Jim Plunkett combined

Murphy: [0:01] Hello again everybody and welcome once again to a little conversation, and this time it's with the Heisman Trophy winner Jim Plunkett, who goes back a few years here. In fact, we go back a few years together and Jim, I can remember those days at James Lick High School and Al Cem and Tina and Gene Washington was a quarterback at Stanford. All kinds of stuff was going on back then [laughter].

Plunkett: [0:26] Oh yeah.

Murphy: [0:28] When am I talking about, '67?

Plunkett: [0:29] '66 for me, out of high school.

Murphy: [0:30] Yeah, talk about that a little bit.

Plunkett: [0:32] Well yeah, I was being recruited. I had some successful seasons at James Lick High School and I was looking forward to move on. But because of my family situation as it was, I needed to stay close to home. So I couldn't go to some of the big, power football teams in the country. [0:52] And also, I felt the need to get an education. My folks had a tough time all their lives, but they still managed to take care of us kids. But I wanted to get out of that situation, get an education, make an improvement with my life, and be able to take care of my family in a way that my parents couldn't take care of us.

Murphy: [1:20] Tell the folks a little bit about that, because both your mom and dad had difficulty with their eyesight, handicapped in that way, yet they did a marvelous job of raising you and taking care of the family. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Plunkett: [1:32] Oh certainly. To look back, at the time I certainly didn't think a lot of it, you took certain things for granted. But as I look back at the job they did, my mother was totally blind, my father was legally blind - could not see literally past 10 feet. [1:51] And yet they raised three kids, I was the only one who went on to college, but you know, they provided love and protection. Although we had very little money, if any. My parents were on welfare. You know, they made us realize how important family really was. And I wanted to be able to take care of them as well, go out into the world. Whether it be football, which I hoped it was going to be, or business, I was going to help provide for them after the wonderful job they did for us kids.

Murphy: [2:21] Plunk, was football meant to you at James Lick, Al Cems was a gentleman, wonderful football coach, his personality. Just one of the very special people. Can you talk about him a little bit as he introduced you to football at James Lick.
Plunkett: [2:37] Oh yeah, well actually I started out over at Overfelt High School, my first two football seasons, my freshman year and my sophomore year. My family moved; as soon as they raised the rent, we always had to find another place to live. [2:50] So we moved a little bit further to the east side and Al Cementina was a very innovative coach at the time, he ran the spread pro formations, so it involved a lot of throwing. He had pretty good quarterbacks in the past. One in particular, Shawn Golagis, but anyway he threw the ball. James Lick was never known for it's large linemen or football players, but Al found a way to beat the bigger teams and that was throwing the ball very effectively. And so he helped me progress as a pro-style quarterback.

Murphy: [3:25] As you got into football, did you see yourself as a quarterback, is that all you wanted to be? Because a little later on people saw you, or at least envisioned you, at maybe other positions [laughs]. I'll never forget it, but tell the folks a little bit about that.

Plunkett: [3:39] Well I also played defense in high school, a quarterback on offense and either a defensive end or actually, believe it or not, a safety [laughs].

Murphy: [3:48] Pretty swift, were you? [laughs]

Plunkett: [3:49] Yeah, well at that time I guess. I'll take credit for it. But they tried to put me in a position on defense where I could help out the most. And though people would kid me about my athletic ability, don't be fooled. But anyway, so I got to Stanford, and I'd just had surgery before I got to Stanford that summer. I had a thyroid tumor that was removed, but it happened to be benign. But it set me back quite a bit, so my freshman year was not very good.


Murphy: [4:28] How about other schools?

Plunkett: [4:30] You know what, the pack ten did not recruit me too heavily. SC had signed Mike Holmgren so they didn't need me. And I also let it be known that my choices were pretty much narrowed down to Cal, Stanford, and Santa Claire. And then I didn't want to play at Santa Claire because it was a division two school.

Murphy: [4:48] Was there something about Stanford that made it special for you?

Plunkett: [4:51] Well that goes way back to a fifth grade class trip to watch a football game at Stanford even though they got killed, kind of planted a seed.

Murphy: [4:58] Junior rooters [laughs].

Plunkett: [4:59] Yes, it was. Well, ours was just a class trip, and they seated us way in the last row, but that was fine too. It was a very exciting time for us kids. But anyway it planted a seed, and then about in the eighth grade I came here for a science class
weekend, little day trip to see the cancer research here. And once again at Stanford, that planted seed was reinforced. So I think from early on, my leanings towards Stanford were planted.

**Murphy:** [5:36] So you come to Stanford freshman year, I do remember the surgery and I know that that held you back a lot. Your freshman year Gene Washington was the quarterback and he would take the ball from center and just start running. Sometimes he'd throw it; sometimes he'd keep running [laughs]. He did a lot of running, but it was a different kind of football before you came.

**Plunkett:** [5:58] It was, it was a rollout, sprint-out type of attack offensively. And if they could get Gene to the corner and they didn't pressure him, he'd take off. If they pressured him, then he'd try to find an open receiver. But that was the kind of offense they ran when I first got here. Which is not quite suited to my capabilities. I'm more of a drop-back passer, stand in the pocket type of guy. Reading the field, trying to find a guy open somewhere down the field. [6:26] But anyway, after spring ball of my freshman year, coach Rolston, as he did with every player, brought me into his office to evaluate the spring ball for everyone. And he said that he and the coaches had decided that they'd rather move me to defensive end instead of quarterback.

[6:44] And the thing I mentioned to him was that I don't feel I was really given a good chance. I came here after having neck surgery. And number one, I'd like another chance at quarterback to show you what I can really do. And number two, if you move me to defensive end, then I'll probably leave school and go and play somewhere else.

**Murphy:** [7:04] Wasn't it a high school all-star game where they did play you as defensive end? Talk about that a little bit.

**Plunkett:** [7:09] Oh yeah. I played in the old north south shrine football game, where it pits the Northern California All-Star team against the Southern California All-Star team. And they had Mike Holmgren who could only play one position, that was quarterback. And another kid named Allen Pickathy from across the bay, San Lorenzo or San Andrew, I can't remember which high school he went to. And then myself. [7:31] And since I had more versatility, I wound up playing the game at defensive end [laughter]. For whatever reason, there I am. So I guess that planted some seeds in their head as well, that maybe I'd make a better defensive end. But I convinced them to give me another shot and they did. And when I came back my sophomore year, I was throwing the ball like I always had been. Very effectively. And they were kind of amazed at what they were looking at right then and there.

**Murphy:** [7:57] Now I don't think I ever told you this story, but one day Gene Washington sat in my office and Gene and I were really good friends. He a student and he was looking forward to pro football. And I can remember the discussion, and I'm not going to say that I was the one who encouraged Gene Washington to go outside and catch balls instead of throw them. [8:14] But I did explain to him that if he went into the National Football League, and he certainly had aspirations for that, that taking the ball from center and running one way or running the other, he probably wouldn't last more than a game or two. Or maybe not through the end of the first game [laughs].
Because the game was played a little differently when you were making a lot of money and you were coming in, and I do remember suggesting that Gene as a receiver, getting matched up with your tremendous speed, and your great athletic ability, and ability to catch the ball, and Plunk can certainly throw it. I said you could just have a fabulous year. He did and you did.

I'm not responsible for it, I think other people told him the same thing but he made a whole career out of a change of positions.

**Plunkett:** Oh he certainly did. He became a number one draft choice because he went out to wide receiver and with my ability to get him the football... He had 71 receptions that year.

**Murphy:** For over 1100 yards.

**Plunkett:** Oh, he was a big time receiver and although I've played with a lot of receivers, besides Cliff Branch he was probably the only other guy that you couldn't put out the ball too far because he had that next gear where he could go get it. It was great for me offensively and certainly great for him.

**Murphy:** And I remember Jean; he had some courage. He ran over the middle and catch their ball I mean he would be so wide open at times. I mean he was just some kind of target wasn't he for you?

**Plunkett:** He was. Unfortunately for me they got away from that roll out spread out and mostly dropped back although we did still do some of that a little bit because that's what coach Ralston was used to. But, the line was pretty good and it gave Jean a chance to get down field and he was on top of people so quick. He just had a lot of ability. You're right he was not afraid to catch the ball over the middle. And he was a big guy for a receiver. Especially back then.

So he had all those things going for him. He was such a great athlete he could probably play just about any position.

**Murphy:** Plunk, that year you were 6-3-1 but that team showed and I think you showed everyone that there was great hope in the next year and year beyond that, that this was a team that really improving. And I remember John Ralston always used to say, "You have to beat University of Southern California, all roads to the Rose Bowl lead through the University of Southern California." They were tough to beat, UCLA was tough. It was tough going, but you had high hopes. Coming out of that year, that was a lot of fun looking forward to the following year.

**Plunkett:** Oh, it certainly was. The season especially late 50's, early 60's at Stanford for a forgettable season with Cactus Jack and a lot of losing games. During that time period Coach Ralston was starting to make some progress and change that team around. And we were 6-3-1, but we tied Washington State up in Washington State. We should have beat USC. So we were on the verge of becoming a very good football team and we all believed that.
Murphy: [11:11] Well the next year was something, and I'll tell you what I remember about that next year early in the season was a remarkable game of football. [11:19] I think it was one of the best games ever played if you like throwing the ball and catching it. You and Mike Phipps at Purdue, 36-35, they pulled it out right at the end but it was one of the most glorious games of football ever played. You were sad to lose, but it was fun to be a part of a game like that.

Plunkett: [11:38] Oh, it certainly was. It was one of the most exciting games for me ever. And on a big stage against a very good football team I know that they trounced Notre Dame that year and they were very good. [11:53] But, we were in there stride for stride, punch for punch, however, you want to say it. But whatever they did, we had an answer for. Offensively they were tough to stop, but so were we.

Murphy: [12:03] Your team that year was seven -2-1. That was one of the losses and the other was USC 26-24 and just trying to pull this one off the top of my head. Do I remember holding OJ all day until pretty late in the game and he broke one?

Plunkett: [12:18] No, I think you got it a little mixed up, 68' was when we held him here at the stadium and 69' was when we played Purdue and then back to back we had USC down the coliseum that's when Ayala kicked that...


Plunkett: [12:34] It's a shame we played a terrific game and yet to lose it again to SC is just heartbreaking. And that I think set the tone for all those guys to really commit to come back that next year. [12:50] A lot of us were Red Shirts. Jack Blatzer not Jack Schultz, but some of the other players, Bob Moore. And because of that loss that's when we really made that firm commitment that we were going to dedicate our off-season to beating SC and getting to the Rose Bowl. We'd come so close literally two years in a row. We tied UCLA that year and we should have won that game. We were thinking pretty high of ourselves, I think, or highly of ourselves.

Murphy: [13:20] Well then that next year, and I'm not sure that 69' team wasn't at least as good as your team that went to the Rose Bowl and beat Ohio State the next year.

Plunkett: [13:28] Well the 69' team was better offensively then we were in 70' even though we put up a few more yards. The offensive line clicked together. Everything was a little bit more in sync then they were in 1970.

Murphy: [13:41] Well 1970 was a remarkable year. I always remember that game up at Washington State, 63-16 it was. There were some elements of that game that were just classic. One was a pass you threw to Randy the Rabbit Vataha for 96 yards and somewhere around the 45-yard line on either side of the 50 that broke the all time total offense record in college football. Randy completed that took it all the way to the end zone at the other end. But, what a game of football that was.

Plunkett: [14:11] That was, it was exciting, we were on a roll early in the season and we were setting our sights to higher ground and that was to beat SC and make it to the Rose
Bowl and play and beat whoever we were going to face there. But, you know offensively although not as good as we were in 69' we were still pretty darn good.

**Murphy:** [14:29] Playing up in Joe Alby stadium, now of course all the games now are played down in Pullman, but one element I wonder if you remember this like I do. One of the funniest things I have ever seen in football, Eric Cross on a deep reverse from nearside to far side going left to right up the field. He breaks free right at the line of scrimmage and brakes wide open and there were a bunch of Washington students on the other side that had a little beer keg going and they were working pretty heavy on the beer keg. [14:52] And this one guy staggers out on the field and sets himself up on about the 20-yard line. Cross could have ran by him, and he ran right over him. Left footprints right on the guy's face I think. And I said couldn't you have missed him? And he said, yeah I could but the guy wanted a thrill and I didn't want to disappoint him. Do you remember that?

**Plunkett:** [15:10] Certainly that was a very funny... It was funny because we were winning by such a large score. It may not have been funny if some of the roles were reversed. But, yeah of course and that's one of the episodes you will never forget in your Stanford football experience. And it's funny when I was playing in the NFL a couple of years later, I ran into that very guy that got run over.

**Murphy:** [15:32] Oh did you? How'd he ever find you?

**Plunkett:** [15:35] Oh we just happened to be in the same bar I guess. Sitting down having a beer, waiting for our cabs to get out of there. But, it is a small world and I went in and talked to him and he remembered that and we had quite a laugh over it.

**Murphy:** [15:51] Well Coach Ralston said all roads to the Rose Bowl go through USC, talk about that SC game.

**Plunkett:** [15:58] You know we were bound and determined to beat SC and we just lost. Got upset by Purdue the previous week and I think that was the only game they won that year. If I'm not mistaken. [16:10] But, part of the reason was all our preparation, because we thought we could handle Purdue, was for SC. So we overlooked Purdue and obviously the results showed that.

[16:19] So by the time we got around to SC we were darn ready to play. And probably offensively we weren't great. SC was still a pretty good football team. But, defensively they came up with some big plays and I'll never forget a number of series on the goal line where Sam "Bam" Cunningham with his famous leap over the top to score touch downs every time was met head on by a 155lb soaking wet Jim Kaufman who stopped him each and every time. And I believe, and, although, as I look back, it might have been up to four times that Kaufman met him in the air and prevented him from scoring a touchdown.

**Murphy:** [16:55] Coffman one of our all time favorite guys has been living over in Italy all these years and he writes us a communiquè every once in a while.
Plunkett: [17:02] Oh yeah I keep in touch with him and he went into the Sameteo Hall of Fame last year. We all bought a table and went up and were inducted.

Murphy: [17:11] Now, Plunk you've got to share this with the folks and I'll give you the introduction to it. I went back to the old Bismarck hotel in Chicago with all the sports information directors before that 1970 season. And the minute I walked into the hotel, in the lobby there everyone is wearing these great big red badges with blue lettering "Archie who?" It said, "Archie who?" And, it didn't take me long to figure out that there was a professional promotional campaign for Archie Manning. And, it's interesting, as we record this, the Manning boys...

Plunkett: [17:42] Right.

Murphy: [17:43] ...Archie's sons, are very prominent in football, but they were promoting him for the Heisman trophy. And, I got a kick out of that. Boy, there were a lot of quarterbacks that year. He wasn't the only one. There were others, and you know who they are.

Plunkett: [17:53] Sure. Joe Theismann. Chuck Hickson. Lynn Dickey. I'm trying to think of a couple of others, but there were a bunch of us all primed and ready. And, yeah. Rex Kern even though he was a running quarterback.

Murphy: [18:05] Sure.

Plunkett: [18:05] All primed to make a name for our school and ourselves or just going into our senior year. Yeah, but you are probably right about the professional promotional company coming in. That was probably, maybe the beginning of that push for the Heisman.

Murphy: [18:20] I think it was. It was interesting, because my old pal Roger Valdiserri the long time sports information director at Notre Dame, when Joe Theissman [laughs] came into school...

Plunkett: [18:30] Right. [laughs]

Murphy: [18:31] ...Roger changed his pronunciation of this name from Theismann to Theismann: to rhyme with Heisman. We couldn't do that with Plunkett. [laughter]

Plunkett: [18:39] Be a little tough. Be a little tough, but I would have appreciated it if RSID had spent more than $179 on my campaign. [laughter]

Plunkett: [18:46] But, today, there are multi million dollar campaigns. It's unbelievable.

Murphy: [18:50] We'll get to that in a moment. It was a crazy season of football. You lost the last two.

Plunkett: [18:58] Right.
**Murphy:** [18:59] And, gosh! I remember going up to the Air Force Academy up to Colorado Springs. It was snowing. It was icy, and you came out, in those white uniforms. You looked like snow bunnies: out of place.

**Plunkett:** [19:11] We played like snow bunnies too.

**Murphy:** [19:12] Oh, boy, it was awful.

**Plunkett:** [19:13] Yeah. Yeah. It was. Having clenched the Rose Bowl the week before, against the University of Washington, maybe we just let up, unfortunately, which really disappoints us now, as we all look back and certainly at the time. You kind of lost that fire. We finally got over the hump. We're finally in the Rose Bowl and probably didn't have enough fire to finish those last two games off.

**Murphy:** [19:37] I always remember. You just brought that up, and it always reminds me of that nice little turn in that Randy the Rabbit ran from the right side to the left and turned inside, and you threw the ball in low to him to make that catch that cinched that Washington game. That's the one that put you in the Rose Bowl.

**Plunkett:** [19:52] Offensively, we were ready to go, but we kick off. They run the opening kick off...

**Murphy:** [19:56] Yeah.

**Plunkett:** [19:56] ...back for a touchdown.

**Murphy:** [19:57] Yeah.

**Plunkett:** [19:58] Believe me. Our guys weren't going to let anything get away from us, on that particular game. We bounced back. We scored right away. We moved the ball up and down the field, and beat a pretty good team with Sonny Sixkiller to finally clench a birth in the Rose Bowl. After what? Nineteen years.

**Murphy:** [20:16] Yeah. It's ironic, because you had beaten the bears in the previous two years, obviously. And, you don't beat them, when you are headed to the Rose Bowl to play Ohio State.

**Plunkett:** [20:23] Yeah. And, that was a really sad way to end the season and to end our careers. You don't know how bad you feel losing the big game, until you finally lose it, and it really hurt.

**Murphy:** [20:35] Hold on Plunk. [Tape ends and restarts]

**Murphy:** [inaudible] [20:42] Now, we are moving to cut two. Do you remember where we were, Plunk? We were talking about... [20:47] Let's talk about the Rose Bowl deal.

**Plunkett:** [20:49] OK.

**Murphy:** [20:51] So, you lose the last two, Plunk, but you're eight and three, and you cinch the Rose Bowl early. So, you get all packed up, and we all go down to Long Beach.
Plunkett: [21:00] Right.

Murphy: [21:01] It's kind of an interesting deal. We're way out of Los Angeles: about twenty-five miles south. Down at Long Beach, but a nice set up. But, you were kind of isolated down there. Some of you guys didn't like being isolated down there. You didn't have cars.


Murphy: [21:14] You couldn't go places. There were some meetings. There were some stuff going on down there. [laughter]

Plunkett: [21:19] Well, you know. [laughter]

[21:19] Jack Schultz and I were the co-captains. We would have done anything for our guys. We were a little restless. We worked very hard. We did double days. The weather was bad, prior to the Rose Bowl. All work and no play is pretty tough...

[laughter]

[21:34] ...for a bunch of young kids. And, we went and had a meeting. I believe it was Demea Washington and Ron Kadziel kind of took the other side, about getting more free time. The Rose Bowl committee gave us access to cars, but we didn't have access to cars. And, we talked about that.

[21:52] And John kind of acquiesced on some of these points and let us have a little bit more free time to ourselves prior to the Rose Bowl, and I think it made the whole situation a lot better.

[22:06] People relaxed, and they could go out and enjoy themselves a little bit, but knowing that they still had to stay focused on a very important game for all of us. That's why we worked so hard to get there.

[22:16] Even though we had been given a little bit more freedom, I don't think any of our players lost their focus and that certainly showed come game day against Ohio State.

Murphy: [22:26] Plunk, talk about Ohio State. Woody Hayes, one of the greatest Buckeye teams of all time. Rex Kern at quarterback, John Brockington the great fullback, they had quite a football team, and boy, they had a record.

Plunkett: [22:38] Oh, they did. They were 31-1 going into that game. [22:42] They had not lost a game that particular year; they didn't lose any their sophomore year. I guess they had lost one when they were in their junior year, and they couldn't repeat, even though they won the Big Ten all three years in between. Another team went because the Big Ten could not repeat in those days.

[22:57] But anyway, we were facing a great team. Jim Stillwagon, Leo Hayden, Mike Sensibaugh, Jack Tatum, the list goes on and on.
Murphy: [23:05] Guys that would later be your teammates.

Plunkett: [23:07] At least Jack Tatum, and I played against a lot of those other guys. But we felt very confident. We felt they had not seen a passing game like ours, ever. [23:22] Guys like, obviously, Bob Moore and Jack Lassiter and Randy Vataha, and our running backs could catch the ball out of the backfield. And Demea Washington, after Jack Lassiter got hurt, stepped up big time for us.

[23:37] So it was quite a performance by our guys.

[23:40] To be truthful, if we played them ten times, they probably would have won nine games, but they weren't going to win that day.

Murphy: [23:44] Not that day. [23:45] We really jumped ahead of ourselves and we're kind of winging it here, which is the way we've always done it anyways...

[23:51] You won the Heisman Trophy before you went to the Rose Bowl. The voting was before that, and we were all a little edgy because you had lost the last couple of games.

[24:02] You won in all seven sections of the country, in every area, even in Archie Manning's, and I'm sure they spent more than $179 down there in Biloxi and all those places in Mississippi.

[24:17] That put tremendous pressure on you going into the Rose Bowl, to have won the Heisman Trophy. You had to feel that.

Plunkett: [24:24] I don't know if I did. I was so focused on doing the job that I needed to do that I wasn't going to let anything interfere with it. [24:39] I guess I could say that there was nothing more important for me than winning that particular football game. We sacrificed, we all sweated together, and the guys I played with I would do anything for, and I wasn't going to let them down that particular day, and I'm sure they felt the same way for me.

Murphy: [24:56] Plunk, let's you and I talk about just some of the plays in that game. We may not have them in sequence, but I will always remember 4th and inches. [25:04] The ball was on the 25, 30-yard line, something like that, for Ohio State. It looked like they were going to take it in and score.

[25:10] Brockington just off right tackle, and Ron Kadziel from his linebacker position, and Ron was a tight end, and he moved to linebacker because Bob Moore had that tight end slot pretty well wired up.

[25:23] But Kadziel hit Brockington, and with a lot of help right behind him, they stopped him short of the 1st down. I'll never forget that play.

Plunkett: [25:31] A lot of big plays by our defense. There's no doubt about it. Those guys could run the football. They rushed for almost 400 yards. But whenever it came to a crucial situation where they needed a 1st down either on 3rd down or 4th, our guys were
able to stop them cold. [25:44] And it was an amazing feat. Up and down the field they went, but when it came to the big play, our defense stood up strong.

**Murphy:** [25:52] Plunk, tell the folks about John Sande from Reno. He had Jim Stillwagon. Consensus All-American. [26:00] Jim Stillwagon was number one All-American on every All-American team, won the Outland Trophy, and he played on Sande's nose that day. Tell the folks about that one.

**Plunkett:** [26:11] John-John was up for the match right then and there. John was probably an inflated 220 pounds or whatever he was, and he probably really should only have weighed about 190, but anyway. And in those days we didn't have the double teams like we do in football today. He had to take them one-on-one every time. And John was up to the task and he handled them. [26:32] One of the things that helped was they put in a quarterback draw for me so even though Stillwagon could pick a side and go up the field John would turn him and let him go and open up a hole for me. But John is a competitor and he's tough and he's hard-nosed and another guy you wouldn't trade anybody for, any All-American anywhere. You want guys like that on your team.

**Murphy:** [26:54] John Ralston talked about this earlier and asking Sande at half-time if he wanted some help on Stillwagon. I'm trying to think, Lightfoot, Terrell Smith, either one of those guards could maybe help him and he said John Sande looked him right in the eye and he says, "I'll take him alone coach." [laughter]

**Plunkett:** [27:13] Yeah, that's the kind of players we had. They were going to do what they had to do to win that football game. And you take Terrell Smith who was a linebacker, didn't play at all, was moved to guard his last year, senior year. And just did a great job. We are probably outweighed 20-25 pounds of man down the line and yet our guys found a way to open the holes for the running backs, Jackie Brown and to pass protect long enough for me to find somebody open.

**Murphy:** [27:44] How about the mad dog catch. Tell them about that one.

**Plunkett:** [27:47] Well you know its funny, I mean it's just almost a quirk of fate. Because sometimes we needed some extra protection, it was third down. We needed a first down. So in the huddle I said, "Bob stay in a block," Bob Moore, the tight end. As we were walking the line of scrimmage something just hit me, I says, "Bob, go out." And that turned into the mad dog catch. I figure Bob, even though he's well covered you put it up high enough, Bob will out leap the guy and come down with the ball and he did.

**Murphy:** [28:15] Well that was interesting because he was covered front side and backside. And if I remember backside was Mike Sensibaugh I think I'm just... Mike Sensibaugh on the backside. He's another All-American he made the mad dog catch right in front of him.

**Plunkett:** [28:27] He did I mean as I said I got all the confidence in the world in Bob Moore coming up with the football. You put it where only he can get it and if he doesn't get it nobody else is going to, the old cliche. Actually we started our first drive with Bob Moore catching a touch down pass that was called back.
Murphy: [28:42] Yeah.

Plunkett: [28:43] So Bob was very crucial in a lot of the play selections not only in that game but all season long. I just found the other day that almost every tight-end who played well for Sanford over the years averaged about 13 yards per reception during a football season and so did Bob his first few years but that senior year going into the Rose Bowl Bob averaged 16 yards a catch which is pretty amazing. That's three yards more than the average. That's pretty good.

Murphy: [29:13] Well you talk about a lot of balls Bob Moore caught and I remember a Jackie Brown touchdown around the right side. I remember Bob had that defensive end and he was split about three yards and then Bob moved out and the defensive end stayed outside him and Bob was still able to go outside and block down and Jackie ran around him for the touchdown. So it wasn't just catching the ball it was one fabulous block right at the line of scrimmage.

Plunkett: [29:40] Yeah Bob could do it all. I mean there's no question about it. Don't tell him I'm saying this. [laughter]

Murphy: [29:44] Hope he doesn't listen to this. [laughter]

Plunkett: [29:46] Bob is pretty darn good. Or was pretty darn good and he could do it all. As I said catch the ball, block, except we should never had him run a reverse on the 10 yard line and use 10 yards on that carry. But you know just, we were packed with a number of really fine football players.

Murphy: [30:07] Another thing I remember was the play that cinched it was it looked almost the same, almost a duplicate of the one that you threw to Randy Vataha in the Washington game that little turn in.


Murphy: [30:20] And it looked like almost the same play and that's the one that cinched the win in the Rose Bowl.

Plunkett: [30:24] Well and Randy and I's timing was so good and even if its man-to-man coverage, I'll remember that play for a couple of reasons. The timing on it, I'm letting go of that ball before Randy's even making his turn and so it's almost impossible to stop.

Murphy: [30:40] And you're throwing it down, throwing it down.

Plunkett: [30:42] You don't even know what's inside your brain that tells you because if you see a guy on the outside, you throw it inside. If you see a guy closing you put it down so only your guy can make the catch. It's just something good quarterbacks do I think. Fortunately for me I had that knack at times. But then not only was that clinching the Rose Bowl for us, it was the anguish on Jack Tatum as he held his hands to his head and saying, "Oh no I can't believe this!" That really stood out in my mind.
Murphy: [31:14] Well after the Rose Bowl triumphant then you go back to Philadelphia for the Maxwell awards so you swept the table clean.

Plunkett: [31:22] Right the Maxwell is the second oldest award in college football right after the Heisman. The Heisman was started in 1935. The Maxwell award was started in Philadelphia in 1936. Not always do the same player of the Heisman Trophy get the Maxell Award so it was very, very rewarding.

Murphy: [31:40] Plunk lets tell the folks a little bit about the Heisman situation. We skipped passed that rather quickly. The old gym at the downtown athletic club, a guy who would become a dear friend to all of us, Rudy Riscoe, was kind of the physical education guy at the downtown athletic club in those days. Al Helfer one of the great old sport casters was the MC. What a scene that was.

Plunkett: [32:03] It was. I was so excited, so thrilled to be there in that situation. It was the second to the last Heisman held in the old gym. Pat Sullivan the year after was also held there. Then it moved to bigger facilities such as the Marriott Marquee and other venues. I couldn't be more proud. Jack Schultz was back there with me. Jenny Campbell my longtime girlfriend was back there; you were there, coach Ralston and his wife. It was a very exciting time for all of us.

Murphy: [32:38] Plunk you stayed close to all those people, Rudy Riscoe of course a dear friend. To this day you have always been involved in the Heisman Trophy presentation. I told you very briefly about our experience last year when we went back and we went down to visit 911.

Plunkett: [32:53] Right.

Murphy: [32:55] When you're in New York you just have to do that. I mean it's quite an experience and it takes your breath away. Then we walked over to the downtown athletic club, which is about two 2½ blocks away and sitting inside doing a television interview and the building is now in very bad shape and pretty well shut down now. The club is pretty much defunct now I guess. Rudy Riscoe, our dear friend was sitting there doing a television interview about the closing of the downtown athletic club. [33:26] And I was just blown away. He gave a signal to us standing at the door. When it was over he came out and I hadn't Rudy for years, and he says, "Bob Murphy, it is so good to see you!" He is an amazing guy and he has been our friend for a long time.

Plunkett: [33:41] He not only runs the Heisman foundation, the Heisman dinner, he is also historian for the club. I mean he's truly an amazing person. I talk to him frequently on the phone about certain things, as a matter of fact I was just there yesterday to tell you the truth, I just love the guy he is just such a great person to know and to be a friend of. [34:09] Hopefully they are going to get some new facilities across the way at Battery Park. Hotels going to go up and give the...

Murphy: [34:17] Bring the club back?
Plunkett: [34:19] To a certain degree you know a little. It won't have an ownership interest but it will have some room to operate with the not only office but athletic facilities and such.

Murphy: [34:31] Plunk you finish up the Rose Bowl. You sweep the table clean with the Heisman and the Maxwell Awards. Then you get drafted by New England Patriots and you go back there to play and Chuck Fairbanks is the coach and he likes to run the option.

Plunkett: [34:48] Well you jumped ahead.

Murphy: [34:49] Did I get ahead a little bit?

Plunkett: [34:50] Yeah, when I first got there John Mazor was the head coach.

Murphy: [34:52] Oh that's right. Yeah, yeah.

Plunkett: [34:53] He had been an assistant. He had been a quarterback with the Jets out of Notre Dame. He was there for about a year and half and then he got fired and then Phil Bankston came in for half the year and then he was no longer with us. Bill Sullivan the president and owner of the Patriots brought in Chuck Fairbanks. [35:10] Impartially, he came from Oklahoma, he wanted me to run the option. Yeah, I will do whatever they asked me to do, but that's not my forte, it is not what I do best. I throw the ball and that's what I do best. And there was two years of that and it was time for me to move on.

Murphy: [35:26] Well, I want to relive one great day because you'll remember it as I do. Stanford was playing that next year with Don Bunce at quarterback, stepping in in your place, and they stopped in Columbia, Missouri. Beat Missouri by a score of nineteen to nothing. Then got on the airplane, instead of coming home, went to West Point to play Army the next weekend. And Stanford beat Army so they had won over Missouri and then over Army. [35:52] Paul Cardoso was leading our touring group of gypsies at that time. And we got in a bus, we went down and got on an airplane and we zipped up to Schaeffer stadium, in those days, at New England. And you were suiting up in your first game against a team called the...

Plunkett: [36:12] The Oakland Raiders, of course. [laughter]

Plunkett: [36:14] As fate would have it, yeah. And Randy had just joined us just a week before. He was released by the Rams. They found him on a beach in Southern California, said, "Here is you plane ticket, come on over to New England and we'll see if we have some room for you." And Randy was our best receiver, wide receiver at that time. New England was not a very good football team when I got there.

Murphy: [36:36] And you beat the Raiders?

Plunkett: [36:38] We did.
Murphy: [36:38] You beat the Raiders. And I remember... We went down to try and see it. We were able to see it, but thousands of people milling around that dressing room at the left end of the stadium there.

Plunkett: [36:48] Oh, a very exciting time for us. Beating a perennial playoff team in the Oakland Raiders. Just a great football team. You've got Daryle Lamonica and Ben Davidson against Tatum. You name it. But it was a big thrill for us. Me and Randy hooked up. I think he only caught one pass that day but it was a big one and so, we kind of made our mark early at New England.

Murphy: [37:13] And do I remember correctly? We were going to leave because there were so many people there, but you said that I had to stay there and wait. You gave me a little package and there was a watch in it and you had a nice little inscription on it, and you didn't say anything about the $179.

Plunkett: [37:30] No, I left that out. [laughter]

Plunkett: [37:33] But shoot. But I tell you that's Stanford for you. Shoot. We're as much friends as we are, teammates and classmates. It's been a great experience having played at Stanford, played with those guys who as I've said, even though you'll find better football players maybe, maybe I say, around the country but you won't find any finer players than there.

Murphy: [37:56] What about the Stanford experience beyond the limits of the football field? In the classroom, the delta house and all the things you enjoyed here?

Plunkett: [38:04] Oh, those were great times. The Delta house was a lifesaver for me. Those guys took me in when my football career was kind of questionable. I didn't know if I was either going to play quarterbacks, still be here or anything else. And you know all the guys that I know and Jack Lasser, Jack Shultz, Bob Moore, Jack Alastesha, Terrell Smith, who wasn't a Delt, a good friend of mine, John Sandy, and the list goes on and on. [38:32] Forty years later almost, we are still friends and we're kind of still teammates. We see each other, we socialize together, we do business together. And that to me is my Stanford experience.

Murphy: [38:45] Plunk, we've had fun over the years and just recently, as we record this, in 2004 in the month of May, we just concluded the last Jim Plunkett golf tournament. You have been putting on this tournament for years. And if I can interpret it properly as your way of saying to thank you to Stanford and returning a nice tidy sum to the athletic department each year. We've a wonderful time but more importantly, it's been a great reunion of you guys every year. We always have a few laughs and it is a wonderful day.

Plunkett: [39:17] Oh, it is great to see those guys. We always don't get as many of them together as we do at the golf tournaments. They support the university, they support my golf tournament. A lot of them say they wouldn't be there if it wasn't me putting it on. But Stanford is still going to continue that tournament in some form. So that is going to continue because it is an important revenue to the university and the athletic department.
So, in some form, that tournament is going to continue. It will be a generational change. Some of the younger guys will take it over but it has been a lot of fun. It started all with Title Nine and getting money for the women's athletic program back in 1981. It has come a long way. We were fighting and scrapping back to get enough players to show up in those early years to where at the end, you didn't have a free spot for anybody. It was all sold out, months in advance. So, it's been a great run. It has been a lot of fun and you get to bring those guys all back. Anyway, they are going to make me throw the party every year so...

**Murphy:** [laughs] Forget the golf, we don't need that. We can do the rest of it.

**Plunkett:** Twenty-five years of golf, twenty-five hangovers, you figure it out.

**Murphy:** [laughs] Well, let's go back, we're jumping around a little here. After England, that great start and then it all changed and you weren't going to run the option obviously. And then it was the 49ers and it was kind of one bad chapter after another in what had been a great life for you.

**Plunkett:** Unfortunately. I came to San Francisco. I wanted to succeed more than anything when I got back to the Bay Area amongst family and friends. And it just didn't work out. The harder I tried the worse it became, it seemed like. A big changeover going over at the 49ers, they were just sold to the DeBartolo family. He brought in Joe Thomas who kind of ran that franchise into the ground. Then I was finally released. After seven years in the NFL, it seemed like my career was over.

**Murphy:** Then...

**Plunkett:** That was devastating, to say the least. But my agent Wayne Hooper got some calls from other teams around the country.

**Murphy:** Let's stop there just for a minute. Two guys in your life. Jack Dietz and Wayne Hooper. Let's talk about those two guys.

**Plunkett:** Two wonderful men. Jack Dietz, I don't know if we'd call him my mentor or not, but he took me under his wing, and gave me a job in the summer so I could earn enough money to go to the goose.

**Murphy:** Did you pound nails actually? Did they have to check on you once in a while?

**Plunkett:** They wouldn't let me pound the nails. I had to carry the wood and the nails. I couldn't pound them. I was a laborer not a carpenter.

**Murphy:** Deitz-Crane Homes.

**Plunkett:** Yes, I worked many long hours for Deitz-Crane Homes. Enjoyed every minute of it. And also, introduced me to some people who would later on in my life be important factors in my business associations and dealings. And he was quite a man.
To this day, everybody who's known Jack, we'll once a while give a toast to Jack, because he was such a great man. [42:21] And Wayne Hooper was my agent.

**Murphy:** [42:22] One of the great golden bears. One of the truly great golden bears.

**Plunkett:** [42:26] That's true. And a good friend. You can't help to like him right off the bat despite him being from Cal and we had a good relationship that endured long after he no longer became my agent.

**Murphy:** [42:37] Then it was Hoop who connected you with a team called the Oakland Raiders.

**Plunkett:** [42:42] Right, he said "Mr. Davis called, wants to have a meeting." So we went over and talk with Al. Al said he wanted to draft me. Probably says that to lot of guys, but we had a good long talk. He said "I can't sign you right now because we have to make a trade for one of our other quarterbacks to make room for you." And two weeks later I was an Oakland Raider.

**Murphy:** [43:03] Talk about the story. How it all build up to a couple of Super Bowl rings.

**Plunkett:** [43:07] Well, I was behind Kenny Stabler. Actually John Madden brought me into his office and said "Look, everywhere you've gone you've been a savior. Here that is not your role. We have a quarterback. Your job is to learn the system, to become acquainted with the way we play football, and then one day your time will come." And eventually it did. Got rid of Kenny Stabler. Picked up Pastorini. He broke his leg. I took over for that year and we made a good run for my first Super Bowl.

**Murphy:** [43:41] And it was a lot more fun having Tatum on your side rather on the other side.

**Plunkett:** [43:45] It was. Well, actually, you know what? Tatum was no longer there.

**Murphy:** [43:47] Was he gone by then?

**Plunkett:** [43:48] He was. He had a bad knee and he finished his career, I believe, with Houston. Things change over time but it was funny, we played the Philadelphia Eagles in the Super Bowl and my old quarterback coach Dick Vermeil is their head coach. It's a small world out there.

**Murphy:** [44:04] Now how about all those old Stanford teammates of yours that gathered in New Orleans, can you tell the folks about that? I'm surprised they even got to the game, their training methods being what they are.

**Plunkett:** [44:15] Well that's true, but their training methods weren't much different than the Oakland Raider's training [laughs] methods. No they found a way to get there. Although we had Terrelle Smith, I can't remember who else because after the Raider team party we rented a bar and had an upstairs and a downstairs and Terrelle Smith and I can't remember who he is did not know there was an upstairs so they missed the entire
post-post-game party. [44:40] But, you know, you've got Randy Vataha, Jack Schult, Jim Coffman, and Bobby Schultz and -- god the list goes on and I've got a great -- Phil Passatomi who was my long time friend from high school and we both went to Stanford, but it was just great to have them there and be a part of it them. Jim Coffman said, since it was such a tough road for me to get there, to that point, to Super Bowl, instead of flying he was going to drive and take the tough road to get to the Super Bowl, but he wound up being there, and I mean it's just a great thing to have them all there.

**Murphy:** [45:22] Well what a story Plunkett, I mean so many chapters, so many interesting episodes in this life of yours.

**Plunkett:** [45:29] Oh yeah, you know, started with my parents, started as a bad kid a little bit as a youth, it was tough growing up but when I got involved in sports, I loved playing every sport there is, and I kept working hard at it, then knowing one day that this is what I was going to do for a living. [45:49] There were some trials and tribulations and bumps in the road but it makes you appreciate things a lot more when you make it that way.

**Murphy:** [45:57] What about that coaching staff that John Ralston put together, almost all of them ended up being head coaches if not in the NFL in college football, almost every single one of them?

**Plunkett:** [46:08] Sure, you've got Jim Mora, you've got Ed Peasley who went to Northern Arizona for a while, Mike White, Dick Vermeil, obviously Bill Walsh. It's almost never ending. It was quite a staff that he had assembled. At times we didn't think so, but, obviously, they're very good at what they did and it showed. [46:31] We wound up getting to the Rose Bowl and we could've been there twice, and if they had the same rules back then that they do now we would've gone to a bowl game every year.

**Murphy:** [46:40] Plunk, that was a different time too, I'd like you to touch on this a little bit, those were very political times with the Vietnam War coming to a conclusion and campuses and especially the Stanford here at campus and all kinds of marches and that sort of thing. Was it difficult to compete at the high level physically when there was so much intellectual and political stuff going on?

**Plunkett:** [47:04] Well you know, there was a lot of turmoil, as you say. But for me, my opportunity lied on the football field pretty much at the beginning, and I was going to try not to let anything determine... [47:17] Sure I had feelings for what was going on and obviously the war and some of the things, other things, on campus, the burning down or trying to burn down the athletic department and our ROTC building and all that stuff, but you know, my focus was on becoming a better football player and that's what I tried to do.

**Murphy:** [47:41] Some characters that come to mind, Hollywood Roger Cowan, one of the all-time greats used to sit in the tub a lot. I think he considered it... I'll put it as politely as I can, but I think he considered the very hot tub a birth control device. [laughs]

**Plunkett:** [48:00] Knowing him, maybe.
Murphy: [48:02] And I also remember Coach Ralston going by there one day twirling his whistle as he used to do and saying "Rog, you can't make the club in the tub." [laughs] And Roger with his Hollywood background says "But Coach, I can't take the field till I'm healed. There were some characters in that group.

Plunkett: [48:21] Oh without a doubt. You know, Larry Butler, Roger Cowan, and Dan Lightfoot. I mean Coff was a character and Kadziel. But a group of guys that came together and played good solid hard football. It was a lot of fun, I mean I've never had so much fun in my life and people who don't have that college experience are missing a lot. I was truly a great time for me.

Murphy: [48:44] Plunk, in the ensuing years, you've always expressed great loyalty to Stanford, to the Raiders, anybody whose ever asked, all kinds of charities and that type of thing, been an interesting path to follow.

Plunkett: [48:59] Sure. I never dreamed growing up that I would be so fortunate to be successful at something I love, you know, doing, and that's playing football, meet the kinds of people that I have met and truly become good friends with so many of them. [49:15] Stanford, I loved to death, and to be able to provide some financial help to the athletes because most of these kids regardless of what people think, need some kind of financial help to get through Stanford, it's not easy and I certainly could have never done it and most of the guys I play with couldn't have done it so this battle for funding goes on.

Murphy: [49:44] Geez, I think about great players, just thinking about Jackie Brown and Hillary Shockley and Benny Barns and just remarkable players like that and thoughts keep popping into my mind, this thing all started with the first eleventh game. [49:59] The first time they allowed an eleventh game was the 1970s season and it was Stanford and Arkansas in Little Rock Arkansas. I was lucky enough to go out on Friday, oh it was hot as blazes down there, and play golf with Bud Wilkinson, which was fun, and he was doing the television the next day.

[50:16] We went out to that stadium in Little Rock and it was hard as a rock, artificial surface and it was just a barely thin, very hard surface. It was 126 degrees on the field. Do you remember how hot it was that day?

Plunkett: [50:32] Oh I certainly do, during the game, obviously it was very warm but Randy passed out, couldn't finish the game and Jack Schultz could hardly walk because he was cramping up so bad, but yeah it was extremely hot. But I've always been of the opinion that if you've got a job to do you go out and do it despite the weather, as they say it's the same way on both sides of the ball, you've got to do what you got to do, just like playing in the snow is difficult. But I don't let those things bother me. I try not to anyway.

Murphy: [laughs] [51:05] I remember you guys laughing after you'd been out there and running around a little bit, you were back in the dressing room and Coach Ralston and his first words to you that day were, if I recall, were "Men, we got a great break in the weather today!" Is that about right? [laughter]
**Plunkett**: [51:24] Yeah pretty much. You remember some of these things a little bit better than I do. But at least there were no clouds. But it was just an exciting game. We'd beat a perennially nationally ranked team in Arkansas coached by Frank Broyles and so we were off to a great start.

**Murphy**: [51:41] Well, how would you review this thing? Have we covered everything pal?

**Plunkett**: [51:45] You know what? I don't know but I'd just like to say that from my perspective, the guys I played with and I probably said this earlier, but I wouldn't trade them for anybody in the world. They played with all the guts, emotion, and heart that you'd want in every other player who played sports. I mean, they gave it their all. It was just great and when they had to come up big, they usually did.

**Murphy**: [52:12] Yeah, not bad off the field either.

**Plunkett**: [52:14] Oh no, no, no, [laughter] all these guys are successful in whatever endeavor they're involved in whether it be business, medical profession, whatever they're doing, they're successful people all the way around.

**Murphy**: [52:27] Well I think that just about does it folks, Murphy and Plunkett just reviewing the better part of the last 40 years, Plunk.

**Plunkett**: [52:34] Oh yeah, in one hour. But we'll talk about it some more.

**Murphy**: [52:39] All right pal, thank you very much. And that of course, Jim Plunkett, Heisman Trophy winner, 1970.

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