became a head coach. My father never knew

the success I had in coaching because of his tragic death. I flew home that night. I got on a private plane and I was flown to Crossett. I went out to the homestead where daddy lived out in the country. I saw the blood where he was shot and where he had walked into the house and the blood on the floor in the kitchen, and where he had staggered to the phone. There was blood on the stove. He tried to make a phone call and it was a party line back then (a shared telephone line) and I am sure someone was on the line. Daddy staggered back outside and told the woman who had shot him, who was in shock, to take him to the hospital. They jumped in the car and tried to rush him to the hospital. But driving on an old gravel road speeding, she couldn't make a curve, flipped the car and it hit a telephone transformer and exploded and the car burned up with them both in it. That's what I went back to. Galen Hall and the team went to play Kansas that weekend without me. They played in Lawrence in 1972 and I missed that game. It was the only game I missed in my career at Oklahoma. I came back and we completed the year. We defeated Penn State in the Sugar Bowl and ended up Number 2 or 3 in the country and with an outstanding team with an 11-1 record. Chuck Fairbanks called me into his office and told me that he was going to take a professional job. It totally shocked me. I was stunned when he gave me that information.

**JE:** And you said...

**BS:** When Chuck told me that he was going to take a job with the New England Patriots, he had been meeting Billy Sullivan, the owner of the New England Patriots. He said he had been driving to DFW airport on Sunday mornings meeting and negotiating a contract with Billy Sullivan and he had been keeping this out of the press. He was doing this privately and he didn't want any publicity to affect recruiting in case he turned it down. He told me that he had finally negotiated a contract that he wanted and that he was going to take the job. He offered me a backfield job. He wanted me to come coach the backs for him in New England in 1972. I said, "Chuck, I would love to have the Oklahoma job." He said, "I knew you would. If you don't get this job you can come and join me at the Patriots." Thank goodness Jack Santee was on the Board of Regents. Jack played football for Bud Wilkinson and he was probably the strength and the backbone of the Regents. None of the Regents had played football and none of them understood the game like Jack. Jack was the leader of the Board. Paul Sharp was President and Paul took a passive role in this, Jack was the leader. Jack knew the importance of keeping the continuity of the staff and keeping what we were accomplishing, because in 1971 and 1972 we had outstanding football teams. We had returning talent and Jack believed in what we were doing and recognized that these things needed to continue and I should be given the opportunity and I was given a nine-month contract to prove it. So, I said, "Jack, would you please announce it to the papers that it's a four-year contract to help recruiting." And

they were able to do that. So, we didn't lie to the papers, we just made sure that they (OU) had made a commitment to me that they didn't have to live up to privately. But that was very important to me that they do that for recruiting purposes.

**JE:** You were a young man. You were 35 years old.

**BS:** Thirty-five years old and named the head coach of one of the great programs in college football. I never dreamed growing up in Crossett, Arkansas as a young junior high school football player with the map posted on my wall. I think I took it out of a Collier's Magazine or a Saturday Evening Post, and pinned it on my wall. The top programs in the country were depicted by the size of the mascot and there was a big Indian in Norman and I remember that and there was a leprechaun in South Bend, Indiana and there was a big Trojan in southern California. I remember looking at those mascots and thinking they were the largest on the national map of the United States. And there I was, I was an Oklahoma fan and they always played afternoon games, so I would listen to them on the battery-powered radio. Or, if the static was bad, I would go out and listen to it in the car. I would open all four doors of the car because there was no air conditioning. And I would sit in the car and listen to Oklahoma play afternoon games and listen to Arkansas play or LSU play at night. So, I was an Oklahoma fan and here I was at 35 years of age named the head football coach at the University of Oklahoma. You never know where the roads in life take you, just be prepared when you arrive.

## Chapter 16 - 4:11

### Ohio State

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**John Erling:** There are so many games that we could talk about but we don't have time to. But maybe you could talk about Woody Hayes, Ohio State and the most famous field goal in OU history.

**Barry Switzer:** Well, I like to kid Uwe von Schamann about this field goal. It was a kick that won the game with no time left. The ball could have traveled...it could have been a 60-yard field goal and he would have made it. He kicked that ball that far. It went over the uprights and split the middle. It could have easily have traveled that far and he would have made it. It was a 40-something yard field goal. I've told Uwe, because he'd said to me when he has had a few beers, he says, "Coach that has to be the biggest play in your career." And I said, "Uwe, if Billy Sims hadn't have hurt his ankle in the first quarter, and Thomas Lott hadn't pulled his hamstring in the first quarter, we would have hung a half a hundred on them and we wouldn't have needed your damn field goal. (Laughter) But I'm glad that you were there." I knock his blocks out from under him with that and deflate

him somewhat. But I joke with him about it and it was a pressure-packed play. It was a big play to win the game. But truly we would have hung half a hundred on them. We were leading 19-0 early in the game when Billy Sims and Thomas both got hurt. I had to insert a true freshman quarterback. We fumbled the ball and continued to make mistakes and played horribly and let a good Ohio State football team get back in the game. I truly believe we would have dominated and won decisively had those players not got hurt.

**JE:** Did you have interaction much with Woody Hayes?

**BS:** No interaction with Woody Hayes, in fact, Woody before the ball game, there was very few words said. Woody was a hard-nosed coach. He was an intimidating coach and I think that was his philosophy. It was September 24th, 1977 and I'll never forget the date because it was Joe Washington's birthday that day and that's when little Joe was born. Joe wasn't on this team. But we were on the field to play and Woody said very little to me and after the game the field was mass hysteria, people running on the field. It was Oklahoma fans. It was one of the few games that Ohio State had lost at Columbus. I think they had a winning streak going for a long time there. I was looking for Woody and I saw Woody coming toward me and all of a sudden one of our trainers stuck his hands out to shake hands with Woody and Woody slapped him out of the way. When I saw that, I turned and walked through the crowd and walked through the crowd a different way because I didn't know what Woody was going to do to me! (Laughter) Obviously, I shouldn't have done that. Woody was going to shake my hand and congratulate me and turn and walk away. I often regret that I didn't just continue on and just shake his hand and leave. But after witnessing that, I just turned from him. I don't know whether I was just repulsed or what my reaction was. I just knew that Woody was very upset and I was very happy and I was headed to where my football team was.

**JE:** So as you became the head coach at OU in '73 and led the team to undefeated seasons that year and the next. You won the National Championship in '74 and '75 and '85. Your team won or shared in the Big 8 Championship every year from 1973 to 1980. And during your 16 years as head coach, your teams won 8 of the 13 postseason bowl games they played in and 54 of your players were selected as all-Americans. How does that make you feel?

**BS:** It makes me feel tremendously proud of what my assistant coaches and what my players did. In that period of time we had the winningest team in college football and it still is today. No one has won like that since Frank Leahy did in the 1940s at Notre Dame. We had a great run. I call it a great batch. We had great players. I had outstanding coaches and we all contributed and we enjoyed tremendous success. The end of my career is not what I wanted it to be, but it happened and I moved on to other things. If those things hadn't have happened, I might still be coaching today.



**Chapter 17 - 3:35****Barry Resigns**

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**John Erling:** Well, you made reference to 1989, that's when you resigned. There were several scandals involving players including your quarterback who was arrested for soliciting cocaine from two undercover FBI agents. And so, you resigned under tremendous pressure obviously.

**Barry Switzer:** Yes, I call it the doping, the raping and the shooting John, that's how I refer to it. I know of no other way to say it, but that's how it happened. I had four players that committed felony acts in society. I never thought I'd have to have in my playbook rules that said: Don't shoot players, don't sell cocaine and don't rape women. That's just something coaches don't think you have to do. That occurred. Four players were involved and it had a tremendous impact on thousands of great young men that played at the University of Oklahoma that were outstanding athletes and students. They paid a tremendous price for the actions of four people. The cocaine incident was a sting. It was a set-up of my quarterback. My quarterback was not involved in cocaine. He was from Lawton, Oklahoma, Charles Thompson. He was asked many times as Charles told me, to make this buy, this arrangement and he turned it down time after time after time. Until finally, he just said he was going to do it one time and get it out of the way because they kept bugging him. He did it, and it was an FBI sting. They just wanted to get our program. I have my suspicions about who was involved in this. I wrote about it in my book. That was a set-up. The media was involved. The others were just stupid acts by individuals, the gang rape in the dorm and the shooting.

**JE:** Were people out to get you, you think?

**BS:** Oh, there's no question I had enemies. And at the end of my career as I said, I have often referred to it as some of those in the media.

**JE:** So then, you had several years where you were not a part of the OU family? You were on the outside?

**BS:** Well, yes I was and that hurt it me. It hurt me more for my son, Doug Switzer, who came here as a player and was denied even the opportunity to live in the athletic dormitories. I have bitter feelings and still have bitter feelings about that today, but I've taken the high road on many occasions when I see those people. I had an interim school president and some regents that had hidden agendas that wanted to remove me from being the head football coach. My athletic director I had 100 percent support from.

**JE:** And that was?

**BS:** Donnie Duncan was my athletic director and was my former assistant coach. He believed

in me. No one asked me to resign. No president, no interim president, no regent, no athletic director. It was my decision. I thought it was best for the program and best for me. I watched Oklahoma wallow around for about eight or nine years in football. It didn't need to happen and it wouldn't have happened had I stayed. I believe I would have kept the players in state and I still would have recruited tremendously out of state and we would have still won football games and things would have still continued. But, my bucket wasn't full and I wasn't up to it and it was time to move on and do something else in life.

**JE:** And by the way they didn't have "Bury Barry" bumper stickers because you had it...

**BS:** I licensed and trademarked that. (Laughter) They had the "Chuck Chuck" but they weren't going to have "Bury Barry" on a bumper sticker.

## Chapter 18 - 5:05

### Bob Stoops

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**John Erling:** These years, obviously you still had bitterness and maybe you still have some of that, I don't know if you do or not.

**Barry Switzer:** Well, I do because I know what happens behind the scenes in intercollegiate athletics. I have often wondered if my interim president...Soon after I resigned as head coach, he was given the job of executive director of enforcement for the NCAA. He was appointed as the enforcement director, David Swank. I've often wondered about Myles Brand for firing Bobby Knight and now he is president of the NCAA. There's suspicion and coincidence that makes you wonder about how things actually do happen. And a lot of things do have hidden agendas and motives.

**JE:** So then these years go by when it was not real popular to be Barry Switzer. During this period of time when you were so-called "shunned"...then you just happen to get a head coach job at the Dallas Cowboys in 1994.

**BS:** March 28th, I'll never forget that day I had a colonoscopy that morning and there's no correlation between Jerry Jones calling and that colonoscopy, (Laughter) but people have asked. But I had a call from Jerry Jones asking me if I wanted to coach the Dallas Cowboys. And I said, "Jerry, you have a coach." And he said, "Well, I won't after tomorrow because I'm firing him. Do you want the job?" And I said, "If the job is open I would visit with you about it." He fired Jimmy (Johnson) and then the next day there was no interview, the job was offered to me and I drove to Dallas and they announced the next day that I was head football coach. Jerry had always considered me on the short list the first time when he bought the Dallas Cowboys. I wished he had hired me at that time in 1989 because I was just out of coaching. But, that didn't happen and didn't occur. And

if it had happened, I think the same things would have happened. Because Troy Aikman would have been my first draft pick and he would have been my quarterback immediately because I had him at Oklahoma and I knew what he was. I spent four years at the Dallas Cowboys and I enjoyed it tremendously. Jerry and I had a great relationship and Stephen his son and Larry Lacewell was there. We had good teams. We won Super Bowl XXX in 1995, my second year there. I was there four years and then I was there at the beginning of the cap and free agency and players began to be siphoned off and the era on the team was pointed downward. We had lost a lot of players, Novacek and Charles Haley on defense, our pass rusher. Then we weren't the team that we were several years earlier. Here again, I was never fired. I told Jerry I was going to resign and I picked the time and date. I did it in the early spring of 1998 and I drove back to Norman, Oklahoma. I didn't even attend the press conference. It was ridiculous to resign and attend a press conference for the media. To allow them to beat you up, why submit yourself to something like that? I said, "Jerry, you handle it and you announce that I've resigned and you can say what you've got to say, but I'm out of here."

**JE:** We should point out that you are one of only three coaches to win college and NFL championships, Paul Brown, Jimmy Johnson and you.

**BS:** They did not have the Super Bowl when Paul Brown coached. Jimmy and I are the only two coaches that have ever won Super Bowls and college national championships. He did that at Miami and we both did it professionally at the Dallas Cowboys. I obviously won three at OU.

**JE:** When did you come back then to the OU family then is the only way for me to say it?

**BS:** Well, I came back here and watched Oklahoma football. I didn't spent much time watching it because I was embarrassed by the way they were playing. They had not recruited as well as we did in the 1980s. They had no direction offensively. They were very poorly coached on offense, were limited in the players they had. They had some outstanding players but they just didn't have the cohesiveness, the direction on offense that would have allowed them to have consistency and allowed them to win. Then they hired a coach named Bob Stoops in 1999. I realized then the first time I saw his team play that we finally had the right guy. The way he lined them up, they way they played and the effort they played with. He demonstrated offensively and defensively they were a very good, well-coached football team. And obviously, the next year they win a National Championship and since then Oklahoma has been one of the top perennial teams in college football and rightly so and back where they belong at the top. He embraced me and my ex-players and all the players that had helped build and establish this great tradition of college football at the University of Oklahoma. That was very smart by Bob. He made us feel comfortable in our own home, as I've always expressed it. We built this

great tradition. Bud Wilkinson created a monster, it was my job to feed it and now it's Bob's job to feed it. I fed it well and Bob's feeding it well now.

## Chapter 19 - 4:00

### Special Olympics

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**John Erling:** You never thought in 1989, 1990 or 1991 that one day there would be The Barry Switzer Center?

**Barry Switzer:** No, I never did think that. I think that happened because of a couple of people. I think it happened because of Donnie Duncan, our athletic director, a Board of Regents led by an ex-Regent Richard Bell who Sarkeys Foundation gave several million to make it happen. I had several friends who made sure that it did happen. But that was something that never entered my mind that I would have that facility named after me over there. Since then I've been well received and it's because of the great success Oklahoma has enjoyed and because of the coaches and the people that exist and coach here and work here today.

**JE:** In 2009 you are now one of the most popular men in the state of Oklahoma, next to the governor we have in our state.

**BS:** Well, I don't know about that. You know some people give me a lot of credit. I worked hard to get Brad Henry elected governor and I did it for an ulterior motive and that was to get Sarkeys Foundation to give me a lot of money to buy OU band uniforms. (Laughter) And they helped do that.

**JE:** You were elected to the College Football Hall of Fame in 2002 I mean life got a whole lot better from 1989 on.

**BS:** Well it did, I was kept out of it for a long, long time. Finally, they relented and they let me in the Hall of Fame. I knew it would happen someday. If they had not done that, and would have waited until after my death, my daughter would have never accepted it. She told me she was going to decline the invitation to be inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame.

**JE:** You have been on television, on Saving Grace, you've acted and now you're on FOX NFL pregame shows?

**BS:** I've done a lot of radio and television for college football. I was offered jobs at ESPN many years ago to do (inaudible) and I've turned that down. Right now, I dabble a little bit in it but I'm more of a Sooner fan and I enjoy staying here at home during football season which I will do this year. I will do many of the Bowl games this year. I'm going to do three Bowl games for FOX. I do various things in business and stay active. Norman is my home

and I have six grandchildren that live here. Six in two blocks and in two years I'll have four of them right across the street because my daughter is building a home right across the street from where I live. I've got it pretty good. I've got two in Nashville, Tennessee, two grandchildren. I'm very fortunate to have two wonderful sons and a wonderful daughter and a wonderful wife and two step children that are successful, and are good people.

**JE:** Eunice Kennedy Shriver died last week, August 11th, 2009, sister to President John Kennedy, Ted Kennedy and they had a sister Rosemary that spent most of her life in a mental institution because she had mental disabilities. And then she used money from the Kennedy Foundation and started a summer camp that evolved into the Special Olympics. You've been very active in Special Olympics.

**BS:** I've spent half my life in Special Olympics. In 1973, I was approached by Terry Kerr a special education teacher who was director of Special Olympics in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She asked me to be the Honorary Head Coach. For the past 36 years I have been the Honorary Head Coach. I have been to four international games. I have met Eunice Shriver. I've been with the Kennedy family at those games' opening ceremonies many times, Winter Games and Regional Games. I've been active in fundraisers, I've done many things to help support Special Olympics. I have a passion for it. I've helped many charities, but the Special Olympics is special to me. I've spent half of my life, 36 years being involved with that organization. It started in Oklahoma in 1969, one year after Eunice Shriver started it in 1968.

## Chapter 20 - 3:05

### Advice to Students

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**John Erling:** Then finally, while we have talked about stories of your parents and your upbringing and all, some would say, how did he come out of that and you would often wish that your parents could have enjoyed the good times with you. Do you have any advice to students about not having to be a product of your environment? Although you have talked about your father instilling in you some great ways to live. Would you talk about that?

**Barry Switzer:** Well, yes. Sure. You are what you are, and what your family is, you don't have to make those decisions to be what they are. You are what you are and what you want to be and you can be that. I think you have to prepare yourself. Education is the ladder to success, and how high you go and how far you climb in life is how high you climb the ladder of education. I firmly believe that. I always encouraged students and young people to do it early on, don't wait until late in life like I did. I arrived at a plateau in

my profession not because of academics. I did it because of a sports phenomena that occurs in this country. Athletics and sports is an American phenomenon. I think in most professions it's how you prepare yourself academically for that opportunity and in those particular fields. The one thing I say to people, we are all given innate talents and abilities. Use them to the best of your ability and don't waste them. Give it your best. Compete in the classroom as I have said earlier. Try to be the best you can be at all times and do it early on in life.

**JE:** Would you say to athletes, don't plan on making it in the pros?

**BS:** Certainly, only one half of one percent of all athletes that you talk to is going to have the opportunity or even have the chance to play professional football. I'm saying to all races, black and white and all ethnic groups don't plan to play basketball and football, plan on getting an education first. That is so important. It's so hard today for young kids to believe me in certain cultures that they are going to be CEOs or presidents of corporations or whatever, because they look up so much to athletes and all-sports NBA and NFL as leaders and that's what they want to be and emulate. But, let me tell you, your chances of being that are one in a billion. You need to think more about what you can provide for yourself and your family and make yourself a productive citizen in the next 40 or 50 or 60 years of living that you'll do, and you do that through an education.

**JE:** And you could have taken many turns in your life, as a teenager and as an adult. During those dark years after 1989, none of us probably know how dark they really were. But you kept on and you knew that you had to have a positive attitude. So, as much as you won on the football field, you were just plainly a winner in life.

**BS:** Well I tried to be and I tried to pass that message on to other younger people than myself. Hopefully, with my relationship to my players, I've given that to them and been a positive influence in what they've done and what they have been able to accomplish.

## Chapter 21 - 3:20

### Roberts, Hope, Hogan

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**John Erling:** Why don't you tell me that story about Oral Roberts and golfing?

**Barry Switzer:** Okay. This is in the early '70s, maybe the mid-'70s, I was invited to Tulsa, Oklahoma to Southern Hills Golf Club. I can't remember the event. It had to be some charity. I'm not much of a golfer. I don't play today. And, certainly I've never had a good game, but I've always enjoyed it and when I was young I would play a lot and play a lot of charity tournaments. And I was invited to come participate and I did not know who would be in my foursome until I arrived. And it was Oral Roberts and Bob Hope and

someone who I think had paid the most money or given the most money to that charity that day was the fourth person in our foursome. I remember Oral was a good player. I mean I was surprised how good Oral was. That was 30+ years ago and he was in his 40s or 50s and he was a very good player. Bob Hope hit it around and played. Bob loved to play the game, but Bob wanted to entertain more than anything else. He was very entertaining that day and I enjoyed it. It was a wonderful experience. Not many people can say that they played golf with Bob Hope. But my best golf experience, get this now, how many people have played with Ben Hogan?

**JE:** Oh my...

**BS:** Think about that. I was at Shady Oaks Country Club in the early 1970s again. Eddie Chiles was a great friend. Eddie Chiles was President of Western Company. Eddie happened to be an OU graduate, was very successful in the oil and gas business and had a service company that was well-known. Eddie was a great supporter of our university and he helped me with summer jobs. I was at Shady Oaks and we joined Ben for lunch and then Ben says, "Let's go play a few holes." And so we go out to his private practice tee. We did that and we played a few holes. That was an experience that I like to brag about because not many people can say they've played golf with Ben Hogan.

**JE:** Did you feel like a little intimidated teeing off with him?

**BS:** Well my golf game I was mostly embarrassed by, I wasn't intimidated. (Laughter) I was embarrassed. (Laughter) Because, obviously he took one look at my swing and he knew I couldn't play. I was one of those guys that they say to, "You ought to give the game up."

**JE:** Did he try to offer you any advice or?

**BS:** I didn't ask any, and he didn't offer any. All that he was concerned about was his game as the story goes on Ben Hogan. That's how he was.

**JE:** He was a pleasant cordial guy wasn't he?

**BS:** Oh, he was to Eddie and to me both that day, yeah. I've heard a lot of horror stories about Ben Hogan and how he treated people, but he was always pleasant. In fact, Eddie brought him several times, Ben Hogan to speak to the OU football team prior to the OU Texas football game that was played on Saturday morning. He gave kind of an emotional talk about mental preparation to play the game, and how you play every hole before you play the hole, mentally. And that's how Ben approached every hole and he thought that should apply to the game of football. That you should be positive and play the play before the play is played and it would be a positive play. He talked to us a couple of times.

**JE:** Well Barry, this has been very nice of you. You've given a lot of your time here and you've been very giving in this interview. Because of technology, students and athletes can listen to this story years and years beyond us.

**BS:** Thank you John. I enjoyed it very much myself, and good luck to anyone that listens to this.

**Chapter 22 - 0:18****Conclusion**

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**John Erling:** Oklahoma's Barry Switzer has just told you the story of the Bootlegger's Boy. His book of the same name is listed in our bookstore. You may have a printed transcript of this interview by clicking on transcript, made possible by the generous funding of the sponsors of [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).