

**INTERVIEW WITH BOB BARBER
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TS: Bob, why don't you start by talking about how you got involved in track? I know you grew up in the Chicago area and was a high school star there. Why don't you talk about how it all came about?

BB: That's simple to answer. When I entered Niles West high school, I was about 5'2" and weighed about 100 pounds. I grew up with a lot of great athletes (Jim Hart of the NFL's St Louis Cardinals being one), but all of them went out for football. I was so small. I wanted to be in something, so I went into the cross country tryouts, and that's where I got my start.

TS: You must have done pretty well.

BB: Yes, I grew from 5'2" to about 5'10" in those four years of high school, fortunately.

TS: You weighed a little more than 100 pounds by the time you graduated, I guess. Talk about your accomplishments in track and cross country in high school.

BB: I was very fortunate to get involved with a club team in the summer. There was a coach in Chicago named Don Amadei, and he coached Tom O'Hara. I

don't know if you remember Tom; he set the world record indoors in the mile for Loyola University in Chicago [3:56.6 on February 13, 1964; and 3:56.4 on a 160-yard track in Chicago Stadium on March 6, 1964—the latter time standing as the world record for ten years]. He had a young fellow that he was mentoring to be a coach. This fellow wanted to get experience, so he formed a club called the North Shore Track Club. It was by invitation only. The coach's name was Chuck Shurke. I joined this club the summer between my sophomore and junior year in high school. He invited about ten or fifteen of the top high school runners in the suburbs of Chicago. We trained a lot together. We'd go to the Indiana dunes. It was a memorable trip in the summer. We'd camp out for a week. We'd be running in sand dune hills in 85 degree temperature. We would be doing innovative stuff like fireman's carry on the beach in the soft sand for forty yards maybe, then turn around, change places, and carry the other guy back.

TS: Was that a Great Lakes beach? What kind of beach did you have in Indiana?

BB: It's on Lake Michigan, and there are sand dunes.

TS: It's not far from Chicago then?

BB: Yes, about two hours from Chicago. There are really some pretty good hills there. We'd be running maybe forty yards in Lake Michigan water that would be just under our knee level—very unique stuff that I don't think many high school kids were experiencing.

TS: Was that an Australian influence from Percy Cerutti?

BB: I think he had probably studied [New Zealand coach Arthur] Lydiard and maybe Cerutti but especially Lydiard concerning the hill workouts. We had no hills in Chicago, but they had toboggan hills that were built for wintertime. He had us run up the hill, but he stressed that the important part of this workout was not going up the hill especially, but going down. He wanted us to get continually faster as we got toward the end. When we hit the level part, he wanted us running faster than we thought we could and lengthening out our stride for about 100 yards. That helped me a lot in high school. I guess to make a long story short, my senior year I was second in the state for cross-country. Incidentally, the person that beat me was in that group of mine that trained together. Chuck Schultz from Evanston beat me. In fact, he was a junior, and his senior year he won again. He was one of the few two-time winners in the State of Illinois. Schultz went on to Southern Cal teaming with O.J., Earl McCullogh, and Lenox Miller—our sprinters know that crowd. Illinois had pretty good competition in cross-country. In track I was limited because the longest race in track was the mile.

TS: Really, no two-mile run? I don't guess we had anything longer than a mile in Tennessee either.

BB: I didn't get to run a longer race until right after the close of the high school season. In a May Open meet I ran the three-mile in 15:15. *Track & Field News* ranked that No. 8 in the country for high school seniors. Probably the time that impressed Coach Rohe was right after the close of the high school season, I ran 9:34 for the two-mile. Coach had a good friend up there, Joe Newton, the famous coach of York High School [Elmhurst, Illinois], the only high school coach to ever be an Olympic coach [in 1988 as assistant manager in charge of marathon runners]. Rohe had called Coach Newton and asked about prospects, and Joe recommended he bring me down on a recruiting trip.

TS: Of course, Coach Rohe was from the Chicago area himself [suburban Park Ridge].

BB: I should mention that story about his recruiting prowess. When I was a senior in high school, he went up to visit his mom in Park Ridge for Christmas. He calls me to keep in touch, and we start talking, and I said, "Yes, I'm running in a road race down at the University of Chicago on Saturday." He says, "Can I come with you?" [I'm surprised but said,] "Sure. So Chuck picks me up to go to this road race. He said, "I want to meet Coach [Edward] "Ted" Haydon"—famous track coach at the University of Chicago Track Club. Haydon was also involved with the Olympics [as assistant US Olympic track and field coach in 1968 and 1972 and head coach of the US track and field team in the 1975 dual meet versus the Soviet Union.] He was a great coach. Coach wanted to meet him, so we went down to this road race. Sure enough—you know how Coach is—he got with Ted Haydon right away and convinced him that they drive around Jackson Park following the nine-mile race in the car. So Coach got a full hour for himself with Coach Ted Haydon to discuss everything about track, philosophies and stuff like that. It didn't hurt that I beat the Big Ten runners in the race. That's one of the Coach Rohe stories.

TS: So you got a chance to talk to him a little bit too I gather on the way.

BB: Yes, driving down and back. I just thought it was very interesting that he would take the time to call and recruit while he was up for Christmas and would want to go somewhere with me. That is really going the extra mile.

TS: I would have been shocked if he hadn't been recruiting while he was up there for Christmas. Of course, you didn't know him yet at that time.

BB: Well, I had been to a recruiting trip to Tennessee in November. He had invited us down as part of a group of about fifteen athletes.

TS: Did you go to a football game?

BB: Yes, we went to the Kentucky game, close to Thanksgiving time. He had state champions visiting from Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and New York, and half of these guys said they were coming. So I said, "Man, this might be a lot of fun!"

CV: Did he show you the track?

BB: No, that's another story. I've told this story many times, but it is true. I didn't really know we didn't have a track at UT until I got here. I never thought to ask about it.

TS: You didn't want to go for a run on the track while you were down here?

BB: When we were here, he had us so busy with his agendas—like we had to go to breakfast together, go to something [else] together, go on a hayride together, and go to a football game together. He had the Vol hostesses, and we had a dance. There never was time to think about facilities—Chuck had no locker room; no weight room; no nothing.

TS: You weren't in his first recruiting class. You came in the fall of 1963?

BB: Yes, I was in his second recruiting class.

TS: So your recruiting trip would be in the fall of 1962?

BB: His first class was here, and they were kind of entertaining us and keeping us busy. They were probably told not to bring [the lack of a track] up.

TS: And he was probably doing his best not to expose you to the varsity team that year. So when did he offer you a scholarship?

BB: Actually, it wasn't until early summer after I ran 9:34 and 15:15. I was very lucky to get invited so late.

TS: That should have been enough I would think. So you came here in the fall of 1963. Talk a little about your experiences on the track team at Tennessee.

BB: It was a tremendous four years. I wouldn't trade that for anything. I was more of a distance runner. I would classify myself as pretty good in cross-country, and I was a little disappointing in track from what I expected from

myself, and I'm sure from what Coach Rohe expected of me. I know this sounds like an excuse, but two miles was the longest race in SEC track. The western schools in the Pac 10 were running three miles and six miles at the time. Vick was probably in this situation too---he was a great three miler and in my opinion he would have been an All-American steeplechaser. There were other teammates of ours who were distance runners, and I think we were a little handicapped because training for the mile and the two mile, and then not getting to run a three mile, a steeplechase or a six mile until the last meet of the year at the NCAA meet was really a little disappointing. I know I could have done better at those.

TS: It's a measure of how backward the SEC was at that time.

BB: Well, I don't know if it was anybody's fault. It is just that I would lose a little focus after cross-country because I wasn't totally focused on track as much as I should have been.

TS: We've talked to several people that actually enjoyed cross-country a lot more than they enjoyed track—Paul Ladniak I guess is one—and thought of themselves more as a cross-country runners than track athletes.

BB: Possibly I did too because I could have been a better three miler and six miler if we had those events. The one time I did qualify and go—my junior year—at the USTFF I was ninth in the six miles and I think I was fourteenth or fifteenth in the steeplechase at the NCAA. And that was without any training for those events at all—just training for the one mile and two mile. But it was great. It really was a great four years. I was young when I got there. I was seventeen still. Vick was my roommate. I was very immature. I don't know how Vick put up with me. I didn't realize even during my senior year what I was learning from Chuck Rohe until maybe five years into my business career when I started applying things that he believed in and things that he demonstrated. Not that he tried to teach us, but he did it by example—getting up at 5:00 in the morning to be there to wake us up. For most of my career I was on the road as the Regional Sales and Marketing Manager for Brunswick Corporation. Part of being successful when you were on your own and on the road, with the home office in Chicago, is just getting up and doing your job everyday. You do that, and you are going to be more successful than half the guys that are better talkers and smoother, because that's how you win in sales.

TS: We're talking fifty years ago now, but I think I remember that maybe you would have preferred some different types of workouts than you were getting with the track team. You used to run back to campus from Cades Cove and stuff like that didn't you?

BB: No, that's exaggerated. One time Corky Williams and I tried to run back from Gatlinburg. That would be like 40 miles. It was just kind of a lark really. It wasn't any criticism of the coaching.

TS: Of course, it's all down hill to Knoxville from the Great Smoky Mountains.

BB: It probably is. I made it about a little over twenty [miles], and believe it or not Corky made it all the way.

TS: Who was it?

BB: Corky Williams. He was a distance runner from Ohio. He was a nice guy and was on our cross-country team.

TS: I guess we just didn't run far enough in our cross-country meets for him. But you made it twenty miles—almost a marathon?

BB: Yes, I made it in the lower twenties. That was a stupid thing for me to try. I did run in one marathon. I went home for spring break in 1964. It was the inaugural Chicago marathon on the Lake Shore. I ran real well, but there were only like seventy-five people in the whole race. I think I ran 2:50, and I got a letter from the Olympic Committee encouraging me to keep working at the Marathon. I swore to my mom when she was driving me home from the race that I would never run one again, and I never did.

TS: Well, 2:50 is pretty good.

BB: It was good for that time, and for my age. We didn't know about hydrating before and during the race—and we didn't know about nutrition (carbs).

TS: So you didn't drink any water on the run.

BB: Well, I probably grabbed [something]. I don't know. I don't remember. I just remember being completely cramped everywhere driving home, opening the window of the car and puking.

TS: What did you place?

BB: I think I was fifth. Hal Higdon was in the race—famous distance runner and writer—he was second or third. I think he was the top finisher of [the] Boston [Marathon] that year [first American, fifth overall in 1964 with a time of 2:21:55].

TS: Now you were captain of the cross-country team one year weren't you?

BB: Yes, my senior year I was captain of cross-country and our No. 1 runner.

TS: And that would be 1966?

BB: Yes, that was actually our weakest team.

TS: Was 1965 when Tennessee came in third in the NCAA?

BB: Yes, in 1965 we were third. In 1964 we won the USTFF [United States Track and Field Federation] Championship in Chicago. Those are our two highlights of cross-country in my opinion.

TS: That was the USTFF Championship that Copley ran so well in, and then he was gone by 1965. [Editor's note: Copley Vickers finished 3rd, Bob Redington 5th, David Storey 11th, Rocky Soderberg 12th, Bob Barber 17th, and Don Pinkston 23rd. UT's team score was 41 points, with Southern Illinois second (76 points) and the University of Minnesota third (90 points).

BB: My junior year [1965] we ran the SEC Championship, if I remember correctly, on a golf course in Birmingham. We took the first six places. Redington was way out front [19:15.40 for 4.06 miles, a course record]. Pinkston was way ahead of us. He ran very good [19:46]. Our third, fourth, and fifth were right together [Melvin Maxwell 20:07, Storey 20:08, and Barber 20:10]. I never even considered trying to sprint past these other two guys who were both seniors. [Soderberg was 6th in 20:15 and Mickey Shelton 8th in 20:30]. I had been running with them for three years. We got done, and this story is already on the website, so I guess you don't need to repeat it. All the teams in those days would be gathered around the finish chute putting their sweats on and dying, you know, trying to breathe. Of course, we had already finished and had our sweats on. Everybody was lying there. Coach Rohe comes running across in his big, loud voice, right in the middle of all these teams, and he goes: "Okay guys, let's get up. We're going to do five miles now, so we don't have to do as much when we get home tonight." That's my favorite story of Coach Rohe. I couldn't believe he said that. Everybody is lying there. And we did. We all got up. We had our sweats on. We took off down the golf course. I doubt if we did five miles. We probably did two or three. And we didn't work out when we got home. But it was a great psyche-out move by Coach Rohe.

TS: We've also got a story on the website about the next year and Larry Kelly running in the SEC cross-country championship.

BB: That was my senior year. Like I said, we were kind of spoiled. We had all those great runners, Vick and all those seniors that left us that year. So I'm the captain, and we don't have a good team. We're pretty weak. We got blown out by Georgetown—of course, they were very good—on our own home course. The week before the SEC, I went to Larry. He had been out

there running some cross-country workouts, but they had different workouts for the half-milers, and he hated it. He was a 46 and change quarter-miler. He was the anchorman on our mile relay. I said, "Larry, you've got to run with us at the SEC meet. You could be our fifth guy. It takes five guys to score. It's going to take a good fifth man—or a decent fifth man—for us to win." He said, "Bobby, I hate cross-country." It was like four or more miles [4.065 miles around a golf course at Birmingham, Alabama].

But Larry was a good friend of mine from a bordering city in Chicago. We knew each other from Chicago. So he says, "All right." We finished the race. I'm in the chute. I finished 4th [in 20:02]. I turned around to look. I see [Mike] Tomasello back in [16th] place [21:02]. I yelled back to Mike, "Do you see Larry coming in?" The next thing I hear is this really dead voice that goes, "I'm right here, Bobby." He was in 6th place [in 20:33]! He almost beat me! Sixth place in the SEC in a four-mile race, and he's a 46 second quarter-miler!" That was truly the finest memory I have at UT of him doing that for our cross-country team. Of course, we won the championship, and I didn't have to be the first captain to come home a loser. So that really meant a lot to me. [Editor's note: Others contributing to the UT victory were Andy Russell [7th in 20:34], Steve Allison [10th in 20:44], Gerry Eddlemon [18th in 21:29], and Steve Deaton [30th in 22:20].

TS: Just think what he might have done if he had run the mile seriously.

BB: I think he did run 4:09 when I was a senior and Larry was a sophomore. But you are right—if he wanted to, he could have broken four minutes. But Larry was more of a quarter-miler/half-miler than a half-miler-distance man. There was a big difference.

TS: Now your freshman year, did you go to the SEC meet? Freshmen weren't eligible, but I remember Bob Culbertson actually won the freshman race.

BB: Yes, I didn't go. This doesn't sound good, but the hard workouts, day after day, with no recovery, ran me into the ground my first two or three months in Knoxville. I was just so beat and worn out by November that Coach didn't even take me.

TS: I don't remember whether we had a full team there for the freshmen.

BB: No, they always sent one freshman in those days.

TS: I think it was just a two-mile freshman race, one loop around the Water Works.

BB: I don't know because I never went. That was a disappointment for me, obviously, because when I got to UT I was in great shape. Vick will tell you that I went out to our UT course, and I set the course record in the varsity-freshman race (Vick was a transfer and wasn't yet on the varsity). So I was looking forward to a good season, but it didn't work out that way.

TS: Well, I guess it paid off in the long run. What are your proudest accomplishments in track in college?

BB: My favorite days at UT in track, if I could just name a couple: one was my junior year in the SEC [outdoor championships] in [Athens] Georgia, when we took the top five places in the two mile [Redington 9:11.3, Pinkston 9:13.7, Barber 9:16.6, Storey 9:29.5, and Soderberg 9:37.7]. That was not just an exciting day for our group, but the whole team went crazy. I think we scored [91 points, to 2nd-place Auburn's 34]. I still have this picture in my mind of running the two-mile, and the weight men, of all people, were lined up around the track, cheering us as we went. It was truly a team performance and project. Everybody was together. I guess I enjoyed my junior year. I did go to the national meets—even though I got lapped in the six-mile on the track by Gerry Lindgren [of Washington State University]. I guess other people did too. I did enjoy that. It was the first time I got to run six miles in a college race and the only time.

TS: What did you place?

BB: I was 9th in that race at 30:15. Storey was ahead of me, possibly in sixth.

TS: So if you were 9th, there were a few other people who got lapped.

BB: Yes, I would say everybody except the second place guy, Oscar Moore [Southern Illinois University], probably got lapped. Then from there we went to the NCAA national meet the next week, and I was in the steeplechase against guys like Kenny Moore [University of Oregon]. So that was exciting.

TS: So you graduated in four years from UT?

BB: No, it took me two extra quarters. I had student teaching to do in the fall of 1967, and I had a few courses to do in the winter of 1968. So I graduated in March of 1968.

TS: Were you thinking about teaching school at that time?

BB: Yes, I was thinking about being a teacher and a coach. I was more interested in the coaching end of it. I wanted to coach in Illinois, so I started graduate school at Southern Illinois University in the summer of

1968. About half way through that first quarter, I got my draft notice for the armed forces. They let me finish that quarter. So I entered the army around mid August or late August.

TS: Had the rules changed by that time that being in school didn't automatically earn you a deferment?

BB: They had given up on grad school deferments.

TS: If you had been out teaching, you could have been deferred.

BB: There were teacher deferments, and that's for a later story. That's what really led me to my career. After getting out of the army, I went back to grad school. While I was there working on my master's, I started applying for jobs in Illinois. Because of the teacher deferment deal with the army, it was really hard to find anything where I wanted to be--- up in the Chicago suburbs.

TS: Oh, you're saying that everybody wanted to be a teacher at that time?

BB: Kinda. It was tough competition to get the jobs at that time because of the war and the teacher deferments. I had a couple of offers to coach and teach at a couple of schools in Southern Illinois—kind of country schools—and I didn't want to do that. So I gave up on that. I said, "I've got to start working at some point." So I went to Chicago and started working at Wilson Sporting Goods, and then to Brunswick Corporation.

TS: Okay, so you get your draft notice, and then you go immediately into the army?

BB: Very quick. It was late August. I go through basic training. They gave us a week. I went to advanced infantry training at Fort Ord [California], and by January 1, I was in Vietnam.

CV: January 1 of what year?

BB: Of 1969.

TS: Where did you do your basic training?

BB: I did my basic at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. I was assigned to the infantry. It wasn't by choice [laughs].

TS: Leonard Wood was a hero of the Spanish-American War [at later Army Chief of Staff, 1910-1914].

BB: Yes, he was some kind of famous person. I don't know what Ord was named for. [Editor's note: It was named for Civil War Union Major General Edward Otho Cresap Ord].

TS: So you spent all of 1969 in Vietnam?

BB: Yes, 25th Infantry Division.

TS: So you stayed there one year exactly?

BB: Exactly one year, yes. That was the required tour. I started just as a rifleman. The first month or six weeks, you've got to walk point and flank because you are the new guy. Then when some more new guys come--- you know you walk in a line--- and you try to get more into the center of the line as you're walking these missions through the jungle. So I saw an opportunity, and I became assistant machine gunner to get in the middle of the line. Then when that machine gunner was gone, I took over his gun, and I carried a machine gun for a couple of months.

TS: What does an assistant machine gunner do?

BB: You're still a rifleman, but you're the guy carrying all those fans of ammo like Pancho Villa, criss-cross. When the fight starts, you have to feed the ammo into the 60 mm machine gun, while the gunner fires. You're carrying a lot of weight. Then when you carry the machine gun, you've got those loops of ammo on, plus you've got a 30 pound gun hanging from your shoulder. It worked out good for me. I was in good shape still.

TS: How much did you weigh at that time?

BB: I probably weighed 145.

TS: So 145, and you are carrying a 30-pound machine gun.

BB: Let's say 30 pounds and 5 pounds of ammo and all your other stuff. So you're probably carrying 50 pounds through the jungle.

TS: I know you were given all kinds of medals. Why don't you talk about your experiences and maybe how your experiences at Tennessee on the track team influenced or helped you?

BB: I'm not sure anything really influenced or helped me. The whole idea once you got there—I hate to say this—was to survive the year and go home. I was very fortunate. I was very lucky. It was all by chance who got wounded and who got killed. I mean, the guy next to you could be five times the soldier you were, but it was just luck that it hit him instead of you.

I didn't get a lot of medals. I got a Bronze Star for Valor and two Purple Hearts.

TS: We've got on the website [www.rohetrackera.com] what you did to get the Bronze Star.

BB: That's on the website, so we don't need to go over that.

BB: Later in 1969 I was sent to a unit that was guarding the top of Black Virgin Mountain. The technical name was *Nui Ba Den* Mountain [Tay Ninh Province near the Cambodian border]. It was the highest peak in South Vietnam [3,268 feet]. We had a bunch of Air Force radar and technology and stuff up there. We were assigned to guard that mountain at night. This was quite a bit easier detail. We got attacked sometimes, but they only got inside our perimeter twice in my five months. Again, being lucky, both times their penetration into our wire was on the other side of the perimeter than I was on. I kind of had a horseshoe in my pocket when I was in Vietnam.

It was an interesting mountain because the Viet Cong had all kinds of caves and places where they went to rest in the middle of the mountain. We were on top, and our military was on the bottom. Our Army units would do sweeps all the time. They would come up from the bottom, and then when they got up there, they would stay over night, and then they would sweep back down. It's interesting that the Viet Cong were in the middle of the mountain, we were on the top, and our forces were on the bottom. Many nights it would be so foggy up there, that we couldn't see ten feet in front of us, but we had a great perimeter set up.

TS: So the sweeps didn't find them, or what?

BB: I don't know. The VC and NVA had great caves and tunnels. I doubt if our sweeps did much good, no.

TS: So one year [in Vietnam], and then what happened after that? Did you have two years in the army?

BB: They sent me to Fort Campbell, which was nice. That was close to Nashville for my last five months. They were going to let me out two months early, which I thought was nice to go back to grad school in June, because I went in in August. I knew how to type, so they had me in the office typing AWOL notices. I mean for thousands of guys disappearing everywhere (on my plane to Viet Nam we stopped at Honolulu to refuel. We were let out into the airport for an hour. When we took off there were two empty seats---true story) I was typing these forms all day. One day during a break, I was driving on the fort, and I saw this track, and there were these

guys running on the track. So I stopped, and I went over there, talked to them, and they said there was a track team at Fort Campbell. I asked who was the coach. They told me, and I went to see him. The last three months of my duty was pretty good. I would type in the morning, have lunch, and then about 2:00 o'clock I'd go to the track and work out for an hour or two. That was pretty nice. They had a meet there—it was like a regional army/open meet. Guys came over from UT. The only one I remembered from my group was Tom Carmichael [discus and shot put at UT, 1969-1971; captain in 1971]. He came over. I started talking to him. Dan Zoeller [middle distance runner at UT, 1969-1973] was there. I didn't really know Dan from school. They were competing in the meet. I ran in the steeplechase, and won the steeplechase. This was like in May. I had a couple of weeks left. The coach says, "If you'll re-up for like three months, I'll send you to the national" [laughs]. Maybe you [Copley Vickers] were in that.

CV: The All Service Meet.

BB: The All Service Meet, or the All Army Meet, and [he says] "it's a great experience." I say, "There's no way I'm re-upping to go to another track meet."

TS: I've never heard of anyone re-upping for only three months.

BB: Yes, they had programs like that.

TS: But you didn't want to have anything to do with it?

BB: No, no. They were letting me out two months early. So maybe you're correct, the extension was probably to my real discharge date in August [when the two years were up] not a reup as I said.

TS: Did you keep running after you got through with your military duties?

BB: Not really. I would go out and run once in a while, but once I started in my career, I was a Regional Sales and Marketing rep out in the field it was difficult. You would take a dealer to lunch. You might have a beer or two. You would go see another dealer in the afternoon. You'd take him to dinner—another beer or two and dinner. It wasn't conducive to running at all.

TS: You said a little about how track helped you with your business career. Do you have anything you wanted to add to that?

BB: I think it helped a lot. If I could say one thing about the influence on my military career, it was probably to a detriment that I had been taught so much discipline to get up every morning and to run. We were very

disciplined people. Even if we were goof-offs like myself, we were disciplined. Then you get into the service, and like in basic training and advanced training, they're trying to break down these young guys and teach them discipline and do these silly things like clean latrines with a toothbrush and stuff. I didn't really feel that I needed that kind of training. I felt I was disciplined. So that's that. But the same thing in work, especially if you are out on your own and your home office is in Chicago—you could stay home if you wanted, or you could go out and work. I felt that the discipline we got as distance runners probably helped me a lot. Like I said, just going out every day and doing your job.

TS: So what we really got was self-discipline wasn't it? In other words, we didn't have to have someone to tell us what to do.

BB: No, but I think we learned that from the disciplines of distance running training. You had to be pretty disciplined to do it every day and most times twice a day.

TS: So when did you start running again and doing so well in senior track?

BB: If I could just go back a minute, I would add probably the most important thing that influenced my business career—and I did quite well I think—was being around Coach Rohe for four and a half years. Not the training and what I accomplished in track, but the positive attitude and work ethic that he showed—not that I had—but that he showed—what it takes to be successful. That carried with me all through my business career. I think the other thing I learned that helped me all through life was to be around positive-thinking people. Find people that have goals and think positive and aren't complaining, like they do today about every little thing in government. And stay around those kind of people. You're going to stay positive. I think that helped me a lot. I have a wife that's like that. That helped a lot in my business career.

TS: How did you get back to Knoxville?

BB: When I was about 55, my wife and I started thinking about where we wanted to retire. We could live real nice on the East Coast. With my job we could live anywhere we wanted. We lived in Boca Raton [Florida] for five years, Fort Lauderdale for nine, and Hilton Head [South Carolina] area for five. But those places are expensive to live. So my wife and I sat down one day and we said, "Do we want to keep paying this \$10,000 a year in fees and dues and stuff to live at this country club on Daufuskie Island across from Hilton Head, and work ten extra years, or do we want to look for a less expensive area to retire in and retire early?" Our choice was to look around. We started looking in Georgia, Alabama, and East Tennessee. Those were our targets—a little bit of the western tip of Virginia. We liked

Lake Martin in Alabama. We liked that lake that's 60 miles east of Atlanta—Reynolds Plantation is near.

TS: Lake Oconee?

BB: Yes, we liked that area and the Johnson City area. We came to Knoxville looking at a country club called Rarity Bay on Lake Tellico. We spent the day there and were driving out of there and saw this sign for Tellico Village. We decided to look at that, and that's where we ended up. It's a very nice lake. We were able to afford a property right on the lake and have a boat and fish off the dock. There are a lot of retirement people there. So we moved there in 2000, and three years later in December 2003 I retired.

TS: So that's when you got started with the Knoxville Track Club?

BB: Yes, I retired in 2004 at the first of the year and went to the Sea Ray Relays [at the University of Tennessee]. It's April. I'm at the Sea Ray Relays. I still weigh about 175 pounds and couldn't run around the block. But I saw these athletes and runners and stuff, and they looked like so great! I said, "I've got to get back in shape." So I went on an Atkins Diet and lost a lot of weight and started running. The more weight I lost the more I enjoyed going out for a jog or a run. I got under 150 pounds, and I decided, "I know how to train. I think I'll start training and run in a race." I ran my first race in September 2004 on Neyland Drive. It was a 5K. I think I was 58 [years old]. I was in an age group, probably 55-59.

TS: How did you do?

BB: I ran 19:10. I was expecting to run around 21:00 minutes. I just got in a race and got all excited. I won the age group from 50 and over, which is called Grand Masters. That got me a little interested. I looked into some of the different things I could go to. The Senior Olympics was one that interested me. I looked at what people were running, and I said, "I could be successful at this." I had already missed the qualifying in Tennessee for the next Senior Olympics. So I went to Arkansas, and I ran and qualified in the Arkansas Senior Olympics to go to the national one. One thing that I remember there; one of the best senior runners in the country was doing the same thing. He had missed his state qualifying, and he came there to qualify. He ran around 4:50 for 1500 meters. He was younger than me. I think I ran around 5:06 or 5:07. We were talking that evening. I was digging for information because this guy had experience in doing all this, going to the big meets and everything. He says, "There's really two ways that you can do it. You can [go all out] in your training and shoot to compete against the top guy, or you can enjoy a 20-year master's career and run a little easier."

He worked for FedEx. He went to [college at] Georgetown. He was a really good runner at Georgetown. He said he had chosen to run for the national titles, and he didn't know how long he would last. I don't know how long he lasted. I lost contact with him, and a few years later I didn't see his name in the national meets. So I guess he suffered the same fate I did. My career was five years in masters'. So I went to that first national meet The US Senior Olympics. It was in Pittsburgh. I had no experience. I was 59, so I was the oldest year in the 55-59 year group. I was entered in the 5000 and the 10,000, and the 1500. I went out to see the course. I drove it in the car, and it was so difficult. I'm not making this up. It was the same course that the bicycle racers were using. Hills probably don't bother them as much, but it was very hilly, and the temperature was like 90 degrees. So I scratched out of the 5K with the intention of trying to win the 10K.

Lo and behold, I'm leading this race all the way for my age group. There was a masters' track legend called Bill Boryla from Connecticut. He was in the age group above me, 60-64. Bill's probably won 50 national championships in different events---you could look him up. We are at about the five and a quarter mile mark, and I passed this guy. I was moving pretty good. We got to about five and three-quarter miles, maybe even further, and I passed out, and hit my head on the medal road divider—heat exhaustion. When they picked me up—because it was all masters' they had a lot of people watching that last mile with cars—they picked me up and threw me in a car. They wouldn't even let me [finish]. I could probably have jogged in and won my age group. But they picked me up. So that was my first experience with masters' at the national meet.

TS: What was your biggest accomplishment?

BB: In masters' my favorite days were a year and a half later. I was age 60, which was the plumb age because you're the youngest in your age group. I went to the USTAF master's indoor championships at the Reggie Lewis Center in Boston. There was good competition there. That Friday night I won the 3000 meters on the track. The next day around noon I ran and won the mile. I ran around 5:25. So that was nice winning two national championships in really the first master's for USATF that I went to. I met and saw so many inspiring things. There were 70-year-old guys jumping 20 feet in the broad jump. There were 50-year-old sprinters. I forget what times they were running, but they were really impressive. I really got into the track part of master's running. I enjoyed that the most. That summer I went to the outdoor USATF Championships in Charlotte, North Carolina and won the steeplechase setting an American record for the age group, and took second in the 10K. There were some really good runners that I met. I was in a USATF Indoor Championship race also at the Reggie Lewis Center a couple years later. I didn't fare as well. The Australian who won

our mile race set the world indoor record. He ran either 4:58 or 4:59 or right at 5:00 minutes, and he was 60 years old—in the mile indoors.

CV: Wow.

TS: That is good.

BB: I was the fourth American finisher. He was international, so he didn't count. I ran around 5:29. Ten minutes later my friend who I got to know, [Frank] Condon, who ran at Villanova—he sets the American record—it might have been a world record—for 65-69 [age group].

CV: Wow.

BB: These were people who were doing phenomenal things. There was a 70 year old Canadian running 2:30 for the 800m. Now when I try to run at a 7:00 minute pace on the track, it feels like I'm sprinting.

TS: Right.

BB: I say, "How did we ever do those things?"

TS: Talk about the things you've done for the Knoxville Track Club.

BB: Well, once I retired and got into running again, I met people from the track club and started participating in their events and decided I wanted to get involved. After a year or so I was really doing well in the races, and one of the guys on the board asked me if I wanted to be on the Board of Directors. So I did that. I was on the Board of Directors. My first year on the Board of Directors was the second year of the Knoxville Marathon, which has become very successful both participant-wise—they have like 8,000 participants altogether, including the youth events—and good financially also. I won't say how much the track club was netting, but it was making some pretty good money from it. The board wanted to figure out what we could do with that money to help the community. The idea came up between me and another guy. We decided, "Let's present this idea to install mileage markers on all of the greenways". I had been training out in Maryville, and they had these markers every quarter mile, and it was really helpful. So we decided to use our funds and do that as a gift. There were 40 miles of greenways that we placed quarter-mile mileage markers on. That was a project that I headed up. I was at every installation and got the volunteers and did everything. That was a worthwhile project. In fact, last Sunday we just finished our repair work, reinstalling 50 signs that were either vandalized or faded or whatever on the greenways. So I became good friends with the City of Knoxville Parks & Recreation also. We've

been good partners on this project. Joe Walsh is the director of Parks & Recreation and has become a good friend and ally of the club.

That was one project, and then about a year later they needed a treasurer, so I volunteered to be an officer and treasurer of the track club for a while. Somebody mentioned [the Knoxville Track Club] Hall of Fame. So I said, "I'm probably the only one of the board here that was around when the track club started. I'd be interested in being involved in that." So they said, "Good! You're in charge"—just like Coach Rohe would do [laughs]. "Good; you want to head that up?" I said, "Sure." So I've been involved as chairman of the Knoxville Track Club Hall of Fame. We've done three inductions. We do them every two and a half years. That's been a lot of fun and a lot of work. It's almost a year project. You form the committee that picks the honorees. Then you have to put out notice to get applications. We give two months for that. Then you have to vote. It takes a lot of time. That was a time-consuming project, but it was a lot of fun for me because, I'm not kidding, after [Hal] Canfield left the board because of health, I was the only one left there—Donnie Graham wasn't on the board at the time—that knew who some of the people were that started the club. That was rewarding for me. I got them all in the HOF, except for [Copley's] dad so far. Sorry Vick. But everybody else we've inducted. I don't pick them. I don't influence the Committee. But I can put in a nomination just like any other member. I wrote a lot of the nominations because I knew what these people accomplished for the Club in the early years. So that was another way [I've been involved]. To view, go to ktc.org and click Hall of Fame.

I've been involved as an official with the track officials' group. I was an official at the SEC cross-country meet [hosted by the University of Tennessee] when we had our reunion [in 2011]. There haven't been any [college] cross-country meets to officiate in Knoxville, which is sad and probably part of the problem we have right now with [the success of the UT] track [and cross-country program]. I'm just learning on the track end of it to be a clerk in the clerks' tent. The clerks are responsible for signing in the athletes, giving them their numbers, their lane assignments, taking them out to the starting line, putting them in position and handing them off to the starter. So that's been kind of fun too learning how to do that. I've had some good help—teachers teaching me how to be a clerk.

TS: All right. What have we not talked about that we ought to talk about?

BB: I'm not sure.

TS: Is there anything that you're really proud of that we haven't talked about?

BB: I'm proud that all of us have stayed together as friends. It's pretty unique. I have friends from high school and even grade school, but it's like four or five people [from grade school], maybe ten from high school. But to have about fifty friends that we've kept in contact with from [college] is pretty unique. So I'm proud of that, proud of what Vick has done in organizing everything for the [October 2014] reunion.

CV: What about the great job he has done on the [Rohe Track Era] website?

TS: Absolutely.

CV: Absolutely!

BB: The website has been a fun project. I would say your brother Paul [Scott] has probably done as much work on it as I have. He's done some amazing things. The hours he has put in probably exceed mine. But, yes, that's been fun. It wasn't something I was equipped to do. I had no experience. Most of us at our age are fossils when it comes to technology. I made the mistake—I wasn't even going to go to the [Rohe era] organizing meeting, and Vick called me and begged me to come. So I came, not wanting to volunteer for anything, and I happened to make the mistake when we came to the discussion about how we set up the website. I said: "I'm good friends with our webmaster at the Knoxville Track Club, and I'm sure he could help us out." So Coach says, "Okay, will you take care of that?" You don't say, "No," to Chuck, so I said, "Okay." So I had to learn a lot about setting up a website, and I'd say right now I'm proud of what we've done. But I'm a little uncomfortable that not as many people have volunteered to add to it. I'm uncomfortable feeling like I'm determining what goes on the website. It shouldn't be that way. It should be our whole committee.

These new sections that Paul and I and you are working on—the Vols in the Military and the Post-Graduate Success Stories—we really aren't trying to brag about ourselves; we're trying to show how it reflects on Chuck Rohe.

I was a very, very minor figure in our success and don't deserve this lengthy interview, but Tom asked me to participate and I hope we continue to add many more interviews this coming year. Thank you Tom, Vick, and thank you Chuck.