

Jane Jayroe-Gamble

She overcame her fears and shyness to win Miss America 1967, launching her career in media and government

Chapter 01 - 0:52

Introduction

Announcer: As millions of television viewers watch Jane Jayroe crowned Miss America in 1967, and as Bert Parks serenaded her, no one would have thought she was actually a very shy and reluctant winner. Nor would they know that the tears, which flowed, were more of fright than joy. She was nineteen when her whole life was changed in an instant.

Jane went on to become a well-known broadcaster, author, and public official. She worked as an anchor in TV news in Oklahoma City and Dallas, Fort Worth. Oklahoma governor, Frank Keating, appointed her to serve as his Secretary of Tourism. But her story along the way was filled with ups and downs.

Listen to Jane Jayroe talk about her struggle with shyness, depression, and a failed marriage. And how she overcame it all to lead a happy and successful life, on this oral history website, VoicesofOklahoma.com.

Chapter 02 - 8:30

Grandparents

John Erling: My name is John Erling. Today's date is April 3, 2014.

Jane, will you state your full name, your date of birth, and your present age.

Jane Jayroe: Jane Anne Jayroe-Gamble. Birthday is October 30, 1946. And I have a hard time remembering my age.

JE: Why is that?

JJ: I don't know. I have to call my son, he's better with numbers. I think I'm sixty-seven.

JE: Peggy Helmerich, you know from Tulsa?

JJ: I know who she is.

JE: And she's in her eighties and she says, "I'm not going to tell you my age."

JJ: Oh.

JE: She says, "I know you can look it up but I'm not going to tell you."

JJ: Good for her. I've heard great things about her.

JE: Yeah. And where are we recording this interview?

JJ: In our home in Oklahoma City.

JE: Where were you born?

JJ: I was born in the hospital at Clinton, but my family lived in Hammon at the time.

JE: So Clinton was the big town?

JJ: That was the big town. Had a hospital and a doctor, Dr. Cunningham, who delivered most of the babies in Western Oklahoma. He was a great doctor, according to my mother.

My dad was basketball coach at Hammon, had some great teams there.

I will still hear from people who were in Hammon when Daddy was a coach there. They weren't there that long, but I think it was a special time for them.

My sister was like five years old when I was born. Then they moved back to Sentinel when I was two, I believe. And my dad grew up in Sentinel, that was his hometown. And soon they moved to Sentinel.

JE: Grandparents, your recollection of grandparents?

JJ: My paternal grandparents, my dad's family, was from Sentinel. I just barely remember my grandfather. He was a small man, he didn't work much. I say that because I can remember him being at the pool hall in downtown Sentinel. And I would go in, which little girls were not supposed to do, but I would go in and find him there. And he would give me a dime. He was a sweet man.

I remember hearing my grandparents lost two or three boys. I think I can remember Mother saying that the loss of those sons, he just kind of quit, he just kind of gave up. And then he died fairly young. I can remember his funeral.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative). And their names?

JJ: Lettie May Jayroe. And I think he was Bill Jayroe. I might need to look that up. She was a force to be reckoned with, she was the strong one. I always think of her as a woman of the land. She loved the land. And as she grew older, if you wanted to do something nice for Grandmother Jayroe you would take her out and let her look at the land. You would just drive her around.

She would let her grandchildren drive at any age because she didn't drive. So whether we were twelve or sixteen we could drive Grandmother, just we couldn't tell our parents. But she would let us drive.

She was a very masculine woman. It's hard to even find a word for her, she was tough.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: I'll never forget her wringing the neck of a chicken. She would just do that with a flip of her wrist, she would just wring that neck off the chicken. And then the chicken would run around the yard like a chicken with his head cut off, spewing blood. Freaked me out. I would swear that it was chasing me. She could also do it with a hoe, she could also do it with a clothesline.

And she would send me into the chicken yard to get the eggs. I was such a shy child I would not tell her that that scared me. But I, again, have a very vivid memory of going into that chicken yard and the noise of those chickens. And you'd go in and try to get an egg, and ugh.

She would let me drink coffee as a young child, but she would pour it into the saucer so it would cool. She was not a good cook and she was not a good housekeeper. So she was a total contrast to my other grandmother, and yet, through the years, they became great friends. Which I thought was really a testimony to both of them.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: That they were so open to becoming friends. And it was because of their mutual love for my sister and me.

We would spend the night on the feather bed in the attic at her house, on occasion. But my mother didn't let us stay with Grandmother Jayroe too often because she would get surprises when she would come home. Grandmother had cut my bangs, real, really high.

But it was fun to grow up, you know, with family around.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: Because Uncle Sam and Aunt Edith and their daughter, Sammie, lived there. And that was my dad's brother, Sam Jayroe.

So we moved back to Sentinel and had that family support, which was nice. And I just took that for granted. It was very, very close, however, to my mother's family. And they lived in Turpin, Oklahoma, in the Panhandle.

My grandmother, Clara May Hill Smith, came, not in the land run, but homesteaded when she was just a young girl. And the deed to her land in the Panhandle in Beaver County, her name is the first name on the deed.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound), um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: She was a great storyteller and as grandchildren, all of us, my cousins, all of us are so sad that we didn't record her stories. Because she would tell us about the Depression time, the horrible dust storms, and living in a dugout. How she would cover everything with tea towels. She was a fastidious person and very, very feminine. She never went to church without wearing lace gloves. Everything had a place, everything was pretty in her home. And they were very modest homes.

She had a tough life and yet had six children, never lost one. They built a home over a dugout. She was the first teacher in Beaver County. She was educated, for that area. She came from Belvedere, Illinois, and had an eighth grade education when she came.

I have a wonderful picture of her in her Sunday school class in Belvedere. The girls are beautifully dressed, high necks with lace, beautifully embroidered clothes, just the epitome of lace and femininity. Their hair up in a little bun on top, beautiful young women. And on the back it says, in her beautiful cursive penmanship that's perfection, "Going to Oklahoma."

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: So she was an inspiration to all of us. We never knew, I say we, all the cousins, there were lots of us, we never knew until many, many years later that during the dust bowl her husband left her.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: She had a son and it was such a shameful thing at that time—

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: ...that she didn't even tell her children that she had been divorced. He went to California. She ended up marrying one of her students, Homer Lyle Smith, and he was much younger. We called her Mama May.

So she was a great inspiration. And he was a great man as well. We had a terrific family. There was great laughter, great music. Everyone in the Smith clan had to play an instrument, even in the small Turpin school system. All of their children had to play a musical instrument. So all of our gatherings, which were numerous, were full of laughter and fun and music.

I remember harvest time in the Panhandle, because all of the sons and sons-in-law would go to Turpin to work the harvest, the wheat harvest. And it was just a vacation for children.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: Because we were all there in that, what we thought was a big farmhouse, and since then, of course, it's tiny as it can be.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: But just running all over and playing and having great times. We always gathered for Christmas.

My grandparents moved to Enid for a short amount of time. I remember that house in particular—one bathroom, two bedrooms, and she cleaned out her garage and painted it. She always painted everything, made it wall-to-wall beds, talking five to six families with children gathered every Christmas. Don't remember waiting in line for the bathroom. I don't remember the dishes, just remember having a blast.

Really, my life has been so blessed with family.

Chapter 03 - 5:17**Family Life**

John Erling: So then your mother's name and maiden name.

Jane Jayroe: Helene Grace Smith.

JE: What was she like? Describe her personality.

JJ: This will make me emotional. Uh, she was the best person I've ever known.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: She's the very best person. Fun, loving, she was just a great person to grow up with. I was bonded to her. She used to laugh and say I would walk so close to her that when she turned she'd trip. But she was that way with the whole family. She was in the middle of those six children and my grandmother was so precise as to how they were raised that Mother was kind of the second mother to her two younger brothers. Very nurturing, loving person.

She taught school. She and my dad met at Northwestern in Alva. Got married, and then moved to Weatherford.

He was a basketball player.

JE: His name?

JJ: His full name, and he will not like me saying this, he was known as Pete Jayroe. But for whatever reason, his mother named him Estelle Griffith. So he never went by that name.

He went by E.G. Pete Jayroe.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: And he was a great ball player.

JE: Is your mother living today?

JJ: She is not. She died a year ago.

JE: How old?

JJ: She died at the age of ninety-three.

JE: Wow. And then your father?

JJ: He died in his mid eighties.

JE: So then what did your father do for a living?

JJ: Basketball. He was a basketball coach. Basketball allowed him to go to college. Basketball influenced his time in the navy during World War II. He played basketball for the navy, but then he also served during the war in Guam. Then he was a basketball coach.

And then he became a superintendent after that. He wanted to go into administration.

JE: Didn't he play for a while for what was then Oklahoma A&M?

JJ: He did, he got the scholarship to play at Oklahoma A&M, but he was just a small-town boy and he was very homesick and he didn't make that transition very well. So he transferred to Alva Northwestern and did much better.

JE: Would he have played for a famous coach?

JJ: He did!

JE: Henry Iba?

JJ: He did! Really loved Henry Iba. He was great friends with Abe Lemons and I think was influenced, his coaching style was, I'm sure, influenced by Hank Iba.

Maternal grandmother, Clara Hill, her brother who went to Annapolis, I believe, was the first football coach at Oklahoma A&M.

JE: And he—

JJ: Boyd Hill. And he died young. But she would tell this story again about when he was very ill, it was from some disease, when he was very ill the students at the university would surround his house at night with candles.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: She was very proud of Boyd.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative). Your sister, what's her name?

JJ: Her name is Judy, Judith May, after Mama May. Judith May. She is terrific. She was a music major at Southern Methodist University. She came home one summer to Laverne and fell madly in love with a coach who was kind of my dad's best friend. My dad was kind of his mentor, Don Wieser. So she got married that summer to Don and transferred to Northwestern.

So she graduated from Northwestern and became a music teacher. Had three fabulous sons that I'm very close to, my nephews.

And, tragically, Don died of a heart attack at the age of forty-one. And she is remarried to another terrific man, Frank Elmore. She lives in Follett, Texas, which is close to Laverne, where are parents were.

She retired as a music teacher from Follett.

JE: The family, what are some of the things you might have done for entertainment?

JJ: Church—that doesn't sound like entertainment, but church was such an important part of the community life. So church and school were everything. You know, school activities. Of course, we were athletic and basketball was everything in our family. Girls basketball. Going to all the games because of our dad, but also participating.

We were both really good, I say really good, we were both good basketball players, and we were in communities that girls' basketball was extremely important.

JE: So you inherited genes then, obviously?

JJ: Well, we did and a passion for it.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: We loved the game. Just loved the game. And again, in a small town, school activities are so important to the social life. We played other sports too but basketball was the activity. And church as well. And all the social activities that surrounded church. And family.

And, I mean, we did other things. We were both very musical. And my sister organized a quartet of singers when she was in grade school. And that group sang all the way through high school. They were fabulous, and probably would have gone on but they decided to go to different colleges. But they were pretty well-known in Southwestern Oklahoma. They would go sing at all the Rotary Clubs and—

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: ...all the civic organizations.

Chapter 04 - 4:25

Childhood Memories

John Erling: Did you go swimming in Clinton?

Jane Jayroe: Oh, that's a good question because, you know, we grew up with almost no minorities, except there was segregation in the swimming pools. So I recall that. Because we were living in Sentinel by the time we were old enough to really go swimming. We went to Cordell and Hobart, to the swimming pools. And when we were young they were segregated, and then as we grew older they were integrated.

But I remember that being an issue. And when we were in grade school in Sentinel there were no minorities. And then there was a black family that moved to town and Violet Jean was in my class. I remember her fondly, I hope we were friendly. I think we were.

We didn't grow up in a segregated feeling in Sentinel because there were no minorities. So I think we were welcoming. I would hope so.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: And I just remember that being an issue at those other pools.

JE: Probably in a young mind, you couldn't understand why—

JJ: I don't remember understanding. And, you know, we were greatly influenced by the fact that Mama May came from Illinois. So she had created a culture in her family that was very accepting of different races. And so Mother created that culture in our family that was very accepting of other races.

JE: Your education begins in Sentinel?

JJ: Yes. Started to grade school with Miss Thomas, who also taught my father first grade.

JE: Oh.

JJ: Isn't that sweet?

JE: Yeah, yeah.

JJ: I adored Miss Thomas. It's a testament to think that I can—Miss Thomas, Miss Campbell, Miss Edgar, and I've got second grade and fourth grade maybe mixed up. My fifth grade teacher was Mrs. Jayroe, my mother.

JE: And how did that work for you?

JJ: Mrs. Bon was sixth grade. It was not good all the way. Of course, I loved her as a teacher but she was harder on me than other teachers had been, but it was fine. And then I had my dad in junior high in Oklahoma history.

JE: Did you call her "Mom" in class?

JJ: I think she did let me, I think she did. But she gave me a B. That was the only B I had in grade school.

JE: Do you even remember the names of some of the students back then?

JJ: I do. Sue Ann, Trudy, Dan Stowers, Gary Lumpkin, Suzy, Violet Jean, I mentioned, she was just there a few years. Judy McQuarter.

JE: So then you went on to junior high school in Sentinel?

JJ: Yes, in Sentinel. You know, it was a very small, secure little world. We walked to town to the movies on Saturday night and walked home. Judy and I would walk home from there and I ran all over town by myself on the bicycle. I had great friends in the Methodist church. Barbara Wiley was there for a while, her father was the minister. She was a best friend, but they were a year older, they were a year ahead of me in school. Caroline Paulafry lived next door to the Methodist church and Karen Self. They were my best friends at the church but they were ahead of me in school.

My best friends in school was difficult because they all lived in the country. I was a big baby and I got homesick so I didn't like to spend the night. So I'd go home with them after school. These were people that did not have indoor toilets.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: They had plumbing. But I loved going home with them because they had the farm and we'd play outside. It was just great.

But when evening would come I would just think I was getting sick and I had to have my mother and I was just such a big baby. So I would either be awake all night being homesick or they would call Mother and she would have to come get me. So I was much happier when I could play with those friends and then go home.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: But I'm amazed now, Mother would let me get on my bike and ride all over town by myself. I had a great imagination, liked to climb trees, and I would just play in my imagination.

My parents had great friends, this was before television. We would be with their friends and their children all the time in the evening. Somebody would cook and the kids would play. Most of their friends though had sons, so I had great friends who were boys. So I had this tomboy thing.

JE: Um-hmm, um-hmm (affirmatives).

JJ: And we would just play. But then when television came along people stayed at home more.

JE: Um-hmm, um-hmm (affirmatives).

Chapter 05 - 6:22

Jane Was Shy

John Erling: How about in high school? Were you active in activities or basketball, I guess?

Jane Jayroe: Oh, basketball was huge. When I was a freshman, the summer before my freshman year, we moved to Laverne, and that was huge for me. I thought my world would always be Sentinel.

My sister graduated from Sentinel, so she was leaving, she was the extrovert. My mother and my sister did all my talking for me. My sister sold my Girl Scout cookies for me. You know, they did all the extrovert things so I could be content to be this little introvert that was pretty and smiled and was the pet of the basketball team. And life was very secure and small.

Then we moved, and I freaked out. I still had the security of my family. And, as God would have it, it was the best thing that could have happened to me. I loved Sentinel but I moved into a community that probably had the strongest class of students ever in the history of Laverne.

A great composer named Jimmy Webb was in that class.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: Two people that I can think of off hand have PhDs, just incredibly outstanding. This little town where everything I did was easy, in terms of academics, basketball, music, everything was easy. I moved to a place where I was not the best in any of these things. It made me work twice as hard and it was wonderful, it was wonderful for me. And it gave me the opportunity to really grow and stretch.

JE: Your personality then, became more outgoing?

JJ: No.

JE: You always, did you remain shy?

JJ: I did. I remained shy, although, again, once I had friends and I'm comfortable in a situation, I'm not shy. It's just those new situations that really are difficult for me. And then once I'm familiar I'm not really shy.

I can remember the first day of school, it was the first day my mother was teaching school and she took me to school and I wouldn't get out of the car. She was like, "I have to be at work. This is my first day too. You have to get out of the car." And I wouldn't get out.

But I did, and I met a few of the kids and I already had a crush on a boy named Len Hoke, so I walked in with all of my books behind Len Hoke and I tripped and spilled all of my books. I was so humiliated. There were incidents so adolescent like.

Mother had arranged for me to be in the marching band because she had led marching band. Sentinel didn't have that, so she had held this out as a reason to move. I was going to love being in the band. The band started before school so that was a good thing. I'd taken lessons. She'd driven me from Sentinel to Hobart to take saxophone lessons so I was prepared musically.

And the first day I went to band practice with my saxophone. Wayne Sizelove was next to me and he took the saxophone out of his mouth and threw up, which, of course, everyone else freaked and ran away. And I was just freaking, I didn't know whether to get up or—anyway, so that was traumatic.

Then the next day I went to band practice and we went out and started marching and I had not practiced marching. So we get out and we're marching down Main Street and the drum major puts her hands up on the baton and tweets three times and puts her hands out. Which means you take two steps to the right and spread out.

Well, I didn't know that, so I'm still marching the same way and they all go on the diagonal for two steps and, of course, I run into everyone. I'm humiliated again, I take the saxophone, and I run home in tears. Again, this is fourteen years old.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: And my family was so great. It's so typical of my family how they handled this. They were just empathetic, yes, but then they said, "We'll teach you how to march." So the whole family goes marching in a circle, even my dad. He said, "I was in the navy, I know how to march."

Judy was still home, not going to college yet, and we marched around the house, calling out commands. And, of course, then all ended up laughing.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: And that gave me, you know, the—then I had to get up and go back to school.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: But very quickly had great friends and had a wonderful experience in high school.

JE: You talk about the shyness as a child, now as an adult, is there still a side of you that has a shyness?

JJ: Yes, yes. You know, those are parts of your personality that you can't really change.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: And I've accepted that. You learn skills to deal with that.

JE: Right.

JJ: But I have to push myself in new circumstances, new social circumstances. And I still would not choose to do a social hour like, you know, at a big gathering, I would not choose to do that. I'd rather not go to something by myself. But, oh my, the pageant system is so wonderful for shy girls.

JE: And we'll get to that.

JJ: It pushes you to develop those skills.

JE: Right. Musical instruments, saxophone, did you play—

JJ: Saxophone, I always took piano lessons, that was kind of a rule with Mother. So we took piano lessons, took voice lessons. I loved music from day one.

JE: Somewhere along the line in here you decided to add a Y to your name.

JJ: Oh, that's so funny. Inside the shy girl was a performer with dreams. I wanted to be a performer, it was my dream always. I can remember at Grandmother Jayroe's house dreaming any movie that I would see of Ann Marie and some movie, oh, the imagination would run wild. And so I dreamed of seeing my name in lights. J-a-y-n-e J-a-y-r-o-e looked better in lights.

So when we moved to Laverne I decided that I would change my name to Jayne, J-a-y-n-e. So I did. Then by the time I went to college, I thought, "That was a silly dream and I'm kind of a plain Jane, so I need to go back to where it matches all of my records." So I went back to plain Jane, J-a-n-e. And then two years later with Miss America, that's why there has always been confusion, 'cause all the time at Laverne I was Jayne.

Chapter 06 - 4:30

Jimmy Webb

John Erling: You mentioned Jimmy Webb, about him, a little more. His background and what sort of a guy was he? Of course, he wrote such great songs, "Up, Up, and Away," and "By the Time I Get to Phoenix," "Wichita Linemen," "MacArthur Park," and more, your association with him?

Jane Jayroe: Well, he's a musical genius, he's just brilliant. We were great friends at Laverne. His family moved in after I was living there, probably my sophomore year in high school, I think. His father was the preacher at the First Baptist Church. And Jimmy was the oldest son. His father was a great athlete. Jimmy's younger son is also a great athlete, he's a coach in Oklahoma, Tommy.

So Jimmy tried to adjust to rural Oklahoma culture. With his dad, he had to go out for football and basketball. He took basketball, my dad was his coach, and Jimmy loved my dad. Because Daddy treated him just the same as the other players and Jimmy was very awkward, he was not athletic at all, he was an artist.

We were great friends because we were the only two kids in Laverne that really loved music. But Jimmy was not cool. You can imagine that he was not cool. His glasses were always on the edge of his nose. His shoelaces were often untied, and he was kind of in his own world. And he was smart as a whip.

He had a couple of male friends who were also really smart and went to the Baptist church, but he was in his own world. And he would come to our house and we would spend long hours together. He would play and I would sing, and we would perform for anyone who would ask us. But then he would say, "Okay, this is a score for a movie and this is the way it sounds." And he would just play.

And I would listen but then I would go to the edge of the room and look out the window and look for my boyfriend to drive by. But we were really good friends and we remained good friends.

My freshman year of college, I can remember at Christmas, Jimmy called and his mother had died, which was a terrific loss for him because she really accepted him as the musician that he was. And I think didn't care so much if he was not these other things, that he tried to fit in. That he called, I think he dropped out of college, but he said, "I'm sleeping on the floor at some of these places but I got to play the piano for the Supremes."

And I thought, "Oh yeah. Not the real Supremes." But I listened. Then I lost track.

And then the next thing, this is so ironic, at nineteen I became Miss America. At nineteen, he did "Up, Up, and Away." At nineteen, this little kid from Western Oklahoma, small towns, that had probably never dated because he was not cool, was the hottest composer in America.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: Traveling with the Fifth Dimensions, going up in a balloon with "Up, Up, and Away." The next thing I know, he's in Oklahoma City and these really cool movie stars—women—were kind of after him, and I'm like, "I'm not believing this."

And he remains a good friend, I mean, he is a good soul.

- JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JJ:** He's just a wonderful man. He went through some tough times. His dad had me come to California a couple of years after Miss America and Jimmy was kind of in another place. I mean, he was, he was in another place. You can imagine, handling all of that at nineteen.
- JE:** Right, right.
- JJ:** I had protection. And he had his dad come out and that really helped him, but still, he had times that he was in a different place.
- JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JJ:** But he's in a great place now. He's got a wonderful wife and he's got six children.
- JE:** It was even music that Frank Sinatra enjoyed singing, Jimmy Webb's.
- JJ:** Isn't that great?
- JE:** Uh-huh (affirmative).
- JJ:** His music is timeless.
- JE:** Yeah.
- JJ:** And he is uncommon in that he does the music and the lyrics. His lyrics are poetry.
- JE:** Right. He sings and plays the piano both.
- JJ:** Yes.
- JE:** I always wondered, "How did God put all that talent—"
- JJ:** I know.
- JE:** "...when I can't play and I can't sing on key." I'm very good at singing off key. Why did he get all that? And I'm sure he plays many instruments too.
- JJ:** It really was a gift. I don't know that he ever studied with anyone growing up other than his mother. And then when he went to college he learned orchestration and that kind of thing, but it was all gift. And he has developed the—

Chapter 07 - 5:44

Miss Laverne

- John Erling:** Basketball at, you were a senior then, in your senior year. What would have been the primo basketball time?
- Jane Jayroe:** We were a great team throughout high school. We had very few losses. In four years of high school I would say we had fewer than ten losses total.
- JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JJ:** Our whole mantra was "Take State." We would run those laps and we would do the little pushups and our mantra was, "Take State, take State, take State." We went to the state

tournament numerous years, but my senior year played with great, great women. We went to the finals of the state tournament. We lost to Mangum in an overtime and I fouled.

JE: Your foul was—

JJ: I was the foul.

JE: Which produced a free throw.

JJ: And Greta Hogan from Mangum, not that I remember, made the free shot.

JE: To win the game.

JJ: To win the game. Not that I remember the details.

JE: And you were mortified.

JJ: Oh. You know, two women that I played with that would never have gone to college have college degrees because of girls' basketball: Lola Hamm and Glenda Rogers. Lola was a guard, we played three on three. Glenda was the post forward. These are two girls that had to ride the bus a long way to get to a school. Farm girls, great athletes. It was a privilege to play with them.

JE: What year did you graduate?

JJ: Nineteen sixty-four.

JE: Then you went on to college?

JJ: I went to college. When I was senior, there was a pageant posted by Northwestern at Alva called the Miss Cinderella Pageant. Pageants had always been my dream. I would watch the Miss America Pageant. And they were my dream because I could not imagine in my wildest imagination ever going to New York. I think because I was such a homebody and so attached to my mother and my sister and my dad. I couldn't imagine going somewhere. But I had a dream to go to Oklahoma City University. I had a dream to entertain troops, and that because of growing up with World War II, my dad and all of my uncles, and my love of performing.

And then I had a dream of entering the Miss America Pageant. I never, ever had a dream of winning, I just had a dream of entering.

JE: So your first entry into a pageant then, would have been?

JJ: So into the pageant world was to be Miss Laverne for the Miss Cinderella Pageant. I won those, which gave me a full scholarship to Northwestern at Alva. But my dream was to go Oklahoma City University, which had the music school, and had surrey singers, which performed for USO and entertained military troops. Oh, I wanted to do that. And my parents, God bless them, teachers, full ride, no tuition at Alva, and they sent me to OCU.

JE: Wow.

JJ: Now, I mean, it was a big sacrifice for them.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: I had a scholarship but it was still, I mean, it was no money at Northwestern to even go for a year or two and then transfer. But I needed to go to Oklahoma City University. And

bless them for the sacrifice of sending me. With the scholarship, it was about the cost for them of public education.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: Like going to OU or OSU, but it was what I needed.

JE: So then you entered as a music student there?

JJ: I majored in music education because at that time for women you needed something to fall back on.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: I knew that I wouldn't be much of a teacher. I didn't have that teacher gene that my sister and my parents had. But that's all that I knew, really, so I entered music education. I had a scholarship and I was on a work study program. The work study program was in journalism. I worked several hours a month for the journalism department at OCU.

JE: Did you have dreams about your own music ability? Because you were playing piano and you were singing.

JJ: Yes, and I was singing.

JE: Right.

JJ: I sang all the time.

JE: Right, so you might have thought—

JJ: Oh, absolutely, that was my dream and that's why I wanted OCU. I wanted to perform. I didn't know how good I was on the bigger stage. I was a good performer for Laverne. I was singing with Jimmy at everything anyone asked us to do. And that kind of experience was so valuable.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: So I wanted to do music theater. I wanted to be in lyric. I was hired to do lyric theater the summer I got into pageants. And so I had to give that up when I won Miss Oklahoma.

JE: Any names of music students at OCU that maybe went on and did become famous for their singing abilities?

JJ: At that time, the big thing for OCU was opera. There were a lot of names in opera. But there wasn't anyone my age that has the fame that say, Kristen Chanoweth or Kelli O'Hara have. But it was all about opera at that time and there were some pretty big names in opera. Ron Raines was younger than I but not by a lot of years. And he's a big Broadway name. Leona Mitchell is younger than I am and she was big in opera.

But when I went to OCU Jamie Zerger was there and she was a fabulous voice. Kate Creed was there, she had a good Broadway career, she wasn't a huge name. Tamara Long was there; Carveth Osterhaus, again, these are people who worked on Broadway and then chose to return to Oklahoma and teach. So they were not huge national names, but they worked.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: They had starring roles on Broadway. And that's what I thought I wanted to do.

Chapter 08 - 4:00

Pageants

John Erling: Then, though, you had conquered one pageant.

Jane Jayroe: Yes.

JE: And it was time to enter another one.

JJ: Well, my plan was when I went to OCU I realized that I wasn't quite as good as I thought I was.

JE: In, in, in?

JJ: In singing.

JE: Really?

JJ: So my plan was to enter a pageant when I was a senior in college so that I had more time to develop as a singer and had more experience. I auditioned for Surrey Singers my sophomore year and did not make it, but I knew I would the next year. But I was heartbroken when I did not make it as a sophomore. I was very close to being a Surrey Singer as a sophomore.

And my sorority, let me step back, my freshman year my sorority put me up for All-College Basketball Queen. And that's just something that sororities did, but you were judged, and I won that, which, again, was confidence building.

One of the judges was Dolly Hoskins, who ran the Miss Oklahoma City Pageant. She started calling me, encouraging me to enter Miss Oklahoma City.

And I kept saying, "I'm not ready, I'm not ready." But my sorority really pushed me to enter, so I went ahead and entered Miss Oklahoma City my sophomore year in college. March of that year, I found out that I did not get Surrey Singers, heartbroken, cried all night, kept all—

JE: Was Surrey Singers, was that a group of—

JJ: Men and women.

JE: ...men of women? As a chorus?

JJ: Yes.

JE: Okay.

JJ: About eighteen, maybe, twelve.

JE: Oh? That small?

JJ: Yeah, small group, small performing group.

JE: So then it was a big deal to get into it.

JJ: It was a big deal to get into it. And I wasn't opera material, but I was Surrey Singer material. So I didn't get in but the timing was the same as Miss Oklahoma City.

So I cried all night that I didn't get in Surrey Singers. That same month, was in Miss Oklahoma City. Expected to have the experience. Wasn't expecting to win and I was really okay with that, because most people, even then, entered several pageants before they won. And that was kind of a good thing because it gave you the experience to handle it better, I think.

But, at the end of March, I won Miss Oklahoma City. And then in June, won Miss Oklahoma. In September, won Miss America. So it was much quicker than I expected.

JE: All right. Let's go back to the shyness thing then.

JJ: Okay.

JE: Here you are—

JJ: Here I am.

JE: ...Miss Oklahoma City, and you're expected to be out there and all. And you're able to overcome your shyness?

JJ: Well, the performings is a wonderful thing for shy people because you can assume a character. I tell this in my book, as I've mentioned, my parents weren't flush with money. For Christmas I asked for an evening gown for the Miss Oklahoma City for my Christmas gift. My parents came in December and we went to Shepherd Mall and I found a great brilliant, bright green evening gown—fifty dollars. I said, "This is what I want for Christmas."

And they said, "Okay." That's what I was going to wear for Miss Oklahoma City.

So I went to the meeting for Miss Oklahoma City, and they said, "We would prefer that you would wear a white evening dress, but you don't have to."

So there was no way that I was going to go back to my parents and say, "You've got to come up with more money for a white gown." So I just wore that green dress. And then I got on the stage and I was the only person without a white dress. So that really fed the insecurity.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: And my mother, bless her heart, all of their friends in Laverne, they came for the Miss Oklahoma City Pageant. And they all sat in the audience and Mother's friend, Doreen Wilmont, when all the contestants came out, Doreen punched Mother and said, "Why didn't you buy that girl a white dress?"

And then, of course, I won. But I love telling girls that story because it's not a matter of money in pageants or having the right thing as much as it is who you are—

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: ...and how you perform.

Chapter 09 - 2:00**Too Shy**

John Erling: So then you win—

Jane Jayroe: So as Miss Oklahoma City I had wonderful help. Donna House was in Oklahoma City with the Chamber, I believe. She was kind of my mentor and the person that helped me buy clothes and groomed me. Because it was one-on-one we became great friends and I loved Donna. But she told me, “Okay, Miss America is coming to Jackie Cooper Oldsmobile in Yukon. I can’t go with you but you need to go out and meet her, they’re expecting you.”

JE: And who was that?

JJ: Debbie Bryant from Kansas.

JE: Okay.

JJ: I watched her win. She was so beautiful. I just thought she was just the coolest thing ever. So I got in my car, I drove to Yukon, and I was so nervous and so shy. By myself, I circled the dealership and tried to kind of peek in. My heart was thumping. I parked, I backed up, I circled it again, looking in. I drove off. I was too shy to walk in and meet her.

And you know, I’ve had other people tell me that story of themselves when I’ve been in an Oldsmobile dealership as Miss America.

JE: They didn’t dare come meet you either.

JJ: They didn’t want to come meet me, they were intimidated, which is just amazing, to me. And, of course, it was to Debbie, I told her that story.

JE: It didn’t help that you had become Miss Oklahoma City?

JJ: It didn’t help.

JE: Your confidence, it didn’t help at all?

JJ: Didn’t help, I was so nervous. Now, had Donna been with me and drug me in it would have been okay, but by myself I just couldn’t muster up the courage. It does seem so absurd now, but I just could not get my wobbly legs to walk me in that dealership cold, stick out my hand, and say, “Hi, I’m Janey Jayroe, Miss Oklahoma City.” I just couldn’t do it.

Chapter 10 - 4:30**Miss Oklahoma**

John Erling: Yet, we have to go on now to the Miss Oklahoma Pageant.

Jane Jayroe: Yes.

JE: And you had no qualms about doing that?

JJ: Not about the performing, but I did have qualms. The next most scary thing I had to do was walk into the Mayo Hotel in Tulsa. First of all, my mother and I got lost getting there, but to walk in as Miss Oklahoma City and meet those girls—you know, a little bit, in addition to shyness there's the small town inferiority complex. If you're from Oklahoma City you have more confidence. You're somehow better prepared, which is not true. But it helped to be Miss Oklahoma City, that helped me think of as somehow a bigger deal. But I still was Janey Jayroe from Laverne inside.

And I walked in and that was the other really hard thing to do, it's that initial walking in and sticking out my hand and saying my name to other people.

I met Nancy Turk, I think was her name, from Ardmore, and she is an extrovert. You know, I would just glop on to those great personalities that were warm and inviting and authentic, not fakey people, my good at spotting those.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: I'm not interested in those. And then if I can just be with them, they make friends easily and I make friends easily too, if it's not dependent on those initial sell yourself. I'm not a salesperson.

JE: What was to be your music talent?

JJ: I sang a medley of songs that Don Johnson, my accompanist put together for me, "On a Clear Day You Can See Forever," and "Miss Oklahoma City." And then we changed to "Sadie, Sadie, Married Lady" from *Funny Girl* for Miss Oklahoma. And then as Miss Oklahoma I had the blessing of having Toni Spencer as my executive director, who was amazingly creative, Moe Billington as a musical arranger, and Kenny Harris also did the actual, I think, arrangement.

Those musical people and Toni's wild and crazy mind came up with the idea of me conducting. Because I was a good singer but not a fabulous singer, and there were so many singers in the Miss America Pageant that if you didn't have something unique—and I studied conducting with Dr. Ray Luke, who is an incredible musician, conductor, and composer. And I was a good conductor.

So Toni's idea was that I conduct the orchestra and sing. Her idea was that I be funny but I'm not funny. So I took that idea and together with my sister, who is a musical conductor, and a couple of my professors from OCU, but mainly Judy, we worked out this thing. And Toni chose the song "One, Two, Three," which is a great song that's fun, and she wrote the lyrics.

So I sang "One, Two, Three," and conducted the orchestra in Atlantic City, the only time that's been done. And it was a huge hit.

JE: You danced too then, didn't you?

JJ: Yes I kind of had this whole routine where I danced.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: I never got to rehearse it with a live orchestra, except a small orchestra, we made a tape so that I could practice with it. But I really never rehearsed it. This kind of amazes me, I never rehearsed it until I was in Atlantic City with the Miss America orchestra. I ran through it twice live, and then did it, and won Talent. It was just a big hit because it was different.

JE: It was a novel thing to do, right?

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Back in Oklahoma City, the competition then, the interview with the judges, what was that for this shy person? And how did you walk into that?

JJ: Again, because it was a small group I was okay. And because I never expected to win and no one ever expected me to win any of these, I never had a lot of stress. Because, again, no expectations of winning. And in a small group I'm pretty easy being myself. I didn't try to be something I wasn't.

And, at that time, those judges' interviews didn't expect you to have the answer to world peace.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: And I'm grateful for that because I didn't. I still don't.

JE: So you won the Miss Oklahoma Pageant?

Chapter 11 - 9:00

Miss America Pageant

John Erling: Then we're on to Atlantic City and that adventure. Norma Smallwood had won in 1924, and nobody had won since. And this was in 1966.

Jane Jayroe: Yes. Oklahoma had had two women close, a girl from Alva, and I had watched her and thought, "Wow, a girl from Alva can get that close." And she was beautiful. And, of course, Anita Bryant was second runner up. But since Miss America had been on television no girl from Oklahoma had won.

And you have to remember that the Miss America Pageant was among the most watched television shows on the air. It was either *the* most watched or it tied with like the Super Bowl or something. The viewership was incredible, everyone watched the Miss America Pageant.

JE: While we're talking about this, since you then like to give credit here to 1980's Susan Powell from Alec City. She was Miss Oklahoma City in 1995. Shawntel Smith from Muldrow, Miss Tulsa State Fair; 2006, Miss Jennifer Berry from Tulsa, Miss Grand Lake; 2007, Lauren Nelson from Lawton, and Miss Oklahoma State Fair. So the state of Oklahoma has tied with Ohio and California of having six Miss America's.

JJ: Isn't that great?

JE: Yeah.

JJ: And we're almost always in the top ten, often in the top five.

JE: You kind of wonder why that is.

JJ: Well, we've got a very strong state pageant, that's a big reason. It really has to do with the strength of the local pageant and the state pageant.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative). In Miss America Pageant, who were the judges?

JJ: Oh, it was so wonderful, again, now think that I had no stress to win. Nobody went to Miss America Pageant with me except my family and Moe Billington. Even the executive director did not go. She could not attend and no one expected me to win. I never even considered it. I'd already moved into the dorm at Oklahoma City University.

So it was just pure joy for me to be there. I was Miss Oklahoma, I was living the dream. I got to walk that runway that I'd watched on television all those years. It was just joy. And Toni, my pageant director, knew that my dream was to go to New York City. I'd never been there, and so she sent us to New York City a few days before I had to be in Atlantic City. I took pictures of everything, every street sign, the traffic, everything. And she sent me to Broadway shows. I just had the greatest time.

So some of the directors were on a white choreographer of *Mame* that I had just seen on Broadway. Vincent Price, do you remember the scary guy in the movies? Mr. Voorhees, who was a real musical conductor. So these were people that I was thrilled to meet. So I just enjoyed my interview. I was thrilled to meet them.

They asked me some serious questions and I just wasn't too serious. And I think they liked that and they liked the small town. And Mr. Voorhees asked me about musical conducting. He said, "How do you hope to conduct?"

And I said, "I just hope to be able to stay in the right beat at the right music," or something. And I think he liked that. I wasn't trying to say, "I'm going to be the world's greatest conductor." And I don't know, I think I was just who I was and didn't have great expectations.

JE: You didn't feel any pressure, did you?

JJ: And—I didn't. In the interview, they took in three state queens at the same time. I was in with Miss South Carolina, who was one of the favorites, she was fabulous. Barbara Harris had so much pressure to win and she fell apart in the interview.

JE: Fell apart? How?

JJ: Fell apart. They asked her something about racial tension in South Carolina. She started expressing that, trying to be perfect. She kind of got caught up in her language and used a word that you would not choose to use when describing racial tension. She just got tied up.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: And I was just hurting for her. You know, I couldn't get tied up because I just wasn't anxious. And I wasn't trying to win.

JE: That's a key word what you just said. I wasn't trying to "win."

JJ: I wasn't trying to win.

JE: Yeah, right.

JJ: You know, although all of the sports psychology says you need to visualize winning and—

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: ...all of that. I did do that, when it came time to go on stage I think I had a subconscious visualization of what it's like to be Miss America. And I think a lot of that kicked in because I wasn't nervous about that either. It was like I kind of walked into that dream and that visualization of what it's like to be Miss Oklahoma, and I wasn't shy me.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: I could be that person and just love it.

JE: Bert Parks is the emcee, obviously.

JJ: Yes.

JE: Had done that for many, many years. Bring us up to you learned that you were in the top ten. That moment.

JJ: I was hoping to be in the top ten and I was very anxious when it started coming down to all of this. I wanted to be in the top ten. No one in Oklahoma had seen my talent, "One, Two, Three." A lot of people had helped me with it. I knew everyone at OCU was watching. All of my friends, all of my sorority, all of my other friends, the music school. Everyone in Laverne was watching. No one could go to Atlantic City and no one had seen "One, Two, Three," 'cause I couldn't travel around with an orchestra. So I really wanted to be in the top ten. And I wasn't assured of that, although usually if you win the talent you are in the top ten.

JE: And you had won that, obviously. Right.

JJ: And I won the talent on Friday night. So the biggest thrill was being in the top ten. So when they announced my name as the top ten I was flying high.

JE: You had won, you had won, in your mind.

JJ: I had won.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: It was all down hill. I mean, I wanted to do my best, but then you're on just adrenaline because it moves so quickly. Then you're just on automatic pilot of doing everything. So I

hardly remember, really, the Saturday night, it's just a bit of a blur. I was flying so high and the adrenaline was pumping so quickly. So I went through the whole thing.

I do remember the end. At the end, the five of us, were sitting, and they asked me a question about being a conductor. And this was Toni's bad idea to say that I wanted to be a musical conductor. Because this was the beginning of women's liberation. They were burning their bras on the Boardwalk in Atlantic City, picketing the pageant. So she thought it would get a lot of attention if I said I wanted to be a musical conductor, a female in the realm of men.

So they asked me a question about that and I didn't want to be a musical conductor, I wanted to be a choral conductor. That wasn't the same. So I couldn't tell a lie, so I talked about the assets of studying to be a musical conductor and how that would benefit me no matter what I did. But I didn't answer it very well.

JE: The prejudice that could be against you—

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: ...as a female—

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: ...was the question.

JJ: Yes. And so I kind of sidestepped the question—

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: ...and just talked about the benefits of studying to be a musical conductor. And, of course, I hadn't experienced any prejudice being a female.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: At anything I'd done at that point.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: So I couldn't speak from my own experience about that. So I sat down and then when it was the two of us standing—now, I want to paint the contrast between Miss California and Miss Oklahoma. Miss California, I thought, was the most sophisticated girl I had ever seen.

JE: And what was her name?

JJ: Charlene Diane Dallas. How's that—

JE: That's a great name.

JJ: ...for a sophisticated name? She had an entourage. You know, I was there by myself, she had an entourage. She had a hairdresser, she had on a white thousand-dollar evening gown. She was drop-dead beautiful. She was from San Francisco. Contrast San Francisco and Laverne. She played the piano, classical music. She was just fabulous. She was a double winner. She'd won talent and swimsuit. I didn't get to know her, she was fairly reserved, but she was stunningly beautiful and so sophisticated. I knew she was going to

win. Everyone said she was going to win. South Carolina was the other favorite, but I knew that Barbara had not done well in the interview.

So it was down to the two of us. And I knew she was going to win. Plus, I had a peek at the ballot that Bert Parks was holding. When he received the ballot from the judges and he walked across the stage, his hand was on the bottom of it, but I could see Charlene's name at the bottom. But I couldn't see was that his thumb covered up the real bottom. But I was so happy because to me, being first runner up is the very best. I could do the very best you could do and still go home.

Remember, this homesick Oklahoma girl that was not at all ready to be Miss America.

Chapter 12 - 6:25

Miss America

John Erling: So then?

Jane Jayroe: So then they announced her first runner up. And I could not believe it. Of course, I did what you're supposed to do. The tears weren't really tears of joy, they were, "Oh my, what is this? What are the judges thinking?" Walked the runway, got to the end of the runway, I can remember that that was just amazing looking into that camera. Atlantic City is huge, the size is three football fields and the runway is just enormous. So that was very dreamlike.

But I kept thinking, "Stop crying, because you look awful when you cry." So I looked into that camera and thought, "Stop crying." And then walked back. They had all these stairs and I walked up the stairs and I just kept thinking, "Stop thinking. Stop thinking." Because I was just freaking out, so upset, because in a second my life changed.

It's hard to imagine now because it's not quite the same, but it's like becoming a Beatle overnight. I mean, it's instant celebrity, instant celebrity, with guards. Your life is completely not yours.

Walked up the stairs and kind of kept it together through the photo shoot. Everyone was kept away, there were policemen, and people were yelling and wanting to touch me. I just couldn't believe it and I just felt so inadequate. Did everything I was supposed to do. Went back to my mother, finally, and cried all night, cried.

And I'm so sorry that there wasn't somebody that came in from the pageant and said, "Oh, it's going to be fine. We're going to take care of you and we're going to help you." But it was a time of transition for their chaperones so there was no chaperone that came in.

There was a woman who came but she wasn't a warm and kind woman. I don't even know who she was, but she came and she just kind of glared at me. And I'm sure she was thinking, "What an idiot. She's crying hysterically with her mother."

And I was crying, saying, "I don't want to do this. I want to go home."

JE: Your mother was with you?

JJ: She was with me, in the hotel.

JE: And she stayed with you that night?

JJ: Yes, she was my chaperone.

JE: What were her words to you then?

JJ: She was just comforting. She didn't know what to do either.

JE: Right.

JJ: Because she knew me.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: And nobody told her, "We're going to take care of your daughter." My dad had been kept away. It was a rule that you could have no men close to you, in case somebody would think they were not your father.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: So it was just the two of us and she didn't know either. No one was telling us, so I was just distraught. And I cried and cried and cried. And then I looked terrible the next morning for all the pictures and I cried. And then I told this story many times but it's a precious, precious way of God reaching out to me. The rules were that no one could come to your room. You couldn't answer your phone. An Atlantic City person would answer the phone for you, and that was to protect you. But, again, the chaperone that's normally with you was not there for me.

But a phone call came through and it was Leonard Gillingham, who was our most favorite Methodist minister, and he had baptized my dad and me in the Sentinel Methodist Church many years ago. And I don't remember our conversation but it was kind of like I finally took a deep breath and realized that I was not by myself and that God would be with me during the year. That I didn't have to be a perfect Miss America.

You know, I just kept thinking, "They don't know me."

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: "I've never flown in an airplane." I was nineteen years old and had never been on an airplane. How was I going to be Miss America? I had never been in front of a group to speak. To sing, yes, but not to speak. They didn't know that I was this shy bumpkin from Laverne. Uh (disgusted sound), how was I going to do this without my parents, without my friends? Talk about outside your comfort zone. My comfort zone was thousands of miles away. It was just such a big, big shift in my feelings of ability to handle.

But this reminded me that I wasn't called to be perfect and I wasn't alone, that I just needed to be faithful. So I kind of took a deep breath.

We went to dinner that night and the pageant manager had gotten word of my not being happy, so he was kind of blustery. He wasn't really a part of my year at all, but we didn't know that at the time. But he was cold and kind of blustery.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: He approached my dad and said, "Hey, if she doesn't want to do this we'll get somebody else who does."

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: And my dad just stood right up to him and said, "Fine, I'll take her home. Are you going to take care of her or not?"

Good for him!

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: So finally, they brought the chaperone around, Peg O'Neill, who was this feisty little five foot tall Irish woman from New Jersey who traveled with Miss America and was adorable and sweet and was like, "Oh, honey, I'm going to take care of you. We're going to have the best time."

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: So the next morning, my parents left but I was with Peg. We got in a limo and drove to Philadelphia and I was on the *Mike Douglas Show*.

Then I met the vice president of marketing for the Bandler Corporation, Lola Costigan, a New Yorker, a career woman, and Lola was so wonderful to me. I was getting ready to meet the New York Press Club and Lola said, "Honey, here's my diamond bracelet. I'm putting it on you because you are stunning. They are going to love you and you're wearing our clothes and no one could wear them better."

Oh! I loved Lola.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: But you know, I just needed a little bit of that. Somebody that said, "You're going to be fine." And it just happened that I kind of dropped into a vacuum for the pageant. I knew I couldn't give it up. I mean, I really thought about it, but I knew I couldn't. And I couldn't because of Oklahoma.

Chapter 13 - 2:45

Lonely Experience

John Erling: But you felt it was a lonely experience?

Jane Jayroe: It was a lonely experience. I think all Miss America's will say that. If you're older

it's easier. It's a hard job. You travel almost every day. You aren't around people your own age. You live with a chaperone. It's easier now with social media and cell phones, but at that time, it was very expensive to make long-distance phone calls.

I was making a lot of money and the pageant was wonderful. They didn't charge you a management fee or an agent fee. Every cent you made you received. I went from living on my parents' ten dollars a month allowance when I was in school and my first day I think I made a thousand dollars. That was a lot of money in 1966. I had a ten thousand dollar scholarship and I made a lot of money that year. The pageant didn't keep a penny.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: They did all of my bookings, all of my expenses were paid, first class. Had an apartment in New York. Pageant's very, very good to the women.

JE: You were busy shaking hands and smiling and the only difference here was you didn't have to walk in to introduce yourself to anybody.

JJ: That's right.

JE: They already knew who you were. So that had to help your shyness.

JJ: That helped me so much.

JE: Right.

JJ: Yes, I always had someone there. What was exhausting, for someone who's not an extrovert, was the constant giving of energy to others. So it was very helpful, even then with a chaperone, especially the chaperones who were extroverts. Because they would absorb some of that for me.

We would arrive, and, of course, they were excited to see Miss America, and I would be pleasant. I'm a pretty pleasant person. I would be pleasant, but if I had to converse with them from the minute I arrived until I went to bed that night, I just couldn't handle it. It just drained me. So if I was traveling with a chaperone who was the extrovert, they loved it. They were with me for a month and home for two months.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: We would get in the car and they would talk to the sponsors. They would talk nonstop in the car. Then I would talk and have the energy for the time that I was working, which was supposed to only be for four hours, but this was every day. So it was exhausting.

JE: And you realized there's more to life than shaking hands and smiling.

JJ: Yes. I've not run for office.

JE: You must have been asked to run for office in Oklahoma.

JJ: Well, yeah, and I have considered it from time to time, because I do love people and I love serving the public in that way. If I could have my own pacing, I even like the shaking hands because I like interacting with people. But I have to pace myself. I can't just do it all day, every day. And politicians need to be able to do that.

Chapter 14 – 2:56**USO Show**

John Erling: You dreamt about being in an USO show and that actually came about.

Jane Jayroe: It did, and again, I really believe this is divine, by the hand of God, I really do. I mean, the irony is just too great. Grew up wanting to do that with this very patriotic family. My mother's brothers all served in World War II except for one, who was forced to kind of stay at home and be on the farm, which was part of the policy at that time. And my dad.

One of the heroes that I had growing up was Jane Froman. There was a *Jane Froman Show* on TV. There was a Jane Froman story that was a movie. And her theme song was "With a Song in My Heart." And it was set in her performing for the militaries.

And I would watch that movie and cry and "With a Song in My Heart" was my first pageant song. So this was a big dream. That's why I wanted to be in Surrey Singers. This was the height of the Vietnam War. And every time I had a press conference they would ask me what I thought of Vietnam.

And I would just say, "I didn't have an opinion on the politics but I wanted to go."

The pageant heard that. Bob Hope always asked Miss America to go but the pageant didn't like the image, I mean, they loved Bob Hope, who didn't love Bob Hope? But if he took Miss USA, he used that person as kind of a straight person with his jokes. So it was a beauty type image. And the pageant was very careful with their brand, which was scholarship, kind of a total image, not just a girl in a swimsuit. They wanted to control that brand.

Joan Crawford was on the Pepsi Cola board and the USO board, so the Miss America Pageant joined with USO and Pepsi Cola, who was a Miss America sponsor. They put together a Miss America Vietnam Show.

We did our own show. We were there for two weeks.

JE: Right.

JJ: In Vietnam, and I'm so proud of that. I was the first Miss America to go to a combat zone. But Miss America has always worked with the military.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: From the beginning. And we have gone to entertain troops ever since then. It's been a great opportunity for not just Miss America, but what they do is they'll take state queens who fit and they'll put together a musical show. So Miss Alabama, Miss South Carolina, Miss Maine, Miss New Hampshire, there were five state queens and myself. They hired the choreographer and music arrangers and put together a show that was particularly ours. And it was a great show. And you could imagine how our troops enjoyed that.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: I mean, we were the same age. And, you know, we saw our friends there. My cousin was there. There were boys from Laverne there. Miss Tennessee, oh gosh, Vicki Herd, our first day at a hospital, there was a friend of hers from Tennessee, and he was minus his legs.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: I mean, it was just heart-wrenching.

Chapter 15 - 2:10

Soldiers of Vietnam

John Erling: You were in Saigon, then?

Jane Jayroe: We landed in Saigon, but then we went all over.

JE: Okay. And, as everybody knows, and those who want to read more about it, this was not a popular war. There were many protests against it in the United States, ultimately leading to Lyndon Johnson not running again. So that's kind of the backdrop to all of this.

You visited the army hospitals yourself, I would imagine.

JJ: We did.

JE: And saw some of those.

JJ: We visited hospitals and we did our show everywhere. We went out, we were everywhere. I think I list a lot of the places in the book.

One of the most poignant, I'll call it a scene, was when we returned on an airplane that was full of military. As we got close, I'll get emotional, but as we got close to America, of course, we were all singers, and we saw the coastline, we just started singing. And we sang all the way down, "This Land Is Your Land," "God Bless America."

We're all forever changed as to how we view the sacrifice and the price that's paid. Certainly for those who have the ultimate sacrifice, but those who served and what they came home to. Because what they came home to was not appreciation. And that broke our hearts.

We got off the plane and there was no one there to welcome them, the people that were on our plane. They were happy to be coming home, but there was no one to say, "Thank you."

JE: Yeah.

JJ: No one. And they went back into their communities where no one said, "Thank you," and where people said bad things to them. That's a wound that never goes away for them.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: And we saw that. That's why it's always emotional for me too.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: That we never said, “Thank you.”

JE: Right.

JJ: I think America has tried to make up for that now, but it hurt so much for them.

JE: The wall that we have in Washington, DC.

JJ: Yeah.

JE: And the moving wall that goes across our country with all those names is our way to say, “Thank you.” That’s very moving to see that.

JJ: It is. It is. And, you know, you wonder what it was all for. But anyway, I’m glad I was there.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: And we’re all glad that we got to do that little, tiny, tiny bit that brought some moments of home to them.

Chapter 16 - 4:40

President Johnson

John Erling: The president, did you get to meet Lyndon Johnson?

Jane Jayroe: I did! My chaperone, she went with us to Vietnam. We were exhausted, as you can imagine, that long flight home, and then from San Francisco we flew home to New York and fell into bed. And left a message that our phone would not ring. We were in our apartment in New York. And the phone rang. And we were both like, “Ah, who’s calling?”

Lucille answered it. I could tell from her tone of voice that she wasn’t mad. It was the White House. There was an Oklahoman in the White House. Would it have been Jim Jones?

JE: Yes, it would have been Jim Jones.

JJ: Okay.

JE: Know that’s James R. Jones. He was the aide to Lyndon Johnson.

JJ: Okay.

JE: That’s right.

JJ: I think he facilitated all of this. And so the White House was saying, “Could I come?” We did, of course. We got up and got dressed, and it was such a gift for me. Of course, the president wanted us there to show his interest in Vietnam. But we arrived and had a quick tour of the White House. And then met the president. He took us out to look at his beagles. If you remember, his dogs.

Oh, what was I to say to the president, you know? It’s the president of the United States. I remember he had a cold and I thought, “Wow. You have all that power and all that authority and you still get a cold.” But, you know, I didn’t have that long with him.

And he had our senators, Monroney and Harris, come. And I was relieved when they came because they could have conversations with him. I was way too intimidated.

He said, "How are our boys?"

I said, "Fine." I mean, again, I couldn't say anything. What was really a joy was Vice President Hubert Humphrey. I was there for the signing of a GI Bill. I got to experience that and he was warm and friendly.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: He was easy to be with. Then just to be there in the White House for the signing of that bill with the veterans was so thrilling. That's one of my favorite pictures that I have.

JE: You actually stood in the Oval Office with the president, didn't you?

JJ: Yes.

JE: And did you think, "I'm from Laverne and I'm standing here—

JJ: Yes.

JE: ...in the Oval Office.

JJ: Yes, but I could hardly catch my breath. It was so overwhelming but, oh, such a, such a thrill.

JE: Oh, Lyndon was such an outgoing guy, he didn't come off as warm?

JJ: No.

JE: As Hubert Humphrey did?

JJ: No, he did not. Maybe he didn't feel well.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: And, of course, that mantle of Vietnam—

JE: Yeah.

JJ: ...upon him at that time, I'm sure was very, very heavy. And again, my shyness was all out there. So I'm sure I wasn't easy. And I don't remember him being friendly. Of course, he was.

But what I was not prepared for was after my visit with him was the press. I walked out and then I was just overwhelmed with the press. "What did you say?" "What did the president say?" I don't remember much, I mean, I didn't know what to say then either. I think somebody took pity on me and kind of marched me through there.

JE: Reminding again that you're nineteen years old.

JJ: I'm nineteen!

JE: Right.

JJ: Wow! That's one of the things that's a strength and a weakness of the pageant at that time. The strength is they let you be you. You won, they trust you, and they trust your character, and they trust the system that will allow you to grow into the role.

The weakness is when it's so overwhelming like that it would have been really nice to have had an expert in communications that would have said, "Okay, you've left the president, the press is going to be outside this door."

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: "Let's think for a minute how to respond." And not put words in my mouth, but help me to organize my thoughts. There was no training for that at all. And there is a woman now.

I had a chance to have lunch with the current Miss America just two days after she won this last fall. And there was a woman with her, as a volunteer, who's been with the pageant system and is an expert. And she was just with her for that week that is press oriented. We were all like, "Oh, this is so great."

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: There were five Miss America's in New York with Nina, and we were just thanking this person because we said, "That is so important."

In the car, in between press interviews, that's what she would do with her.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: "Okay, Nina, here's the next person. Here's the type of questions they'll ask. Let's just organize your thoughts." Not put words in her mouth, not try to persuade her what to say, just, "This is what's coming and how can I help you?"

JE: Yeah.

JJ: I wish I'd had that, you know, my chaperone didn't have any expertise in that.

Chapter 17 - 2:45

Future of Pageants

John Erling: Your year as Miss America was wonderful for you and despite the fact that you were nervous and all, it was a great growing experience for you.

Jane Jayroe: Oh, it was. My goodness, there was no price tag high enough to put on it, but I was sure ready for it to be over. It was lonely. It was lonely, you're so isolated, and it's hard work.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative). Do you think as we reflect on it now, we're in 2014, 1966, and you talked about the television ratings being just huge, that has not the impact on America today that it had back then. It's, I don't know if the word's passé or what, it's not as big a deal.

JJ: Correct. It's not. And I think the pageant in some ways kind of lost its way for a while. You have to be very careful about your brand and how you handle it. I think it's on its way back,

but it will be very difficult because it's a very different media market now than it was. And there were some mistakes during those difficult years. But I think we're on our way back now.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: It depends a lot on the culture, what do we value? The pageant still stands for some very fundamental values about women, in particular, and I think they're important values. I think it's just a very important organization. It gives tremendous foundation to young women, not only in scholarships, which is no small thing.

JE: Then did you graduate from OCU?

JJ: I did. You know, I had the money, the resources to have gone to any school, but for me it was right to come home. Again, I was still very young and I needed the support of coming home. I needed my family but I also needed Oklahoma City University. They were wonderful to me and really helped me graduate. I still graduated in four years minus the years Miss America.

It was different but my first day back I went to the cafeteria, which I'd always done for breakfast. And again, in spite of Miss America there was still the shyness. I walked into the cafeteria, everyone in the room turned and looked at me getting me in line with my tray. I never went back. So I wasted all that money for breakfast but I couldn't do that.

And so I get a lot of attention, so I pulled back. But I had all of my friends, they were still my friends, my great friends.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: And I had not changed. What I did changed and how some people treated me changed, but I still had the same friends, they're my friends today. I love them and that's mutual.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: And so it was the right thing for me.

Chapter 18 - 6:45

Time to Adjust

John Erling: After graduation, our friend Lee Allan Smith comes into play. And he calls you about a job.

Jane Jayroe: Well, actually, it was even before graduation. Lee Allan called and offered me a job with Channel 4. I told him I didn't much want to do that. He kind of talked me into it.

Lee Allan plays a role throughout my life, not often prominent, but I can't say enough good things about him. I like to say he's one of the few people that fired me. He does not want me to say that. But it was a favor.

JE: What was the job he was calling you about?

JJ: He wanted to put me on staff at Channel 4, and he had something in mind that I wish I had followed through with. As it was, I just appeared on their programming now and then.

JE: But I thought he had called about being a promotions director on WKY.

JJ: You know, it may have been, but I didn't do much. That's why he fired me.

JE: Oh.

JJ: And I think that's why I said no to him because after a year of being Miss America I wanted to try to go back and be young and be a college kid. Again, I was twenty and I had missed out on being a college kid. And I thought I could go back and be that—and I couldn't.

JE: So you didn't take that job?

JJ: I took it.

JE: And then?

JJ: But I didn't do a very good job with it.

JE: Oh. So then what happened?

JJ: So after a year, he said, "You know, I can't keep paying you because you're not doing anything."

And I said, "Well, maybe I'd do something now."

And he said, "Well, I don't think so."

So I said, "Okay." But I still worked for him off and on forever and I adore him.

JE: Then what came about in your life at that time?

JJ: Well, one of the difficult things I think about Miss America, and I think this is probably true for athletes that things happen to very early, is your maturity doesn't catch up for a while. I think it was very tough. And I speak for Jimmy Webb, I'll speak for him whether he needs it or not, I think it's tough when you become a huge success at nineteen. And it takes a while to catch up to that and find yourself again.

I skipped some things maturity, so I tried to go back. Well, you can't go back. I had to take time to adjust and I made some mistakes during that time. When you have kind of a high point, in some ways, the high point of your career happen at eighteen or nineteen—it would be the same for a lot of Olympic athletes—then you have to kind of redefine yourself and go back and find out, "What is it that you want to be as you grow up?" Now that you realize you're still not an adult.

I had two more years of college, so I had a lot of adjusting to do. I didn't want to be a teacher—so what do I want to be? I didn't want to be on Broadway. I knew what it was like to travel all the time. I didn't want to do road shows. I wanted a home and a family. I didn't want a job that meant that you lived in New York. I didn't want a job that meant you traveled all the time.

Okay, so what do you want to be? I was so tired of traveling and being on that I thought that I was content to just be married to someone who was ambitious and do a

little bit of this or that. So I really got married too quickly. I wasn't back to who I was kind of meant to be.

JE: And what was his name?

JJ: His name was Paul Petersen. He was an OU student, a friend of one of my best friends. And I think had I waited a year or two, and this is not uncommon for Miss America's, they have such a response to that year, and if we would all have to wait a year or two until we have a equilibrium—

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: ...of adjusting from that year, I think we would be better off.

JE: So that decision to be married was too hurriedly.

JJ: Very quickly.

JE: And too quick.

JJ: I came back in September of 1967, met him in October of that year, was engaged in February, and married in August. Not even a year.

JE: Where did you live after you were married?

JJ: We lived in Norman when he went to law school, and then in Tulsa after he graduated from law school.

JE: He's off to work or school and what are you doing?

JJ: I finished at OCU and did a lot of work. I did some television work, commercials, I did pageants, I did musical theater, a little bit of everything. And then we moved to Tulsa and I continued with those and also got a master's degree at Tulsa University.

Kara Gae Wilson—

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: ...was my advisor.

JE: Now Kara Gae Neal.

JJ: Now Kara Gae Neal. She was a real bright spot. Isn't that funny that an advisor at university—I needed a bright spot, those were dark days for me.

JE: Because of your marriage?

JJ: Because of my marriage. And I was really wanting to be happily married and I was not. I was really wanting children and I couldn't get pregnant. Nothing was working out.

JE: So you were feeling empty?

JJ: I was feeling really empty. The shyness really kicked in and it was depression too. It was in a new place without an identity.

JE: Yet people in town knew, "That's Miss America."

JJ: I guess. But nobody reached out, and of course, no one knew I was shy. I had no place there. I finally started going to church by myself, which again, you can imagine, was really hard to go by myself. Miss America, I was supposed to be a big deal, trailing into church by myself.

JE: In Tulsa you went to church?

JJ: In Tulsa.

JE: Which—

JJ: Christ United Methodist Church, Bob Pierson. It was kind of a life saver for me. I took a volunteer position with them as receptionist. Became active there. Gave me a little, small group, a few friends.

I had two great friends there, one was from college and one was from my history. Annie Arganbright was her name. She grew up in Alva and was living in Tulsa. And Beverly Hoster, her married name in Tulsa. And Beverly was my little sister at OCU in the sorority. So I had them. They couldn't fill my life up.

And my husband worked all the time. I was so lonely and so depressed and just didn't know what to do.

JE: So what—

JJ: My marriage was very bad.

JE: So what did you do?

JJ: I got the degree, worked on the master's degree, volunteered at Christ Methodist.

Chapter 19 - 9:55

Failing Marriage

Jane Jayroe: Finally got pregnant and that made the marriage worse instead of better.

John Erling: Really?

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Why is that?

JJ: I don't know. But I think Paul had just emotionally left the marriage and nothing put it back together again.

JE: So your baby boy?

JJ: Was a baby boy born on July 4, 1976.

JE: In Tulsa?

JJ: In Tulsa, St. Francis.

JE: His name?

JJ: His name is Tyler Jayroe Petersen. Bi-centennial. We made *Associated Press*. "Miss America has bi-centennial baby." It was great joy at finally having this baby.

JE: But Paul must have been excited about that too.

JJ: He was excited about the baby, but it was a really sad time in our marriage. Instead of pulling us close it did just the opposite.

JE: So then it did come to an end?

JJ: It did.

JE: So how long did it—

JJ: And I had to accept that. Oh, Tyler was an infant and I had to realize that I was just by myself all the time in Tulsa with him. Paul and I had had trouble before I got pregnant and I'd left one other time. He really wanted the marriage to work and had come after me and my parents encouraged me to go back.

I did. But this was clearly over and he was just not there. I'd gotten sick one night, as it turned out it was a breast infection, but my temperature went to 104. And I was so scared. I got okay and I had some friends help me. So I called my parents and said, "He's not here and I can't do this. I cannot be here by myself. I would rather be alone and make plans than to not know when I was going to be alone."

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: "And to pretend that I was married." So I called them and they came over and got me and baby Tyler and took me to Laverne.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: So I stayed there for a couple of weeks and then I moved in with my sister in Oklahoma City. She moved her oldest boy out of his bedroom. Tyler and I moved in with her and I set about trying to find a place to live.

And now I realize that I probably should have had some medical help, in terms of antidepressants. You know, your hormones are so messed up after giving birth, so you have the chemical reality of hormone imbalance after birth, and then the depression of going through this. I was in bad shape, in terms of depression. Just—

JE: And you weren't taking any medication?

JJ: No. I didn't know there was anything.

JE: Right, um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: I would have if it would have helped me.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: Of course I would have.

JE: What happens along the way here to help you come out of that depression and what are you beginning to do?

JJ: Well, the grace of God, I mean, my family and my friends. I'm in Surrey Hills, which was a real small housing development outside of Oklahoma City, so I'm there, totally depressed, just wanting to cover my head with the covers.

There were two newspapers in Oklahoma City at the time, and one morning, not the *Daily Oklahoman*, but the other newspaper, had headlines: Miss America Separates from Husband. So I was just like, "Oh, let me hide in here."

So then I had to answer publicly to what the situation was and I don't remember what I said. I mean, we weren't divorced, we were separated. But it was a hard time, it was really hard. I didn't know what I was going to do financially. I was back on my parents financially. I had spent all the Miss America money. I didn't have a job, I wasn't capable of getting a job yet. It was hard. It was hard times.

I've written about it but I don't think I wrote in the book. There was a wonderful couple in Surrey Hills that were storing their furniture in a duplex and they said Tyler and I could stay there rent free.

So I went over there, I didn't cry, but I remember it as a big low point. Because it was dark and it was kind of smelly. There was no light coming in. And I thought, "If I have to move over here I don't, I don't . . ." because I'm not a practical person especially and the practical side of me was like, "Buck up! This is your reality, you can do this. Quit being a baby."

And then the other side of me, "But there's no light. There's nothing of mine here. I'll wither. I will wither away like a plant with no light. I can't do it." But I didn't let anybody see that. I just said, "Oh, I so appreciate this, thank you."

As I'm leaving that duplex, a woman is coming out of the duplex next door. She said, "Are you looking for some place to rent?"

And we're like, "Yes."

She said, "Do you want to look here? It's coming on the market."

So Judy and I went in there. I was one-story, which means I could move my furniture in. It was light and airy. It had a view out on the golf course. If you've grown up on the plains having space it's really important. You know, it's nothing like my big house in Tulsa, but it had the light.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: Then financially I didn't have the money, so Judy and I called Daddy. He said he'd do it. I know Mother was right by his elbow saying, "We can do this, we can do this." For six months they paid the rent.

And talk about grace, I could have made myself move in. There was nothing wrong with the other duplex. It's just that when you're really depressed...

JE: Yeah.

JJ: It's amazing those little things that matter.

JE: So you move in?

JJ: So we move in. I'm a couple of blocks from my sister and I'm a couple of blocks from one of my very best friends, Kerry Robertson. Knows my heart, looking at me. I started going to church at The Servant and Norman Neaves. Kerry and I go to an exercise class and the neighbor across the street is willing to keep my baby. Kerry arranges that.

You know, when you're depressed, just the smallest thing takes enormous effort. And when you feel defeated, everything is just a mountain to climb and you have no energy. So to have Judy and to have Kerry help, just ask those questions. Valeda Turpening was across the street from Kerry.

"Valeda, will you keep this little baby for my friend while we go exercise?"

It's amazing just the little things that make a difference. Because I was so emotional I'd go to church and the first couple of times I'd go I'd take Tyler to the nursery. And being by myself in church was too much. I'd start crying and I'd have to leave. I'd go cry in the bathroom and then I'd go pick Tyler up and go home.

Then I was able to go and it gave me that support system.

Then my dad had gotten me a job with the State Department of Education. I could have gotten a job on television, probably, but it was God's timing that I had to heal a little bit first. I didn't have the nerve.

Mary Hart was a friend of mine.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: She was still in Oklahoma City at the time. And I called Mary and said, "Can you help me?"

And she was willing to help me. She said, "Here's who you call at this television station," or that. She said, "Just call them and see if there's anything."

But I didn't have the nerve to do it.

JE: We should say, Mary Hart went on to?

JJ: She went on to California.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: *PM Magazine* was her first job there and then *Entertainment Tonight* was her big role.

JE: Right. So you had thought about wanting to be in the media and television. Was that kind of a dream for you to come back?

JJ: Yes, yes, it seemed like a good option. When I was in Tulsa, one of the television stations called me and offered me a position on a noon show. And it was for almost no money but, you know, it would have been a career start. And I didn't take it. I was traveling a lot and it was five days a week live. And I didn't take it. I just didn't have a direction. I was making so much more money by doing freelance work.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: And I was wanting to have a baby.

JE: So you said no to that.

JJ: Yes.

JE: So now we have you there in Oklahoma City and then you are beginning to look around. So when Mary Hart said, "Just call some stations," did you do that?

JJ: Yes, I didn't. I didn't have the nerve. I didn't have the confidence to do that. You know, I was so defeated. I felt like I had let everyone down because I had this big career as Miss America, if that's a career, and made Oklahoma proud. And then I had chosen family over career. And then I had failed at that miserably. So not only had I failed personally, but I felt like I'd let everyone else down. And now I was just a big nothing. At twenty-one—I was a nothing. After being such a big deal at nineteen.

And what was I going to do? I was worried about paying my rent. My dad was picking up my rent. How was I going to make something of myself? I was just worried about making the rent.

My dad got me a job at the State Department of Education, and at this point, I really had no pride. A great gift of that experience is that it stripped me a lot of that vanity. Not that I was puffed up and conceited in that way, but still, it really humbled me and gave me a compassion, I think, for others when life gets tough. As it can.

Chapter 20 - 8:54

Television News

John Erling: Is there where being Miss America actually worked against you? Because you had been here. If you hadn't had the Miss America Pageant you wouldn't have felt maybe as much as a failure.

Jane Jayroe: Oh, absolutely, because I think everyone that gets divorced feels a failure.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: But you don't feel such a public failure and that you've let everyone else down. And it's very humbling. I mean, I made a hundred thousand dollars in 1967.

JE: Uh-huh (affirmative).

JJ: That's a lot of money.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: And I'd gone through all of it. So to have gone from that kind of success, a national success, you know, meeting with President Johnson—

JE: Yeah.

JJ: National big deal to feeling like a nothing at twenty-one. And really having to start over.

JE: So when you have that job then at the Department of Education it's like, "All right, here I am—"

JJ: Okay—

JE: "...this is where I am."

JJ: "This is where I am, I don't care."

JE: Right.

JJ: "I've got a baby."

JE: Right.

JJ: "I'm going to take care of this baby and this is where I am. And I'm glad to have a job that has insurance. It has a paycheck and I'm grateful for it and I don't care."

JE: Grateful for the basics of a life.

JJ: You bet, you bet. Fortunately, I had that master's degree because it got me, maybe, twenty-eight thousand a year.

JE: Yeah. When does your entry then into the media world come about?

JJ: Well, again, it gave me a year to heal. I worked with two of the most fabulous people in Oklahoma, Peggy Long and Charles Moore from Lawton. Arts and Education Specialists. Both had been divorced. Charles was raising his children. They were still single, they were so great, I loved them. And they were just helpful.

So I worked at the Department of Education as an Arts and Education Specialist. After a few months, they said, "You know, we've got this television show that we need to do something with. You want to do that?"

I said, "Sure." So that gave me a little bit of ability in television.

And then I had this wonderful friend in Norman, Mike Smith, who was a retired advertising executive. He, just of his own interest, had always done some publicity for me. He had a Jane Jayroe Newsletter that he did. So I still had great name recognition.

And this was the time that they started putting women on the air as news anchors. Channel 5 called me and said, "We're going to have a woman on the news. Would you like to audition?"

Well, now, in Tulsa I wasn't so interested, but now it would double my salary. It would be at night, which I did not want to do because of my baby boy. But I needed the money, and I liked the idea of the work. I'd not ever done it but I was a different person. I was much more risk oriented because I had a lot more at stake. I would risk failure to get a career that would support Tyler and me.

So I took the audition seriously. I'd never used a teleprompter but I practiced looking at copy in the mirror. Had my hair fixed that day, and went in for auditions.

The newsroom was not excited about having a former Miss America audition.

JE: With no—

JJ: With no journalism—

JE: ...journalism.

JJ: ...experience.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: The male news anchor at Channel 5 at the time had been producing three or four newscasts, writing everything and being the solo news anchor. He was *not* happy. He anticipated doing everything for me. They didn't put me with him to even audition.

I auditioned and I did a good job. So they offered me the job at twice my salary. It was much closer to my home, which would mean half the commute.

The Turpenings, by this time, who only kept Tyler, kind of had him as their grandson. They had two daughters in high school and the whole family considered him their baby. I said, "Would you consider keeping him at night if I took this job?"

They talked about it as a family and they said, "You know, he's our baby, so we would do that."

So I took the job.

The co-anchor quit—

JE: Before you even went on the air?

JJ: He did.

JE: Do you remember his name?

JJ: I don't. He was on the air a long time ago.

JE: So what year would this have been?

JJ: It would have been 1977. Bless his heart, because women were here to stay.

JE: They hired somebody else to be your co-anchor?

JJ: They did. They hired the greatest news director, Tom Kirby. He had the greatest philosophy. Channel 5, KOCO TV was going to build a new building in the near future. But this was Tom Kirby's philosophy, he came in and he said, "It doesn't matter when that new building is, we're about today." That newsroom was repainted and we were so up. We were a distant number three and we were number one in a very short length of time.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: That man was such a motivator and such a teacher. He was exactly what I needed because I didn't have the experience. He taught me how to write. But, you know, I had that master's degree. A Master of Arts in Humanities from Tulsa University, and more than anything else, I learned about writing. That served me so well. Because journalism was a matter of style. Writing is what I learned.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: Writing skills and telling stories. And then Tom helped me teach me about the importance of writing to pictures. But it's about stories, it's about people's stories.

So no one ever wrote my stories for news. I've always written my own material. And I loved, I loved journalism writing. So if I could have picked a career, if I'd known to choose—

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: ...communications, that would have been an obvious choice for me. I just had never thought of it.

JE: When you went on and made your presentation, even from the first night, did it just feel good?

JJ: It did, it did. I loved people's stories, I loved the importance of news. I loved working in a team. I loved that about music theater. You know, it's not about one person, it's about a team. It's about everyone doing their best at one role. It fitting into a part and the part makes a difference. That's what a news team is about. I loved that.

JE: So you went to number one.

JJ: We went to number one.

JE: This must have been a kind of a perfect storm too because the whole town knew that Miss America is on Channel 5.

JJ: Yes.

JE: And then you had a news director there who was creating this team. So—

JJ: Yes.

JE: ...if people came to be curious then they stayed because they say, "Oh, you actually have something to offer."

JJ: Yes. And he changed everyone. I was standing in the newsroom one day, and we had a live shot, and he sent a secretary out on the live shot because that's all who was available. She wanted to be a reporter and she was good and he was talking into her ear. And I'd never done a live shot.

It was brilliant, it belonged in a movie, because he was saying, "Okay, Andie, tell us what you see. What does it look like? What are the firemen doing?" Very calm. "Tell us what you see." Oh, it was brilliant.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: And then when it came to writing to pictures, and I'd say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, I've got to have this done in forty-five minutes. I've got to write this story."

"What do you remember from the story? What's the picture you remember?" He said, "If somebody looks at the pictures and hears the words, it's the picture they'll remember, so match the words to the picture. If you don't match the words to the picture they don't remember either one."

JE: Yeah.

JJ: Oh, he was a brilliant teacher. And then if you did a good job you had a note in your box afterward. He just would praise you and praise you and encourage and encourage. It was a perfect storm.

JE: Give his name again.

JJ: Tom Kirby.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: He wasn't here long and then he moved on, but then he was hired back as a general manager. And he did a good job as a general manager, but he was brilliant as a news director. I think he had more fun here as a news director than any place else in his career.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: Because it was that way with everyone. He took news anchors and reporters and he made all of our careers. For me, because across America it was a new time for women anchors, I got tons of job opportunities.

JE: That's fine.

JJ: I could have gone to San Diego, I could have gone anywhere. And because of that quick rise all the producers got jobs too.

Chapter 21 - 6:20

Dallas

Jane Jayroe: And the producer that I had, Craig Mars, who has had a terrific career as a producer and with consulting firms, I think it was Craig that sent out a tape. I wasn't looking for a job but he sent a tape out to the Dallas station and they came looking for me.

After two years at KOCO, I mean, Dallas is a huge jump from Oklahoma City. It's among the top ten markets in America. And we're, I don't know where we are, maybe thirty-ninth, forty-ninth, I don't know.

John Erling: Was that something you thought long and hard about? Or when that opportunity came, "Yes, I'm on my way!"?

JJ: Oh no, I had to think long and hard. It was leaving Oklahoma again. It was so hard. I loved, I loved the career. It sounds so stupid, I loved reading a teleprompter. That sounds so dumb, but it's a subtle form of communication. And for my personality—

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: ...subtle communication is what I love, rather than belting on stage. I love the writing and I love the form of communication. I rarely love television.

But leaving Oklahoma, oh, that was hard. I would have only gone to Texas because my aunt, my mother's only sister, lived in Dallas. And my dear, dear cousin Mary lived in Dallas. But the job was in Fort Worth, and because I had Tyler I had to be close to the station, I couldn't have a commute.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: Because I worked nights I wanted to be able to pick him up after school. And I was able to do that in Fort Worth.

So I did think long and hard about it. And that's still among my favorite jobs. I'd have to say it's my favorite job, just to the act of working. It was my favorite work.

JE: In Dallas-Fort Worth?

JJ: Uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: At KXAS TV?

JJ: Yes.

JE: NBC affiliate?

JJ: Yes. But it wasn't my life. Oklahoma's my life.

JE: Yeah. Also in this, there's a benchmark here because you got married—

JJ: Yes.

JE: ...in this transition time, right?

JJ: Yes. I really did the same thing again. I was always rushing into the next thing. I was always rushing to re-create a family, and I did the same thing again. I was rushing to heal the wound of that first marriage. I was in a rush, I wanted so much to have more children. So I rushed into another marriage and messed up again. I've just messed up.

JE: How long did that marriage last?

JJ: Not very long and it was a commuter marriage, at that. He lived in California for much of the marriage and it was just a mess, just messed up. He's not a bad person, Paul's not a bad person, I just made bad choices.

I had relationships based on the most vulnerable times of my life. And you don't make good decisions when you are your most vulnerable. You need to find that even place in your life before you make the big decisions, the big choices. Or at least, that's my experience.

JE: You're there then in Dallas and then you receive a phone call from Lee Allan Smith, I believe, and—

JJ: Oh, good Lee Allan. Lee Allan knew when I signed my contract with KXAS, he was general manager at Channel 4. He put that on his calendar and he called me every year when my contract was due, and said, "Are you ready to come home yet?" Isn't that something?

JE: Sly fox, wasn't he?

JJ: He is a sly fox but he knew, because Lee Allan's that way.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: I mean, Oklahoma is home. But I did love the work in that station, and I worked with some great, great people.

JE: Remember some names that might, we still might know?

JJ: Oh, Karen Parfitt, who became Karen Hughes, who was George Bush's right hand person. Scott Pelley was my ten o'clock producer.

JE: Wow.

JJ: And Scott married Jane Boone from Moreland, Oklahoma, an intern at SMU. I see them when I go to New York. Jane's going to come see me next week. Love them.

JE: And Scott now, of course, doing the *CBS Evening News*.

JJ: Yes.

JE: Did he want to become a news guy even though he was a producer?

JJ: He was a producer!

JE: Did he—

JJ: Not at that time.

JE: He didn't?

JJ: Not at that time. But he was heading up. He was going to be executive producer and they did not make him executive producer. So he went to WFAA as a reporter.

JE: Oh?

JJ: And then just started climbing his way. Isn't that amazing?

JE: Yeah.

JJ: He's a good, good person. I love Scott and Jane, but just people like that. Brad Wright was a co-anchor.

I was hired to co-anchor with Chip Moody. He was a Texas icon. Before I got there, Chip went to another station.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: So we never got to work together and I'm sorry for that. Chip was an all-time great news anchor in the Dallas market, in the Texas market he was fabulous.

But I worked with some great people. Dave Layman, who then went back to Rhode Island. Dave Wright was great. Scott Murray was a sports guy. Mike Schneider was on the air forever. Jane, whose the current news anchor there, was the five o'clock, I mean, new anchors have not changed. The personnel, for the most part, have not changed. I could have been there for a very, very long time.

At times, I've thought about that I could have done that. It's almost like the larger the market the older as a woman you can be.

JE: Oh?

JJ: Isn't that weird?

JE: That is interesting.

JJ: Now Oklahoma City is an exception because Linda Cavanaugh is so extraordinary, but it's because of the cost, in part, because of what you can make. They're paid better in a bigger market.

Let me mention one other person. I got to work with Harold Taft. Harold Taft was the first weatherman in Texas to be on television. If you think Gary England is big in Oklahoma, Harold Taft was *the* person in Texas. When I went to KXAS, Harold was kind of all they had, and Chip. Then Chip left, so they were a distant third, except for Harold.

But I loved Harold Taft, and so did everyone else in Texas. I just wanted to mention his name.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative). I'm glad you did.

Chapter 22 – 10:08**Back to Oklahoma**

John Erling: So then about 1984, Lee Allan Smith calls you.

Jane Jayroe: Yes.

JE: You've got this great job going.

JJ: Got this great job and they do market research all the time on the television stations. The market research on me was very good because it was iffy when I first went on the air. Then TV Critic had done a telephone interview with me. The station did not use the fact that I'd been Miss America in with the press release. Then Ed Bark, the TV critic, came out with a big headline, "KXAS Hires Barbie Doll, Former Miss America Loves God, Dogs, and Family."

They were very upset. I hadn't even gone on the air yet.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: So they were very concerned that I would not be accepted, that I would be considered a Barbie doll, not a journalist. But, in time, I was well accepted and the market research was extremely good on me. Did not do well with their new male anchor, so he was shipped off and a new one was hired.

But my personal life, it was so hard working nights and eventually was by myself with no family. Because I was in Fort Worth, the family was in Dallas.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: If I could have commuted from Dallas I would have stayed, probably, and had some family support. But without that...and when you work nights it's really hard to make friends. Because you don't have a regular schedule.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: I had one girlfriend, Sue Suwell, and she's still my friend, in Fort Worth. And then the people I worked with, but none of them had children, except for the men, and they all had wives.

So when Lee Allan called it was still a tough decision, but at that time I was by myself with Tyler. I needed to come home. I needed my friends, I needed my family, I needed my mother closer. I needed—

JE: So then—

JJ: ...to come home.

JE: ...was your answer to him, "I'll think about it"?

JJ: I'll think about it. What Lee Allan offered me—I guess I can say this now—he was general manager—

JE: Of KTVY.

JJ: Yes. He said, "I will match your salary and you can do the five and six o'clock with Linda Cavanaugh."

JE: Wow! That was very generous, wasn't it?

JJ: Yes, it was.

JE: Wow.

JJ: Wow.

JE: You must have leaped at that?

JJ: I couldn't believe it.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: I could be at home with Tyler.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: I could be a single mom that had a regular life and still have a good salary—

JE: Be home—

JJ: ...and come home—

JE: ...by seven o'clock in the evening.

JJ: ...and do a five and a six o'clock newscast.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: Wow! But what it meant was the step-down in terms of status.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: What I didn't realize is it meant some other things. It meant getting off the ladder, the career ladder. I didn't realize that.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: But I still would have chosen Tyler.

JE: Yes.

JJ: That's what I was doing. I was choosing him, and I missed my church a lot. I missed Norman Neaves and Church of the Servant. I never could replace that, and I tried a lot of churches. But I never could replace that. And I missed my friends. So—

JE: Must have been a number of people who said, "Are you crazy?"

JJ: Oh yes.

JE: "Leaving this market to go—"

JJ: And you know, a lot of people didn't believe it. They didn't believe it. Uh (hesitation sound).

JE: Didn't believe that you—

JJ: Well, you know, it's like politicians who say, "I'm resigning because—"

JE: Yeah, there's another reason.

JJ: "...for family and friends."

JE: Right.

JJ: When everybody knows they can't get reelection.

JE: Right.

JJ: A lot of people didn't believe it. And there was one woman who freelanced with the *Fort Worth Telegram* and also worked at KXAS and I loved her article. I was so appreciative of that because she wrote a great news article that told the truth. She said, "Nobody did what Jane Jayroe did. Nobody does that. She left a top ten market. She really left."

JE: And we should point out that you were the first female to be awarded Outstanding News Personality in the Dallas-Fort Worth television market.

JJ: Yes.

JE: That was, that was super.

JJ: That was a really neat thing. Uh (hesitation sound).

JE: I mean, you have a lot of awards, I know, but that just jumps out at me.

JJ: Well, it was a big deal for the station because they'd never had a woman that had any acceptance in the market. It was a big deal. Lola Johnson was the big name in television news. Judy Jordan had been the big name, I think that was her name. She had kind of changed by the time I was there. But KXAS had never had any female that had caught hold of any market share.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound), um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: So it was a big deal. And they offered to give me a big raise to stay.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: That did not help my decision.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: It was really, really hard to leave. Because I loved my career, I really loved it.

JE: There's a certain magic and chemistry between the camera and that person. These people are looking at you, so whatever you had within you, in addition to your writing and all, and you could read, obviously, there's that magic that happens. And you can't explain it and many of us can't. But something does happen. Is it—

JJ: I guess so.

JE: Right.

JJ: You know, I'm not good at analyzing that.

JE: Right, right. But that's what happened with you. You had that something that could jump out at a viewer.

JJ: Well, and I think it's maybe a bit regional, maybe not, I don't know. And I think it's an authenticity.

JE: Right.

JJ: I really think you can't fake it.

JE: No. However, how long did you stay at KTVY?

JJ: Just a few years, it didn't work very well.

JE: Why?

JJ: I don't know. I love Linda, she's one of my best friends. But, one thing is, the reporters and producers at Channel 4 were very loyal to Linda and they perceived me as a threat to her. They thought I was Miss Big Time coming in—

JE: Oh.

JJ: ...to show Linda up.

JE: Oh, for sure.

JJ: Linda is the least cosmetic person around. She doesn't care a bit about cosmetics. So here I was, Miss Beauty Queen.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: All fluffed up. And Linda, you know, hardcore journalist, but they paid people to fluff her up. She's okay with that and she's a very attractive woman.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: And she's a great journalist.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: She's a great writer.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: People don't know what a good writer she is. And she's fabulous at adlibbing. But there were little subtleties, like one night we were doing elections, which were very hard for me. I had not been in the market, I didn't know the name of people. Linda is brilliant at adlibbing—I'm not. And one of the teleprompters was down. I'm not sure they didn't turn it off.

They gave her the camera with the teleprompter. She could adlib all day and night, she doesn't need a teleprompter. She could do a whole newscast adlibbing if she had to.

I didn't have a teleprompter, so I just fumbled all over myself. I still did fine in the market. But what happened is, the station sold and Lee Allan left. New management came in and saw my salary.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: And said, "You're going to make half your salary and we're going to put you on early morning. We don't need both of you heavy-hitters on the same newscast, you and Linda."

So I asked Bill Thrash, who is a dear friend of mine, he was at OETA at the time, but I'd worked with him initially at Channel 5, if he would act as my agent, contact Channel 5 and see if they would be interested in having me back.

And they said they'd love to have me back, but they needed me at six and ten. I'd have to go back to nights.

So I talked to Tyler, who was older at this time, and said, "If you want to stay in a private school I'm going to have to go back to nights."

He said, "Mom, I don't care if you work at night. You know, it doesn't matter to me. I'm all right with that." And he was.

I was the one that missed out.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: Much more than he did. But he did miss out on things. There were things that I couldn't take him to. He missed out on a lot because it was just the two of us.

But I took the job and was able to keep a good salary and keep him in Heritage Hall. But that's what I mean about I didn't realize I got off the ladder when I left KXAS. I was on a heck of a career ladder.

JE: And now as you look back, you could have stayed there for another ten or fifteen years?

JJ: I could have stayed there for a long time.

JE: Yeah, 'cause it was working for you, big time.

JJ: It was working for me in a big way.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: And all of the anchors that I worked with, stayed there. And my acceptance in that market was extremely good. It never worked as well, really, here. News anchoring is funny, people like you to be familiar and the jumping around doesn't work very well. So I was jumping around. And then when I came back I was five and six with Linda and then I was back on Channel 5 at the six and ten.

And then I got married, and Tom Kirby came back as general manager and I really wanted some timer before Tyler left for school. And Channel 5 was not number one in the ratings anymore. And when you're not number one they start looking at ways to cut salaries. So I knew the writing was on the wall that they were not going to keep me on the six and ten at that bigger salary.

But I was very creative and I found a way that I would not be let go, but rather be used to use that with Channel 5. I got a great job with *Oklahoma Health Center* and I continued to do medical reports for Channel 5. But got a day job, so I had Tyler's last two years of high school where I had a daytime job. And I loved that.

JE: Tyler went on to what college?

JJ: He went to Vanderbilt. He's really a smart, smart man. He's—

JE: What is he doing today?

JJ: He is with the private equity division of J.P. Morgan in New York.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: He's really smart.

JE: How old would he be today?

JJ: Ahh, he is thirty-eight, I think. You'd have to ask him. He keeps track of my age and his.

JE: They make us feel old, don't they?

JJ: Yes, they do. I can't believe he's that old.

JE: And his wife's name?

JJ: Elaine.

JE: They have children?

JJ: They do. They have Luke, who is eleven, and Maya, who is seven, I think.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

Chapter 23 - 2:45

Marriage

John Erling: You were at *Oklahoma Health Center*, as you said, and various other things. A volunteer connection that you developed?

Jane Jayroe: Yes, I got to do some great philanthropic type of work, volunteer type of work. One of the gifts of being in Oklahoma for me is that I was able to be connected and involved in the community, which is something you just can't do in a place like Dallas-Fort Worth. You just kind of do the job.

And I would do things there, but it was kind of on behalf of the station. And here I was just immersed in the community too, and I loved that.

JE: So along in here I think it's time for us to bring up Jerry's name.

JJ: Yes, Jerry Gamble. Oh, he was a hard one to catch.

JE: You were married in what year?

JJ: Oh, gosh, we've been married twenty years, 2014.

JE: So in 1994, you were married?

JJ: Yes, I'm glad you're good with math.

JE: You had spotted him from afar?

JJ: I had. Norman Neaves had mentioned him to me. He said, "You've guys have so much in common. You both have grown up in the Methodist church. You're both from little towns. I hope you meet him sometime. He comes to church once in a while, but just know that when you meet him you guys sure have a lot in common."

Then he was really good friends with a good friend of mine. So I flat out asked Bruce Day to fix me up with his friend Jerry Gamble. I was tired of being single and I liked Jerry. I don't think he would have ever asked me out.

So I said, "Bruce, I need an escort to Robert Henry's dinner party. Will you ask your friend Jerry Gamble if he would take me?" This was so aggressive for me. Oh. But I'd been single for so long and dated so many people and I knew he had the character of the kind of man that I wanted to date.

JE: And what was his profession?

JJ: He was commercial real estate. He was a law graduate of Oklahoma City University and undergraduate of OU. Got a master's from Stanford, but he was from Jefferson, Texas, a little tiny town. He was just like me, he had done everything in high school. Grown up in the Methodist church.

You know, he wasn't real impressed with Miss America. Which is just fine with me.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: He took me out and then he didn't ask me out again for a long time. So I had to just keep asking Bruce what was going on with Jerry. And then he finally would ask me out. We dated for five years. Jerry does not do change easily. But he has that kind of stability.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: It was great. Still is great. Very grateful for him.

JE: Now you've been married twenty years.

JJ: Yeah, now we've been married twenty years. We both love the Methodist church. We both love Oklahoma City University. We both love music. We just have so much in common.

JE: If people heard the name Mrs. Gerald Gamble they would never know this was the former Miss America.

JJ: That's true.

Chapter 24 - 4:50

Tourism Director

John Erling: But then you do get into the Oklahoma Department—

Jane Jayroe: Yes.

JE: ...of Tourism. Tell us a bit about that.

JJ: And I'm so grateful. I just had four years as Cabinet Secretary of Tourism, director of the Department of Tourism. I have a real history of jumping into things that I'm not especially prepared for. I don't know why that is. I guess because I'm willing. And God places great people in the path to help me. I certainly had that with this.

JE: It was Governor Frank Keating who—

JJ: Governor Frank Keating asked me to serve. Appointment Secretary was a woman named Kay Dudley, who was also a mentor, a great encourager, and a spiritual mentor as well. They were very careful and also shoring up my weaknesses. I was not a politician. I didn't know how to craft legislation. I didn't know the players in the legislature.

And so they helped me as agency director to hire a deputy director, Doug Enevoldsen, whose whole career had been in the legislature and in the Department of Finance. He

was perfect to help me and he helped me hire an assistant, who was a godsend, Leann Overstake, who is still working in state government.

But I loved the job. It was still about communication.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: You know, communication to our employees, to our in-state public and out-of-state public about the treasures of Oklahoma. I really resonated with that.

JE: You really got to know the treasures, as you said, of our great state.

JJ: I did.

JE: Right.

JJ: And that was just such a joy. I was lacking in the administrative skills, but again, Doug, that was his strength. We hired good people and they were in place. But I did know the marketing and promotion and the public relations aspects. And this is where my heart was. So it was a joy to serve that. And I just had a lot to learn but I feel like I learned it fairly quickly.

JE: Out of the office you went out and you traveled Oklahoma, went to places you had never been before because—

JJ: I did.

JE: ...partly it was your job, but you're curious. And you saw all these beautiful places.

JJ: I loved that.

JE: The world does not know how great and the different eco systems we have. I think seven of them that are so wonderful, I don't need to tell you. But we just go from mountains to salt flats and people don't know that.

JJ: They don't know that. And it's the most varied landscape of almost any state in America.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: The greatest western art, and truly the most hospitable people. That's kind of a cliché, but it's not. Because you think of your own vacation experience, how it's affected. And I've traveled the world. The places I won't go back have to do with the people.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: You know, how you're treated when you go someplace makes all the difference about your experience. And people are treated well here. We're authentic people, we're so inviting and so hospitable.

JE: You served four years there?

JJ: Four years under Governor Keating, and of course, that was great fun being in the cabinet. And having a first lady like Cathy Keating was a dream because Cathy was such a promoter. And Lieutenant Governor Mary Fallon, at the time, was so promotion minded. And so to be able to work with those two women was a dream because they loved tourism. They were so willing to do anything we asked them to do.

One of the things we did that was great fun was Cathy's idea was she was good friends with Janet Huckabee in Arkansas. And so we had this big promotion on that

eastern border of the state of Oklahoma that we did with Janet. We just had a blast. We had television stations and newspapers and they did the same thing for Arkansas with Cathy.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: It was a great four years.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: I'm very, very appreciative of the fact that I received that insight into Oklahoma politics.

JE: And now today you are still involved in our community, of course, in many, many levels.

JJ: Yes. I love that. I love to be able to volunteer and to be involved. Also still like to write.

And when I think about it, my whole journey has been, in a great part, communication, which is interesting considering that shy streak that I have.

But part of it is being able to put words to pictures. Even as you said, on the landscape of Oklahoma. And trying to describe that to people, trying to inspire people, you have to use words or pictures.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: And words are more often the vehicle we use, whether it's written words or spoken words, it's what we use to connect with others. Even music, it's so often the words of music that connect.

So that's kind of where my life has been spent. And continues today in books and programming that I do, I use those vehicles to, hopefully, inspire and connect people.

Chapter 25 - 2:00

In an Instant

John Erling: I'm sure you've wondered as you looked back on your life and you're still a young life, you're sixty-six—

Jane Jayroe: I hope there's more.

JE: ...that there's another third left there.

JJ: Well . . .

JE: That if you had not been Miss America—

JJ: Um-hmm (questioning affirmative)?

JE: ...what would your life have been life today?

JJ: Oh, wow.

JE: You don't know but you just have to wonder about that a lot.

JJ: I don't know. I do.

JE: Because despite the fact you had the shyness and so forth, it did open doors for you.

JJ: It changed my life.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: There's no doubt.

JE: In that instant, when he said . . .

JJ: Just an instant.

JE: Right.

JJ: It changed my life. I think the pageant system would have changed my life even had I not won Miss America. But had I not entered the pageant system, what would it have been like?

OCU changed my life. Had I not gone to OCU, you know, there are all steps for each of us. There are those pivotal points that had we gone a different road, what would it have been? So I don't know, I'm just grateful for each turn, even the bad ones.

JE: I'm going to read your last paragraph from your book.

JJ: Oh.

JE: You just set it up beautifully because you said, "Even the bad ones." You wrote: If I had never been divorced, I would not be married to Jerry Gamble today. If I had not been desperate for money as a single mother, I would never have found a career that was incredibly satisfying. If I had not faced a demotion in television because of my return to Oklahoma, I would never have worked with the Presbyterian Health Foundation and Oklahoma Health Center. All of these *failures* led to a wonderful opportunities, including serving on Governor Keating's cabinet. Living an unexpected life by accepting grace, living with grit, and loving with a grateful heart is a blessing beyond description. For all of us who have met our failures, we have to look back and say, "Yeah, but, had it not have been for that, this would not have happened."

And you've summed it up right there.

JJ: Well, gratitude's a wonderful thing.

Chapter 26 - 5:50

Advise for the Young

John Erling: Advice for young people who are listening to this, coming out of college, ready to take on the world in whatever area of life, what would you say to them?

Jane Jayroe: Well, from listening to that, failures serve a purpose. Take the risk. For me, a person of faith, trusting in God, building those spiritual disciplines that build trust. Trust doesn't just happen, you have to have some spiritual discipline.

And I think we all know about loving our neighbors. But, know the commandments. The first one was love God. And how do you love God? You worship, you read the Word, you read the Bible, you pray, those are things that are choices to do. And we're pulled by so many time-consuming habits that to make the spiritual disciplines a habit, I think that's how you build your faith and your trust.

Those are choices we make every day and if you don't build that, some day, for all of us, a turn in the road, you're going to be pulled out. Something's going to happen that drops you down.

And then how you deal with that. Some people maybe are just strong, I don't know. But if I'd not had my faith and that spiritual strength, I don't know what I would have done. So in good times I really have become aware of that, of really building that spiritual muscle. Because loss happens for everyone. And I like living with that faith that I feel is always building, so that my relationship with God is something that is real. It's not something that I feel like, "Oh, well, when something happens, then I'll run to it." But something that I'm building on now.

So certainly to have that in your life helps you to risk and fail. Because you know there's something more to life while we're down here with our legs running. There's a bigger plan. And that there's grace when we do fall. And there's grace when we make mistakes.

I'm concerned about women, about young women, because they really have a struggle with family and career. It happens at the same time. Just like with me, you've seen that with Dallas with that great career opportunity and this little boy at home. It's a hard one. I don't see how it reconciles itself.

And these books and these high-powered women that say, "Just go for it. Hire help." I don't know about that. Something has to suffer. I don't think there's enough energy. You're going to be tired and worn out.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: And not doing your best at something. And so often it's the children at home. I think what compensates for that is the husband/father, or having that family support. I think if you're a woman that's got a great high-powered career and you're in the community with family, yes, that makes a big difference. Or if you've got a husband that can help fill in.

But, you know, if you want to set the world on fire and be Barbara Walters, when Barbara Walters was climbing the ladder—

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: ...and have four children, I think you'd better have one or two of those. Either a husband who's not doing the same thing.

I will say this, my son is married to a woman who is smart as anybody on the planet. She is choosing to be at home because he leaves before six o'clock in the morning and gets home after seven for his job. And I'm so grateful that she's there.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: With these young children.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: And if she does something later, power to her. But women, it should be about what they choose to do. And one's no more important than the other. But it is a dilemma for a lot of young women. So if they were to ask me—

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: ...I'm always very careful about, "Know what's important to you. Know your values when you go into it." Travel, just like with music theater, do you want to be with a regional company? Are you willing to travel? Do you want children?

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: Just know, know what you're getting into to, because you have them for such a short time. I just had Tyler for just a little time, and now I have all this time, but it doesn't work that way.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: You have to be a news anchor at a certain stage. You can't go back and start when you're fifty.

JE: Well, thank you for spending this time with us.

JJ: Ohh.

JE: And letting us in on your personal life and all its vulnerabilities because I think a lot will learn from this. Young people and adults as well. So this was fun, I enjoyed it. Thank you.

JJ: I enjoyed it. Thank you so much. And just an added word that we just have to be grateful for the opportunity that is there. And I think especially in Oklahoma, but in America. I mean, I just look around and my friends that I know, I mean, I'm friends with Judy and Tom Love, and David and Barbara Green and these people who we think of ourselves as ordinary, and yet the opportunity to influence—and I don't say greatness, because it's not a matter of being great or not great, that's not it. But to have some influence in our community. The opportunity to achieve what you were called to be, we have that opportunity. And especially in Oklahoma, it's just wide open.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: I'm just so grateful for that. And it is today for our young people. Just take your talent and go with it. Our schools are accessible, our universities are open. I know some OCU graduates who have done very well and they have stars in their eyes and they've seen their dreams come true. And they believed in them.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: That opportunity's still there.

JE: Yeah. Thank you very, very much. This was fun.

JJ: Thank you.

Chapter 27 - 0:33**Conclusion**

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