

Entry #28 - May 11th 1964

Dear Diary,

Today I had the opportunity to compete in the Paralympic swimming event, a dream I had been working on for years. I have always been put down and made to feel less than everybody else because of my disability, where I was born without legs. As I neared the enormous stadium in Tokyo, all I could feel were my nerves vibrating and pulsing around my body like a buzzing bee hive.

All the intense training and sacrifices I have made over the years led up to this moment, but something went wrong during my race. As I made my way up to the starting block, my heart was racing so much that I thought that my heart was threatening to jump out of my body. The smell of chlorine filled my nostrils and the sound of the cheering crowd echoed through the arena. As I dived in, I felt the water enveloping me, the coolness a refreshing contrast to the heat of the competition. Once I had pushed off the wall, I felt a stab of pain in my shoulder that caused me to falter for a moment. Panic started to creep in as I saw my competitors pulling ahead, but I refused to let this setback define my performance.

Gritting my teeth, I pushed through the pain and focused on the finish line ahead. My strokes became more powerful, propelling me further forward each time. The taste of victory was on my lips as I neared the finish line, the cheers of the crowd pushing me to give my all. When I finally found my fingertips brush against the wall, I gazed up to realise that, despite the setback, I had come out on top.

Standing on the podium with the gold medal weighing my neck down, I felt so grateful for my family and friends who supported me every step of the way, and of course, my coach, who had prepared me for this once in a lifetime moment. But most of all, I was burning with pride that I had the opportunity to represent my country on the Paralympic stage.

Today, I showed the world that nothing can hold me back, not even with my disability. Competing in the Paralympics was an experience I will never forget, and it taught me the power of perseverance, determination and never giving up on your dreams. And even though I stumbled at the beginning of the race, I still emerged victorious.

Forever and always,

Abigail