

Bob Barry, Sr.

For half a century, his voice was synonymous with Oklahoma football.

Chapter 1 – 1:03

Introduction

Announcer: For more than 50 years, Bob Barry was a radio play-by-play announcer and television sports anchor. He was the voice of more college sporting events on the radio than anyone else in Oklahoma history. He is truly the voice of Bedlam, having called every Bedlam football game between the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University for a half century, representing both the Sooners and Cowboys. It is a feat that will never happen again. Bob Barry is a member of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame. He was named sportscaster of the year in Oklahoma a record 15 times. Due to an accident in his early youth, Bob was put on a path to follow his passion for play-by-play. Then to be chosen by the iconic Oklahoma University football coach Bud Wilkinson for his first college assignment. This oral history interview was conducted March 31st, 2011 in Bob's home in Norman, Oklahoma. He died seven months later on October 30th, 2011. He was 80 years old. Listen now to the voice, which became part of the fabric of Oklahoma, Bob Barry on VoicesofOklahoma.com.

Chapter 2 – 5:20

Early Sports

John Erling: My name is John Erling and today's date is March 31st, 2011.

Bob Barry: My name is Robert G. Barry. I am 80 years old. I was born on February 21, 1931.

JE: Where are we recording this interview?

BB: We are here in my home in Norman, Oklahoma.

JE: Where were you born?

BB: I was born at Wesley Hospital in Oklahoma City, which later became Presbyterian Hospital.

JE: Your mother's maiden name and where she was born?

BB: Her name was Francis Glasgow and she was from Gainesville, Texas.

JE: How did she come to Oklahoma?

BB: My father was born in Paris, Texas. Both my mom and my dad's fathers went bankrupt during the Depression in 1929. They didn't know each other, but they both moved to Oklahoma City to try to regroup I suppose. That's where they met. So she grew up in Gainesville and moved to OKC and she and my father met in OKC and eventually married.

JE: Your father's name?

BB: Jack Emmett Barry. They called him Jack or John.

JE: What did your father do? What was his profession?

BB: My father was a self-man man. He put himself through night school in Oklahoma City. He went to work as a general flunkie at a savings & loan. In those days they called them billing and loans. When he died at age 66 he was chairman of the board. He was a self-made man and just a terrific person with people. He was a people person. Dad was very, very successful because of his own doing.

JE: That was his main profession though, the savings & loan business?

BB: Yes.

JE: What about his education?

BB: He went to TCU when he lived in Texas, but his folks couldn't afford that anymore, so he went to night school in Oklahoma City.

JE: Did you have grandparents in OKC?

BB: Yes. My grandfather on my mother's side died before I was born. My grandmother and grandfather on my father's side I knew for many, many years. I was close to them.

JE: What was the first house you remember here in the OKC area?

BB: On Northwest 20th Street in OKC near Classen High School.

JE: So you would have gone to kindergarten near there?

BB: I went to kindergarten at Gatewood. Then my folks bought a home in OKC, which in those days was on the outskirts of town. Now it's one of the main areas, near Taft Stadium. I went to Cleveland Grade School in OKC, Taft Junior High School and Classen High School.

JE: Did you have brothers and sisters?

BB: I had one brother named Jack. He is still alive and he is 84. We aren't estranged by any means, but we are totally different. We are as different as night and day. He has no interest whatsoever in sports. (Chuckle) He worked in insurance for many years. I love him dearly, but we just don't have much in common.

JE: So there's a four-year difference in age?

BB: Yes. He was in WWII. When you have a four-year difference, that's really a big difference. It meant that I was never really in the same school with him.

JE: I am six years older than my brother so I understand. So as a youngster, were you interested in sports from the get-go?

BB: Baseball was my big love and I still do love baseball. It's the greatest sport ever invented without question because it has every athletic ability—you need to jump, throw, catch, run, slide—it has every aspect. Baseball is a great sport. It's not as popular in the modern day as football and basketball perhaps, but baseball was always my love. Primarily, I was interested in baseball because—if you are interested in details—my dad's mother's great-uncle owned half of the Oklahoma City Indians minor league baseball team. Therefore, I got free tickets when I was a kid to go to the OKC Indians games. I got to pitch batting practice. I thought I was really a stud. I was about 15 years old pitching batting practice to these minor league baseball players, which were just bigger than life to me. That's how I grew up was going to just every baseball game I could go to.

JE: You must have been a star among your friends too?

BB: Oh yes. They thought I was just a stud. I signed an autograph one time and someone thought I was a member of the team. (Chuckle) That word got out and it was embarrassing that I was signing autographs.

JE: Where did they play in those days?

BB: There was a ballpark at 4th and Pennsylvania in OKC. It was called Holland Field and then it became Texas League Park—that's where the Oklahoma City Indians played.

JE: They were the farm club of the Cleveland Indians?

BB: Right.

JE: Do you recall seeing watching players that turned out to be major league stars at that time?

BB: Yes, Al Rosen and Paul Easterling. Many of these names people probably don't remember or have even heard of. This was before integration, so I really don't know any of the black players who were great for Cleveland until after I was much older.

JE: I had an Al Rosen baseball card.

BB: Did you? Al Rosen was a big stud. There were a bunch of others. I was out there every night because I got in for free and it was really fun to watch them.

JE: Wasn't Rogers Hornsby a manager of that club?

BB: Yes, very briefly. He was unsuccessful as a manager.

JE: Oh really?

BB: Oh very much so. It was like Superman being manager of a bunch of clods. Rogers couldn't put up with the minor league capabilities, or lack thereof, so he was not a good manager.

JE: You would have been about 10 years old, so did you see him as a manager.

BB: Yes, every night. I was literally there every night. There was no air conditioning in those days and I had free tickets and I went with my grandparents.

Chapter 3 – 3:06

Music & December 7, 1941

John Erling: Obviously baseball was your big interest, but you had a music interest too didn't you?

Bob Barry: Right. My father was a musician. He played ragtime piano by ear. When I was very young, about 10, 11, 12, dad wanted to see if I had any rhythm. You are either born with it or not. You either have it or you don't, but you can't learn it. You can learn it, but you're not good at it. So one Christmas, my dad got me a track drum set with the tom-toms and the cymbals. He sat down at the piano and started playing ragtime. I did have rhythm, which I do, so he and I teamed up and played for a lot of civic clubs during World War II. We would go out to Tinker AFB where they were building airplanes and play for the workers while they were building planes. We would play for high school assemblies and stuff like that. The when I got older, I joined the Musicians Union in OKC and played drums with dance bands. I did that for years and put my kids through college with money I made playing drums. I was a dumber and a drummer. I was a dumber in school and a drummer as a musician. My two children, I have two boys—Frank who is my elder son, is a musician as well as a schoolteacher. He plays drums and has two groups he plays in. My son Bobby is on Channel 4 in OKC and does a great job. I often say that Frank got the music and Bobby got the blab of my genes. (Chuckle)

JE: (Laughter) It's nice that you shared it like that between the both of them. On December 7, 1941, you were 10 years old. Do you have any recollections of that day?

BB: Yes.

JE: Tell us about that.

BB: Well, Roy Jones was my next-door neighbor. At age 10, boys were playing guns or cowboys and Indians in those days. Roy and I were playing out in the yard on Sunday afternoon, December 7, 1941. Roy had to use the restroom, so he went inside. He came outside and he said, "There's an airplane flying and it might be Japanese bombing us!" Of course, I didn't know what he was talking about. It scared me to death. I went inside and I remember my dad sitting in front of that huge Philco radio, of course that was before TV. He was really worried I could tell trying to figure out what was going on and so forth. So I have a definite recollection of the Pearl Harbor attack.

JE: The ensuing days or months or years, do you recall men going off to war?

BB: Oh yes—absolutely. We had scrap metal drives at the Cleveland Grade School. I can remember Mrs. Smith my homeroom teacher in grade school—her husband was drafted, as were all of the men in those days. The librarian, she was a German lady—she was ashamed of her native country of Germany and the part they were playing. I just have memories like that. Of course you just thought the war would never end. It went on and on and on.

JE: It ended in 1945, do you remember when it ended?

BB: Yes, I was home sick in bed. I had a lot of sickness when I was young for some reason. I remember being in bed ill and the war ended and hearing all of the Broadway and New York celebrations on the radio.

Chapter 4 – 5:05

Bob's Accident

John Erling: In 1938, you had an accident.

Bob Barry: I was 7 years old, right.

JE: Tell us about it.

BB: In those days, the 1930s, you had pop-stands. You could build a little wooden pop-stand and put it in your front yard. You could go down to the Coca-Cola Bottling Company and get fruit drinks, either strawberry or grape or whatever, plus Coke and so forth. You would buy them and bring them out to your pop-stand and sell them to the neighborhood kids for a nickel apiece. So I am 7 years old and I love strawberry pop. Mother had gone somewhere and my dad was of course working. I had a nickel and my brother had this pop-stand. I paid my brother the nickel I had because I wanted a strawberry pop. Well, I wanted another one. (Chuckle.) My brother wouldn't give me one. He told me I had to have money or he as not going to give me another one. That's how older brothers are. With my mother being gone I called my father at work. I said, "Dad I want a strawberry pop and I don't have any money." He said, "Where's your mother?" I said, "She's gone." He said, "Son, don't call me at work. You've already had one strawberry pop." I said, "Can I borrow a nickel from the next-door neighbor?" He said, "No, son. You don't need to do that. Don't do that." Well, I went to the next-door neighbor and I said, "My dad said I could borrow a nickel from you." (Chuckle) The neighbor thought it was real cute. They were great friends. He gave me a nickel and I got my strawberry pop. When my dad came home the neighbor, jokingly knocked on my dad's door and said, "You owe me a nickel. Your son took a nickel off me."

So dad called me in and he said, "Son, I told you not to borrow a nickel." I said, "I didn't." He said, "Don't stand there and lie to me. I know you did. He told me you did." I said, "No, I didn't." So this went on and he said, "Son, you go upstairs and you are not having any dinner until you are man enough to come down and admit to me that you lied to me because I know you did." I said, "No, I didn't." So I went upstairs and I was crying. My grandmother lived with us at the time. It was summer. Again, there was no AC in those days. Mother had eaten dinner and had gone outside and was painting the swing. I was crying and leaning against the screen and it came open. I fell two stories headfirst onto a concrete porch. I actually at this moment, even at age 80, I can close my eyes and remember lying across my mother's and grandmother's lap in the backseat of the car and my dad driving like a bat out of hell to Wesley Hospital. The treatment, and this has a big significance in my life, I'm not being dramatic, it really does—but I had all of my head wrapped. I was bleeding through every orifice—eyes, mouth, nose and ears. They were worried about all kinds of things—gangrene setting in, blood clots, brain damage, which there probably was (laughter). They were worried about just everything you can imagine. There was no treatment. The doctor told my mother and father, "I want him with his head on the pillow for eight weeks. Don't lift his head off the pillow for eight weeks." Well, can you imagine a 7-year old boy in those days with no TV? What do you do? You listen to the radio. That's all you could do. I couldn't even get up to go to the bathroom. I listened to all of the play-by-play guys, Bill Stern and all of those great guys from way back then. I just became enamored with radio. At the end of 8 weeks, I got up and fell flat on my face because my legs had atrophied. They didn't know that in those days. I was a sickly person because of all of this. I had terrible leg aches growing up. That's why it has great significance because that's the genesis of my interest in radio. I never lost it. I would invent little baseball games. I had this game and I would announce it and the windows were open and I would be yelling the plays and all of the neighbors thought I was nuts. They would say to my mom and dad, "Can't you close the windows so we don't have to listen to that?" After a game each day I would make a little newspaper of how my game came out and I would put it on my dad's Hi-boy, He thought it was cute for awhile but then he thought, this kid's got a problem. (Laughter) So that's the long answer, but my head injury in 1938 led to my career in broadcasting.

JE: You were really creative at that age to entertain yourself that way.

BB: Well, I had to. There I was lying in bed.

JE: Were you able to put these two together? Here you are in 1938 at 7 years old and then you go to baseball games. Did you think early on that you would be a play-by-play announcer?

BB: I don't think that I actually thought that, but it was in the back of my mind obviously. I would make a little card on all of the major league players. What I was doing was trying to imitate those announcers I heard on the radio.

JE: Who was the voice of the Oklahoma City Indians back then?

BB: Curt Gowdy of course came in later, but he'd broadcast the Oklahoma City Indians.

JE: Was he there for many years?

BB: Yes. He's from Edmond, Oklahoma. In fact, his sister still lives there.

JE: So you were enamored by these announcers' voices?

BB: Yes, I would try to mimic what they were doing obviously because I thought they were it.

Chapter 5 – 3:50

Classen & War Games

John Erling: Back in those days, these announcers would re-create games.

Bob Barry: I did that myself, later.

JE: Tell us about that.

BB: Because of my interest in broadcasting, my dad took me down to KOCY, who broadcast the Oklahoma City Indians games when they were on the road. I would watch the guy and he would hit a wood block to imitate the sound of a hit. I could see him do that and see that he had a piece of paper that said "base hit left field". That was similar to what I was doing when I played my little game. I was able to relate. Years later, KTOK asked me to re-create an OKC 89ers game when they played out on the West Coast and they couldn't afford to send anybody out there. So I re-created that in their studio similarly with a wood block and I did that professionally.

JE: Did Curt Gowdy go from OKC to the major networks?

BB: Yes, as I recall the Boston Red Sox primarily.

JE: In junior high, what was your experience like? Did you play ball in junior high?

BB: I played baseball but I wasn't any good. For whatever reason, and I am being serious here although this sounds like a joke, I was a terrible student. I could not study. To this day I have a little trouble reading a book entirely from cover to cover. I don't know if that's a little brain damage (laugh) or what, but I was a terrible student. I had trouble studying. I could not just sit down and study like you were supposed to. All the way through school I was a very bad student. It just frustrated my dad so much because he didn't have the advantage that I did. He was paying my way through school. Dad had to struggle his way through anything. Here I was going for free and I was a bad student. But we had a great relationship my dad and I.

JE: In high school at Classen, did you play baseball?

BB: Yes, with Lee Allan Smith by the way. Lee Allan was the outfielder and I was the pitcher, but I wasn't very good. Back then, this is hard for people to believe but we played five in the entire baseball season.

JE: Wow.

BB: I pitched in one game and lettered (laugh). The wrestling coach was our baseball coach. He put Joe Burke at third base—he was a left-hander. Have you ever heard of a left-handed third baseman? (Laugh) It wasn't very well organized. Then I played American Legion Baseball and then semi-pro baseball. I never was all that good but I was just relief or just barely hanging on.

JE: What kind of player was Lee Allan Smith?

BB: We were about the same. He is just a terrific guy.

JE: What do you recall about OKC in those days? Where did you guys hang out?

BB: We were living way out by Taft Stadium, which was in north OKC. There wasn't much out there but fields. We lived on 26th Street. There was a crawdad pond a block over. It was almost like living in the county. Taft Stadium during WWII, they had mock battles there to try and raise money. You would buy war bonds and you would get to see a mock battle there at Taft Stadium.

JE: Do you remember watching that?

BB: Oh, every night almost. We lived really close, about three blocks away. They would have big explosions that would rattle the windows. They couldn't do that now—they would have lawsuits. A lot of windows were broken. It was a heck of a deal.

JE: So it was a war exhibition?

BB: That's exactly what it was. It was a war exhibition to raise money for the war effort through bonds.

JE: And it drew quite a crowd?

BB: Every night. Later I broadcast many games there at Taft Stadium, which was a football stadium.

Chapter 6 – 4:20

First Radio Job

John Erling: Did you have an early association with a radio station?

Bob Barry: It was not an association, but I of course related to KOCY because they carried the Oklahoma City Indians.

JE: Were you a mail clerk for KOMA?

BB: Dad got me a job there in high school. That was when KOMA was located in The Biltmore Hotel, which was in downtown OKC in those days. Now the Biltmore is out west. That was in the very early part of television, so radio was still dominant. I was just a gopher. I was a mail clerk sorting the mail. I learned all of the counties in Oklahoma because Eddie's Corner Store was a show on the radio and Eddie would get most of the mail. I had to catalog which counties the mail came from. I got to watch the announcers and watch everybody in the station to learn what they did and how they did it. That was a big learning experience.

JE: As you look back, everything was being laid out here for you.

BB: Exactly. I really think the good Lord sort of guided me through all of this. The falling out of the window, I could have easily died. My dad was smart enough to see where my interests were. I think it was His guiding hand all the way around.

JE: Did he get you a job at the radio station intentionally because he knew you had an interest?

BB: Yes, he knew I had an interest. Those people that worked at KOMA later in life, Joe Jerkins was a booth announcer in those days. Later he was the general manager of Channel 4 when I worked there. So we went way back. It was great education and on the job training.

JE: Lee Allan Smith and you were classmates at Classen?

BB: Yes. He was one year older. In junior high and in high school there were national fraternities. I was a Pi Kappa Phi at Taft Junior High School, a Phi Lambda Epsilon at Classen High and a Kappa Alpha at OU. I spent years in fraternities, which were just kind of legal gangs in those days. (Chuckle) Lee Allan was a Phi Lamb. We were always great friends.

JE: Was he an outgoing guy then organizing things?

BB: Yes, you could see it developing. He was always getting it done.

JE: After Classen you went to OU?

BB: Yes. I was such a bad student.

JE: Why did you go to OU when you knew school was so tough for you?

BB: I wanted a college education. That's the way it was done in those days. My brother was a Phi Lamb, but my friends were in KA. He got really mad at me when I didn't pledge Phi Lamb and I pledged KA. I just raised holy hell during my freshman year. I didn't go to class. I got 18 hours of F's because I didn't go to class. It was just so immature of me to do that. It was such a stupid thing. Finally my brother called dad and said, "Dad, he's writing hot checks all over Norman and they are calling me." My dad gave me \$500 for the whole school year. He paid every bill there ever was, books, tuition and fraternity house bills. I had \$500 just to spend for the whole year and it was gone before Christmas. It was totally immature. Everything I was doing was just ridiculous. I majored in drama, which was just stupid for me. That's how dumb I was. I refused to take stagecraft, which was a required

class. They made me take it, but I never went to a single class. I did a bunch of dumb things like that.

JE: If you had earned better grades at OU, would you have stayed in school?

BB: In those days, it wasn't like it is now. If you made grades like that now they would kick you out. They called me in actually at OU and said, "Young man you're wasting your money and you're wasting our time." So in effect, they kicked me out, really.

Chapter 7 – 2:53

Korean War

Bob Barry: So here came the Korean War and they were drafting people. My dad said to me, "Son, what are you going to do be drafted or enlist?" I told him I didn't want to be drafted, so I joined the Air Force. I was in the Air Force for four years. It was one of the best things that ever happened to me. I grew up in the Air Force, I really did. I got married and my wife of 50 years—we had known each other at church in Oklahoma City, but that was a great experience for me. I grew up when I was in the Air Force.

John Erling: What was her name?

BB: Joan Hester. Her dad was a Marine Colonel. He spent the entire Second World War as a prisoner of war in a Japanese concentration camp in Okada, Japan.

JE: Where were you married?

BB: In Oklahoma City. We met each other in church.

JE: Which church was that?

BB: I grew up in the Presbyterian Church—it was St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church on 23rd Street.

JE: You did four years in the Air Force, where were you stationed?

BB: Cheyenne, Wyoming for four years. I got married and we had our first child there. I really grew up. I was an enlisted man, but I had basic training in Lackland Air Force Base down in San Antonio, Texas. Guess what they made me?

JE: What?

BB: They made me a teacher, after MY grades? But as I said I had completely matured and grown up by then. I taught supply procedure, which is very important. I will give you a little Air Force commercial that is true today. The thing that keeps airplanes out of the air during wartime is not being shot down—it's that they can't find parts to fix them. Think about all of the parts that are needed on an airplane. To find the part that's needed to fix the airplane,

no matter where it is in the world is quite a problem. It still is. So in Supply School in Cheyenne there were five phases. The first phase was catalogs. We learned how to look up parts and what the numbers meant, and the class code was a four-digit thing and I taught Phase 1, which was about catalogs. Phase 2 was warehousing and so forth. Supply was so important for the Air Force and all military organizations. My wife used to kid me when I couldn't find somebody's name in the phone book. She would say: "You're teaching how to look up parts and you can't find a name in a phonebook!" (Laughter) I really loved teaching. It was rewarding. I got all the way to Staff Sergeant in three years, which was pretty good. I could see why people stayed in because I really enjoyed the Air Force.

JE: It's interesting that they selected you to be a teacher.

BB: The reason is, they looked at my history and saw that I had had some college. They didn't know that it was miserable college, but I am convinced that's the reason. After I went through Supply School, they asked me to stay as an instructor—they needed me.

JE: So you did four years there and then you returned to Norman?

BB: Right. I got out of the Air Force and we moved back here to Norman and went to school

JE: What year would that have been?

BB: 1955 or 1956.

Chapter 8 – 4:30

Radio Sales

John Erling: What did you pick up doing then when you came back?

Bob Barry: Well, I have always been able to sell. Back when I was a kid, if you sold so many seeds or whatever door-to-door, you could earn stuff. I was great at it. I have always been able to sell. The good Lord gave me that ability. My brother wanted a Jack Armstrong decoder ring, but he couldn't sell anything, so I would go sell it for him. Selling was something I could do. So dad got me a job at KNOR radio station in Norman as a salesman selling radio advertising, which I enjoyed very much. There's not a better kick in the world than to devise an advertising plan for a company and have it work. It's great for the customer of course, and great for me to have a success. There was a place in Norman called Moonie's Army Salvage. Well, he ran a two-page, color ad in the *Norman Transcript*. It must have cost him in those days several hundred dollars. I went in to Mr. Moonie and I said, "If you would have spent that money on radio advertising on KNOR, you would have gotten radio spots for a whole month." He said, "I'll tell you young man, you get the hell

out of my business and you never come back. Get out!” He kicked me out. What I should have said, the lesson I learned later—was “Mr. Moonie, I saw your double-truck ad and it was terrific. Why don’t we run a few radio spots and tell people to be sure to see that ad in the paper.” But you make mistakes like that and you learn from them. So I learned that. I was very successful as a salesman. Then Jack Ogle, the father of all of the Ogle boys in OKC, he and I became friends. Jack worked at KNOR and was doing Norman High School play-by-play. Jack got a job at WNAD, which was the OU station and he left. We were just starting football season. Mr. Morgan, the manager of KNOR said, “Can you do play-by-play?” I said, “Yes!” I had never done it before. I had just helped Jack do it. So that’s when I began doing Norman High football and basketball, which I did for about five years. Then in 1961 Bud Wilkinson had a tryout and I won the tryout.

JE: You had a love for baseball, but you obviously followed football and basketball, so you knew the sport enough to do play-by-play. As a young man you had a lot of confidence to be able to say yes you could do it, even though you had never done it before?

BB: I thought I had done it a lot before because I had been making up games for years. Really, I didn’t learn basketball until much later. With football, I understood it because I followed it more closely than basketball.

JE: Didn’t you pick up with music too when you came back from the Air Force?

BB: Yes. I played in dance bands all around because that’s how I made my money other than working at KNOR.

JE: Did you move on to other positions at KNOR?

BB: Sales is where I made most of my money, and then play-by-play and then I would disk jockey in the morning. In those days, radio stations signed off a midnight and signed on early the next morning. I would sign on at KNOR at 6:15am Monday through Saturday. I would do a disk jockey show for about three hours and then go out and sell advertising and then do football and basketball.

JE: You were living the dream weren’t you?

BB: Absolutely. I loved it. I was preparing all of my life for what was going on.

JE: Right. Then there was Ross Porter who was in your life at that moment.

BB: Yes, absolutely. Ross is a great friend and a tremendous talent. Ross, as I recall was really never much at KNOR. He was more of a freelance guy. He never actually worked there. He’s from Shawnee and worked more at the station there than he did at KNOR. But Ross was the next step up in my mind. He was ahead of me as far as ability and he was just a terrific guy. I looked up to him.

JE: Because he was doing play-by-play?

BB: Yes he did that for other stations, but not for KNOR. He was one of the 14 people that tried out for Bud Wilkinson in 1961.

JE: Did he give you tips on play-by-play?

BB: Yes, particularly with basketball because I didn't know that sport like you needed to do play-by-play.

JE: He went on to the Los Angeles Dodgers where he spent many years didn't he?

BB: Right. He was there just until the last couple of years. When I talked to him recently, he said the new owner of the Dodgers didn't like him or something. So Ross was sort of out of that and then he did UNLV basketball for several years in Las Vegas.

Chapter 9 – 7:17

Bud Wilkinson

John Erling: In 1947, Bud Wilkinson comes on the scene for OU. His first season was pretty successful.

Bob Barry: Yes. I was really not involved with OU at all at the time in any capacity. I was just a fan in those days.

JE: They went undefeated that first year?

BB: We listened to the games on the radio. I didn't go into the Air Force until 1951. I was just a fan like everybody else in 1947 and '48 and '49—all those years.

JE: He brought OU their first National Championship in 1950?

BB: Right. But I was not involved at that time.

JE: You were doing Norman High School football and basketball games.

BB: Right.

JE: How does that tie to Bud Wilkinson?

BB: Bud's two sons, Pat, who was a fullback and Jay who was a quarterback, played for Norman High. I think to this day—I don't know because I never did ask Bud before he passed away—I think maybe one of the reasons I got the job in the tryout was because Bud was used to listening to me. When he couldn't go to the Norman High games he would listen to me on the radio because his two sons played for Norman High. I think that probably gave me an edge. But when I got that call that I had been selected, can you imagine how that feeling was to call my dad and tell him I got the job? The first game I did for OU on the OU Network was in 1961 in South Bend, Indiana. It was OU versus Notre Dame when they had Daryle Lamonica and Nick Buonicotti and those guys. You talk about being scared to death—the first game ever on the OU network being OU at Notre Dame. Wow. After the game was over I called my dad and I said, "How did I sound?" He said, "Son, you did fine."

JE: How did you find out that you got the job for OU?

BB: I got a phone call.

JE: It wasn't Bud that called you was it?

BB: No, I think it was his assistant who called me and told me that I had been selected. It was unbelievable. I almost fainted.

JE: Isn't it true that Bud would have some of the national sportswriters to his house?

BB: Yes, that was very common in those days for coaches, after the game to invite writers to the coach's house. I can't imagine Bob Stoops doing that now. Not bad-mouthing him, but that was just a tradition in those days. He would say, "Ya'll come over to my house after the game." There would be Red Smith from *The New York Times* and Howard Cosell. Here I was a 30-year old kid and it was my first year doing OU football announcing. My eyes were as big as saucers in Bud Wilkinson's kitchen right after the game. It's an amazing memory.

JE: As you look back and you must have felt it then, Bud Wilkinson liked you. Otherwise he wouldn't have invited you to his house?

BB: Well it was sort of a tradition.

JE: Talk to us about Bud Wilkinson and his personality. What was it like to be around him?

BB: Bud was somebody that had the aura of being one step above everybody else. I don't mean that he was conceited, but he just had a star quality about him. He would walk down through the campus at OU and everybody would just sort of stare at him. He was just almost like a Godlike figure and I don't mean that disrespectfully. He just had an aura about him. I don't know how else to say it. He was friendly, but almost untouchable. What I mean by that is that you didn't just run up to Bud and do a quick interview. You had to make an appointment and all of that. Nowadays, Bob Stoops has a news conference as all coaches do during the week sometime and the place is packed. In those days, Bud would have his news conference in the student union and maybe there were 15 people there. It was just amazing. There would be the writers from OKC and Tulsa and a few of us broadcasters and it's a lot of students.

JE: OU went 12 seasons without a conference loss.

BB: Yes.

JE: Why do you think there wasn't more attention? There was some attention nationally.

BB: That's why it became famous was because of all if that. But there wasn't television and newscasts and 8,000 different networks and websites like there are now.

JE: So you beat out some known names to get that job. You really believe Bud got used to listening to you?

BB: I should have asked him. But I went to OSU for 18 years and then I came back. When I came back I happened to see Bud at a gathering in OKC and I said, "Bud" I am back doing OU and he said, "That's where you ought to be." I remember that quote.

JE: How much were you paid then for your games?

BB: Oh gosh, I don't even remember. It wasn't much then, but now it's pretty good. (Laugh)
It's gotten much better. It was something like \$100 a game or something ridiculously low.

JE: But you would have done that game for nothing at Notre Dame in 1961—wouldn't you?

BB: Oh sure, I would have paid them.

JE: This was a time when Texas was beating the tar out of OU wasn't it?

BB: Right, mostly. Bud ended that however.

JE: Tell us how he did that.

BB: Well, he just kept recruiting Texas Players. People talk about OU having Texas players. Everybody has Texas players. Texas is the largest state in the Union with more high schools than any other state. For example, this is maybe not technically correct, but Texas has something like 4,000 high schools, Oklahoma has something like 1,200 high schools playing football. So of course Texas has most of the recruits. Everybody out of the country recruits out of Texas. So just because you have a bunch of Texas players doesn't mean that Oklahoma is bad, it just means it's a smaller state. Bud went to Texas and got the players he wanted.

JE: He must have been an outstanding recruiter.

BB: He was tremendous. If he were sitting here right now you'd have to have your mouth open just listening to him. He had that ability to spellbind you.

JE: Wasn't he out of Minnesota?

BB: Yes, he was All-American out of the University of Minnesota. This is not exactly correct but the basis is. During the war there was a Navy Base here in Norman. There was one located north and one located south. Some of the buildings are still there. Bud was at the Navy base during the Navy in WWII. Jim Tatum was also at the Navy Base. Some of this info is faulty, but it's close. After the war, Jim Tatum became a coach at OU. OU Football had been regionally successful. Snorter Luster was the coach. He was a funny man. He was a Rotarian, which I am, and he was a great coach. Anyway, President Cross, the president of OU wanted to upgrade the football program. Therefore, Jim Tatum became the coach. Tatum was from Maryland and he wanted to get back to Maryland. He didn't want to mess around at OU. So Tatum told President Cross that he ought to name Bud Wilkinson Coach.

JE: Because Bud was an assistant coach at that time?

BB: Right. So that's how Bud got the job here at OU. One other thing I should mention, the big thing that put OU on the map nationally was Blanchard and Davis. In those days the Army team and the Navy Team were really great because everybody was in the service so they were the great athletes. Blanche & Davis were known as Mr. Outside and Mr. Inside. Army was No. 1 in the nation every year. OU played Army in a big battle. Army was just expected

to wipe OU off the map. OU darn near beat them. They lost 21-14. That put Bud Wilkinson and OU on the map, the fact that OU almost beat Blanchard and Davis. Wow! From that point on everything just went straight up for Bud.

Chapter 10 – 5:32**OU / Army**

John Erling: When OU played for a National Championship against Army, they did it in Yankee Stadium and you did that play-by-play, so that was another momentous occasion?

Bob Barry: Absolutely. There are so many things I could talk about in that game. Yankee Stadium obviously is in a baseball configuration. So for football they lay it out from center field to home plate. There's no Press Box for football, so we were in the stands in what was left field. It was wide open with no covering. We had a bunch of New York writers there with us in this makeshift Press Box. So here's Army and OU playing. Bud did one thing during that game that coaches rarely do now—probably never—but Bud did it. He trusted me as a play-by-play announcer. Bud would like to throw in a trick play every once in awhile. He would tell me before the game, not right before the game, but during the week before the game. He would say, "We are going to run a trick play and here's what to look for." So that was wonderful. It gives you a big break. This is a true story—as all of my stories are—(laughter). It was a close game. In those days defensive teams huddled, they literally formed a huddle on the defense. They didn't line up like they do now in a formation, but they huddled. Bud ran the option, you know down the line of scrimmage and pitch the ball back. So Bud decides that when Army would be huddling on defense, he would run an option play and catch them in the huddle. He told me what to look for before that play was going to be run. He said, "We are going to run to the sideline—not even hardly block it and on the way back to the huddle we're going to come back into formation and when Army huddles up on defense, we are going to pitch the ball and sweep left." That's what happened. Mike McClellan went 75 yards for a touchdown and beat Army. In *The New York Times* it said: "Sooners Outflank Army" as the headline. I called that play—you know. After that broadcast, one of the writers from New York, I think it was Red Smith. It was one of those big guys. He came up to me and he said, "Son, I don't know who you are but you called that trick play beautifully." I didn't tell him I knew it was coming. (Chuckle) But that was a great thrill.

JE: Yes, because you could easily have missed that.

BB: Right.

JE: You could have been looking down just waiting for the game and doing stats.

BB: Right, but I saw him run over there and I thought, here it comes. Then Army huddled and Boom!

JE: And OU wins the game.

BB: Right.

JE: Basketball was not popular at OU at that time.

BB: It was off and on. It wasn't really big-time like football. Football was totally dominant.

JE: You went into the 1961-1962 season and Jack Ogle was your caller-commentator?

BB: Yes. Jack and I were great friends. He had a terrific voice and he was very knowledgeable.

JE: Lee Allan Smith said that the two of you made a great pair.

BB: Yes. I can say that and still be modest about it. Jack added so much and our voices had a nice contrast. I had a higher pitch and Jack had this nice deep resonating voice. He really knew what he was talking about.

JE: So OU was invited to play the University of Alabama in the Orange Bowl game on January 1st of 1963. A president visited the OU locker room. Tell us about that.

BB: Well, here's the problem. The bowl games in those days were not allowed to be broadcast by the local networks. We were not allowed to broadcast the game.

JE: But you were there?

BB: Maybe not, because we had nothing to do.

JE: I heard that President Kennedy visited the locker room because of Bud Wilkinson.

BB: Yes, that's right. President Kennedy made Bud the National Physical Fitness Director. He was the first one we had ever had. He wanted the nation to shape up.

JE: OU lost that game to Alabama 17-0, partially due to a quarterback named Joe Namath.

BB: I wasn't there. I am sure I wasn't there for that game.

JE: In the spring of 1963, Coach Wilkinson recruited Joe Don Looney?

BB: Yes. Joe Don was not nice to broadcasters, or he wasn't very nice to me. One time he knocked the recorder out of my hands and said some expletives. I don't have time for that. He was definitely a renegade.

JE: What made him that way?

BB: I don't know. It was his personality.

JE: He was eventually kicked off the team?

BB: Right. He was not your average bear by any means. It was a mess to try and get a post-game interview back then. It wasn't as easy as it is now. You had to carry this recorder with you down to the locker room and have them come over and talk to you and then rush it back up to the booth. You didn't have all of the modern conveniences. It was quite a deal back then.

JE: But he was a tremendous athlete?

BB: Oh yes.

JE: What happened to him?

BB: Well, (pause) he became weird. He went over to India and started smoking pot and became some sort of guru.

JE: But Bud had recruited him from Texas right?

BB: I believe so. He became very weird. In those days I didn't have very much to do with the players. I just did the play-by-play of the game.

Chapter 11 – 5:09

JFK – November 22 & 23, 1963

John Erling: OU wins their next six games and they were getting ready for their game against Nebraska on November 23rd, 1963. That's a very important time in our nation's history because President Kennedy was assassinated on November 22nd.

Bob Barry: Again, this sounds made up, but I'm not making it up. In recent years you fly with the team to away games. But in those days, the broadcast crew flew in a small plane. In all of the years I did play-by-play, all 50 years at both schools, the only time that we couldn't fly was the day that Kennedy was assassinated. The pilot called us and said the weather was too bad to fly. So Mr. Morgan the head of the broadcast crew said we were going to have to drive to Lincoln. So we got in the car and we drove to Lincoln. We were on the Kansas Turnpike and we stopped for lunch. We came out to the car and turned on the radio and we found out that Kennedy had been assassinated. Wow. Then there was talk that we weren't going to play the game. We continued on to Lincoln, because we knew if they did play the game that we had to be there. Nebraska was the only state in the Union with a unicameral legislature. They do not have a House of Representatives, just a Senate. I don't know if people know that, but that's the deal. Nebraska Senate voted to go ahead and play the game. Bud Wilkinson knew Bobby Kennedy through Jack Kennedy. He called Bobby Kennedy. Bobby Kennedy told Bud that Jack would want the Sooners to play the game. So our broadcast that day, the day after the assassination, we told our affiliates, we had about 30 radio stations—we told them that we were not playing any commercials on the network. During every time out we are playing funeral music or organ music. We told the local affiliates that if they wanted to play their commercials that it was up to them, but that we were not playing any commercials. It was very strange. We would call a timeout

on the field and then there would be organ music. The crowd didn't cheer much. The Nebraska-OU rivalry in those days was not like it is now. It wasn't as intense then. It was just a weird feeling then, the whole broadcast.

JE: Were there a lot of people in the stands?

BB: It wasn't full.

JE: People probably didn't know how to react did they?

BB: Exactly. If I recall Nebraska won the game, but it was weird. The whole thing was strange.

JE: We could point out that all stations across the country then gave up their usual rock music and so forth and they ended up playing orchestral, somber music.

BB: Yes.

JE: OU closed out the year with a win over OSU and that was Bud's final game?

BB: Yes. He wanted to run for office. He wanted to be a U.S. Senator.

JE: He ran for the Senate seat held by J. Howard Edmondson? It was hard to believe that Bud Wilkinson, who was loved by so many in the state lost. Why do you think he lost?

BB: This is just my opinion, Bud's demeanor in football was that "we were going to try very hard" and "we are going to do this" (said very calmly) and the demeanor of a politician is, "I am going to do this!" or "I am going to do that!" He had a completely different demeanor. They weren't used to Bud being forceful and saying, "Vote for me!" They just didn't know how to take him.

JE: His personality at that point wasn't assertive enough do you think?

BB: Well, he was a football coach and won tons of games but he was always very humble and modest about it. That was his approach. Then all of a sudden now he was saying, we need this or we need that. Or this is bad and that's good. You know it was a whole different deal. Then Fred Harris who ran against him...Fred was a wild liberal and Oklahoma has always been conservative in politics. I give Fred credit. He ran great campaign and he was experienced and knowledgeable about the workings of Washington and of the state and all of that. Bud just got beat.

JE: It didn't hurt that LBJ carried the state over Barry Goldwater and LBJ had pretty much scared the nation about Barry Goldwater.

BB: Right. Exactly. That's a good point.

JE: He probably suffered from that as well. On this website I have interviewed Walt Helmerich from Tulsa.

BB: Yes.

JE: Walt Helmerich was a financial campaign chair of sorts. He would go with Bud on these campaign stops throughout the state. Bud would never talk about football. Walt would ask him why he never talked about football and OU. Bud would say, "I just don't think that's appropriate here." So he tried to talk about political issues instead. Walt always felt that

he didn't connect to the audience because they came out to hear this famous football coach and they wanted to here some football stories and then led into politics.

BB: Right.

Chapter 12 – 5:48

After Bud Wilkinson

John Erling: After Bud Wilkinson's career ended, the new coach for OU was Gomer Jones.

What do you recall about him?

Bob Barry: Gomer Jones was Bud's great defensive coach and a great guy. He did not have the mystique that Bud had—people sort of felt like he was second fiddle. He was a good coach and a good guy, but he just didn't have "it." That's the only way I can explain it.

JE: He resigned but he remained at OU as the Athletic Director?

BB: Yes.

JE: They tried to hire Darrell Royal from Texas because he had been the quarterback for Bud, but he said no to that. Then whom did they hire?

BB: They hired Jim MacKenzie who did.

JE: The defensive line coach for Jim would have been Barry Switzer.

BB: Yes. All of the Switzer years I was at OSU.

JE: Lee Allan Smith offered you a sportscaster job on WKY TV? This was a big deal then to switch?

BB: Right. Yes. I was at KNOR and doing TV on the weekends at Channel 4. Without getting into their personalities, Lee Allan wanted the guy that was doing sports during the week out and he offered me the job. To this day, this person and I are not exactly buddies.

JE: So this person is still around?

BB: Yes, but I don't want to embarrass him, so I don't see any reason to mention his name.

JE: Right. On the weekends you would see some celebrities coming in and out of the station? Like Buck Owens?

BB: Yes. I've never been much of a star watcher type of person.

JE: The first year for Coach MacKenzie was in 1966 and that's when OU beats Texas. You were doing high school football and basketball games through all of that weren't you?

BB: Yes.

JE: Tell us about the lighting at Norman High School Football games?

BB: It was horrible, terrible. There was an NFL Exhibition game between the Chicago Cardinals and the Detroit Lions. It was a night game—sponsored by Safeway. You would

buy so many groceries and you would get a ticket to this game. It was always packed. It was nightfall and we turned on these miserable lights and this Detroit Lions announcer asked me, "When are they going to turn on the lights?" (Laugh) I said, "This is it." He said, "This is it?" I mean the northeast corner of that field was dark in the end zone. It was just terrible lighting. When we did high school games there you could just barely see. It was embarrassing really.

JE: You probably had to do some re-creating when you were actually there.

BB: Yes. You couldn't see. It was ridiculous.

JE: Coach MacKenzie dies and then Chuck Fairbanks was named coach. He had six years that were quite successful. Fairbanks was named coach of the New England Patriots.

BB: Chuck was good. He was a friend and he still is. He was very nice to me. There were no problems there at all.

JE: In 1967 new faces appeared. Steve Owens?

BB: Steve has been a lifelong, great friend.

JE: Tell us something about him.

BB: I will tell you something that people find hard to believe. When they awarded the Heisman Trophy, the year he won, they didn't invite him to New York. People did not go to New York in those days for that. They went over to Dr. Presley Cross' office. Steve went in with President Cross. There was a guy there from the *Norman Transcript*. I was at KNOR, but I don't think any of the OKC TV stations were there. The phone rang and they told President Cross that Steve Owens had won the Heisman. That was it. There wasn't a big hoopla like there is now.

JE: Steve came on as a sophomore. He was from Miami, Oklahoma. He was a very nice guy—very humble.

BB: Right. I remember him as a great runner.

JE: Back in those days OU had a quarterback by the name of Jack Mildren?

BB: Oh yes. Jack and I became good friends. He had great ability and was a great athlete. He was very confident. He's the type of guy that you want as quarterback. He had the aura about him that we can get it done. Jack was just a great guy. I was riding on the bus with the team from the hotel to the Cotton Bowl when we were playing Texas down there the year that OU went for the wishbone. Jack said, "If we don't win today against Texas, we are never going to win." That's the year they surprised Texas by going to the wishbone.

JE: Did you know that that wishbone was going to happen that day?

BB: No, Greg Pruitt wore a wide receiver number, because he was a wide receiver. They went into the dressing room and came back out and I noticed his number had changed. I pointed that out to somebody. Sure enough they came out in the wishbone. We called it the Y formation in those days.

JE: So was that the first time you had seen it?

BB: Yes. When OU lined up in the Y, or the wishbone, Pruitt had his old number on his helmet and his new number on his jersey. Texas won that game.

JE: Yes, they did but that was the key time for the wishbone, which served OU well for many, many years.

BB: Definitely.

JE: You were a full-time sports director then in 1970 at Channel 4.

BB: Yes.

JE: In 1971 OU beats Texas with the wishbone and OU becomes No. 2 in the nation.

Chapter 13 – 2:43

Game of the Century

John Erling: Then came the game of the century, OU and Nebraska.

Bob Barry: Right, in 1971.

JE: Let's set the scene there for that with Johnny Rodgers, and Greg Pruitt and Jack Mildren.

BB: Well, that was unique in the sense that the teams were No. 1 and No. 2 in the nation in the polls. Also, both teams were undefeated and both teams had the week off before they played the game. So it was just built up like they do the Super Bowl. You had No. 1 versus No. 2, both undefeated. Both had an open date and there were two weeks full of all the hype. It was just one heck of a game—a terrific game.

JE: Johnny Rodgers returned a punt in that game didn't he?

BB: And there was clipping on the return, although he won't admit it to this day.

JE: Really? (Laughter)

BB: There really is a controversy there. You can look at the play-by-play film—there was clipping. Anyway, Nebraska and OU have had a great relationship in football. Nebraska's custom was that they would have the play-by-play guy on the opposing team to breakfast the morning of the game. And so, years later, in fact only a few years ago, they had me speak to them at a breakfast before OU played Nebraska and Johnny Rodgers was there. Of course I told a few corny jokes and so I said, "I'm sorry Johnny, but there was clipping." And I got a big laugh out of that and then they started booing and all of that. There's a great relationship there. But that game of the century stands out as one of the all-timers that I have ever gotten to do because it was such a great game. Both teams just played brilliant football—great game.

JE: With Nebraska winning that game.

BB: Yes.

JE: Jack Mildren, you need to talk about him a little bit. As a quarterback, he loved to throw—but he was able to play and pick up this wishbone offense?

BB: Yes. He was a great runner too.

JE: That's the point I guess because that year he rushed for 1,000 yards. Not every quarterback could have adapted to that style of play.

BB: He was a great runner always, in high school and college. He was a great athlete so that was not a big jump forward for him. The actual execution of the wishbone, pitching at the last minute and all of that stuff was something you had to work at.

JE: Wasn't Barry Switzer really a strong pusher of the wishbone offense as an assistant coach?

BB: The option, yes, basically it's the option—this is the way to run the option.

JE: Yes.

BB: The defensive guy is always wrong if you run the option correctly. If he takes this guy you keep it, if he takes that guy you pitch it. It's really a wonderful, fun thing for college teams to run. This past year when Air Force ran the option against OU—it's tough to defend if you don't see it every week. But it's not a good formation for coaches to recruit to in this day and age because the college kids want to go on and play pro-ball. None of the pro teams are going to run the option. So you don't recruit a guy to a wishbone school and tell him to come to your school and play football because they are going to say, yeah, okay but what about the pros? So that's why the option isn't very much en vogue.

JE: Used occasionally I guess.

BB: Right.

Chapter 14 – 5:07

1972 Olympics

John Erling: Something happened in your career, you went to the Summer Olympics in 1972. Henry Iba was the coach of the team in '72. Were you around Mr. Iba then?

Bob Barry: Yes. To show you how times have changed, they sent three of us from Channel 4 to cover the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich for three weeks. Can you imagine the cost of that? Then in 1976, they sent three of us to Montreal for the Olympics for three weeks. That was the one where Nadia Comaneci had such a great success. Nowadays these TV stations are so stressed because there are so many of them and web pages and all of

that stuff that they don't send anybody anywhere. We were over there and I think it costs \$40,000 or \$50,000 to send three of us there for three weeks. We were staying in the Austrian Alps, far away from the Olympic Village. It would be like the Olympics being in Tulsa and us staying in Oklahoma City. It was too far to drive every day on that German autobahn, with no speed limit. So, we shopped around and rented a little place about a block and a half from the Olympic Village. We met a guy named Joe, who was a prisoner of war during World War II. He had spent time in a prisoner of war camp in Canada and had learned English. His wife and kids could not speak English. He rented us a couple of rooms where we stayed while we covered the Olympics. Joe was invaluable because when this thing occurred, he was able to tell us when the German media was lying and when they weren't lying. It was really a great civic lesson in Free Press because Germany was controlling everything—TV, radio and newspaper. They were lying to the people most of the time. It was so obvious. Joe would tell us and we would call back to Channel 4 and tell them what was really going on. It was a big deal. We were telling the truth because Joe would tell us the truth. Everybody thought that the problem was going to happen at the Munich airport. In fact it occurred at a NATO base called Fürstenfeldbruck, which was right there. Joe told us that they were going to go to Fürstenfeldbruck. Sure enough they did and that is where the Israelis were killed. We were right on top of that story because of Joe.

JE: The Israelis had been taken hostage by the Palestinian terrorists.

BB: Right.

JE: You're saying that the Germans didn't report it the way that you reported it? You weren't a newsman then, you were a sports guy?

BB: Correct. The other two guys with me took over because it was a news story rather than a sports story.

JE: What do you remember about the 1972 Olympic games?

BB: We weren't over there to go the games. We were over there to cover Oklahomans at the Olympics. John MacLeod was the OU basketball coach. Abe Lemons was over there as a basketball coach. Of course Mr. Iba was the head coach. One time, Abe Lemons, you know he was a character. He told me, "Go over there to Tiger, (the name of a Japanese shoe company) tell them you are John MacLeod and they will give you a free pair of shoes, which I still have by the way. (Laughter) I went over there and signed John MacLeod and they gave me a pair of shoes. People don't believe this either, but we used to walk right into the Olympic Village in those days. There was no security at all. Of course, that's when the terrible thing happened, because of the lack of security and so forth. We interviewed Abe Lemons. We said, "Abe, what would you say to the folks back home?" He said, "I would tell them to stay home because you can't get a ticket to anything." (Laughter) We

did feature stories on athletes, but we did not do any actual coverage of events because that was exclusive to the networks.

JE: Were there many Oklahomans in the 1972 Olympics?

BB: Mr. Iba was the big star, because he was the coach of the Olympic basketball team.

Something people don't realize is that he had his pocket picked when they kept playing the play over and over until the Russians finally won the basketball game. In the melee out there, he had his pocket picked. What happened was, we got down to the last 5 seconds of the game and they kept replaying it. There were Russian officials calling the game and they kept replaying until Russia won.

JE: What was the logic behind that?

BB: They claimed this and that did not happen right and it needed to be replayed. Finally the Russians wanted won and that was it. That's really what happened. They just absolutely, really, stole the game. To this day, Mr. Iba, if he were alive, he just never really got over that because they just absolutely robbed us.

JE: What was his demeanor on the court? Was he yelling and waving his arms.

BB: Yes, all of the above. I don't know if he was yelling or not—but they just screwed us. It's hard to understand how they got by with that, but they did.

JE: Talk to us about Henry Iba a little bit.

BB: I didn't know him well. He was a little bit like Bud Wilkinson in the sense that he was a little aloof. He was not above it all necessarily. He was a down-to-earth type of guy, but I mean he was interested in his job as a coach, but he was not really interested in public relations. I will put it that way.

JE: He was not necessarily a people person overall?

BB: Right. He was very nice and made nice talks to his fans at banquets and stuff, but he was mainly a coach.

Chapter 15 – 4:47

TU / OSU

John Erling: Then you came back home and you changed jobs. TU basketball coach Jim King calls you and asks you to broadcast.

Bob Barry: In those days, the broadcast rights were put out for bid. The group bidding the most money to the University got the exclusive rights to broadcast the games. Mr. Gaylord, who owned Channel 4 and the Oklahoma City newspapers, his group had the rights to

OU football, but they were outbid by KTOK. I was working at Channel 4 and I was doing football and basketball on WKY radio and the OU Network. But then KTOK outbid Gaylord and wins the rights. It's hard to believe, but it was a mess-up. I won't get in to that. I wondered, what going to happen now? Well, Mr. Schuller, the general manager of KTOK wanted Jack and I to continue doing the games for him. I will be quite frank with you. I talked to Mr. Schuller and I made a hell of the deal moneywise for Jack and me. It was about five times but we were making working for Mr. Gaylord. It was amazing. Schuller said, "Okay." I called Jack Ogle and I said, "I made us one hell of a deal." He said, "We are in deep trouble." I said, "Why?" He said, "Mr. Gaylord said we are not doing the games for KTOK and still working at Channel 4."

JE: Because it was a competitor obviously.

BB: Right. I had already shaken hands on the deal with Mr. Schuller. I'm not being overly dramatic here, but there were about 3 or 4 days where I was going to get fired if I did it and sued if I didn't. Finally, they worked out a compromise where they let me do OU play-by-play on KTOK that last year, but Ogle could not do the color. They gave him the OU playback show on TV. But that was one last year that I did OU. So because of that last year, basketball wasn't included at OU, so I had a basketball season open. Jim King, the TU basketball coach at the time, called me and said that his guy that was doing basketball play-by-play had been transferred to Chicago for a different job. He asked me if I knew anybody that could do play-by-play basketball. I said, "What about me?" (Chuckle) He said, "Can you do it?" I said, "Yeah." So I did Tulsa basketball play-by-play that season. Then the next year the OSU athletic director called Jack and me and said that he would like for us to do his games at OSU. Mr. Gaylord and WKY then started carrying OSU football and basketball games, when I started doing games for OSU.

JE: What you just said, that's a major deal. You are at OU for a lot of years. That's not just by going from here to here. Talk about the fans because when you are the voice of one team and then you're going over to their rival—you are going to their enemy. Talk to us about that.

BB: That's one of the questions that everybody asks me. It was amazing. I'm not trying to brag or be boastful, but they welcomed me with open arms at OSU. At OU, when I left they called me Agent Orange and a traitor and all of that, but OSU welcomed me with open arms. They explained later, and boy, this is a tough thing for me to say publicly because it's bragging. But they said, "With you and Jack coming to us, we felt like we had the number 1 broadcasting team and we took it away from OU." That was kind of their attitude. They treated Jack and I like kings at OSU. When they dedicated Gallagher-Iba Arena they just were great to us all of those years. They couldn't have been nicer. So the transfer to OSU was really very pleasant.

JE: OU was on this very high level and OSU was not nearly what it is today in football. They

looked at it as a compliment. They thought it was part of a franchise that they would love to have. I am sure that you did bring attention to OSU football.

BB: Yes, and I am saying that modestly. They felt like they had the number 1 broadcasting team. Without stepping on people's feet, Bill Platt had been doing OSU football for years and he got crowded out. To the day he died he resented it. We really had nothing to do with it, but we did because we took the job. Do you see what I am saying? In this business, when you replace someone, I don't care what the circumstances are, there are bitter feelings.

JE: They didn't care for his play-by-play?

BB: Well, they did. He did a hell of a job for years. That first year, you talk about tough. They had me doing one quarter and then Bill doing one quarter, and then I would do another quarter and then Bill would do another one. That eased him out. Then the next year it was all Ogle and I.

JE: That had to be tough for the both of you?

BB: It was.

JE: Jim Stanley was the new coach then?

BB: Yes. Coach Stanley was not glib. He was a good coach but he did not have the gift of gab.

Chapter 16 – 1:20

Terry Miller

John Erling: In the 1974 season OSU had a running back by the name of Terry Miller?

Bob Barry: Oh boy, yes he was great. I helped recruit him believe it or not.

JE: How did that happen?

BB: Well, they called me and said he was interested in radio and TV and asked if they could send him down to see me. He was there on a recruiting trip so he came by himself. I showed him around Channel 4. He wanted to know why I was at OSU and not at OU. He was knowledgeable. I don't know whether I had any influence one way or the other, but Terry turned out to not be a really good person. He had a little drug problem.

JE: But when he ran it was Miller power wasn't it?

BB: It really was. He was a great runner.

JE: He never went on to anything else did he?

BB: No his personal life was never wonderful.

JE: Meanwhile, Barry Switzer becomes coach of OU. OU won back-to-back championships in 1974 and 1975. Steve Davis as quarterback averaged 43 points a game.

BB: See, for all of that I was at OSU.

JE: OU was placed on probation for violating some rules regarding altering players' high school transcripts. OU was prohibited from playing in bowl games for two years. But being there at OSU and looking at that happening had to be kind of an interesting scenario? Either you were glad you weren't there or...?

BB: I had no feelings like that. I really didn't. I am being honest. My wife went to OSU. She and I made great friends up there. We just enjoyed ourselves and we didn't worry about OU. We really didn't at all.

Chapter 17 – 1:45

Dream Bowl

John Erling: Here is something kind of fun that came from Lee Allan Smith about the Dream Bowl.

BB: Yes.

JE: Tell us about that.

BB: Well, OU was prevented from playing in bowl games when they were on probation. So Lee Allan Smith—the world's greatest promoter—decided why don't we have a Dream Bowl between OU and Notre Dame? We will "play" it in the 100,000-seat Jim Thorpe stadium in downtown Oklahoma City. You know, we made it up and called it the Dream Bowl. He said, "Why don't you draw that up and you and Jack do a play-by-play of the Dream Bowl?" The idea was to publicize it and have it on WKY Radio. This went back to my youth when I was making up games. So we dreamed up this thing. Jack and I worked hard on it. So OU was playing Notre Dame in the Dream Bowl. We made it dramatic where Notre Dame got ahead and at halftime we interviewed Howard Cosell. Of course, we did it on the phone because he was in New York. So we decided we would tell the listeners that Howard Cosell was across the way on the other side of Jim Thorpe Stadium and we were going to interview him by telephone. Of course, Cosell played along with it really well. We had a great time and there were so many good stories. OU was playing a basketball game that night. We had Notre Dame leading late in the game of course, before OU rallied to win. A guy called the station and says, "If Notre Dame wins this game we are coming out there." (Laughter) Because they knew it was make-believe. Dewey Selmon, of course was at this basketball game. When we had OU scoring the winning touchdown—everybody cheered. They were all listening to the Dream Bowl. It was a smash success, it really was.

JE: I wonder if there's a recording of that?

BB: We recorded it, but I don't know what happened to the recording, but it's around somewhere.

JE: That's funny. I don't know if they could determine ratings on that, but they had to be huge.

BB: Oh, they were, absolutely. Because with OU on probation couldn't go to a real bowl game you know, so...

Chapter 18 – 2:46

1976 Olympics

John Erling: In 1976 the Gaylord family sells WKY-TV to the Detroit Free Press. They changed the call letter to KTVY. How did that go over?

Bob Barry: We really had no choice one-way or the other. The Gaylords did everything first-class. They ran great operations and spent plenty of money. We had the best equipment and the best everything. You wondered how the new company would run things. If you were to go out to this day and look at Channel 4 your mouth would drop. The building is falling apart. They are not spending any money on maintenance. It's just pathetic and really sad. I realize the days of the Gaylord family owning it are long gone, but they went from a first-class operation to downhill as far as money being put into the project.

JE: Who owns it today?

BB: They've changed owners two or three times. I don't know who owns it now.

JE: You were sent to the summer Olympic Games in Quebec and that's where Nadia Comaneci comes into play here. She was 14 years old at the time and then there came an Oklahoma connection.

BB: Do you mean Bart Connor?

JE: Right.

BB: I wish I could properly describe it but I can't even come close, but to hear Bart Connor describe his marriage to Nadia Comaneci, because she was the star. He was the American athlete and they were the King and the Queen. You should hear him tell the story. It was unbelievable. Their wedding was a national event. Bart has a great sense of humor and to hear him tell it. He was just like a pebble on the beach. She was the big deal. She had this enormous train on her dress. They are a great couple to this day and they are good friends.

JE: They live in this area don't they?

BB: Yes, they run a gymnastics school here in Norman.

JE: In 1976 we had a great American boxing team didn't we?

BB: Yes. I've got to admit something to you about the '76 games. I really goofed off up there. The night that Nadia Comaneci set the record I was at the Montreal and New York Mets baseball game because Tom Seaver was pitching for the Mets. (Laughter) So here I was, the station had sent me there to go to the Olympics and I begged off and went to the baseball game. I never got caught or I would have been fired I bet.

JE: Well, the networks were covering it. It wasn't your job to cover it.

BB: Right. I still have my ticket stub from that game.

JE: Who won the game?

BB: Montreal.

JE: Sugar Ray Leonard was there?

BB: Yes, but like I said, I did not earn my keep. I was just up there like I was on vacation.

Chapter 19 – 6:00

Coaches / Players

John Erling: I wanted to talk a bit about Jimmy Johnson being hired at OSU in the 1970s. You were there at OSU then?

Bob Barry: Right. Jimmy was at OU when I knew him. I had known him for a while. He and I were buddies sort of. Really, I knew Jimmy Johnson almost better than any coach I had ever worked under. Normally with coaches you want to get a pregame interview. Usually, pregame interviews are done on the Thursday before the game on Saturday. Jimmy would let me interview him the Saturday morning of the game. That was unheard of. That was a big deal. I went to his office on Saturday mornings and I had the latest info on the game and injury updates. It was just a terrific thing for a coach to do. Not only that, but we would do a live 15-minute TV show on Friday from his office. When OSU played Miami in the Orange Bowl, when Jimmy was with Miami—all of the Miami people wanted an exclusive interview with Jimmy. He came over to me. He said, "You set up in the other room and give me a nod and I will meet you in there."

JE: Wow.

BB: Jimmy was just great to me.

JE: And it all started at OU when he was there?

BB: Yeah. One Halloween they all showed up in weird costumes and half drunk and Switzer and a bunch of them rang the doorbell and my wife and I went to answer the door and they were all crazy.

JE: Here at this house?

BB: Yes.

JE: That's nice to hear of a guy who remembers a friendship.

BB: His interview on Saturday morning was just unheard of. You know, with Stoops, we do it on Thursday, if you're lucky.

JE: Probably many coaches are like that today?

BB: Sure. That's true. They are very protective. They don't want to say anything.

JE: In 1980 and 1981 basketball season opened with Paul Hanson who was very popular?

BB: Paul was a great man. He had a hearing aid in both ears. He had five daughters. He was so funny. His wife was a judge and still is. Of course, Paul is gone, but Paul used to say with her in his presence, "My daughters never woke up during the night." (Laughter) Of course he had two hearing aids and he would take those out. (Laughter) Paul was just a terrific guy. We have a deal on tape if Bobby still has it of Paul after they lost a basketball game. It's Paul describing how his team screwed up and lost the basketball game. It was hysterical. He was so passionate.

JE: In 1982, Channel 4 lost two sportscasters and your son applied for the job?

BB: Once my son came on, the guys that were there could see the handwriting on the wall that he was the heir.

JE: This was Bob Barry, Jr.

BB: Yes. They originally called him Bob Barry, II, but that didn't work, so they called him Bob Barry, Jr. He really isn't a junior because he has a different middle name.

JE: That had to make you happy?

BB: Yes.

JE: What was happening to you at that time?

BB: I was still the sports director and Bob Jr. was the number two man, or number three man or whatever. I was the boss and he was working. As the years went by, it became obvious that it was time for me to move on. We had a few different owners and I was getting older. Bobby was the heir apparent, which was fine with me. But I moved into the position of being not the boss anymore. Bobby was the sports director, which was fine with me. I did the early show only for years, and then finally retired from TV.

JE: Talk to us about Pat Jones.

BB: Pat is another great friend. Pat was just terrific. I can't say anything but good things about Pat. He was a good coach and a good guy.

JE: When Thurman Thomas committed to OSU that was a big deal?

BB: Yes it was. I got to do games when Barry Sanders and Thurman Thomas played. They won 10 games three seasons in a row. They went to three bowl games in a row. Those were great times at OSU. There was great success in those three years. For three years in a row,

Barry Sanders took the opening kickoff and ran 100 yards for a touchdown to start the season. Three years in row he did that! He is a great talent. The best running back I have ever seen is Barry Sanders and then Thurman Thomas.

JE: So Thurman Thomas was there and Barry Sanders was bucking for the top job?

BB: You want to talk about a tandem. They were two great running backs.

JE: Hart Lee Dykes came to OSU in 1985?

BB: Hart Lee Dykes got five schools put on probation. He was just a bad person.

JE: For history's sake, what was it that he brought along that got all of these schools on probation?

BB: Illegal recruiting and illegal inducements.

JE: That he accepted or asked for?

BB: Both, or all of the above. I don't have all of the details, but he really did get three schools for sure put on probation. I said five, but I know of three for sure. OSU was one of them.

JE: Here today in 2011, we are hearing about that. As a matter of fact last night on HBO they showed a deal about Purdue and some violations.

BB: There's always something. If you and I shake hands and you have a \$100 bill and you hand it to me. How are you going to stop that? It's hard for the guys that have the money and think they are powerful to not get their school in trouble because they give the players things they shouldn't.

Chapter 20 – 2:23

Ice Bowl – Gundy

John Erling: This is worth noting because in the summer of 1985 you suffered a heart attack.

Bob Barry: Right.

JE: You had major surgery.

BB: Right, I had a quadruple bypass.

JE: So the season opened without you. I bring this up because you were released to broadcast what became known as the bedlam game called the Ice Bowl—tell us about that.

BB: Of course, one of the first things the doctor tells you is to stay away from extreme heat and extreme cold. Ha! Barry Switzer tried to warn them when they scheduled that game that that's too late in the year for the state of Oklahoma weather-wise. As I have said, Jo Ann and Myron Roderick were dear friends as well as being the Athletic Director at OSU. Many a time they had my wife and I for dinner and so forth. The Ice Bowl was absolutely

unbelievable it was so cold. The field was frozen and had snow on it. It was just terrible. It could not have been colder. The doctor told me never to go out in freezing weather with having had a quadruple bypass and all of that. The window would ice up. We were scraping ice off the window inside on the booth there at OSU. It was a terrible game and it was hard to broadcast. Finally the game is over and everybody leaves but I have got to get out to my car. How am I going to get out to my car because it was like minus 10 degrees or something. I was scared to death worrying about things. Well, Myron had already told me, you are not driving back to the city, you are spending the night with us. But I had to get to their house there in Stillwater. That was really a nervous time. I bundled up as best as I could and I got to my car and I was slipping and sliding driving out to Myron's house. I spent the night there. That was a harrowing deal. The whole game was ridiculous. It should never have been played. It was just a terrible broadcast I am sure because we really couldn't see anything and nobody could do anything on the field.

JE: That game turned out with OSU losing 13-0.

BB: Right.

JE: In 1986 there was a great recruiting class with Mike Gundy who became the all-time leading passer.

BB: He and I are still very good friends. As a matter of fact I was at OSU when they were recruiting Cale Gundy and I was trying to help recruit Cale Gundy to OSU. They are a great family, all of them. Mike Gundy—I told him, the last time I saw him, I said, “Mike I broadcast on the radio every game you ever played as quarterback.” When they brought him in as a freshman, I did every game he ever played. He's a great friend and a great coach. He's doing a good job. Cale is too, but I know Mike much better than I know Cale.

Chapter 21 – 6:18

Tokyo – Barry Sanders

John Erling: The 1988 football season was a good year for OSU. Barry Sanders ran for 2,628 yards and scored 39 touchdowns. It was the most productive season for a running back in college football history. He won the Heisman as the team was in Tokyo to play. You were broadcasting in Tokyo. What can you tell us about that experience?

Bob Barry: That whole thing was an amazing deal. The Japanese have a domed stadium in Tokyo called the Tokyo Dome. It's a baseball configuration. Each year they would have two schools schedule one of their regular games to be played in the Tokyo Dome. They would

fly both teams over to play the game there. OSU was to play Texas Tech in The Tokyo Dome. So we had a 747 Jet and on one side of the plane were OSU players, coaches and fans and on the other were Texas Tech players, coaches and fans. I'm not saying this to be funny, or salacious, but the Japanese people like blonds with big boobs. So they got the Miami Dolphin cheerleaders and they wanted to Grambling Band. So the Grambling Band and the Miami Dolphin Cheerleaders were upstairs in the 747 and the two teams were on the lower level. The plane took off from Dallas, went through Anchorage and we landed in Tokyo. My wife got to go with me, which I really appreciated. Here we are in Tokyo and we don't know what the heck we are doing. We get off the airplane and we kind of wandered around and got lost. Finally we got organized and we went to the Miyako Hotel. Jack Dale the broadcaster for Texas Tech and I are longtime friends and still are. He is retired too now. We went out to The Tokyo Dome the next day and watched the teams practice. They had a little banquet there. There was no Press Box because of the baseball configuration and there was no provision at all for us. We kept trying to explain through a Japanese interpreter that we had to have a Press Box. There was no scoreboard for football even. They put us in the stands about 12 rows up, which was not close to being high enough. They had a little wooden deal that they attached for us and that was supposed to be the Press Box. We were sitting in people's seats. When the Japanese people came and we were sitting in their seats, they spoke to us in Japanese and were not happy. (Laughter) Dr. Boger who was President Emeritus at Oklahoma State was there. He was a tremendous friend. He kept stats for me because OSU would not send a regular crew over because it was too expensive. So Dr. Boger kept stats for me. This was when Barry Sanders was about to break the all-time rushing record. The game here in the United States was played at about 2:30am. ESPN, which wasn't nearly as developed as it is now, was listening to our broadcast to see when Barry Sanders broke the all-time record. So we were sitting really low in the stands, 12 rows up. It was hard to tell whether someone was on the 8-yard line or the 18th. I was calling the play and in my ear Dr. Boger said, "That's it! He broke the record!" I yelled out that he had broken the record and Dr. Boger said, "Wait a minute, I added wrong." (Laughter) After it was over I said, "Here you are the President Emeritus and you can't add!" (Laughter) He got a big kick out of it. We corrected ourselves. So the game was over and I think OSU won as I recall. The next day the Heisman Trophy was to be presented. CBS had a makeshift, little studio there in downtown Tokyo. Believe it or not, this is the truth John, Barry Sanders did not want to accept the Heisman Trophy. He wouldn't leave the hotel. Pat Jones got to Barry and said, "Barry, if you turn this down, you are going to ruin OSU Football forever."

JE: What was Barry's reasoning?

BB: Okay, he later played in the NFL. If he would have played pro football one more year he

would have set the all-time rushing record. He didn't play. Why? It's just the way Barry was. He didn't care about records. He didn't care about any of that stuff. I know it doesn't make sense, but he had no explanation for it. So finally, he agreed to accept the Heisman. We got to the little makeshift studio. I'm standing right there when they presented it to him and he didn't have a negative reaction or anything, but he didn't have a positive one either. I never will understand they guy. That was quite a deal. Pat Jones was really sweating blood. If he would have turned down the Heisman it would have been a national scandal and a big black mark on OSU. That's a true story. By the same token, you could go downstairs in the hotel and get a Coke and Barry would say, "How are you doing?" He was really friendly and yet that is so counter to the way he acted. He was moody or something. One other little funny thing that has nothing to do with anything, Jack and I got locked in at The Tokyo Dome on the day before the game. We were trying to tell the people what we needed and meanwhile the teams left and we were stranded in the Tokyo Dome, which was air supported. You can't just go out and open the door in an air-supported stadium. You have to go through an air lock or something. So Jack went on his way and I went to this Japanese guy and tried in English to ask for a cab or taxi. Finally I think he understood me. He motioned for me to go outside. So I go through the air lock and outside. Up drives this cab and I start to get in and the cab driver goes crazy. In other words, this wasn't my cab. So I backed off and he drives away. About two minutes later he comes back and opens the door and it was my cab. (Laughter) So I get in the cab and he starts playing American music. I said to please take me to the Miyako Hotel. We pull up and I get out and the sign says Miyako Hotel, but it was not the same Miyako Hotel where we were staying. It turns out there were two Miyako Hotels. (Laughter) it was just a rat race.

JE: On top of that the Japanese didn't understand football.

BB: No, they didn't.

Chapter 22 – 3:17

Return to OU

John Erling: Somewhere along the line when you were at OSU, rumors came out you were going to return to OU. What was going on then?

Bob Barry: Okay. Again John, I've got to be a little religious because I don't have any other explanation. John Brooks, was doing play-by-play for OU. John is a tremendous talent and does a great job. But OU came to me and said, "We want you to come back." Here

is the religious part. Myron Roderick was OSU's Athletic Director. He and his wife Joann became close friends with me and with my wife during the time I was up there. Myron had decided it was time to retire. They hired Jim Garner as the new athletic director at OSU. Jim has no relation to the actor. Okay, so Bill Teegins was a good friend of Jim Garner's. Jim had nothing against me, but he sure did want Bill Teegins to come do their games. So Myron retires and Garner comes in. He wasn't going to can me, but he let it be known that it would sure be nice if Bill Teegins, his buddy, could do their games. So the door was open and OU said they wanted me to come back. So I talked to Jim Garner. He didn't want it to look like—again, I am not trying to out myself on a pedestal here—but he didn't want it to look like OU had stolen us, Jack and me, or whatever. So for a few months, or during that summer Donnie Duncan and Garner kind of worked out a deal so it wouldn't look like either school got screwed or whatever. I went back to OU and Bill Teegins took over at OSU. Then later Teegins gets killed in a plane crash.

JE: Wasn't there a feeling about bringing Bill Teegins in because he was a television personality and they thought that bringing a TV presence to OSU would help them?

BB: Sure, but I was also on TV. I am not belittling Bill. He did a heck of a job.

JE: But he wasn't a play-by-play person then?

BB: He sure learned it. He did a good job. He didn't struggle—he was good.

JE: Did you ever wonder why they wanted Bill over you?

BB: No, it was just because they had known each other for a long time.

JE: So it was based on their friendship.

BB: I think so. In fact a lot of OSU people were very upset about it. Nothing against Bill Teegins—but like I said, it was almost like somebody was looking out for me.

JE: So then Donnie Duncan called you from OU and offered you the job?

BB: He said, "We want you to come back." Those were his words.

JE: You knew there was some unrest at OSU and here this call comes out of the clear blue sky. You didn't campaign for it and you didn't ask for it.

BB: No, I sure didn't. It was just absolutely amazing.

JE: But you are good and you left a good impression in the minds of those people at OU.

BB: I still have great friends at OSU. Really, as I said earlier, the OU people were more disgruntled than the OSU people, both times. But there's never been a whole bunch of that. I don't know whether I got it from my dad or the good Lord or somebody, but I have never been the type to be bitter or say nasty things. I try to get along with folks.

JE: What year did you return to OU?

BB: 1991.

Chapter 23 – 6:28**Boren Keeps Bob**

John Erling: In basketball, when Billy Tubbs was coach, they had players like Wayman Tisdale, Mookie Blaylock and Stacey King. You did play-by-play at some of those games.

Bob Barry: Some of them I did. For some of those, I was at OSU.

JE: What about Kelvin Sampson?

BB: I was there the whole time he was. He is a dear friend. Kelvin and I still communicate.

JE: You were at OU for Coach Schnellenberger. Things didn't go so well with him?

BB: No, that was a mistake.

JE: David Boren fires Howard Schnellenberger and then he hires John Blake and they go on. We should mention here on December 1, 1998, OU hires Joe Castiglione as athletic director and he in turn named Bob Stoops as head coach on the same day and good things begin to happen almost immediately.

BB: Joe wanted to fire me.

JE: Really?

BB: Nothing against me necessarily, but he had a friend in Missouri named Chris Chervino. Joe called me in and he was very nice about it. He was the new athletic director and he wanted to make a change.

JE: What did he say?

BB: I don't recall, but I was shocked. What could I do? What could I say? He was the boss. It looked like I was out. So we go to Kansas State to play that season and I thought it would be my last season. Again, here comes the guiding hand. I was standing in the lobby of the hotel at K State and up walked President Boren. He said, "I am sorry to hear you are leaving." I said, "I wish I didn't have to." He said, "What?" I said, "I don't want to leave, but Joe..." He said, "I thought I saw a letter that you signed?" I said, "Yes, but I thought I had no choice." He said, "We'll see about that." To make a long story short, President Boren said I was not leaving. Joe and I have not had words ever. I know that he's embarrassed by it from his standpoint. I am embarrassed a little bit because I felt like I was railroaded out. It doesn't do me any good to be bitter or anything about it. This business is kind of that way, as you know.

JE: Yes.

BB: So I have been there ever since. The last couple of years I literally did think about retiring and the fact that I was getting tired of it and my eyes are going. I was ready to cool it. So I called Joe and told him before my last season that this was going to be my last year. He made a comment a bit later, unbeknownst to me but I overheard him, where he said we were on the same page all along. In other words, (Chuckle) he was ready for me to leave.

I'm positive of this, and I am not bragging or anything, but if I would have wanted to stay, I could have stayed. So it was nice that I was able to quit when I wanted to no matter what his feelings were.

JE: Then you were going into a season where you thought it was your last. You knew your boss didn't want you there. Did a lot of emotion go through your head?

BB: President Boren wanted me to stay there and he is the decision maker so I didn't worry about Joe after that. The thing about it is John, you know this as well as I do, when you are doing play-by-play and you are talking ad lib for three and a half hours, you are going to make mistakes. I don't care who you are, whether you are Curt Gowdy or Bill Stern. You are going to make mistakes. There are going to be people who think that you are the worst damn announcer they have ever heard in their life. You'll get too excited or not excited enough or you might call a name wrong, or a yard line wrong. Others might think you are the greatest announcer in the world. Both of those are wrong in my opinion—you are somewhere in the middle. So what is the key? The key is to get excited. Excitement in the voice is the most important in a play-by-play guy. That's my opinion. I am doing it the way I want it done, not that I am perfect by any means. Mel Bracht with *The Daily Oklahoman* did a poll on whether they should get rid of me or not. Stuff like that happens. I tell people that if you are going to be in this business, you had better be ready for criticism because you are going to get it. You are also going to get praise. You had better be able to handle both because that's going to happen. So you are on 30 or 35 radio stations every Saturday for three and half hours for basketball and football and there's a lot of room for people not liking you and for people loving you. I was doing the best I can. I listened to myself and I graded myself. I did the best I could and if that was not good enough then it's not good enough. That's a long dissertation but that's the way I feel.

JE: I am glad that you said all of that. But it's hard for me to believe that a journalist, because you are in the journalism business, that one can call out somebody else and say that he should be fired, when maybe he could or should have been fired too? What gives him the right?

BB: That's what newspaper columnists do.

JE: You just kind of put it off as that?

BB: I talked to him the other day. Mel and I are not buddies by any means. He was asking me about the guy that's replacing me. I said, "Mel, you don't like the way I do games. There are a lot of people who don't like the way things are done and you just have to let it roll off of your back. That's the way it is. I don't like the way you write a column maybe, but so what? This is our job and we do the best we can." That's really the way I feel.

JE: Didn't that bother you or hurt you to read those comments from the newspaper?

BB: Well, sure because in this business you have an ego. But, you have to be a realist. I've

listened to some of my stuff and thought, oh...that did not sound as good as I thought it did at the time. In fact, I used to grade myself every Sunday. The boys grew up with me listening to myself and giving myself letter grades. So I worked pretty hard at trying to get the sound I want. But to me, the key is counting off the yard lines with excitement. You have to call them. That's what it's all about, excitement.

JE: Do you think some didn't appreciate that?

BB: I don't know what they thought. What I am saying is...you do it the way you think you should do it. If you do that and you still get fired, you must be doing something wrong. I don't sit back and think darn I wish I had done it this way, because I am doing it the way I think I should be doing it.

Chapter 24 – 1:12

OSU Plane Crash

John Erling: The OSU plane crash in January 2001, how did you hear about that?

Bob Barry: Like everybody else. I didn't have any advance notice. I just couldn't believe it because that could easily have been me. I was on those same planes when I was at OSU. I have flown in and out of that airport before, after and since.

JE: Which airport was that?

BB: The Jefferson County Airport between Boulder and Denver.

JE: You were shocked like all of us were, but then they had BIG 12 announcers come in to do the games.

BB: Yes. I thought that was a great move. I didn't start it, so I can say that. There are 11 announcers and 10 of the 11 announcers did one game each for the rest of the basketball season in place of Teegins. The money we got for announcing those games we donated to the Teegins family. I got to do the first one against Missouri at OSU. That was tough just knowing that Teegins was a great guy. I mean a great person. He really was just a wonderful guy. He did a heck of a job on the air. That was really tough.

JE: That issue about OU and OSU had to be gone when it was you replacing Teegins—nobody thought about that or even talked to you about that.

BB: No. I've done them for years. I have tons of friends up there. It's just amazing how it's all worked out.

Chapter 25 – 3:38**Coach Bob Stoops**

John Erling: About Coach Stoops, he began to trust you and liked you when he came on?

Bob Barry: Yeah, coaches are a separate breed. Guys like Al Eschbach...there are some guys that have the ability to get close to coaches. I have never had that ability. I am just not the big ol' buddy of any coach. Not that I am standoffish or that they are. Coach Stoops is a nice guy. He treats me nice, but he doesn't want to be buddies with me necessarily. I've never had any problem with him. It's kind of hard to describe I guess. I never got close to Bud and I think I got pretty close to Gilmore just because they were friends.

JE: Pat Jones?

BB: I was real close to Pat and to Jimmy Johnson.

JE: Well, there you go. So there were coaches that you were close to.

BB: Yes, but you don't go into it thinking that you have to get close to this coach. It just kind of happens. Jimmy was on OSU's staff when he was here.

JE: Look how he trusted you so much he let you do those interviews.

BB: Yeah, right.

JE: So you were close to some of the coaches?

BB: If it doesn't just happen, it doesn't just happen.

JE: You didn't become buddy-buddy with them?

BB: No, that's what I am saying. Stoops and I just could never be buddy-buddies. He is very friendly and nice. He has just been perfect.

JE: I think that's the way he is with everybody, so it's not just you.

BB: Yes and no. Bud you could never get close to. I couldn't. Bud Wilkinson was like a God.

JE: Okay, about Bud, who were his one or two close buddies? Somebody had to be close to him.

BB: That's hard for me to say. Mostly writers. He was oriented toward writers.

JE: What about Bob Stoops? Are there those that you know who are part of his inner circle beyond his family?

BB: Not much. He's pretty much a family man. Plus his assistant coaches are his buddies.

Matt McMillen is his football operations guy and he's pretty good friend with Matt. He's a friendly guy. I don't mean that at all. He's not a politician I guess you would say.

JE: In Stoops' second year he wins a National Championship. Did everybody think that these things are going to come rolling in now?

BB: I thought we were going to lose that game for sure.

JE: It was 2003, OU vs. Florida State.

BB: See, he coached of course in Florida, so Florida State to him was just like playing in Tulsa.

JE: Yeah.

BB: I got ready to do the pregame interview the day before the game of course, I said, “Man, Bob I’m worried...” He said, “Hey Bob, don’t worry, we’ve got a handle on it.” So that was a buddy-buddy type of comment. On occasion he would lower the bar a little bit. That was an incredible game. I thought we were going to lose but we played very well.

JE: Did you or the OU fans think that he brought us one National Championship and we are going to get a few more out of this guy? Here we sit in 2011 and we don’t have another one but he has played for many conference championships.

BB: And a couple of National Championships.

JE: Right, he’s been there four times. If he doesn’t win another National Championship, he still has a job here for life doesn’t he?

BB: I would think so.

JE: Do you think in your estimation that he will stay here until he retires? Or will he move on? Do you have any feelings about that?

BB: I would think that he will stay at OU for a long, long time, until he gets tired of it or whatever. I don’t think he wants to go to Florida or wants to go to the NFL. I just think he’s happy here. He’s making millions and has a beautiful, huge, enormous home that he just built. I can’t see why he would want to leave.

Chapter 26 – 1:02

Preparation

John Erling: You would always come up with facts about players that I think you were known for. One player collected tennis shoes and you knew that. Did you work really hard to get these personal facts about a player?

Bob Barry: Yes, absolutely. That’s one of the things that I worked really hard on. For a football game, I’m not exaggerating, it takes me about 8 hours to get ready. I write something about every player—every player, linemen and backs. It takes hours to do that. I did it just for that purpose, to try to personalize them a little bit. Whether it was what they liked to collect or whatever. It takes about 2 or 3 hours to do a basketball game. I think those little personal things are important. Not many of them take the trouble to do that, not that it makes me better than any of them, it doesn’t. It’s just my style.

JE: How did you get your facts? Did you interview each player?

BB: I used the press guide. They had a bio on each player.

JE: So you would incorporate that into the play-by-play?

BB: Yes, right.

JE: It does make them human beings.

Chapter 27 – 1:45

Bob's Wife Joan

John Erling: I don't know if you'll want to comment on it, but the spring of 2003 was a sad time for you—that's when you lost your wife Joan.

Bob Barry: She had an incurable disease called A1AD or Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency, which won't mean much unless you are a medical person. Alpha-1 is a bad disease. It acts like emphysema. I am anything but a doctor by the way, but it's a liver disease that affects the liver, or the lungs, or both. It acts like emphysema, so your breath gets less and less. In the last couple of years she was on oxygen 24/7. There's just no cure for it. It's hereditary. Her dad died of it. Frank, our eldest son is carrying the gene. He doesn't have it and I hope he doesn't get it, but he's carrying the gene and they told us to check our grandkids for it too, because it's hereditary. You are never ready and I certainly wasn't ready. But that last day, she had her oxygen on and she said, "This is the worst day I have ever had with my oxygen on." That's what you dread is her suffering. About 5 o'clock on the morning of June 10th, 2003, I said, "Do you want me to call 911?" She said, "Not yet." Those were her last words. (Pause)

JE: How tough. Now it will be forever because you were a team and a pair.

BB: (Pause.) I'm sorry.

JE: It's okay. I completely understand. Or I don't, because I haven't been there, but I can only imagine losing your partner in life. She attended games and everything with you. I am glad that we did talk about this because it shows how close two people can be in a marriage.

BB: She sort of put up with it rather than attending the games. She was a people person.

Chapter 28 – 4:30**Advice to Students**

John Erling: I am sure you have been asked this 100 times, but is there any game that stands out for you as the greatest?

Bob Barry: Well, the first game in South Bend, the Yankee Stadium event and the Tokyo thing and the Game of the Century are four I can just point out immediately.

JE: What about best players you remember?

BB: Oh gosh, Barry Sanders is the best running back. I wasn't doing OU when Billy Sims was at OU, but watching him on tape he would be right up there with Barry.

JE: Students who want to get into play-by-play—students we want to be listening to all of this... what is your advice to them?

BB: You've got to get an idea of how you want to sound. You can't just get on the air and start blabbing. You can be too much of a "homer." You are doing it for OU or OSU, but if you are just ridiculous about how they can't do anything wrong—that's not good in my view. You've got to figure out how you want to do it. Like I've said, the most important thing is excitement. Get some excitement in your voice. That's key. That gets people fired up when they are listening and gets them excited. Make the story alive. Paint pictures in the mind of your listeners. That's what radio is, is painting the picture in the minds of people. So that's why I say to students out there listening that when you are doing play-by-play on the radio you want to paint the picture. You know, Jones takes the ball, hands off to Smith over on the left side. He fakes a cut at the 15! He's at the 10 and the 5! Oh they got him at the 1-yard line!! Try to make it live like that, you know, or whatever you think is good. That's the advice I have. If you're doing what you think you should do right, if you sound the way you want to sound, let me put it that way, and that's not good enough, you had better get into a different profession, but if it is good enough—you have a job.

JE: Doing your play-by-play right there like you just did. Are you going to miss that feeling because there's a feeling that comes with that—the play is going on and you are telling it as fast as you can. There's almost a high that comes with that. Are you going to miss that?

BB: A little bit. Maybe more than a little bit, but really John I'm going to be totally honest, I've thought through all of that for two years. I would be in a particular place and I would say okay, this is it, how do you feel, what's your thought. I've even prayed about it a little bit because I am really sold on my decision. I'm ready to give it up. I will miss a lot of aspects of it and the thrill of doing the games and being the voice of it. It's ego building and so forth, but I'm really ready to retire.

JE: I'm holding the March 11th *Tulsa World* newspaper here where the story reads: Barry Makes His Last Call. How did you feel as you made your last call?

BB: I was about to have pneumonia. I felt terrible. I was up in Kansas City and I felt awful. That's right before I went into the hospital with pneumonia. The next day after the game on the bus, the players had to carry my bags. Man, I was one sick puppy. But as far as the game itself, John Harrison who is a good friend at OU and now with the Big 12, he gave me the game ball after that last game. Things like this (showing award to John).

JE: This says, To Bob Barry, Voice of the Sooners.

BB: That is from the OU Club of Houston.

JE: We are sitting in your kitchen looking out into your backyard and that's a nice piece that you have.

BB: It was just amazing—this whole last season. The Texas A&M Coach gave me an autographed basketball and congratulated me on my career. Dave South the play-by-play guy, they were up in Missouri and they put me up on the screen and congratulated me. It's just been wonderful.

JE: OSU did a video tribute to you on their screens. That was nice because you had been there and gone and came back again and still to be loved after all of those years.

BB: Right. It's amazing.

JE: So this journey that started in 1938 in that fall out of the window became something you could never have imagined. It's bigger than you could have ever thought.

BB: Absolutely. That is exactly right. It's been amazing. I have just been so blessed, really.

Chapter 29 – 0:40

How To Be Remembered

John Erling: So then we ask, how would you like to be remembered?

Bob Barry: As a rich man! (Laughter)

JE: (Laughter)

Bob Barry: No. I would like to be remembered as a guy who got to do what he loved and got paid for it. In about every aspect of my life I have been just luckier than hell really. Just lucky, or blessed, or whatever you want to say. There are so many people that are doing jobs that they don't like to do. This was just so wonderful. That's what I tell kids. Find something you love to do, work hard at it and it's not work—it's fun.

JE: Right. Well, this has been fun for me.

BB: Me too!

JE: You've made it fun. This has been an enjoyable time for me and I appreciate you doing this—thank you Bob for doing this.

BB: Well, thank you!

Chapter 30 – 0:29

Conclusion

Announcer: You have just heard the true voice of Oklahoma Football Bedlam, who represented Oklahoma's two major football teams for half a century. That act alone was the measure of a very kind and gentle man who saw the best in all athletes. For further reading, consult our Bookstore for the book *Voice of Bedlam: The Life of Bob Barry*. We would like to thank our Founding Sponsors for making another Oklahoma oral history story possible on VoicesofOklahoma.com.