

SEEKING THE EXTRAORDINARY

Ep 17- The Unsinkable Mary Margaret Revell

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Michael Nathanson: Welcome fellow seekers of the extraordinary welcome to our shared quest, a quest, not for a thing, but for an idea, a quest, not for a place, but into deep inner unexplored regions of ourselves, a quest to understand how we can achieve our fullest potential by learning from others who have done or are doing exactly that. May we always have the courage and wisdom to learn from those who have something to teach.

Join me now in seeking the extraordinary Michael Nathanson, your chief seeking the extraordinary today. We're going to meet someone whose life has been a story, the likes of which you've never heard before. Disney wanted to make a movie about. And with good reason, what you're about to hear might very well sound more like a movie and a podcast. So, sit back, get some popcorn, and get ready for an amazing story about an amazing person. The main plot of our movie really starts with our protagonist was a young girl who learned that even President Truman would and did reply to her requests. If she had the right ambitions, when her parents did not want her to be a competitive swimmer, our guests decided to take to the open water. And how you asked, did she do.

Well, here are just a few of the highlights. She swam across the nine-mile Strait of Gibraltar finishing in seven hours, 13 minutes, and becoming only the second woman to accomplish this feat. She made several attempts to swim across the English Channel before swimming across the 14-mile Sea of Galilee in Israel becoming the first woman an American to do so. She was the first woman to swim the 16-mile Straits of Mackinac in upper Michigan, and the first woman, and first American to swim the double crossing of the straits of Messina. And she did a lot more than that during her career. She said eight open water world swimming records but believe it or not swimming wasn't enough for our guests.

She got herself into long distance running too. She did a six-hour swim in Lake Mead just after running from Los Angeles to Lake Mead via Las Vegas at the age of 47. The next year she ran the 2000-mile length of Japan in 62 days. She was the first person in the world to do this two years later at the age of 50, she ran the 3000-mile length of the Himalayas. By the way, she also worked for the Pentagon as special assistant for the environment and help direct the Navy's first environmental and conservation office. She wrote children's books and newspaper articles edited a magazine may BBC documentaries study sharks raised sea otters founded a company that made swimwear and sporting gear became an acclaimed historian and took the lead in establishing her great passion, the Maryland museum of women's history.

Please welcome the extraordinary Mary Margaret Revell Goodwin. Welcome Mary.

Mary Margaret: Thank you so much, Michael. Thank you. This is really something for me, because at this point I have so many people who know little bits and pieces and who are constantly getting on Facebook saying, you've got to write your autobiography.

And I've been doing that actually for about 18 months, but in little bits and pieces as things come up, that sort of remind me, oh yeah, I remember way back when I was being naughty or when I was being a brat or when I was being, because I really do consider myself an army brat because I was born actually at Fort Lewis when my father was in the United States army, but that's kind of been the hallmark of my whole life.

And if you were to talk to at least some people here in Queens County and Centerville, Maryland, I would say that they still think that at 84, I'm still a brat.

Michael Nathanson: Well, the word that comes to mind when I read about your story was none other than, wow. You truly do have an amazing story and worthy of an autobiography that I would suspect could be a best seller? And I mean that, and I'm guessing that our listeners will agree when they start to hear your story. So, I gave a little bit of, I guess, some of the headlines during my introduction, but maybe it would be helpful if we could start by stepping back and asking you about the, how and the why, how, and why did you start getting into all of these extraordinary and that is the word challenges?

Mary Margaret: Wow. I guess in the first place, in spite of the fact that I have been pretty much. Professional athlete for part of my life, but for almost every project that I've taken on, there's been stuff that stopped me or the biggest cases, a disease or medical problem that had to be overcome before I could take on whatever it was that I wanted to take on.

And it started with polio in fourth grade, the summer before fourth grade, and three of us were in a swimming pool in this SEMO Keene valley in California. And unfortunately, all three of us within one day of being in that swimming pool, we all three came down together. My sister, my cousin and myself came down with polio in spite of being sick with the polio. The biggest deal for me was that because we lived 27 miles from the hospital, we were taken by ambulance because we were one of the first to get polio, the three of us. And I thought the biggest deal was going in the ambulance with the siren on. And when I got into the hospital, my sister, Kathleen, and I were put together in one room and then my cousin was put in another room down the hall.

We did not know that he was put almost immediately in an iron lung. And my sister was closest to the door, and she saw our uncle down the hall and she said, oh, uncle Jerry's here. And we asked, why isn't he coming to see us? And they said, because he's coming to take Gary home without being told that he, in fact he had died, no.

Wow. Within three or four days of being in the hospital, it was a really serious situation for all three of us. But for the two of us, what happened was sort of a long-life procession of the things that happen under lying in your whole entire nervous system and your physical system going forward.

So in later years, The first incident was problems in my legs. And that was when I was in college. And one of my legs was put in a, a huge full leg cast. And of course, that caused adhesion. So, what, after the surgery on my leg, unfortunately, they said, well, now you have to learn to bend your knee and you have to learn to move your leg.

And my father, who was always very demanding that I be as perfect as possible. He said, I will not have a daughter who limps. And that was really hard. And he said, I will break these adhesions myself. And I said, well, give me three weeks and then we'll talk. And so, I went back to college and I went down to the Roosevelt hotel, the famous Hollywood Roosevelt hotel walked in, talked to the manager of the Roosevelt and they said, look, it's winter time.

Could you please let me have the use of the pool? Because this is what my father is going to do. If I can't then my knee, I spent every hour out of class in that pool, five hours a day and swimming and swimming at the end of that time. Not only could I bend my knee and touch my heel to my butt.

But I realized, oh yeah, I can do this long swim. I can go for it. And then of course that none of that was going to be possible with my parents. So that's how I got started on my swimming career. And to be honest, after quite a number of years in the Pentagon, I started having problems walking and with a lot of different times in the hospital, they finally discovered that my spine was disintegrating and the original treatment was to get poked in the back constantly with cortisone, which of course within a couple of weeks put on 30 pounds.

And that just made things more difficult. And finally, they did the actual study that needed to be done. And I said, I know that my spine is coming apart because I can feel it. And when they got the results back, they said, if we had not done the surgery and repaired your spine, you would have been a paraplegic within the next three weeks.

Michael Nathanson: Wow. So when did that happen?

Mary Margaret: Well, that was, I can tell you not the date, but I can tell you, it was the year that Rocky in the movie ran up the steps in the light of the big steps in Philadelphia. I just, I don't remember the year I'm going

Michael Nathanson: I'm going to say late seventies or early eighties.

Mary Margaret: I would say like sometime in 77, 78.

Michael Nathanson: Yeah.

Mary Margaret: But the thing of it was. How I got started with that. The doctor, when I left the hospital said, I'm telling you now you cannot even ride in the car, sitting up until you can walk a mile. And I said, oh, I can do that. And a mile in a couple of weeks. Three miles, five miles, eight miles. And I did my first 10 K six months after the back surgery and the next surgery cause they had to do the whole spine.

So, I'm good to go.

Michael Nathanson: So some physical challenges and you overcame those challenges and by happenstance, you discovered that pool and discovered your love for an ability with the water.

Mary Margaret: Yes, at home, we always had a swimming pool and it was all for recreation, but when I wanted to do competitive swimming, my dad said, you're going to do the books.

You're going to have the grades and you're not doing competitive swimming. You're not going to do that. And I did it anyway.

Michael Nathanson: So, one of your first big swims was the Santa Catalina channel. What happened when you tried that?

Mary Margaret: Well that's when my parents had no idea that I was going to go ahead and do my long-distance swimming. I actually swam to prove that I could swim.

And I looked at that particular swim now have swimming from Malibu to Santa Monica as my first big 18 mile swim. And I look at what is going on with all of the sharks and all of the sewage water from dirty rainwater, going into the ocean in those areas. And I think, wow, I'm glad I was doing it back then.

And not now, but when I did that first Catalina swim, unfortunately I gave power to other people to make all of the boat arrangements. And the place where we were starting, you had to wait to see the lights from the boat.

And when we saw the lights from the boat, we went into, I had a friend on a surfboard who was with me and I will tell you now, when we got out there, there was no boat. And by this time everybody who had come to see us leave and start, the swim had already left. Unfortunately, it was in 400-foot dirt cliff to get down, to start the swim. And when we got out there and there was no boat turned around to come back, we had to climb back up. Now I was covered in axle grease.

That's how unknowing I was about what I was supposed to do. And we got to the top. And then there was a complete field full of thorn bushes, those wonderful California sticker bushes. So covered in the dirt and the actual grease and barefoot and swimsuit and camping goggles. We had to go, I don't even remember how much distance it was, but it was a significant amount. And we then had to go. To some house. It was very long ways away, five o'clock in the morning. And we knocked on this man store and he came in his bathrobe, and I said, could we please call the police? And it's you bet. And then he said, I would offer you to be seated. But he said, you're making oil and dirt tracks and mud on my floors.

So that was the start of my first channel swim. But unfortunately, everybody thought I was still out in the channels. And so, at three o'clock in the morning, the coast guard called light carrots and said, your daughter is at the moment, lost in the Catalina channel. And we have a helicopter up looking for her.

So that was not a good way to start. And it got worse. Yeah,

Michael Nathanson: Mary Margaret, we tell us the story of your attempt to become the first woman and first American to swim the straits of Messina between Italy and Sicily. I mean, this is one of the ones, at least I think you're best known for. I understand you even had some interaction with the, with, shall we say the mafia?

Mary Margaret: Oh, I knew it was a mafia and it wasn't a question of having to, it was my idea to do that, but I didn't really understand at that point it was like before all of the big, well, I'm sure there was a lot of FBI stuff going on, but all I knew was one of the biggest mafiosos in Sicily had just started this hydrofoil and he was able to cut out the steamers and bring the passengers from the Italian side to assist.

On the hydrofoil. And so, I thought, wow, he's going to need publicity. How about if I call him and ask him to be my sponsor? So, from the U S I called up to Italy and asked, and I got a call back saying, yes, we'll do that. Well, it turns out he also owned the hotel and so forth. So, when I got there and they brought the plane ticket, I mean, it was everything.

And I got there, and I went to the hotel, and I said, I need to talk with somebody from the Harbor who can tell me how to get across the Strait in terms of time and where I leave and so forth. And the concierge said, oh, this is all. There's a United States Navy ship. That's in the harbor and you go down there tomorrow, and you will talk to the captain.

Well, little did I know that it was Admiral McDonald, who was the commander of the sixth fleet for the whole of Europe and his command ship. So, I go there, and I have on my best silk shenton dress high heels, my wool coat, and wearing a hat. And I walked up to the Marine at the plank at the gangplank, and I said, could I please see the commanding officer?

Now, this was long before I had been to the Pentagon. I, that was a whole thing in the future. So, they went away, came back, said, okay, they will see you. I've walked into the Admiral's meeting room. And here was this whole group of senior officers and one Italian Naval officer. And they said, you bet, we can do this.

And everybody here is going to help you get this done. And that includes this gentleman to my right because he is our Italian attached to the six fleet and he will take care of you. So I thought, oh, this is really great. And that young men there is a really good looking young man. So, we made everything agreed upon leaving before I left the ship. And the next morning I'm just waking up and I hear clop clop, clop, clop, and the helicopter has landed on the roof of the hotels.

And it is the Italian Naval officer who has come to meet with me in his helicopter to come and talk with me about how things are going to happen. Then it turns out on top of that, that Cecily was the first site of the first United States Naval seal team to the UN international seal team operating from Cisco.

And then they said, well, we're going to bring your boat. We're going to take care of everything. So. The arrangements were all made everything. They said, you just be on the beach at XYZ hour and we're good to go. So on the morning of the swim there, I was, I had all the Italian fistulas sports officials that the timers I had everybody, I had a Naval officer from the US Navy who was actually on the boat to the one of the judges.

And I got in the water and did the swim. But the thing was that the seal team had brought, first of all, they came to actually go in the water with me. But besides that, they had the little rubber sodium boats, and they had this black bag. Funny, one of the votes, it was going to be right next to me. And I asked what that was for. And they said, oh, you'll see what that bag was full of little American flags. And every time an American flag got wet in the spray, if it didn't stand out straight, they would change it to another dry American flag. So, every time I took a breath, I could see the American flag. Right there. Yeah,

Michael Nathanson: It must have been so inspirational.

Mary Margaret: It was so amazing to me.

And so we got to the other side and there was a small group, but when we turned around and went back and I can't remember the Messina, it's like a huge turbulence, like almost like being in a washing machine, but it isn't always exactly the same. It got worse on the way back. So, it was a tough swim back.

But by that time, the crowd was so great. In Sicily that everybody, including the United States Navy officer, who was the judge for the United States, because there were also Italian judge say all jumped overboard and waited through the water in their shoes and clothes, because all of these elderly women in fully dressed in black who were Sicilian, women were so excited, but they were so worried that they were rushing onto the beach to try and help me out of the water.

And you cannot be touched by anybody until you have completely cleared the water. And so, you can just see. All of these CLT people, everybody holding these people back. And in the meantime, the street was for much higher up as a result. And I sent you a picture. It was just incredible. I mean, there were thousands of people there.

Michael Nathanson: Full of people I, I did see the picture and it's absolutely full of people and it looked quite amazing. And you mentioned how difficult these waters were. The straits of Messina are where Odysseus traveled and cribbed this correctness. Yeah. Yeah.

Mary Margaret: And one of my big things about picking where I went to swim was specifically because of my level of history. So, I already knew the stories before I got in the war. So that was a major part of it for me.

Michael Nathanson: So, you've talked about this swim has one of your favorites, uh, ever, and I can understand why, uh, did I read correctly that while you were in your early seventies, you were thinking about doing it again?

Mary Margaret: It was just about maybe 10 or 11 years ago. I was thinking about making one more effort. Unfortunately, that's I just had so many other things.

And one of the things I've learned in my life is that there comes a time when you stop what you're doing, because there's something else, you're supposed to be doing. And you need to learn where you can place your effort to the greatest effect. And that was doing that swim was not going to be one of them.

Michael Nathanson: I really like that Mary Margaret. That's so that's very, that's very wise. You had an interesting experience swimming in Turkey.

Mary Margaret: Well yes, that series of Turkey swims came right after I had done the Strait of Gibraltar and from router itself, I contacted.

I didn't know at that time what I was going to do. And I knew if I wanted to do the Turkish swims, but I didn't have a sponsor. So, I actually, from there just sent a telegram to the term, biggest Turkish newspaper and asked if they would sponsor. And they said, yes. And so off I went, but again, this was an American girl.

I wasn't even, you know, aware of how I should be behaving. I didn't know enough about the Muslim faith, the big mistake on my part, because first of all, once I got there, I was locked up on arrival. I would stoppopped up in a room in a bed and breakfast. And wasn't allowed to see anybody. They said, well, when it's time to swim, you'll go and swim. And I'm stumping my feet and saying, no, this is not, first of all, I want to see the American embassy. And secondly, I want to see the editor of the newspaper. No. So there I was in this little bed and breakfast under locking key. And when I finally got to the embassy and I finally got to see the editor, both individuals said, well, they know that there's this American girl coming to swim, and the other newspapers are so competitive.

They're trying to kidnap you. So, I always had a body guard and they finally allowed. To go and do some training at a small resort outside of Istanbul. But my first two or three days in Istanbul were pretty scary because I suddenly realized I had put myself in the hands of people that I knew nothing about. So when I went down to this little place where I could, it was wonderful little hotel and I could train there from there beach. And then from there I was going also to do it, another swim down in a little town called Chanaka lake. And they said, well, we're taking a land rover and you're going to go in, in comfortable clothes.

But for me, comfortable clothes cut off denim shorts, and a blouse. And I went downstairs, ready to go out to the car. And the concierge said, Ms. Ravel, I think you need to go back and change your clothes. And I said, why I did, this is the way I dress at home. And he said, well, not here. And I kept in system.

To my shame because their legs, no, anything over your head face showing I mean, unreal and uncomfortable, the looks of because where we were going women to leave and walk on the streets. So, it was like all of these men just to get to this tiny little French, like a bed and breakfast. And I was still being the snotty American girl.

Cause I walked in, and I said, well, you promised me a hotel with a room to myself. I said, no, here's this room with five beds. And you're all going to sleep. I said, I'm not sleeping in the room with these three men. I came with, I'm sleeping in my own room. Still. Where's the. Well, it's that little room over there with a hole in the floor. That's the toilet. But then over there is the pipe that comes out and that's your shower, as well. As I said, I'm having a bathroom. They said, sit down, we'll take care of it. And all of a sudden, all of these men who had followed me as I'm going down the street and gotten into the hotel, they all parted from the doorway.

And in walk four men carrying a porcelain four-legged bathtub, Victorian style. So that was put in my bedroom. I had four beds and the tub in that room. And then they proceeded to keep the water in the kitchen to bring the water for the bathtub. And I said, well, thank you very much. That was a wonderful bath. I'll help you drain the water out. And they said, no, you'll need it after the swim.

So we're just going to leave the water in overnight and then you'll use it after your swim. So that was really incredible experience. I'm sure Lord Byron never had anything like that kind of reception that I got. And then my last swim in Turkey was to the Sea of Marmara, which by that time the newspaper was really thrilled.

I'd done three swims and then the Sea of Marmara 20 miles swim. And that was the very first one was a swim of the Dardanelles and that is the body of water. That had the submarines piled up underneath in the middle of the channel. And at that time the water was clear enough. I was sure it's not like that now, but you could see all of the submarines and you were swimming over dense submarines.

Michael Nathanson: Wow. So, you mentioned a 20-mile swim. So, what was your longest swim?

Mary Margaret: Maybe the Sea of Galilee or, well, with the crossing of Messina, probably that was my longest because with Messina you had to get out, walk out and walk right back in, just turn around

Michael Nathanson: And was Messina your hardest swim? What was your hardest?

Mary Margaret: No, I think Galilee was my hardest and also, you know, Israel and Syria were at war at the time. And the far banks of the Galilee were occupied by Syria at the time. And there were lots of lights. And I remember, and you know, it's not the same because swimming in water, that's not fully seawater is harder.

So, you know, there was the joy of looking up and all of the lights on the Syrian side flickering. So, it looked like diamonds surrounding the Sea of Galilee. But honestly it was hard just because I wasn't feeling well. And it was a freshwater, and it was difficult.

Michael Nathanson: Yeah. I read somewhere that you had noted that the water was warmer, and you felt that made it more challenging.

Mary Margaret: Oh yes. And the other thing is, of course I had to swim at night. I mean, even at night we were shot at wow. So, we finished, and we were on the Israeli side, but I mean, just because they could see the lantern lights in the boat. And again, I had the men who had done the first ever swim, who was the reigning swimming champion. He was there and the Israeli Olympic committee where the judges, so,

Michael Nathanson: So, I mentioned earlier, they sent a Catalina channel. So you finally did swim that correct?

Mary Margaret: I think so!

Michael Nathanson: Yeah. I think I read that. I know you said I did, so, you know, you've just done so many amazing swims. Now, one of the swims that I'm not sure if you finally did make it across, was, did you finally swim The English Channel?

Mary Margaret: No, not for lack of trying the last trial. Was an October swim, which first of all, I mean, that was another one of those times when I should have known. And I actually learned that there comes a time when you need to stop doing what you're doing and go do something else because you don't do a swim in October.

And the water was 45 degrees, which is really stupid. And I got not quite halfway, and the fog came in and by that time I had taken, not only I had I'd done previous swims, but I had taken a group of the Queens guard. Across as their coach and on the way back, they made it. I went back to England, leaving them in France because they were doing something else there.

And even on the boat, we almost lost the boat and our lives. So, there are times when you just it's like the good Lord says, go do something else. And the other thing is that I had just completed a six-date nonstop day and night run in Northern England. And then I came down to do the swim and I was okay on the run and on the way down, I, and I had been dating a Navy Admiral here, a us Navy Admiral, and he called and left a message at the hotel.

When I came back from the swim he informed me that he was breaking up with me, but that he was giving me a gift of a German shorthair pointer, because he knew that I really wanted one. And that was his parting gift to me. And that dog had been left with people for me in Centerville, Maryland, which it ends up is how I came to be here in Anne's county and Centerville.

So just like in Messina, when, because of Time magazine doing a story about my swim and going, and then. That was done in Rome. And then they said, well, you need to also get Newsweek to do a story. And then you go and see this man. His name is Erwin Goodwin, and I ended up marrying him. But that was at the time when I then broke up with the young Italian Naval officer.

And this is one of those moments when you can look back and see that, oh my goodness, this was a real crossroads. And you took one and you didn't take the other and you can see how totally different your life would have been. And then at the same time came all of this business with the Admiral and breaking up with him much later years. And ending up getting the dog, which I will tell you without any doubt was a terrific bargain. Getting the dog from Admiral was great because that's the dog that I ended up having with me in the 3000-mile run of the Himalayas.

Michael Nathanson: So let's get to that. Now, let's talk about your running career, because even though you had a spectacular swimming career, you also had a spectacular running career and long distance doesn't do it justice. As I mentioned, in my introduction, you ran the length of Japan and the Himalaya. So why don't we go there now, Mary Margaret, could you tell us about those experiences and including also you have some interesting experiences in terms of how you got sponsorship, which you needed to make these long runs. So maybe start with Japan. You had a well-known sponsor for that adventure.

Mary Margaret: Oh yes. Oh yes. I knew I wanted to do Japan. I've been doing a lot of long distance running marathons. I did a hundred mile run around Puerto Rico with a whole group of Navy guys from, as my crew from Roosevelt roads. But I knew that if I wanted to do something like Japan, I would have to prove in a bigger way that I could do that.

So, I sent out from Los Angeles airport to run to Lake Mead. And as soon as I accomplished that, I came out of the water and called up to Chrysler, which at that time was a real big deal car group. And Lee Iacocca was the head of Chrysler and very well-known. And I called directly to his office. And I got through to him.

And that alone qualifies you for having an amazing wife, because you could never do anything like that today. So I was able to in one phone call, have him approve the idea and then turn me over to one of his vice presidents who took the responsibility for setting everything up. And they trained me with different groups of advertising people so that I would say the right things and how to do television interviews and so forth.

All of which was really wonderful training. And then they had a Dodge Ram van waiting for me in Japan. And the whole thing was, and I didn't know it until I got there. Oh, by the way, Chrysler is about to go on the Japan stock market for the first time. And the run is going to celebrate that. So I had this incredible run from the north.

Absolutely the tip of the Northern most part of Japan, all the way to the Southern tip. And I had a second sponsor besides I had ice cream and sometimes the words just pop out. But in any case, the manufacturer was Maury New, and that company still has great products here in all of our stores in America.

But a lot of the soy that goes into the products comes from American fields. And I've always been proud of that fact. So, I did that run and then the best thing about it was just falling in love with the Japanese people and especially the kids who whole schools would come out and run with me for a mile or two on the outskirts of their town and then through their town. And sometimes I would go to the schools and visit and talk with them.

Sometimes English teachers, Japanese, English, teachers would come and just walk along with me for a half hour to practice their English with somebody who could speak English. It was a wonderful time. But I did go to Hiroshima, and I just was overwhelmed with that experience.

And I was in tears. And while I was there, the Japanese television was with me the whole time. And I was always talking through my tears the next day, as I was heading south out of Hiroshima in Japanese roads. In those days, they hadn't gotten to the point of big highways. So, there was one lane for cars going one way, another lane for cars going in the opposite direction.

And I'm running along the side of the road, but they're lonely and all of a sudden. Uh, car stops on the highway ahead of me and a lady gets out, which then means that every car for as far back as possible is going to have to stop as well. So there's this huge line. And this line lady gets out and she has this big bag.

And in it, she has this doll, a clown doll. And she said, I made this last night because I saw you on television and saw your tears. And he said, I don't want you to cry. We have overcome, we have come back from Hiroshima. And she said, I wanted to give you. And I want you to have this clown doll with a big smile and dry up your tears.

And it just overwhelming what a great story it was. It was phenomenal. And you know, and the thing is all of the cars coming towards us in the other direction, they all stopped to see why everybody else was stopping. So, the whole situation to have the entire major highway, which is only two lanes have been all stopped and that had happened a number of times, people would just bring food.

People would bring especially fruit because a watermelon could cost \$40. One watermelon could cost \$40 in those days. So, it was a big thing to be given a whole basket of fruit and. Just that kind of thing happened all the time. So that was really wonderful and excuse me. So, I came back from Japan. I couldn't wait to get started on the Himalayas.

Michael Nathanson: All right. So, let's go there next. Let's go.

Mary Margaret: My dog, whose name was Veolia, and I couldn't take her to Japan. Now dogs are allowed, but at that time, dogs were not allowed. And I went to one place in a woman in Japan. One woman kept saying Schiff, shush, shush move. While she was fixing food for me. And I said, who are you shifting?

And she said under the counter, or she was hiding her dog because he didn't want anybody to know that she had a dog there. So, I made my preparations, and everybody said, oh, you can't take a dog in altitude in the Himalayas not possible. And I said, well, there's something that you always do nearest, always talk about for people is acclamation.

Surely a dog can also do that. And they said, yes, but we've tried it with the dogs, and we've never taken a dog to the Himalayas that didn't die on the way up to Mount Everest. I said, well, Veolia's going that alone became a huge issue just to get there because. In India, they were thinking that, well, you just put her in a box and put her in the freight and sent the dog separately.

I said, no, she's going on the airplane with me. And there is a story about our return back, where she was taken off the plane in Frankfurt and transferred. I don't know where, but I got off that plane and I said, hold the plane. And this was Pan-Am at the time. I said, I'm coming back. I got off. I went, you couldn't do this today.

I went off to the whole of the airport. And then went back to where all of the incoming passengers were getting their luggage. I went into the luggage department, and she was just being brought off from the airplane. And I said, put her back on the airline because this plane is not going to any place until she gets on.

And that happened. And I brought her back, but the whole thing in the Himalayas was like, we were a little Disney thing going on in the Himalayas because she didn't have a leash. He ran beside me. But the only thing, if anybody had a pet, they didn't normally have dogs, but they had cat. She ran through so many houses through the front door and out the back door, through the kitchen.

And then the, so many times in the Indian part of the Himalayas, people were just tranced with her. They wanted to hold her and touch her. And she had her own little backpack, and she had her own little snow suit and so forth. But when we got into the Muslim portions of India, it was a whole different story.

And frequently there were efforts to kidnap her. She would, that was pretty scary. And so, at the very end, literally at the very end, we're getting to a place, but town called Kargil, K a R G I L. And that was the whole Muslim area that India and Pakistan constantly had fought over. I mean, real wars where a lot of people died, and the town has been wiped out twice. So, this Jeep drives up as villi and I are going down the road and this man informs me that he's, um, part of the CIA in the area. And he said, I'm sure to tell you, first of all, that the ambassador to Pakistan ambassador Rafael has been killed. And he said, it's very dangerous for you to be out here. And I said, are you really from the CIA?

And he said, yes. And he said, ask anybody you meet on the road, and they'll tell you about. Plain explosion and the death of both the precedent of Pakistan, President Zia and the ambassador American ambassador, and a whole group of other army officers from Pakistan were on board. This was a special flight and it exploded. And he said, it's not safe for you to be out here on the road right now. And I said, I can't get in your Jeep and go any place because that would break everything I've done for past couple of months. I can't do that. So. I'm not getting it. And he's all at least, let me take your dog. I said, the dog doesn't leave me.

Won't leave me. I am here. She is here. We will see you in Kargil. And he said, okay, here's the directions to the hotel. And somebody will be watching and make sure that you get there safely. So, we get the Kargil 's and that was a wonderful, maybe one of the best hotels in all of India that I had ever been in.

And they had a terrific dinner prepared for both of us. And I went up to my room and then I hear all of this sounds and it's chanting in the mosque, which is right next to the hotel. And they said, well, tomorrow is a very big Muslim holiday and you're going to have to be very careful on the road, because this is a situation where the two main groups of the Muslim faith, the Sunni's and the Shiites is, will be attacking one another.

And you're going to have to be very careful on the road. So, we took off and the next morning, and we were literally running alongside the most gorgeous apricot groves. And I just had. Picking off apricot's all the way. As we met a lot of the truckloads of all of these groups, of the two separate groups of Islam.

And it was very scary, but fortunately, nobody stopped nobody. They were, it's a situation that they're really totally involved in. They're chanting and they're what they're doing. And by the truckload, it was something I had never seen before. And it's difficult to describe. So, we get to dress, which is this very small town on the road.

And we're immediately told to get off the road and go to this safe house and draw the curtains. And don't open the door until this person comes and says to when he's going to bring us dinner. I by this time, realized that with the situation in Kargil and the death of the ambassador of presidency, that things were getting pretty stirred up.

So, the next morning we leave draws as early as possible. Didn't take time to have breakfast, just got out of there and I'm going down the road. And our sponsor for the Himalayan run was Kodak. And the head of Kodak in India had sent his assistant. That was a lady, and she came to meet us and to tell us what was going to happen because we're coming so close to the end, and we are on our way.

She left after. Just tell you, she said, I'll be waiting. Tomorrow morning, it'll take you another 24 hours to get into Srinagar and we'll be watching for you. But she said, you've got a very dangerous thing to do to get there. Then she got in her car with the driver and left and villi, and I kept going down the road. We come around a big rock and I see this long valley and there's this group of men all in white, including their head dress. And they have goals swords at their waistbands. And I immediately I say oh, this is like Lawrence of Arabia. But then there's this man at the head and he's coming up onto the road and I pulled Vili and we get back behind the rock and just watch.

And I'm thinking to myself, holy smokes, this man has the longest legs I've ever seen. And his legs are so long. He can't get his feet in the stirrups. And I don't understand that. And these men are all joyful and laughing and they're all behind him and everything. And I can't understand anything obviously.

And then they cross the road, and they go on up into the upper valley behind this little set of houses. And that's the last I see, but I'm thinking this is just so weird. I wonder if they had anything to do with the explosion of the plane, but that's all I thought about at the time. And of course, there haven't been any other publicity because I had no access to any newspapers.

So, I get to Srinagar and everybody says, yes, it was to me, bad explosion. And there's a lot of politics involved and so forth. And it's really very dangerous, so much. So that the last day of your run is going to you'll have to get through a number of very dangerous riots because the Indian police have locked down the place.

So it wasn't until months later that I get back to the United States. And maybe I don't even remember when it was, but it was before September 11th. I think it was.

Michael Nathanson: You were about 50 when you did this run?

Mary Margaret: I, yes, but I mean, I don't remember when it was that I realized who it was I had seen.

Michael Nathanson: Oh I see.

Mary Margaret: Actually, because the way I first heard about him was the explosion that took down the military, um, barracks. I forget the whole situation, but it was a terrorist organization, but it was Marine barracks. And I forget where, but it was also discussed about a big attack in Yemen. And that's when the whole thing about, Osama Bin Laden started coming out about what was going on in the whole of the region, not just in Pakistan, not just in Saudi Arabia or in Yemen.

And so I suddenly realized, so after September 11th, I took my map and I drew exactly for the command, which was out of the central command, which was out of Florida for planning, everything that was going to happen to try and take, been London down. I said, this is the route that I saw. And I said the map, interestingly enough, I was, I felt that I was believed that what I said I had seen, I would believe. But it's one of those kinds of things that you just don't really talk that much about because you know, it's so like who do you think you are having been and seeing somebody like that,

Michael Nathanson: It must be frightening to think back and think back how close you were to him.

Mary Margaret: How close I was. I was quite scared. Not because of him so much but because he was, he would just, he had this really long beard, very long face, been very skinny. He was really skinny. And he had these really, I mean, dangling, sitting on the horse, holding onto the reins, but he couldn't control the horse that well, because he couldn't get in the stirrups, but I was scared of all these guys in white dress and what their goal swords. And I was scared for my daughter.

Michael Nathanson: Yeah. Well, as I've indicated, your story is truly, it's truly extraordinary. And maybe with your chance encounter with Osama bin Ladin, that's actually a good opportunity and a good transition for us to shift to your work at the Pentagon.

So you worked for the Pentagon for a while and that, do I understand correctly started with your study of sharks?

Mary Margaret: No. Well, the shark study was before going to work for the Pentagon, but because of that study, I was asked to help with this figure out how to deal with the sharp problem at Roosevelt roads and with what I did there. And then other environmental problems that I saw while I was Sarah, I said, well, you know, if you think you've got a sharp problem, you've got a lot more problems environmentally than just sharks.

And they said, well, tell us what you think. And I did never, ever did I pass up an opportunity to tell somebody what I saw? Well, thankfully. They said, well, we think, you know, that you could make some contributions and the commanding officer at Roosevelt roads and his family became good friends. And especially because I helped his who because of my work became, went into Marine biology.

But the thing was that the people from the assistant secretary of the Navy was down on from Washington and saw what I was doing, heard what I was doing there and said, we could use you in Washington. And at that time, my husband had had an offer to go to Time magazine and also write for the Washington Post.

So, I said, yes, I'll take that offer. Absolutely. And that's how I got to the Pentagon. And most of my work in the Pentagon was trying to fight some of the kinds of problems that the Navy wasn't really equipped to fight the, starting with the problems of the donkeys and mules out in the desert in California that were getting in the way of fighter planes and causing damages resulting in the millions.

And unfortunately, at that time, my little brother was married to Maury Reagan. And as a result, is she had been asked by people in California to help with the donkey problems. And the burrow problem with the Navy. And that became an interesting situation between sister-in-law's. But in the end, one of the things we did both agree on you don't feed them, and you don't give them sugar and you find places to make sure that they gather off the runway, not on it. So that was one of the more interesting aspects

Michael Nathanson: You wrote to me in an email once, you said for many of my years, I have been on a course, not necessarily a mission to prove that women could do things that so many, including my own parents doubted were possible for women or were correct for women, etc.

A few world records around the world for some 30 years. Including also a 13-year stint at the top level of the US Navy heading environmental matters, proved to many eventually, including my parents, that the world has changed its mind about what was possible for women. So, this course that you have been on is it complete now?

Mary Margaret: No, no. If anything, and if you listened to the Emmy's last night, I did. And you listened to the number of women who talked about the need for women to be able to tell their stories. And here on the Eastern shore of Maryland, where in the past women have not had that much of a voice. And right now are just beginning to have voices.

And I would stay really in the last five years. I mean, it's that recent? My feeling has been for a long time that we just are not doing enough to kill young girls and young women, that there is so much out there for them, but you still have to fight for it. You still have to stand up. So, when a building became possible here in county, that was in the hands of the county, but how a woman's actions attached to it in the past and the building was maybe going to fall down.

The county said, well, what do you think, what can be done? And I said, oh, how about I form an organization, a nonprofit? And we tried to save it and turn it into a woman's museum. Oh, oh, I mean, it was like, oh, wait a minute, a woman's museum. And some were very supportive. One individual in particular, the minute that he left the entire project came unglued in terms of support here in the county and everything that the county had agreed to.

Because when you take state funds in Maryland, the state has the right to ask for easements and to say, this is what part of the area we're giving funds for, needs to be protected. And the county had written a document which had been legally approved and turned it in so that we got a \$50,000 grant. I did the work.

We saved a wall in a chimney from collapsing, which would have caused the entire building to come down. And then the state came and said, okay, this is what we want as easements. And people turned around and said, oh, we made a mistake. We don't want to do that. And we're not giving the easements. And therefore, that means Mary Margaret's not going to have any money for the museum, and we don't think, and oh, by the way, she's too old. Oh, that's the worst thing you could have said to me.

Michael Nathanson: I can imagine.

Mary Margaret: And I've never let them forget it and I'm not done, but I don't have time to go to court because I could have taken it to court as a civil rights matter, but I need time to get this project underway and go into court would have been beyond what I was interested in doing.

So, within 24 hours, we were offered. A new building and we didn't even know the terms. And I don't think that the owner knew the terms either in the beginning, but here we are. One year later, I'm speaking to you from the office of the museum and its far better property, more beautiful in better shape by a long shot.

It still needs a lot of work, but we have proposed to the owner that we buy the property from him. That's what I'm up to right now is getting the work done and raising the money for that. And for buying the property.

Michael Nathanson: Do you know off the top of your head, how people can help? Is there a website that people could look up?

Mary Margaret: Yes, we do have a website. Which is the Maryland Museum of Women's history. That's just www.maryland-museumofwomenshistory.org. But right now, we're kind of functioning our wing and a prayer. But the other thing is we had originally incorporated under the name of the woman who had originally owned the first building.

And then it turned out this year, once we got in this building and we began to work on a video exhibit that would talk about her life and civil war era and so forth. And we discovered that not only did she approve of slavery, but she loved slavery, she did. And we found all of this documentation, but then in her book about all of this story of her house and story of a couple of other historic houses. We discovered how much she lied to be able to tell the story in a way that shaped her hatred for particular slaves and her love of the owners of these historic properties without ever mentioning her own property and everything.

And the reason we had, we thought she was a good person because she had written a book about local history and had sold it published by the Baltimore sun, no less and sold at \$2 and 95 cents in 1900 and earn the money to buy her house back. And so we thought initially that was a really big thing. Now we have made headlines here because we have actually said we're not any longer related to her in any way, except with the exhibit.

And oh, by the way, when you see what we discovered about how much she lied and how this one slave that ran away, unfortunately, was left wondering because even the union army didn't want him and so on and so forth when it turns out not only did they want him as a black man, he was in the civil war, decorated on the field for bravery in his first battle. And he's buried in a military cemetery in Baltimore, and we now know his whole life story. So, you know, It's one of our issues. It's not our only issue. Mental health is one of our biggest issues, but we're going to look at it over time. What was the mental health like in the days of the civil war? What was it like during the time of the sickness call small talks when people did one vaccinations versus COVID now and not wanting vaccinations and so forth?

I mean, there are a lot of women's issues, so it's not just telling great women's stories, even if they're not about great women, but they are about women who made major influence.

Michael Nathanson: Sure.

Mary Margaret: Impacts and it's about women's issues.

Michael Nathanson: So, but it's incredibly important work and I've been reading about it and I can, we can all say, we appreciate your perseverance.

And I don't think anyone should ever have told you that there was any doubt that it was going to get done. That was not, and that was not wise because anyone who knows your story knows that it most certainly will. So, Mary Margaret, he wrote to me, what I know most of all is that I have lived one of the best lives of a woman from the early 20th century could, when the world was finally opening up to women, being able to freely live their best lives.

I am beyond grateful for all the opportunities I've had. I'm also keenly aware that those opportunities resulted many times because men dare to take a chance and what I was trying to do. So, I love that quote, it's one of my favorites. Do you have any regrets, Mary Margaret you've lived such an amazing positive life.

Yeah. Tell me

Mary Margaret: First. And I expressed them significantly to both my mother and my father. It took my mother almost to her deathbed to come around, to accepting my life. I mean, it's almost everything that I ever did. She had a choral with, but with my dad, he was extremely strict. He was very demanding, but they were good expectations.

And I so regret that for the most part. I didn't have either of them with me on some of the. Events the regret isn't there, that they weren't there to say Bravo. It was that I couldn't share it with them. And personally, that was very sad. I will tell you may be the most important thing for my whole life.

And I can look back on a number of those times, but The English Channel is one of them that every time you fail, if you don't fail a couple of times in your life, you can't be happy with any of your successes. You've learned more from your failures than you will ever learn from your successes. Successes are, you know, out the window and you learn not just about what you should have done, but you learn more about things that will make a difference in how you react with other people.

And other events in your life that may be critical. And that, I mean, even in the last three years, I've really had to do a lot of work on myself to change my attitudes. So, including with, I regret not being able to be more forgiving for the things that other people did that I thought was against me. And to question, am I always right to be so pushy?

I mean, one of the biggest complaints about whether it was about a swim or about how a run was going to be done or what I was going to do including about this project, you know, maybe I'm not always as right as I think. I'm pushing hard for something.

Michael Nathanson: Well, you certainly have great awareness around yourself and a great awareness around your surroundings, how you're feeling about things and have to apply that to your ability to understand those regrets and to face them. I think it is as important as any of the other challenges you've already discussed. So you mentioned this at the beginning, you mentioned that there are a lot of people asking you about writing your autobiography. Is that going to happen? Are you going to put off?

Mary Margaret: Actually, I really am working on it. I mean, I've begun to totally pull things together.

You know, it's really hard in the kind of life I've had. I've got cases full of. Newspaper clippings and maps and photographs. And I have a whole memory bank of photographs from all kinds of things in my life. And you go back to all of that, and you say, well, wait a minute. You know, why did I do that? And how did that happen?

And then you start realizing I should've learned from that, or I should have done it this way. And it's an opportunity to make yourself better in terms of what you can leave the earth saying I made, you know, did I also make somebody else's life better? Yeah. And I'm really criticized by several of my board of directors for being on Facebook, because some people don't believe in social media because there are a lot of bad things about Facebook.

But there can be also good things about Facebook. And I have a pretty good group of people who watch what I'm doing and what I write and what I say. And sometimes I do things I think it's important to also laugh in life. I mean, really big, deep heart-ed laughs and you know, this is an agriculture area. We have a lot of people who have cows, and I just couldn't resist this last week on Facebook to put up the story about what is now called the MooLoo M O O L O O.

And what is that? A group of German scientists have discovered that they have been able to teach very quickly to teach cows. To urinate in a certain spot where all of the urine to be collected. I just think it sounds crazy, but in environmental terms, it has great potential. If it's done on, you know, this is one of those shark tank items of things, the shark tank on it, they ought to propose it to the shark tank.

I mean, it needs a little more work, but that thing I put that up like maybe 10 days ago, and I noticed this morning that it's still getting remarked on and commented on and people are, you know, all laughing at it. And if that just make somebody smile today or tomorrow or last week when maybe they weren't feeling.

That's great. I like to hear people laughing around me.

Michael Nathanson: And what is that?

Mary Margaret: A group of German scientists have discovered that they have been able to teach very quickly to teach cows. To urinate in a certain spot where all of the urine to be collected. I just think it sounds crazy, but in environmental terms, it has great potential. If it's done on, you know, this is one of those shark tank items of things, the shark tank on it, they ought to propose it to the shark tank.

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And if that just make somebody smile today or tomorrow or last week when maybe they weren't feeling. That's great. I like to hear people laughing around me.

Michael Nathanson: Yeah, me too.

Mary Margaret: Not at me!

Michael Nathanson: Yeah, me too. Well, Mary Margaret, if people do want to learn more about your story, I certainly was able to find a great deal about you through several web searches. You know, you're writing your book right now. We don't have that out. Are there other ways that people can learn about you?

Mary Margaret: Maybe just even following me on Facebook?

Michael Nathanson: You can rest assured I will start to do that. So that's something that you have a public profile that people can follow you at?

Mary Margaret: Uh, yes.

Michael Nathanson: Okay, great. Okay. Well, I will most certainly do that. Mary Margaret, this has been an extraordinary conversation. You really do have an amazing story and it's very inspirational. I'm sure people tell you that all the time. I, for one really hope that you do put together an autobiography because there's just so much to be told. I felt during this conversation, every sentence you said, there's a whole story I could unpack in that one sentence. I really do hope you write that book.

Any parting words, Mary Margaret?

Mary Margaret: Well, we have this one woman here in the area who I literally cannot put anything personal photographs or any little anything on Facebook, but what it doesn't say, she'll come. And publicly say, write the damn book. And she's now got a whole crew of people who are all saying the same thing and they're all great supporters.

I guess the important thing is every woman has the opportunity in this day and age. If she pushes hard enough to make the most of her life and don't let your dreams go. Most of all, don't let your dreams go.

Michael Nathanson: Fantastic finish to a fantastic interview, Mary Margaret. And that is the extraordinary Mary Margaret Revell Goodwin.

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