

AN OLYMPIAN'S ORAL HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

Southern California has a long tradition of excellence in sports and leadership in the Olympic Movement. The Amateur Athletic Foundation is itself the legacy of the 1984 Olympic Games. The Foundation is dedicated to expanding the understanding of sport in our communities. As a part of our effort, we have joined with the Southern California Olympians, an organization of over 1,000 women and men who have participated on Olympic teams, to develop an oral history of these distinguished athletes.

Many Olympians who competed in the Games prior to World War II agreed to share their Olympic experiences in their own words. In the pages that follow, you will learn about these athletes, and their experiences in the Games and in life as a result of being a part of the Olympic Family.

The Amateur Athletic Foundation, its Board of Directors, and staff welcome you to use this document to enhance your understanding of sport in our community.

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AN OLYMPIAN'S ORAL HISTORY
METHODOLOGY

Interview subjects include Southern California Olympians who competed prior to World War II. Interviews were conducted between March 1987, and August 1988, and consisted of one to five sessions each. The interviewer conducted the sessions in a conversational style and recorded them on audio cassette, addressing the following major areas:

Family History

Date/place of birth; occupation of father/mother; siblings; family residence;

Education

Primary and secondary schools attended; college and post-collegiate education;

Sport-Specific Biographical Data

Subject's introduction to sport—age, event and setting of first formal competition; coaches /trainers /others who influenced athletic development; chronology of sports achievements; Olympic competition; post-Olympic involvement in sports;

General Biographical Data

Employment history; marital history; children; communities of residence; retirement;

General Observations

Reactions and reflections on Olympic experience; modernization of sport; attitudes on and involvement with the Olympic Movement; advice to youth and aspiring athletes.

Interview transcripts were edited and may include additional material based on subsequent conversations and/or subject's own editing.

WILLIAM CHISHOLM

1932 OLYMPIC GAMES - LOS ANGELES
50,000-METER WALK

INTERVIEWED:

March, 1988
Bakersfield, California
by George A. Hodak

WILLIAM CHISHOLM

Interviewer: George A. Hodak

Hodak: Today I'm in Bakersfield interviewing Olympian Bill Chisholm. Mr. Chisholm competed in the 50,000-meter walk in the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles, which was the first year the 50,000-meter walk was included in Olympic competition. First off, I'd like you to tell me when and where you were born, and then talk a bit about your family background.

Chisholm: Well, I was born in San Francisco, June 28, 1909. My mother came from Leavenworth, Kansas. She died when I was quite young. My father subsequently moved to L.A. After my mother's death . . . well, I was very fortunate, you might say, because I was taken in by my aunt and uncle. They had three sons who were great athletes back in those days; two of them were oarsmen. My first involvement in sports was acting as coxswain for a racing crew in San Francisco. That goes way back. I was the little guy; I was so light at that time they had to put a sack of sand in the stern of the shell. Just recently, last October, my wife and I went to San Francisco to visit an ailing relative, and while there we talked the party into dropping into one of the boat clubs in San Francisco. We made it known that 65 years ago I had steered a boat right there for that club. You can imagine the astonishment of the members. They rolled out the carpet after that. Subsequently, I believe I'll be up there doing a program for them.

I was fortunate in being exposed to sport at that age and knowing the value of keeping in condition through these two cousins, both of whom were working people. The crew they rode for was made up of four men who were earning their

livelihood. We would get up early to run down to North Beach. One cousin would come in to wake me up and all he had to say was rowing, and I'd pop out of bed. We'd run from their house down to North Beach and then into the shells. It was a tremendous break for just a young kid to be exposed that way.

My favorite sport at that time, like almost every kid in San Francisco, was baseball. Actually, baseball today is still my top priority. But I was never good enough to go anywhere in it. I had a sobriquet of "Wild Bill" as a pitcher in high school. I was the guy that could throw that big roundhouse for a couple of innings, and the young guys would step back. Well, in the third inning they didn't step back. (laughter) But I believe I benefited by breaking into what was truly an amateur sport, admiring the cousins and everybody in those boat clubs.

I had heard about the Olympic Games somewhere, maybe in history books, but it was certainly nothing I ever thought of when I was a kid. After the family left San Francisco we moved to the L.A. area, which actually is home to me and has been most of my adult life. I continued on in sport, kind of spasmodically, I guess. I went out for track. There was a big sporting goods store in L.A. at that time—I'm talking about 1921 and around in that area—which was called B.H. Dyas. They had a beautiful home out on 23rd Street with a spacious, enclosed backyard. We used to have kid's track meets there. I guess that's really where my love of running developed. It was just an ideal layout. You got the feeling of competition. I guess I'm addicted to it because I still recall it very vividly and fervently. It was a great break I had, being associated with other fellows of my age group, when I was in my teens. I think it has carried on over into my life. It is probably what has inspired me, in what I call my post-career, to speak about the Olympic Games, speak about Americanism, and speak about inspirational things. And luckily, I've stored up a lot of memories. I! frankly never resort to notes of any kind. It has

become a real treasure to be able to give my thoughts to people who are receptive to hearing them. That's where the inspiration for the "Chisholm Trail" comes from—the Chisholm Trail of Olympic sport talks.

Hodak: It's interesting that you situate these early formative experiences as part of the background inspiration to your various activities promoting Olympism. I'd like you to trace your own development as an athlete up to the 1932 Games. Where did you attend school in Los Angeles? What were some of the other forms of competition you engaged in?

Chisholm: I attended parochial school in San Francisco, When we moved south to L.A. I think I was in the fifth grade. Then I completed my elementary school training at Cathedral Chapel School down on Ninth Street in L.A. I always had a yearning for baseball at that time. We had a Catholic school league in L.A. and Hollywood that I participated in. I went to junior high at John Adams Junior High in Los Angeles. Then I went to [L.A.] Polytechnic High School, where I spent three years. I got my education crammed into about three-and-a-half years because I worked while I was going to school. And I guess the real love of running developed there at Poly High. I was a cross-country runner; running at seven o'clock in the morning so I'd be sure to get through school in time to go to work at noon. I ran on the streets of L.A. and got that tremendous zest that you get from running cross-country. For anybody that is thinking about running, I would recommend any participation. When you get out there on a golf course, where they have many cross-country races like that, it's just a wonderful thing; the good air and the whole bit. Whether that would be the way to go today, with so much smog, is dubious.

In high school, there at Poly High, I ran the mile. I wasn't their best miler but I did pretty good. I think the best I ever ran the mile was in four minutes and 40 seconds. I lettered in

cross-country. But all the while I enjoyed the participation. I participated and went to track meets all over L.A. All of the team members would get into an old beat-up Ford touring car and take off for whatever school we had scheduled. It was enjoyable.

Hodak: There were a formidable number of athletes. In Los Angeles high schools at the time.

Chisholm: Yes, on the 1932 Olympic team we had three students from Poly High School. The other two both have passed on; one quite recently. Herb Barthels, a swimmer. The other was a champion diver, Georgia Coleman. There were three of us from one high school. Georgia Coleman died very young. She was a victim, I guess, of cancer.

Hodak: So, carry on with how you eventually moved from cross-country and distance running to race-walking.

Chisholm: Well, they had booked Paavo Nurmi, the Flying Finn, to have two races in the L.A. Coliseum. It was a big promotion. I don't know what the admission was, but I was there and got caught in the crush. They never anticipated the turnout that they finally came up with. I was crunched against one ticket office. Not only was Nurmi there, but there was also a famous walker there from the East, Willie Plant. Willie Plant competed that night in an exhibition. I think there was some fireman in L.A. that was the competition. But seeing that walk and seeing Willie Plant was the thing that inspired me to become a walker. I kind of put it out of my mind, but I guess it was stored there in that "computer deal" we have. In 1929, my last year at Poly High, I was out for track, but I fancied myself as being a long-distance man. In fact, I even had dreams of entering the cross-country run—the C.C. Pyle Derby, from L.A. to New York.

Hodak: Sponsored by A.L. Monteverde.

Chlsholm: Right. And, of course, I didn't get into that, but in my senior year the *L.A. Times* had the first L.A. Times Marathon. It started at City Hall and ran out to Culver City, bent around and came back. At about the Cotton Club, which was out in Culver City, I got tired running—after all, I was a rookie—and I started walking. Looking back on it now, certainly fate had some schedule because I just started walking instead of running. I kept passing up some of the pluggers that weren't really top-flight runners. But I made such a show in walking, really passing up most of them, that after the race the referee, who was a very famous coach at USC, Dean Cromwell, drew me aside and said, "You really should be a race-walker." It was fate. Dean Cromwell had taken it on himself to look out for a fellow from Hungary, a fellow named Mike Fekete. Mike Fekete had been a champion walker in Hungary and had competed in the Paris Games in 1924. At that time there were two walks, but they were shorter distances—six-and-a-quarter miles or 10,000 meters and I believe they also had a 3,000-meter walk. They had so many fights. They had more fights on the track than they had in the boxing arena. Judges of one nation would disqualify a walker from another nation. It took on some bitterness, believe me. Mike Fekete, the man who was going to convert me into a walker, was thrown out because of his form in 1924. Well, it was so hot and heavy, all this deal about race-walking, that it was dumped in 1928 as being too hot to handle. They didn't put it back on the Olympic program until 1932, when they lengthened it out to 50,000 meters or 31 miles. This was an effort to bring fairness into it. They went on the assumption that people wouldn't cheat over the long distance, which has proven to be a fallacy because today in race-walking it's such a liberal thing, it's almost laughable.

Hodak: By this, you mean the judging is very liberal? The judges give a lot of leeway?

Chisholm: Right. And the contact with the ground isn't being maintained. It's a very simple rule. Racewalking is progression by steps whereby unbroken contact with the ground is maintained. I'm proud to say that in all my years of competition—at that time you were allowed two cautions before they threw you out—I never had one caution. I was what you'd call a very fair walker. I was more of a pedestrian, without all the exaggerated hip swing. Later on, as a judge for racewalking, I was a tough one because I didn't have any patience with people who were obviously cheating.

It so happened that I made the 1932 Olympic team. I was still pretty much of a novice. I embraced walking and for one year I was the American champion of walking at three miles and seven miles. I entered the tryouts, but it was brutal. The tryouts in 1932 for the walk were held back in the East in New York City because the preponderance of the walkers lived back East. And of all things, it was around Central Park; five times around Central Park on a hot day! If anybody knows what the heat is like in New York City, well, I learned it the hard way. I weighed 142 pounds at the start—I was skinny. Five-and-a-half hours later I had lost 10 pounds, so that gives you a little indication of how tough the race was. It was made doubly tough because, it being a new event, they had misinterpreted the Olympic rules. They interpreted them as saying that nothing can be given to a contestant, no water, nothing. It was a case of being dehydrated. Plus, all through my long-distance career I was plagued with stitches. Today they refer to it as a pain in the side. It is usually right in the area of the gall bladder. I had to endure that the last lap—six-and-a-quarter miles around the track—holding my side. That was something. I'm not making an alibi in this late stage of my life. But in race-walking, the most important part of the action is your arms; the arm action, the rhythm. But I made it. It was a tremendous feeling. In reflecting back—I'm always telling students and young people to never quit, which

is the trademark of my talks, to endure things—I've wondered if I, at an early age, had even considered quitting. Quite honestly, I can't recall ever thinking of quitting in that race. I was beaten by about ten seconds by a fellow from Baltimore, Ernie Crosbie. I was leading—it was near Harlem—and as we came up to the finish line I thought it would be great to walk in together. I waved to him to come on, and he buzzed right by me. (laughter) He really wanted to win, I guess. It didn't matter because we both made the team.

But the real come-down happened right after the race. I was on cloud nine having made the Olympic team, which is quite a feat, naturally. I showered and in relieving myself in the bathroom, all I could pass was blood. Well, if you don't think I came down off cloud nine in a hurry! It was a shocker. I understand it is fairly common. Actually, I have had it happen before in athletics. It's a condition brought on the membrane in which our organs are encased, and under a strain it will hemorrhage a little bit. Of course, it makes it look like it's fatal at the time. I had originally planned on coming back from New York to L.A. but I was counseled against that.

But it was a thrill to make the Olympic team. I hope that in my talks I have inspired other people to do things like that. One of the fellows that eventually made the Olympic team several years ago credits my talk about what you can endure to helping him to stay right in there. There are many times in life when you want to give up. Anybody that won't say that is not being honest. I think we all have our ups and downs, and maybe that's one of the payoffs, one of the values of competing. In sport, to know a kind of a yardstick, I think. I think that the Greeks had it in mind that it was kind of a yardstick to watch young people straining for the finish to be the champion. And whether they brought the Games into being many years ago for that reason, I don't know, but it has had a lasting impression on humanity. There's no doubt about that.

Hodak: Let's go on from the tryouts to the actual Games themselves in Los Angeles. I want you to talk about what you recall of the Games, people you met in Los Angeles, your thoughts on the Olympic Village, and certainly your actual competition. Were you able to reinvigorate yourself after this experience at the tryouts?

Chisholm: The Games took place a month later. One thing I'd like to mention, I had a coach at that time, not a walking coach, but a great coach named Boyd Comstock of the Los Angeles Athletic Club. He had coached at Yale and was very famous. While I was training at USC I met a gentleman who had moved out from New York, a fellow named Mack Weiss. Mack Weiss was rather short in stature but he was a very strong, powerful walker. He saw the chance that I could develop into being a champion, and he practically gave up his work to train me at USC. He also trained me so well that I was able to defeat the fellow, Harry Hinkel, who had been champion and had been accepted for many years. Mack couldn't beat Hinkel, but he trained me so well, step by step, that I upset Hinkel and became national champion.

Hodak: What was it in particular that he helped you with? Was it a matter of pacing?

Chisholm: That, and he taught me how to harry, to stay right with him and worry him to death. During the summer that I had spent on a ranch up in Merced, California, I trained at night. I was already American junior national champion in the walking race. I developed quickly up there in Merced, training at night. You have to remember that was during the Depression when I was competing. I "bached" while I was working on a fig ranch up there and trained at night. There was a huge orchard right up there, something like 3,500 acres of peaches. Their fruit pickers, of course, were nondescript—they called them "bundle-stiffs" in those days. And I'd be training, walking

along on the shoulder of the road by this orchard and out of the darkness one of these "bundle-stiffs" would loom up and scare me to death. And I credit that experience with getting additional speed. It was something, believe me. Then, I came back to L.A. and by that time I had developed to a point where we felt I could beat Harry Hinkel. But it was an experience to be up there. Nobody in that town of Merced knew that I was a champion. Back in those days, I guess they didn't have the investigative reporters they have today. But it was a healthy place to train, let's put it that way.

Along the line I should mention my greatest benefactor was my sister Helen. She was a couple of years older than me and she more or less sponsored me all the time, financially and in every way. She was my pal. I mentioned the Depression; those were hard times to get a couple of bucks to go anywhere. Clubs at that time felt the pinch and they had tight budgets, but somebody. Mack Weiss I think, had a hand in it, and talked the L.A. Athletic Club into sending me to New York for the tryouts in 1936. That was quite an expenditure of money back then. That's one reason I was able to get back there and get oriented. I had a whole month to get oriented in New York City. What a break that was to see Times Square and the whole bit. It was a wonderful break, just one of the many breaks I have had in my lifetime. We all have disappointments, there's no doubt in the world about that. Four years later, favored to make the Olympic team, I had piled up some records in the interim and I was more or less considered to be a cinch to make the Olympic team. But in the final tryouts in Cincinnati, along the Ohio River, I was the victim of the flu that week. And it shut me down all the way through. But I had been so favored at that time, that Bill Henry, the great sportswriter of that era, actually put on a campaign to have the Olympic Committee relax their rules and put me on the team. But that wouldn't work of course.

Many people are critical of our method of arriving at our American Olympic team. They think it's a folly for people to go down within a month of the Games, and then for one reason or another be shut out. But I buy the original principle. If there's anything, any organization that shows the whole world what capitalism and free enterprise is all about, it's our Olympic team. You earn your place on the team. In some of the team sports, such as basketball, there's a selection method. But in track and field and in swimming, you earn it. It's cruel, sure, it's cold turkey. But in this nation of ours, with over 200 million people, every one of them technically has a chance to represent this country. What would have happened if I had been put on that team in 1936? It would have bumped somebody else. That has been my logic all through my post-athletic career; to admire what our method is all about. I know people who have been far greater athletes that I ever hoped to be that have been world record holders in their events. Lloyd Hahn, for example; he was a world record holder But on the day of the Olympic tryouts, if you're not right, you're wrong. You're out to lunch. That's why I continually speak about our method being right. Otherwise, you wouldn't hear about some athlete from some remote little town in our country making the team. That's the thrill of it. That's the spontaneous bonus of our method. And I think that that is the way it should stay.

A classic case of professionalism happened in 1984. In 1984 in Los Angeles the women's volleyball team was beaten by China. But that same group of American girls had been hand selected by the coach over a year before, barracked somewhere in Southern California; in essence, they were pros. Maybe it's disloyal to say it, but I was delighted when they were beaten because our concept had been misconstrued all the way through.

My career was fairly short. I suffered a back injury that

terminated my career. Maybe I quit too soon. But there's one experience I had that I look back on and wonder about what happened after the 1932 Olympic Games. I was defending champion that fall in the seven-mile walk and I was scheduled to run at the New York University track in October of 1932. There weren't any funds left at the LAAC; they would have loved to send me as defending champion. Well, my sister came to the rescue and I set out by bus. I went to Chicago and the money ran out and I hitchhiked from Chicago to New York to defend that title, which I lost by seven yards after all that. I remember hiking for 31 miles from Canton, Ohio, to whatever place it was. You've got to remember, it was the Depression. People were very hesitant to pick up a hitchhiker. Me, with my Olympic USA sweatshirt on, didn't pack too much weight. I lost that seven-mile race by just a few yards. But, looking back on it, it wasn't bad. Once in awhile I'll compare it with what the athletes today have. They have airplane trips and the whole bit. But that was strictly a case of somebody loving the sport, if I do say it. It did me a lot of good.

Hodak: I would say you won something just in arriving in shape and prepared for the actual race.

Chisholm: And, at that time, I met a tremendous gentleman. You know, there's so many people in sport, so many freeloaders. I hate to say it, but it's a truism. But I had the great honor of meeting a man, a little, round German fellow, built like a beer barrel, who was a contractor in New York City. His name was Dietrich Wortmann. When you hear of people that contribute, you have to think of people like him. He loved athletics. He had been a weightlifter in his youth. Well, after that defeat I told him I was coming back to New York a few months later to compete indoors. He invited me to join his German-American Athletic Club. I competed for them. A lot of people say, "If I had a lot of money, I'd do this and that." Well, he did it. He got me a job, one of those athletic jobs. Beer was just coming

back from the times of Prohibition, and he got me a job at the Fidelio Brewery down on the East Side. And that was an experience.

Hodak: Mr. Wortmann was a manager, I believe, on the 1932 and 1936 Olympic weightlifting teams. So you trained under the German-American Athletic Club's sponsorship from 1932 to 1936?

Chisholm: No, just for a year.

Hodak: And the L.A. Athletic Club had ceased to sponsor or finance athletics?

Chisholm: Yes, you couldn't blame them. It was the Depression.

Hodak: Before you talk further of the Olympic Movement, I'd like to go back to the '32 Games in Los Angeles. Would you give some further general observations on the '32 Games? What was it like living in the Olympic Village? What are some general recollections you'd like to share?

Chisholm: The Olympic Village was a tremendous part of the whole experience. That was my first meeting with the man who was later to become a lifetime teammate. I'm talking about the great Glenn Cunningham. I was in awe of him. I knew all about him. He was so famous because of the tragedy early in life when he was almost burned to death. I was also inspired by another great teammate, Frank Wykoff, the great sprinter from Glendale. He was then called the world's fastest human. I remember Dean Cromwell said the average sprinter starts with the sound, but Frank starts with the b in the bang. Back in those days, the 100-yard dash was the headline event. Whole meets were built around that event and later, of course, the mile took over as the headline event. One amusing thing happened: We used to go down to the club room of the Olympic Village with the athletes from all over the world. One funny

experience I had was when I met and talked—through our smiles because we didn't speak each other's language—with an Italian runner. I never in the world would have associated him with what was to follow in the Games. I determined from talking with him that he was a swimmer. Boy, was I surprised, in the great throng in the Coliseum that day, when that same Italian that I thought was a swimmer came down to the finish line leading Glenn Cunningham and others to win the 1500 meters — Luigi Beccali. I understand he lives in New York City and has for many years.

Then, one of our German-American Athletic Club teammates competed for the German team, a fellow named Paul deBruyn. On the day of the marathon in L.A. it was very, very cold. It was an exceptionally cold day. I was out on the course to wave him in and give him some inspiration. And old Paul came along: "Ooh, it's cold." (laughter) He didn't win of course. The marathon is always full of a lot of emotion, naturally.

Hodak: Did you see the finish of the marathon with [Juan Carlos] Zabala?

Chisholm: Yes, Zabala from Argentina, a great, great little guy. Of course, we know about Dallas Bixler. Dallas, incidentally, was a high school boy in L.A. too. He went to Los Angeles High. They were our great rivals at Poly. Of course, I wasn't in gymnastics. He stunned the whole world when he won an Olympic gold medal. It was in an event that wasn't popularized at that time. We had quite a showing of local people back then, as you can see.

As far as the Games themselves, they were nothing like they are today. There was absolutely no way to compare what happened then socially with what happens today. But it was great just to be around people that were great—like Glenn Cunningham. Other people on the team, great people who

impressed me . . . well, who could ever discount the noteworthiness of Ben Eastman, the great runner from Stanford University. Ben, incidentally, is still very much alive and lives now in Colorado. He was a San Franciscan by birth. And we did meet and talk during the 1984 Olympic Games. I believe he is still among us. You know, when you get up in our age category you wonder sometimes.

But life has been good to me in general. My theory of life itself, when I'm talking to student groups, which I do on an average of twice a week, is to maintain something we are all born with—a lot of us don't develop it—and that's enthusiasm. It's a great trait to be given in life. I encourage kids to develop it. It's just like a crop, you have to nurture it. Also, the big element I've taken out of participation in the Olympic Games is the patriotic influence. It is certainly a key ingredient in every athlete, whether you're an American or you're from Kenya or whatever. There's no way of discounting the importance of love of country. That's probably one of the great draws that the Olympics provide, the element of national pride. A lot of third worlders deplore that and think there's too much of that influence, but I don't. I subscribe to it all the way through.

Hodak: Let's discuss some specific athletes, in particular Paavo Nurmi. How did he strike you as a runner, as a distance man? Did he revolutionize running?

Chisholm: Yes, I fully believe that. And to this day I believe that Paavo Nurmi, without any doubt, was the greatest runner that ever lived. And he was the most versatile. He set the then-world record for the mile at 4.10. But at the same time he could run the 100 in ten seconds flat. He was a picture to watch. He had beautiful running form. And he ran entirely against the watch, carrying it in his left hand. I don't know how in the world he ever read it—I've tried to do it, but with it bouncing

around I never could read it. But he certainly had it down perfect. I have one great picture in my gallery of Willie Plant and Paavo Nurmi in which Nurmi is smiling, which he rarely did. In 1932 he was barred for professionalism. He might have been singled out to have that happen to him, because over the years many athletes took money under the table. When I was in New York competing one winter, during the indoor season, I'd spend a nickel on the subway to come from Brooklyn to the Garden, and maybe one of the stars, some of my friends too, would get \$1,000, you know, expense money. But Nurmi was tremendous. In his twilight, he tried running the marathon but it was too much for him. He had the great honor at Helsinki, Finland, In 1952, of carrying the torch on Opening Day.

But I met a lot of great Finnish athletes. They have a family tradition in the Olympics. I believe heritage has a tremendous amount of bearing on what happens to you. It is certainly evident in the Jarvinen family. [Werner] "Papa" Jarvinen was a national hero in the early Olympic Games. He had three sons who competed in the Olympics: Akilles, a top-flight decathlon man; Matti, who was the javelin thrower that was the first man to throw it over 300 feet; and Erkki, also a good athlete. Their training methods, well, I couldn't endure that because they rely a lot on baths, Finnish baths. I had an experience on one trip to New York, up in Harlem, when this one Finnish walker. Bill Karlssen, took me to a Finnish bath. And boy, it was almost too much for me—it was stifling. But the Finnish are a wonderful bunch of people. There was also a top-flight boxer at that time, a fellow named Gunnar Barlund. It was great to meet them. They are very competitive people. In recent Olympiads they have done real well, as they should.

But of all the outstanding runners that I have been associated with, the greatest, of course, is the legendary Glenn Cunningham. Incidentally, Glenn Cunningham passed away just

three days ago, over in Conway, Arkansas, where he and his wife have resided for a number of years. Glenn Cunningham, the one I mentioned whose story was in school books, was influenced by what happened to him when he was eight years of age. He was living back in Kansas on a farm. There was a small country school that he and his brother hiked to on a winter morning, snow all over the place. They were the first kids to get to the school, and they had a job to do; get the old stove going to warm the place up for the other kids. There was always a giant cast-iron stove in the middle of those one-room schools. Well, Glenn's brother poured what was supposed to be oil on the coals from the night before; inadvertently somebody had filled it with gasoline, and boom, the whole building exploded. Glenn and his brother were pinned against one wall and by the time they got out they were burned horribly. His brother, Floyd, only lived three days after that incident.

When the doctors looked at Glenn's legs they turned to his mother and said: "We've got to cut his legs off. He'll never walk again." But she wouldn't buy that and that led into months and years of nursing him, and bringing his schoolwork and meals to him. When the doctors finally came and said, "Okay Glenn, you can get out of bed now," Glenn thought he'd pop right out of bed and start running like he did before. Well, he hit the floor twice, once with his feet and then with his nose—he'd forgotten how to walk. Coming from being practically an invalid, well, the Cunningham story becomes almost unbelievable. Finally, he'd go out and hang onto the plow while his dad plowed, and gradually his legs reacted to that and he started walking. He went to high school and had always wanted to be in a race. And to make a long story short, he grew into manhood, not only to walk again, but to become the world's greatest runner. That's probably as inspirational a story as anybody would ever know.

Then, to be on an Olympic team with that man and to continue being teammates through life was more or less accidental. After World War II—I had been in the Air Force and he was in the Navy—I had lost track of him. On a trip over to New Mexico I met a man on the plane who knew Glenn and knew what he was doing. He told me about a youth ranch in Wichita, the Glenn Cunningham Youth Ranch was the name. It was a philanthropy that was accidental. Glenn, out of the Navy, had quite a bit of money in the bank and a lot of horses on the acreage back there. He and his wife, Ruth Their whole lives changed one Sunday when a minister dropped a poor young girl off who had been abandoned by her parents. That was the beginning of a philanthropy that has him dead broke, but not in memories. In the last 30-some years they have played host, with no money at all from anyone, to over 9,000 troubled boys and girls. On trips to the L.A. area where I was living, we'd have Glenn out, and I'll never forget a headline in Long Beach referring to Glenn: "Champion Athlete, Champion Human Being." And how fitting!

I remember one thing I discovered early on after the 1932 Games. I was going to New York for the indoor track season, where he'd starred, and then on up to Toronto for the Canadian championships. And I was bunking with Glenn at the hotel there. I found that he did very little running in between track meets. He just couldn't do it. He had all that scar tissue from those burns when he was just a kid. If he ran too much his skin would break open. So he mostly did calisthenics.

I'm sure there was a lot of pain all through his life, but he was always a very compassionate man, a very kind man, but a man that wouldn't be browbeaten by anybody. I know in his Navy career he had some incidents where he had to really crack the whip. But then to be able to donate a little, not just in money but in time, to raising money for the ranch back there. Glenn

has always been a very gracious and great man. He subscribed to something I subscribe to: Never put all the accent on athletics. I warn kids about doing that. He believed, like I do, that sports are great, but that they are the toy department of life. In recent years he made trips to join me in Bakersfield where the people have embraced him, packing the Civic Auditorium on one occasion. This was not for his running ability, but for what he has done for youth. He's got a great wife and all those kids. (Glenn and Ruth had 12 children of their own.) To me, it's been a real boost all through my life to have been associated with Glenn Cunningham. There are other great milers, other great athletes, there's no doubt in the world about that. But I think that we have been blessed, all of us, with people like Glenn Cunningham. And another guy, a little guy. Bill Schroeder, the man who conceived the idea of the Helms Athletic Foundation. Bill Schroeder was a man with a heart of gold and a man that placed values where they belong. His recent death saddened all of us. He was a man that could never say no. He and Glenn made three trips up here just to be with us. They were true friends.

I've seen a lot of great distance runners. In athletics, I've always looked for distance runners, I've always looked to see who won the mile or whatever. Glenn certainly had a lot of competition in his running days. He packed Madison Square Garden for years. He ran like a centaur, a horse with a man's head. He ran that way with those scarred legs. Remarkable! I always wondered why he ran with kind of a splayed action with one foot. It was because one tendon was completely burned away when he was in that schoolhouse fire. He was an incredible man, doing what he did with all those kids. The kids weren't orphans, they were troubled kids, run off by parents that never wanted them. How in the world can you classify anybody like Glenn Cunningham and his wife as anything but champion human beings? It has been a bonus for me to have been associated with the Cunninghams and with Bill

Schroeder.

This has been a remarkable life for me because I have been thrown into so many relationships and observations that are a treasure, looking back; like my first trip to New York as a real rookie in that great big metropolis. I am grateful for being optimistic, enthusiastic if you'll have it. And I do believe that out of every bad occurrence, something good comes along. I do think that the accent today in sport is a little too much on the winning. That might sound kind of corny to say that, but I do believe it. There's too much accent on being number one.

Hodak: Was that markedly different when you were competing as an athlete?

Chisholm: I do think so. I'm not thinking entirely about track but in terms of pro sports, in particular, where the accent is on being number one, being the champ, being macho. But I like to draw an example of the creed of a little Frenchman who brought these Olympics back to the world about 100 years ago—Baron Pierre de Coubertin. He was a little man with a great big mustache who knew all about human frailties. He knew we all want to be number one; champion or whatever. But his creed is beautifully put: Not so much the victory but to compete with honor. What does it boil down to? Playing by the rules. It's so simple. Incidentally, next week I'll be up at juvenile hall for two days and I really pour that on about playing by the rules.

Hodak: How long have you been engaged in these speaking activities?

Chisholm: My first attempts at public speaking were probably something like reporting something at the Kiwanis Club. Then Coast Federal Savings had a speakers' group. Free Enterprise, and I was finally named to their group as their sports voice. The one prior to me in that assignment was the athletic director of

UCLA for many years. I was in the automobile business as a salesman; sales manager, parts man, the whole bit. That was my livelihood in the L.A. area and I did fairly well. Enthusiasm is a great asset in sales work, and I'm still a salesman in effect. Since 1968 I have been speaking periodically and raising money for our Olympic team, which has been a great element in my life.

Then along came the 1968 Olympic Games, which America doesn't have an awful lot to say about as far as it being a very happy Olympic Games. The Vietnam War was going on. The Harvard crew who had won the right to represent this country were passing out anti-war literature down at the Mexico City Games. Then, the great shocker of all was the episode on the victory stand with John Carlos and Tommie Smith. The average American was shocked out of their skin, and you can imagine the reaction of Olympians to the Black Power salute. It was intolerable. And it seems that that became the launching . . . that incident became the thing that launched me into the Chisholm Trail of sport talks, in an effort to offset that kind of vocalizing. I'm happy to say it took hold and has been well received for the past 20 years. Always a heavy accent on patriotism, but entered into kind of obliquely, especially with young people. There's no moralizing connected with it at all; it's just trying to convey the importance of sports into a country's very spirit. I've had a tremendous career speaking to all kinds of groups. I have spoken to deaf groups, blind groups, church groups, and every type of school. I have about 100 programs a year now. I was running a gross but my wife, Marion, has cracked down on me after a little episode I had in the hospital last year.

Hodak: She has curtailed your travel?

Chisholm: Yes. But the Chisholm Trail is unique, I will say that.

Hodak: And do you travel largely within California, or all across the U.S.?

Chisholm: Wherever. Actually it has been an eye-opener. As a rookie speaker way back in 1968, Bill Schroeder provided me with two large photos of former teammates of mine, Cunningham and Wykoff. I had them along to divert the attention of the audience from me. Today, I have well over 120 of those; everybody in the sports world that I have a fancy to. But it's always amazed me that out of probably 6,000 people that have had the honor of wearing the Olympic shield, I believe I am the only one to do it in the manner in which I have done it.

You might say I have a love affair with the Olympic Games. The oldest organization on earth—there's only one organization that has been in vogue all the way through—Christianity. But these Olympic Games, picture this: 2,800 years ago, two guys got down on the marks at the foot of Mount Olympus. And that's where the whole thing started, 2,800 years ago! I have a lot of fun. I always pitch that to any group, to let them realize why there is all the excitement in the Olympics, why the whole world goes gaga every four years. Part of it I give to longevity, of course. Last spring, for example, I wound up one morning at a country school. And don't get the idea, when I say country school, that they are small. I'm talking about 800 kids in the average school up in Kern County. Well, that morning while I was talking to those boys, third graders, I told them the Olympics began 2,800 years ago. I could have saved my breath. (laughter) I could have said 28 minutes or 28 seconds, they would have bought it. I followed it up by asking, "What was the first sport in the Olympics 2,800 years ago?" A little guy pops up, real eager, and says, "Drag racing." But he wasn't too far off. In the ancient Olympics they had chariot racing. But, on second thought, could you burn rubber with a chariot? On another thought, rubber hadn't been invented. (laughter)

Three days from now I'll take part in a St. Patrick's Day affair, but several years ago, when I was kind of boning up on the St. Patrick's Day program, I found out that 1,100 years before the first race in the Olympics—in other words almost 4,000 years ago—Ireland had the first recorded track meet, the Gaelic Games. I found out an interesting item about the first time a certain field event made its appearance. What was it? No, it was not the hurdles or the discus; it was the pole vault, the oldest field event known to mankind. Originally it wasn't an event, it was a way in Ireland, where they have a lot of little rivers but no bridges, for the Irish to get from one bank to the other. They always had a pole on each bank. Now, what happened after they had been at the pub too long . . . they probably wound up right out in the middle.

The great story about the Olympic Games is that those people, way back then, were not different than we are today. They had their own likes and dislikes, their own ambitions, their own tempers, and the whole bit. And they had blood coursing through their veins. If anybody denies the good of the Olympic Games, I think that counters it. Athletics directed in the proper direction are invaluable, believe me. And that's the charm.

Let me mention the one individual to whom we owe so much. A man I've never met, but I wish I had—Pierre de Coubertin. The Olympics were dormant until he came along. After all, they were continuous for 2,800 years. I've talked here today about Juvenile delinquency. How about adult delinquency? That's what killed the original Olympic Games. And the world didn't have them to thrill them or be inspired by them. Back around 1880, France was in the throes of something similar to what Iran is involved in today. Nobody was steering the ship, anarchy was rampant. Actually, people criticize the Olympics today for being too politically involved. I think it was ordained that they would be because de Coubertin rebuilt them on the

scrap pile of political dissension. He is the one. And I don't think the Olympic Committee points out the tremendous value today of the Olympic flag, the five rings. He's the one that thought that up. I don't use the word create—no human creates anything. Those five rings represent the five continents of the world, embracing everything in humanity. Today, with a lot of bigotry and wars going on constantly, it has to be the greatest peace-keeping thing left to mankind.

L.A., 1984 Eight thousand athletes from 160 countries marching on Opening Day. What a thrill! It was just tremendous to have Rafer Johnson lighting that torch. Let me say something about Rafer: class. That's a great word. Boy, anybody that would ever refer to me as class, I'd kiss them, believe me. Jesse Owens, Joe Louis, Rafer Johnson—class all the way through. But you know, you judge individuals on whether they are bums or good guys. Well, how about nations? Pick one nation out of the 160 that paraded down there on Opening Day. Which one would you pick out? Forget our country, we had enough going for us. Romania, showing so much moxie in even showing up. Lord knows what sanctions they've been exposed to since then. They defied the Kremlin, and I'll say this, and I believe it wholeheartedly, that that was one of the first cracks in communism that has occurred. The defiance they displayed in even showing up; not only showing up but doing well. So, maybe politics backfired.

And the boycott issue is very, very disappointing. I would say that it will be part of every Olympic Games from now on. They have decided that it is a tremendous tool to get the world's attention. Just like the displays on the victory stand, so unhealthy, so bizarre, wicked. But they draw world attention. The shock back in 1972 in Munich of the Israeli tragedy . . . people critically and unwittingly blame the Olympics. My wife and I were just a short distance from where that massacre occurred. And I say if the world's attention had

been zeroed in, on the TV, on a rock festival, the same thing would have occurred. I'm no defender of the Olympics, I'm an admirer. I know one thing: the Olympic Games are made up of human beings, like you and I, with all our imperfections and all our likes and dislikes. But I do say this, if there is any value to these Olympic Games, it has to be in the five rings. De Coubertin, incidentally, wasn't an athlete, but he admired athletes. One thing about de Coubertin, he was very much opposed to the Winter Olympics. He probably had a lot more savvy than we average people. He knew the danger of professionalism had to come in. For instance, in track and field all you need is a pair of shorts and a pair of spikes and you're in business. For winter sports, all the equipment runs into thousands and thousands of dollars. The first attempt at a Winter Olympic Games in Chamonix, France, in 1924, was sort of half put together. And they had the first attempt at an Olympic Village there.

The advent of women into athletics to me is refreshing. The avalanche of women into sports was catalyzed in 1948 with Fanny Blankers-Koen winning three medals in the mud and slush of London. Today women compete in a variety of events. Incidentally, Donna de Varona came up with the idea of the Spirit Team for the 1984 Games, which had a very good effect. We spoke around Will Rogers Park in South Central L.A. and I was so struck with the area, Marion and I went down and gave a presentation at our own expenses.

I learned just last week that the sponsor of my talks is picking up the tab to send me to Korea. I hadn't even dared think of it because of the cost, but my great sponsor, Ben Stinson, is picking up the tab. Now, in the intervening months I need to get busy and scurry around and pass the hat to get enough money for Marion to join me. She has been a great supporter of my efforts. You know, it's not easy being the wife of some guy who likes to get out and gab so much. She absolutely will

not listen to me. She gave me the devil up in Alamosa, Colorado, where I spoke to a college group. All through it I thought it was going alright. But afterwards, instead of a compliment, she said, "You rattled your change all through it." So now, I don't dare do that, (laughter)

Hodak: When did you begin to serve as a judge of race-walking competition?

Chisholm: I began to judge in district meets in the '40s and I became an international judge after 1968. In 1970 I went to Panama where I disqualified a walker from Cuba. Well, the upshot of it was that a group of his followers and coaches were upset, and they were serious about going after me. The Panamanian national guard had to escort me for protection. You can imagine Marion's surprise at walking into a stadium and seeing me and a guard with a machine gun protecting me.

Hodak: What observations do you have on the current competition in race-walking? The rules, the judging

Chisholm: Well, the rules are still there, but they aren't enforced as much. As for the competition, Mexico is the dominant country, along with East Germany and Russia. The Russians are very fair and they do it great. The shorter distances are harder to judge—they get away with more. In a long race you have time to study the walkers.

Hodak: It's hard to top what you've said up to now with any sort of concise summary. Do you have any further concluding thoughts on the Olympic Movement?

Chisholm: I think that the '84 Games actually saved the Olympics. I mean that sincerely. Because of the bad instances—the Black Power salute, the Israeli deal—people were sick of the term Olympics. It was obvious in L.A. before the Games were ever staged.

The indifference was terrible on this rerun of the L.A. deal. The one man that we certainly should credit with snapping the whole world out of it is Peter Ueberroth, the current baseball commissioner. He did a wonderful job and he did it in a brand-new way. He got sponsors for every one of the 23 Olympic sports. The reaction was wonderful. There it was, a pile of money, instead of being completely broke as the media had forecasted. I do believe that Ueberroth deserves credit. He's a down-to-earth family man, a father of four. It is a real stimulating experience to be around the man. He's brusque at times with some of the help—after all, he wasn't there on a pension, he had to get things done. But he is the first one to admit that 79,000 volunteers are what put over the 1984 Olympic Games. Teamwork! Peter's book, *Made in America*, his biography, is an eye-opener and a book worth reading. In it he recounts how our State Department threw every hurdle in the way of putting on the Olympic Games. But he set an example. I believe we are lucky to be living at the same time as Ueberroth, Lee Iacocca, and—this will surprise some people—Ed Koch, Mayor of New York. I'd put them all up there as an inspiration because they are people that when they say something, you have a feeling they mean it.

The Olympic Games have certainly changed a lot since I was first a contestant way back in 1932. Some things, I believe, are for the better. The fund-raising aspect is not nearly as shabby as I used to consider it. Over the years my wife and I have gone into stadiums during track meets and other events collecting dollars from the American public. In that respect, my pitch was that they were part of our Olympic team. But, with sponsors like Budweiser and whatnot, maybe it's a more practical way. But I had always thought that the individual sponsor—and I think of Bill Schroeder in that respect—was the way to make people think they were part of the whole action. But everything is in healthy condition now. In 1984 it certainly looked bleak, not mainly from the financial standpoint,

but from the overall pall that hung over the Games because of the Israeli deal and the bad incidents on the victory stand.

I'm looking ahead to Seoul, Korea, and they have done a marvelous job over there getting things ready. They're so ready they could have put the Games on two years ago. Now there is the threat of terrorism, we know that. They had that threat up in Montreal in 1976 when the African nations foolishly bought the idea of a boycott. I might mention one incident that happened in Montreal. In one race in Montreal, the 400-meter hurdles, Edwin Moses, the black, was the winner. In second place was little Mike Shine. Nobody in the world ever thought he'd be one of the three to make our team in that event. Those two Americans finishing one, two, didn't stop after the victory, but completely and spontaneously ran a victory lap. They were clowning around, horsing around, jumping over hurdles they had sped over minutes before—that's the greatest tonic for civil rights that I can ever think of. They were embracing each other, hugging each other, and what a thrill that was.

One other incident I'd like to mention happened in 1964 in the Olympics in Japan. It happened in the boxing event. Boxing is a very big sport in the Olympic Games. It goes on the whole two weeks. You're punchy by the time you watch all those bouts. A great fighter from this country made our country's Olympic team as a heavyweight, one of three. He was a fellow named Joe Frazier. He went over there with the team to Tokyo. In order to become the champion in Olympic boxing, you have to go through successfully four or five three-round bouts. Joe Frazier, in the first round of the first bout, suffered a broken hand. He kept it a secret and didn't tell his trainers or anybody. Frazier went through that to become the winner. How would you spell that? *C-O-U-R-A-G-E*. Courage! Well, there are so many anecdotes in Olympic competition, you could speak for hours.

Hodak: Before we conclude, I'd like you to talk about your family.

Chisholm: Well, I was married at age 36. Marion and I have been married 41 years. My wife is a California native, born and raised in Santa Monica. She is musically inclined and has done some singing. We have one daughter. Sue. She's a great lover of sports. She's also very big on horses; she can ride real well. She, like ourselves, is a dedicated dog lover. She has worked here in Bakersfield in animal control. We now have one grandchild, David.

Hodak: Well, I thank you, Mr. Chisholm, for sharing your thoughts and experiences today. Your energy in, promoting Olympism through the Chisholm Trail of sports talks is most admirable. You have been most gracious today. I sincerely appreciate your cooperation, and it's been a real pleasure to meet you.

Chisholm: Likewise George, believe me.

Hodak: The Amateur Athletic Foundation is indebted to you for your cooperation. I thank you.