

IRIS CUMMINGS CRITCHELL
1936 OLYMPIC GAMES
SWIMMING



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.

IRIS CUMMINGS CRITCHELL

1936 OLYMPIC GAMES - BERLIN
200-METER BREASTSTROKE

INTERVIEWED:

May, 1988
Claremont, California
by George A. Hodak

IRIS CUMMINGS CRITCHELL

Interviewer: George A. Hodak

Hodak: Today, I'm in Claremont, California, visiting with Iris Cummings Critchell, who competed in the 1936 Olympics in the swimming competition. First off, I'd like you to give me your date and place of birth and then talk about your family background.

Critchell: I was born in Los Angeles on December 21, 1920. I was raised in Southern California. I lived the first part of my school years in Redondo Beach and then in later years in Palos Verdes Estates, so that puts me on the southwest side of the city. There I attended Redondo Union High School and then the University of Southern California.

I was raised as an only child. It was a second marriage for my father, who had had two children by a previous marriage but they were quite grown up. My father and mother came to California after World War I, in which they each participated in their own way. My father was one of these folks with a dual background. He was an MD, a graduate of Tufts Medical School, but also an athlete and a coach. He applied his medical knowledge and his athletic experience to be a medical and sports advisor for the RAF [Royal Air Force] and then later for the AEF [American Expeditionary Force] in France, and trained a team to compete in the Inter-Allied Games held in Paris in 1919. This was sort of a culmination in his career, in that he had been in athletics and coaching in the previous years. When they came to California, it was more or less his retirement years.

My father had been involved in wrestling, weightlifting and

cycling in the 1880's and felt as though, I think, he was just a little too old or almost would have been involved in the 1896 Games. So he was very aware of the Olympic Games and the history of sports because his early years correspond with that history. He was an athletic coach at Columbia and he was at Swarthmore College from approximately 1902 to 1908 as director of athletics, which meant that he was coaching track and field, football, field hockey, and sports they had then.

My mother was an undergraduate at Swarthmore at that time. She was a teacher of the classics in high school—Latin and Greek and so forth—with an excellent education. My father took his medical and sports knowledge to try to combine them in what was uncommon in those years, sports medicine. Today you do find that, but it was quite his own creation in those days. So when he came to California, he was not planning to practice medicine as such, or to become qualified in California, because he was at retirement age at that point. But he did continue to do local coaching and helped local teams, and as I was growing up in the '20s in the Redondo area, he was involved in being a judge or a timer for track and field events and some swimming events. By 1932 he had been an official with the SPAAU [Southern Pacific Amateur Athletic Union] for enough years that he was on the judging and timing crew at the '32 Games in track and field.

I attended the '32 Games with my mother and absorbed the initial meaning of the Games as an 11-year-old, appreciating sports, but not getting involved in competition. By 1933, I began some West Coast track competition and was swimming—I had always been swimming, but in the ocean—and riding bicycles and doing outdoor sports, as my father emphasized and encouraged me to do. But my mother won the battle that I would also maintain a strong motivation in school. And I not only completed but I took extra courses. She helped me to get through high school carrying two foreign languages and

carrying all of the science preparation that you could get in those days; in other words, a broad education.

So I was involved with my education and I was involved with the activities of swimming, but always as an individual sport. I didn't have much opportunity in terms of playing on a team. And I look back now and wonder why I didn't play on a team. I believe that this is a part of the history that you will be seeing, that there were no women's teams. And it is so very recent that you can find women's basketball and other women's athletics in our colleges. We have lots and lots of this type of thing now. In my high school, I was a kook because I liked to run and swim and do some of these things. And in my grammar school, I was a kook because I liked to play soccer with the boys. No girls played soccer. You see, there was no team sport that I could participate in. I played a little tennis but not to any useful degree. Swimming was something that I could accomplish. I could do a lot of it in the ocean, and I swam in a couple of the local pools.

By '33, my dad thought that I should go ahead and enter the SPAAU championships or the Pacific Coast or Far Western championships. And I placed in them. They were held at the L.A. Swim Stadium. He was used to the L.A. Swim Stadium and I had been there watching him be a timer for the swimming races and also watching water polo. And because of his experience in water safety and lifeguard training in New Jersey, which he had been involved in at some time in his life, he was very much a part of the L.A. Recreation Department's lifeguard crews, which were drawn largely from the water polo teams and the swimmers. A lot of them wound up working for them. Kenny Beck, Phil Daubenspeck, Herb Wildman, and a lot of the water polo players through the years were people that I met at swimming meets because my father had also helped with that sport. So I made acquaintances not only in the the women's competitions—which were very meager. There were

only three meets in a year and I didn't swim for any club, so we just went to those meets and that was it. But in '34 I swam in those same meets again and I won one or two that I hadn't won before. By '35, we made the venture to travel not only to the Pacific Coast championships in San Diego, where I won the breaststroke, but also to San Francisco to compete in the Far Western championships, which were held in Fleishacker Stadium. And believe it or not, it was a 100-meter course. They didn't bring it down to 50 meters; it was left as a 100-meter course. So we just went down and back for 200 meters, and in that cold water, that was something. I swam faster and I made my best time.

Hodak: You were competing unattached at this time?

Critchell: In 1933, when I entered my first races, yes. Then, by probably 1934, I was able to swim at the Surf and Sand Club in Hermosa Beach, which was at one of the five clubs that were part of the Los Angeles Allied Athletic Clubs. I swam there to do my training and was allowed to swim there on certain nights. They had someone who supervised the pool who was not really the coach. My father gave me guidance and suggestions as to what I might do. But then at that club, if they had any promising swimmers, they were offering them to Aileen Allen, who was the coach of the downtown L.A. Athletic Club. She had mostly divers downtown and not very many swimmers. And a swimmer would crop up here and there; there were several that were out there at the Hermosa Beach Surf and Sand Club where I swam. That was a lovely club. Each of the clubs were very nice; good locations and lovely dining rooms upstairs and so forth. But that's been torn down since. You can't realize what very plush, nice places they were in their day. And the Pacific Coast Club in Long Beach and the Hollywood Athletic Club were part of this. There would be occasional invitations from Aileen Allen when there was going to be a meet at, say, the Hollywood Athletic Club, where we'd swim 100

yards or something because it would be indoors. And occasionally, probably once or twice a year, it would be at the Pacific Coast Club in Long Beach. And probably once a year, downtown at the LAAC there would be a meet that was, I believe, in a 33-1/3-yard pool down there, which is fairly long for a pool that was upstairs on the sixth floor in a building downtown.

Hodak: Is it fair to say there were a limited number of adequate-sized pools?

Critchell: Very limited.

Hodak: Nothing comparable to Fleishhacker Stadium?

Critchell: Oh, goodness no. But Fleishhacker was a little on the cool side. I don't think it attracted very many people. It was windy and cold out there; it was by the ocean. The only pool in the Redondo area was the old Redondo Plunge. It was part of the old Redondo Hotel, which was of the vintage of the Hotel Del Coronado which has been restored. The Redondo Beach Plunge was a huge, long, hot, indoor saltwater pool. Well, it wasn't the place to train at all. It was an old-fashioned bathing parlor. (laughter) I've noticed a big change in these days. Wherever we went in the '30s, the pool may or may not have had lane lines on the bottom; but it was not expected that people were going to be swimming up and down lanes. People went in pools and jumped up and down. People didn't go and train and swim laps and practice. You weren't allowed to do that except after hours when nobody else wanted the space. The team was something that the club thought about afterwards, and sponsored afterwards, but their members could go in and do their jousting around during any time of the day. Today you will find their members interested in the physical conditioning and will be in there swimming laps. You know, these health clubs in downtown San Diego and in Los Angeles

attract the all-new downtown lunchtime swimmer, swimming laps. Everybody swims laps. But in those days, we weren't allowed to swim because we would be swimming across the pool or down the pool interfering with the other people who were there. It was a different scene then and you couldn't train there.

My father had me on basic, if you wish, body or health building. I swam in the ocean and I was out swimming in the ocean winter and summer. And I was riding bicycles. They were racing bikes, and in those days I was that kook that had a bicycle with narrow tires. Everybody else had big, wide tires on their bicycles; mine had wooden rims, which were very narrow. The narrow metal rim is common today and used on lightweight bikes. I have one now that's about that size and it's the *thing* to have. But at the time, if you had a bicycle with a narrow tire or a wooden rim, you were a kook. Well, that was an outgrowth of my father's experience in cycling. He was cycling when they still cycled on three-wheelers. (laughter) But he did have the knack. He said, "I'm not going to let you ride those great big things with the coaster brakes on them. You're going to ride right." So I was riding on those narrow, wooden rims. When it was too cold to swim, I was often doing that, but as a sort of recreational thing. I didn't ride any particular number of miles or anything, I rode everywhere I could.

Typically, I would go two nights a week to some pool, in this area it was the Surf and Sand Club, and in the summer there were some after-hours during which I could swim at a club that was built in 1934. The Hollywood Riviera Beach Club appeared in the south Redondo or Torrance area, and that was a 25-yard saltwater pool. I did a lot of training there and it was near home and I could ride my bicycle there. And it was outdoors and I sure preferred swimming outdoors where I could breath fresh air when I came up and not the dank, hot, smoke-filled air which often was the case in the indoor pools. And so

although that club was not allied with the Los Angeles Athletic Club, I really did the majority of my training there in the summer months when it was open and then went out and swam in the ocean and then swam in competition. So I was actually getting good health building from my father in doing those things on the beach. But the opportunity to polish strokes, to learn to make very polished strokes and very slick turns on the ends of pools, and deal with short pools where you had to do four turns to do 100 yards in a 20-yard pool, I was not as experienced at that. And I didn't swim the winter months because I was in school. But I did swim in '34, '35, and '36 for the Los Angeles Athletic Club.

Hodak: What was the extent of their support in terms of traveling?

Critchell: Very little; there was very little support. I was given probably altogether about three suits in the whole time I swam for the LAAC. But in '34, '35 and '36, I was swimming in the Far Western Championships and the Pacific Coast and so forth, and there would be a relay team and usually it was the medley relay team, occasionally the freestyle. Then it was a team, so everybody had the suit that said LAAC on it. Then that had to last you quite a while because there wasn't much sponsorship of that nature. Now, as far as traveling was concerned, they never sent a team anywhere, they only sent a few individuals, as I recall. The first time that I was given any assistance, I think they gave us some money to go to San Francisco for the Far Western championships in '35. In this case, I won the 200-meter breaststroke, and I swam on the relay team which won. And so the next year in '36, there were some earlier meets which were probably SPAAU and maybe Pacific Coast. I think they were local, most of those were in the Los Angeles Swim Stadium, so there was no reason to give us any special sponsorship. But they sent me—and I'll have to think if there were one or two others—to the national championships at Manhattan Beach, Long Island. This was in early June of '36

and I competed there probably as the only representative of the LAAC. I think Dorothy Poynton was still diving for the Los Angeles Athletic Club at that time, but the diving competition was held in a different place. There were others whom I had met through these years and who were friends that competed independent of LAAC. There was a point in there where Velma Dunn [Ploessel] no longer represented the LAAC, as she had at one time. Edith Motridge swam for the LAAC. Margie Gestring never did. We all were friends.

Hodak: Aileen Allen certainly had a lot of experience with the Olympics in terms of managing or steering athletes towards the Olympics.

Critchell: To some degree. But Aileen Allen was not a swimming coach; she had more experience with the diving than she did with the swimming. And she did have herself pretty well tied to downtown and the club and she never provided any supervision or guidance at these other clubs.

Hodak: Did she talk of the Olympics much?

Critchell: No, she hardly ever mentioned it. It wasn't something she figured in or dealt with a whole lot. She saw herself as involved more with the divers. And as long as Dorothy Poynton was willing to represent the LAAC and had already, of course, been successful in the '32 Games, there would be an automatic sponsorship to send her to the winter nationals and to the summer nationals. When you ask Velma Ploessel, I don't believe she received as much sponsorship by any means and she was not already known. But Dorothy was, so there was this inclusion of Dorothy in things that were sponsored. And then Esther Williams appeared to have some promise and so they sent her several times. She swam the freestyle lap on this medley relay team with Edith Motridge and myself. Aileen Allen didn't even go to the national championships or travel to them. She was not as active in the motivational sponsorship of these

competitors as say Charlotte Epstein of the Women's Swimming Association of New York. Ray Daughters of the Washington Athletic Club traveled with his group of girls and was training them all the time. They had his mind and his attention and they would swim in Lake Washington under his supervision in a boat, they'd swim in the Washington Athletic Club pool, and they would travel and compete, but with Ray Daughters in attendance all the time. Aileen Allen seldom was involved and never provided any coaching for the swimming. And she was more administrative; she didn't actually stand around the pool and do a whole lot of teaching.

One of the most accomplished and skillful diving, water polo and swimming coaches in those years was Fred Cady. Fred Cady had, of course, been in this business for a long time. He was a gymnast originally, I believe. And he was a tremendous diving coach. He was a general aquatics coach at USC and I got some very good hints from Fred and occasionally worked with him. Eventually, after the Games, I left the LAAC and swam unattached from about '37 on, which wasn't for terribly long. But I looked to Fred Cady for coaching assistance. My father couldn't afford to go to meets away from the L.A. area, and he didn't try to interfere past the general guidance. Fred was well-known for his coaching of swimming, water polo and diving. And as a diving coach, he was quite distinguished. He was Margie Gestring's coach and Georgia Coleman's coach, as well as the 1936 Olympic team diving coach. Another coach, whom I did not know well, is Clyde Swendsen. He was the coach at the Hollywood Athletic Club and the Olympic water polo team coach.

By 1936, Aileen Allen was aware that it might not be too dumb to send me to the nationals in New York so she did arrange that, and that was the only real sponsorship that I received. Once you're a national champion, the sponsors of the succeeding championships are expected to provide transportation

for the defending champion. And so I cost the LAAC only that one trip. Once I was back East after winning the national 200-meter breaststroke championship, I stayed back there for the four weeks approximately between the nationals in June and the Olympic tryouts in mid-July. The Olympic tryouts were held at Astoria, which is between Long Island and Manhattan. Since I was already back there, we stayed with my grandparents and my mother and I were then able to go from the East Coast as far as the Olympic team sponsorship was concerned. And when I came back, then team members were returned by Olympic passage to our homes. We were given railroad fare back home. And so, the LAAC didn't happen to have to do a whole lot. Then by '37, the next national championships were in Santa Barbara. Well sure, the meet sponsors paid my transportation from L.A. to Santa Barbara. (laughter) And then the next one after that was in '38 and was in Santa Barbara again at the Coral Casino. By 1937 I had little contact with the LAAC and no sponsorship. So I swam unattached.

By 1938, I was only swimming in the summer nationals because I was in college and quite occupied during the school year. By 1939, interest was waning in the whole idea because we also could see that there probably wouldn't be a 1940 Olympics. And I went to Des Moines, Iowa, and my transportation there was from the sponsor. I competed there and I did not successfully defend that championship; a gal from Hawaii beat me there and I was second. That was fair. I swam on the relay teams each time and I swam on some of the indoor relay teams. There was so little sponsorship for sports that they had to break up the championships. The women's indoor national championships . . . cities wouldn't bid for all the events; they might bid for the diving alone. Some places would bid for the relays, some cities bid for certain swimming events, and some events didn't even receive a bid. Well, one year they wanted the diving out here. I can remember swimming in an indoor relay championship, with Edith probably, and it was the

medley relay that I was involved in. But I wasn't involved in a whole lot else because they didn't hold my event. The breaststroke that I would have swam in was held in Chicago and I didn't have the money to go. So, although I was associated with the LAAC in the first years, it was fairly limited. I did know a lot of other LAAC athletes. I knew their water polo team and a lot of the track people who competed in the Amateur Athletic Union under the LAAC in the summers, but competed for USC or UCLA during the college year.

Hodak: So, as you kind of hinted at, your amateur swimming career kind of ended in '39-'40.

Critchell: Nineteen thirty-nine, yes.

Hodak; We're going to get back to the path that your career takes after that. Let's begin to talk of the Olympics in 1936.

Critchell: Indeed. Now I gave simply the background, that, yes, I did swim for the LAAC and so forth. Now the Olympic experience, that was completely unexpected. And I surprised myself by winning in the nationals and being able to go ahead and have an opportunity to swim in the tryouts. It was a surprise and there was a lot of newness and, of course, I can look back now and say, "If I had only known." If I maybe had a better idea of coaching techniques or training techniques, I could have done better and so could the other team members. We were just wandering around in the dark when you look at preparing for Olympics. We didn't have any idea until a week or ten days before the boat sailed that we might even be on an Olympic team. And at that point, we won a position on the team and then didn't know whether we were going to go because the Olympic Committee didn't have the money to send a full team.

Hodak: How was that brought to your attention?

Critchell: Well, we were told right after the completion of the tryouts that yes, you've made the team. We got a letter that said yes, you've qualified for the team and yet we do not have the funds to send the whole team. We were told by officials, it was made very very clear, "If you want to go, get out and try to raise some money." And we were sent out, all of us, to try to raise money.

Malcolm Metcalf has probably told you that some people called their hometowns and they made a lot of noise in their hometown and for some, the hometown came through with enough to send them. That was especially true where they were number two or number three in an event. They normally took three for each event and two alternates for relays. Well, they dropped the two alternates off right away; they didn't include them in this. And the third placers in a lot of these events were put on questionable standby as to whether they were going to make it. And you were told to try to find funding. Well, a lot of us had absolutely no association with funding. And I was on the East Coast and our little town of Redondo hardly even knew that I swam. They'd written up something about my swimming in the Far Western championships once but it was hardly very well-known. I was in high school there at the time but there wasn't any money forthcoming from the businessmen of Redondo. In some communities it worked, and they did bring in some money.

There were a couple of occasions where athletes were asked to appear on the streets and before people and on interviews and things to help raise money. Well, that was alright up to a point, but I know my mother took a dim view of this for me at the age of fifteen. And Margie Gestring's mother, who was with Margie and was a good friend of my mother's, agreed. My mother also knew Velma Dunn [Ploessel], who was close to my age. She was just a little bit older than I. And Velma's mother was not able to go and so my mother and Mrs. Gestring

were kind of personal chaperones for all three of us. Neither mother had much money to go on and, believe me, they scraped the bottom of the barrel to buy a ticket to get on the Olympic boat. Mrs. Gestring and my mother shared a third-class stateroom on the *SS Manhattan*, (laughter) The Olympic team, as it turned out, went tourist class.

Hodak: Regarding the WSA [Women's Swimming Association] in New York and coach Charlotte Epstein's position—

Critchell: Charlotte Epstein was certainly a sportswoman. When we met her when we were back there for the national championships she made it very clear that she and her contacts and her club would do nothing to help the Olympic team to raise money for this because of her personal political beliefs. And this was the case with a great many people. The Olympic Committee relied heavily on the Jewish community in many places as major supporters, and many withdrew support. There was much about this in newspapers. There was some opposition to sending a team, and strong opposition to allowing any of their money to be used for the team. And Charlotte Epstein took her own personal position. Now, I don't believe there were very many of her girls on the team. Mavis Freeman, 13-year-old freestyle swimmer [Elizabeth] Pat Ryan, [Cornelia] "Corky" Gilissen and Dorothea Dickinson came from WSA. The 13-year-old swimmer, Pat Ryan, was fortunate. Her parents were fairly wealthy. They were able to pay for Pat's ticket and then Pat's mother and father were able to buy tickets and go on the ship in something other than third class. They were interesting people and my mother was friendly with them. Those who swam for Charlotte Epstein could tell us the internal situation and that Charlotte could not support this Olympics. And this was not taken by any of us as objectionable because there was a lot of recognition outside of the Jewish community that things weren't right in Germany and that the political situation in Europe was in question. Those with any particular

observational capabilities and not motivated politically to polish over were very concerned already that Hitler had taken a humanistically unacceptable position. Then we saw a little more of Hitler's politics as we had the experience of being in Berlin.

We finally did get most of the team sponsored. There were a few left at home, not more than five or six that I knew of. And then we were properly saluted, with ticker tape and confetti, onto the boat. This was the *SS Manhattan*, and it sailed in August for Hamburg. We arrived in Berlin less than two weeks before the first competitions. And we had been wandering around trying to raise money, not training. In those ten days before the boat sailed, I didn't even get in a pool, I never saw a coach, and I didn't have any chance to train. I think we may have gone back to Philadelphia for five days and then back to New York because we couldn't afford hotels in New York. Well, this is also true for the track team and others. They were not in a position to be able to train and do the preparation things that you would be very anxious to do. Today, the athletes are assembled after the Olympic trials, flown quickly to get them right out on the athletic field at the other end and get them in shape and have them going again, adapting to the environment—the rain, the cold, or whatever is there. But we had never seen any place like it. We'd not traveled to a place with a climate like Berlin. Oh dear, it was cold and it rained a lot in Berlin.

We were ten days on the *SS Manhattan* and had to look upon it as a challenge to adapt to the travel. Well, how do you train athletes on a ship? We were all limited to the second-class area of the ship to begin with. And there was just one swimming pool which was about 20 feet x 20 feet x 9 feet deep. And they pumped the saltwater into it and it sloshed around as the ship rolled. But that wasn't terribly safe so they hung rope netting down into the pool; that's how people could climb up the side. The water had to be three or four feet below the

deck because it would slop out, and the water was five to six feet deep. It was very small. And then there were the nets hanging down the sides. Well, they would get the breaststrokes and we'd swim for awhile, and then they'd take us out and put the others in. They kept alternating for the use of the pool. They used long pieces of rubber which they'd tie around our waists and then we'd swim and the coaches would hold us back. Sometimes they tied them to a post. Often I found Fred Cady was up there holding the end of this thing and coaching us about our stroke. Well, you don't swim quite right when it's anchored this way and then the water sloshes and you wind up *bash!* up on these ropes and you'd just grab onto the ropes. When you'd come to the end, you couldn't do a turn, so you'd grab the rope and then you'd have to just start swimming. There's nothing to push against. Well, it wasn't exactly a training facility.

Hodak: It's amazing that the American athletes accomplished what they did in any of the early Olympics considering the conditions.

Critchell: They tried to keep in shape and lots of them would run around the deck. I saw the divers practicing, doing some gymnastics. I remember that Fred Cady would get helpers out there, big strong guys, to hold these rubber things that they'd tie around their waists. And they'd have them do somersaults, and they could reduce their rate of fall; they'd fall softly on the deck. But these were ways of keeping them limbered up, but it wasn't exactly training in any sense of the word. Well, in ten days you deteriorate top-level production anyway, as far as muscles and development and lung capacity. And then for the ten days or two weeks before that you'd been running around New York City in the heat trying to raise money for the Olympics, or trying to figure out where you were going to get some clothes to go. The Olympic Committee handed out about six uniform items, as I recall.

Well, of course the essence of it was very thrilling. These were the Olympic Games, and we were going to go—Margie, Velma, myself and the others. We respected the reservations of those who did not support the sending of our team. Yet this was a great opportunity and we were very thrilled with it. And I can remember being very excited with the send-off—the streamers and balloons and lots of well-wishers! Then we sailed out past the Statue of Liberty and to me, seeing it for the first time . . . this was America and we were sailing across the Atlantic. That was thrilling too. And here was this whole boatload of us, with a lot of Olympic admirers, coaches and so forth in the other sections, and the team in the tourist section. Yes, it was a very big ship and you saw everyone and you had fun talking with other team members. But we did sail out of New York Harbor and we did see the Statue of Liberty and went out onto the North Atlantic. This was new for most of us. But we had good times. Yes, there was a certain little atmosphere that we were trying to ignore; there was Eleanor Holm up in first class with that situation. About three-quarters of the way across the Atlantic it became evident that something was going on.

Hodak: That became an issue?

Critchell: To the Olympic Committee! The rest of us said, "Oh, well," and went on with what we were doing.

Hodak: Well, Eleanor was considerably older than you and some of the others?

Critchell: Well, she said, "I'm old enough to do these things," you know, all the quotes that have been made in the newspapers. There were not very many people saying, "Oh dear Eleanor, we're sorry about this." Her actions were not what was accepted in those days, and it wasn't the thing to do. That was pretty stupid—why get yourself into that? Of course, when we were

disembarking, there was a certain amount of press: "Oh, what do you think about Eleanor Holm?"

The boat stopped in Ireland, I think, but we didn't get off. Maybe they took on fuel and then we went on to Hamburg. And we got off the boat in Hamburg and it was a new experience, entering a foreign country. What's it going to be like? We weren't sure what the welcome would be. But when we did come down the gangplank from the boat, there was a line of, shall we say, welcoming people, and there were some banners and there was a band, it was not terribly extensive, but this was the official arrival of our whole team. You see, on this one occasion the U.S. Olympic team arrived at one place at one time, and so there was a certain amount of welcoming. And I looked quickly out at Hamburg—a dense, European city. There were welcoming people, but it wasn't like our ticker tape parade in New York. We saw a lot of the German police or soldiers where they would be standing very formally, and the goose-step actions appeared in a lot of places during the trip.

They then ushered us into a train to Berlin. And then in Berlin, the girls were taken off on one bus and we went to what was called the *Friesenhaus*. It was sort of a museum and athletic center that was not very far from the stadium. The men were taken to an Olympic Village, much further away from the stadium. I don't know exactly how far away it was. It was a fair distance and they had to ride buses to go to the practice areas. I don't know whether they had a practice area out there. We were within walking distance of a swimming pool; a good, long 50-meter practice pool. I have a few pictures of us using that practice pool, which was cold and unheated, and so was the Olympic competition pool. But that practice pool was near to the women's housing and we could walk there. We were fairly close to what would have been the Olympic stadium area, and not too far from downtown. We were able to go quickly from there into Berlin and see a few things. So it was

definitely not as far away as the Olympic Village. The swim competition stadium was right across from the *Reichsportfeld* where the Games were held, but that wasn't our practice area.

Hodak: You never saw the men's Olympic Village?

Critchell: No.

Hodak: So where were your mother and Margie's mother staying?

Critchell: They rented a room in a part of Berlin that was very close to us. It would have been a residential area not too far away. And they rode a bus—I don't think they were riding on the subway—out to see us each day, and it wasn't more than one or two bus stops from there, as I remember. We were able to walk around in the Olympic area, but we had some transportation available.

There was an element there, which I'm sure other athletes have told you about, that I found very interesting and a very nice part of this experience. I wanted, like any of us, to go to a country and talk to the people, know the people. And we had Mrs. Gestring, who is of German parentage and aware of these things, and my mother, who was academically trained and very aware and could speak some German. My mother did most of the speaking of German and she taught me a little bit so I could get along. We had an interest in people of other nations, and we tried to speak their language and we realized we were guests in their country and so forth.

We were greeted promptly as we got off the train in Berlin by the *Ehrendienst*, Hitler's Honorary Youth Service, which was, in our case, young women who were assigned to be our guides and be with us all the time. I think they lived in a dormitory not far away—they were very close. We knew their names, and we went places with them. We became well acquainted with

some of them and they were like Intourist in Russia today. These people stayed with us and traveled with us. If there was a time we were through training and we said we wanted to go into Berlin, they would either arrange the transportation or take us. They would go with us and show us where to shop and so forth. We were enjoying meeting and talking with the *Ehrendienst* girls. Erika and Ilse Braun were two I corresponded with later. The people who kept up the *Friesenhaus* had a few chaperone-type ladies there and I can remember one or two of them. But I wouldn't have asked them for anything; they seemed very distant. My mother and Mrs. Gestring were around a great deal and that helped.

We did eat at the *Friesenhaus* in a dining facility, and I can remember that there are varying levels of happiness and adjustment to the unfamiliar food. We had to adapt to their food. Margie and Velma and I were not looking for any problems, but some of the girls right away said, "Oh my gosh, we're having boiled potatoes again!" They were perhaps a little older and more inclined to realize some differences. But we did have to eat their food. Well, I was prepared to just accept it, but pretty soon there were simply a lot of things I missed. We were given enough food, but it was boiled cabbage and boiled potatoes and boiled beef—things we weren't really used to. (laughter) And it wasn't training food, it wasn't what you would eat if you were being selective about the food you ate at all. And they had very few green vegetables, no salads, and no fruit. The 1948 Games were the next Olympic Games after these. Our athletes never again had to go with non-American food and quite such a remote situation.

Hodak: It's interesting that the men have remarked, and I've read this too, that there were elaborate provisions made to accommodate athletes from various countries as far as the men's Olympic Village. I think that's revealing in itself.

Critchell: That they had started doing that is interesting and I may have heard that at the time, but we didn't hear any complaints from them one way or another. But we were fed in this cafeteria or dining hall, and I remember it very clearly. There was the cabbage and boiled beef and the boiled potatoes and turnips. Well, those were the staples of Europe when you look back at the history that followed, but not what we were used to. And I heard a lot of complaints from many of our girls about the food. I got to saying to mother, "I'd love an orange. Gosh, I haven't had any fruit."

Hodak: Were there complaints about other issues?

Critchell: Well, there was a fair amount of supervision at this dormitory. The rooms were nice but sparsely furnished. Velma and I shared a room together on the first floor of this *Friesenhaus*. And there was a very domineering, cranky old gal who was the sort of baroness of the place, like a chaperone. But they were not at all uncomfortable accommodations, and Velma and I were enjoying the experience. We really had a lovely time meeting people, meeting the girls there. The honor service girls were our age approximately—in the 15 to 18 range.

As for the competition, Bernice Lapp, Olive McKean, Katherine Rawls, and Pat Ryan made the freestyle relay, and there was no medley relay. The medley relay was held in our nationals, but not in the Olympics. There were very few events. The breaststroke I was swimming was the old-fashioned style. You were disqualified if you lifted your hands out of the water, and you were disqualified if you did the flutter kick. They did the butterfly with the frog kick a few years later. By 1939 the girl with whom I was racing went to the butterfly, which is faster. I stayed with the conventional way. She was using the conventional kick with the arms out of the water. Now it's the arms out of the water and the legs-together kick, which is a different stroke. There have been many changes. The flutter

kick or legs-together kick was illegal clear up through 1939. The butterfly stroke was not permitted.

We had a good time at the sports facility and there is no question about that. Then we did stay with the swimming until our event was over. It turned out the breaststroke was in the first week and most of our events were over fairly early. And we made a beeline for the main stadium to watch track and field. We said we weren't going to miss the opening, even though we shouldn't have been spending our time standing in the sun. Well, we had managed to get my mother and Mrs. Gestring some tickets too, so they were there in attendance. And we had athlete-section tickets after the Opening Ceremonies, and we wouldn't have missed that for anything in this world. We saw Hitler, he was right there, and [Josef] Goebbels and [Hermann] Goering. We were so interested because my mother had helped me to understand a little bit more of what was going on, and we talked about it, and we spoke the language a little bit and could understand some of what they were saying. Everywhere you went there were the goose-step police and guards, but they were ordered to be friendly and so they were a bit less intimidating. And then the *Ehrendienst* went lots of places with us. But once we got in to sit down in the stadium they weren't there. But I did sense a lot of these things that together made up the atmosphere that we took home with us of deep concern for the political situation. These things did not take place without our seeing them and knowing about them.

I was pleased that I went over there and spent several afternoons watching competition. Of course, we took part in the Opening Ceremonies and then watched the first events and so forth. Then I went back and competed and I didn't have too many days before I was through. I was not in the finals and therefore I could go and watch a lot of this competition. I'd watch the swimming competition, then run over here and

watch the track and field. We knew many of our guys in the track and field events. We didn't want to miss any of their events, so we went to watch.

Well, of course, we went to the ceremony for the first winners and they announced the places. Everyone went from the swim stadium over to the big stadium, the main stadium, to receive their awards. And in the first couple of events there was a German shot putter and a German woman javelin competitor who won. So, of course. Hitler greeted them and then later left the stadium. It was early in the Games when these events took place, but they have been very much publicized. I stood there and watched Hitler turn and leave the stadium. Later that day, Cornelius Johnson won the high jump. True, Hitler was not there to shake hands. Apparently, Hitler refrained from publicly greeting the winners from then on. So since he was not there or not doing this from then on, he did not greet Jesse Owens.

Hodak: Nor was he there to shake a few other hands.

Critchell: Oh, indeed! But that's the story that's most publicized. Then, later on, there were these little rumors You see, Margie won the springboard diving, and Velma was second in the tower diving, and they were to go over there to receive their awards, so of course we went over there to watch. And we were close enough, in that huge stadium, to see whether Hitler was there or not. There are many verses and many choruses to that German national anthem. You ask any Olympian and they probably will tell you one of the things they remember is that they played all the choruses of the German national anthem. If a German won, they played it forever. If anybody else won, they only played the first chorus of their national anthem. (laughter) But there was much nationalism and it began to show. It was such a show of strength; there was a display of force, there was a display of the Teutonic

dominance, as those who were students of this recognized. And Hitler and Goebbels and Goering were there fairly often. They hadn't been there for a day or so, then Margie's victory ceremony came up and Dorothy Hill's came up. Now, I don't remember whether Dorothy was actually received by Hitler, but Margie was sort of unofficially after she received her tree and the oak leaf wreath for her head and the medal in a box—they didn't hang a ribbon around your neck then. Yes, he was there and greeted the early winners, and he was not there to receive others.

Hodak: Did you ever discuss politics with the *Ehrendienst*?

Critchell: You could feel it. They spoke to it, they addressed it. "We are trained! We are ready! We are dominant!" And you could hear it right there when they would sit and talk with you. You began to sense that they didn't approve of something that we did or that they felt they were superior; all of these other manifestations of this were apparent to us as we talked to these people. And I know they were very nice and on their very best behavior and they were their honor people—obviously their brightest and shining stars were on this honor service. And as I understood it, they had honor fellows who were supposed to do this with a lot of the other men athletes, and I presume some did. I thought that some of our athletes didn't have much contact with them and others did.

Hodak: I think it varied. It seems like the women may have been more closely supervised or chaperoned.

Critchell: Possibly. And we had enough of these girls to match up with us that we would get their help to go somewhere. There might have been 20 or 25 of these girls. But we did see certain ones often and they would attach themselves to you and that's how they kept track of you. They knew who you were.

Hodak: Were you encouraged to travel and see Berlin on your own or were you discouraged?

Critchell: Well, I would say we were not discouraged. There may have been some wisdom in this that we probably wouldn't have gotten very far without their help. But we asked for their ideas on which subway to take or which bus to take, and they went with us, I think at first, and then we made some other acquaintances in Berlin and we went back. And I can remember going back on our own, taking a bus or whatever we did to get there. If we wanted something or we were lost there would have been a policeman handy immediately. And he would have packed you right up and sent you on your way back there. They were courteous, the police were trained to be courteous but formal. These *Ehrendienst* girls were supposed to be friendly and it's a different situation.

Well, I remember our own personal experience Margie and Velma and I, particularly Margie and I, were still of the age where we wanted to do something special. We wanted to go have ice cream somewhere. Something like that would appeal to us, where other things would have appealed to the older athletes. We went down through the Brandenburg Tor, to Unter den Linden, and we found a condottoria, a chocolate shop, where they sold hot chocolate and ice cream. And we went into this condottoria and found that there was a coffee shop atmosphere and a nice little orchestra—a string orchestra of about six or eight girls in Bavarian costume who played there. And we liked this, so we went back down there again on several occasions and we made friends with these girls. And even I, at 15, could sense the difference. Those girls did not have the confidence nor the authority that the *Ehrendienst* girls had who were Hitler's chosen group. These girls were just ordinary young people in Germany at the time and they came from Bavaria and played Bavarian music and danced in costume. And we felt that was very nice while we had our hot

chocolate and ice cream. We made friends and got their names and addresses and wrote to several of them afterwards. And I received answers for a couple of years and then no more. And there was a sensitivity level there in their letters or in their original meeting with us. There was cheerful concern. The political scene to them was already something they were very, very concerned about. There was fear. Yes, there was fear in their hearts and in their eyes.

When we would sit in the stadium with my mother and Mrs. Gestring we were in the athletes group where we could all kind of sit in one section. Whenever the German anthem was played . . . of course, you were to rise to anyone's anthem, but when the German anthem was played, it was really played. And the German police were everywhere, all up and down the aisles and all around and behind you. "Ooh, there's the black boots and there's the uniform." They'd stand at attention, with all the salutes, and you could feel uneasy. And Mrs. Gestring had a friend who came to the Games one day. She was another ordinary citizen and she stood with us at the Games and she snuggled up between my mother and Mrs. Gestring to cover the fact that she would not raise her arm and salute. The rest of the stadium did, except the rare people, and she didn't want the police to see her.

We were proud to see the events. We watched the competition with great interest. It was run according to the rules of sports. The sports prevailed, the Olympics prevailed. The only slight incursion of those Olympics was that we might have had to leave a few teammates at home, and that Hitler may not have greeted some winners. That wasn't a necessity anyway; our President doesn't greet every winner. But Hitler was there, he was predominant and everytime he came in we'd go through the "heil heil heil" routine. And, you know, after awhile, you should have heard some of our men athletes. Whew! All this "heil heil heil" and all the formality and the

heel clicking and the boots, they were overbearing and frightening. They were intimidating, but not to us because we just didn't have reason to fear. I mean, we weren't afraid, but boy, we could see the fear.

This was just an example of a personal experience there; this lady, being there with us more than once and being totally unwilling to give in to Hitler, in that she would not salute the *Reich*. But she knew that she would be followed out of that stadium if she were detected as not saluting. She got very close between Mrs. Gestring and my mother, and my mother explained it to me in whispers and got me to move over. This little vignette there, or the girls in the chocolate shop downtown—the Efti Am Tiergarten was the name of the little restaurant—they were not feeling the same level of confidence. They did not present the domineering atmosphere that the official representatives of the Hitler *Reich* gave us.

We were allowed to go everywhere. They had said, "You are free and our guests in this country." They watched their own more than they watched us, I think. And I don't know how they would have felt about fraternizing but I didn't feel that anyone minded that we were friendly to these girls, because obviously we liked them. That's not uncommon, as an experience. You make friends with the people who play in the orchestra and you shake their hands afterwards and write them letters or do something like this. But there was fear there, it was evidenced in the little bit of communication that I had with them afterwards, and then it all stopped. Erika and Use Braun, two of our *Ehrendienst* guides, wrote letters for a short time afterwards. They obviously were of a little bit better financial position because at the completion of our stay they took us as their guests for a ride in an automobile. I don't remember where it was that we went, but they took us on a tour and Erika and Ilse Braun proudly had a driver—I'm not sure that it was their father—bring their car, which was a

much more luxurious car than the ordinary vehicles. It was not like a Mercedes today, it wasn't as luxurious as a Mercedes, but it was evidence of a little bit more affluence.

My interest in aviation was already well generated and I asked about aviation. As you know, aviation was a terribly important part of Hitler's power base, but also there was this high motivation and encouragement of youth to go into gliding, soaring and to be pilots in aviation. And that was their backbone for their pilot resources later. Well, there was an air meet and it was called the Olympic display. Like we had our arts display here, they had a big air show out at an airport adjacent to Berlin. We wanted to go, and I think perhaps that could have been one of the things that the *Ehrendienst* girls took us to in their own car. They had a driver and Erika and Use took us to this air meet. You see, a lot of the athletes wouldn't have any association with that, they wouldn't have had any interest in it. But there may have been one or two; for instance, Frank Kurtz, the diver, had an interest in aviation too. As you know, he later became a military pilot, and he was already a pilot at that time, I believe. I'm not sure, he could have gone to this. But there would have been a lot of them for whom the air meet held no interest. We went out to the air meet and I got my own little pictures, and in this picture book that they sent us afterwards there's lots of pictures of this air meet and the airshow. And I was interested in what types of airplanes they were showing.

We were interested in a few other things too. They took us to a museum and into Berlin to see some of the city. So we had a few of these tours with any of the other women athletes who wanted to go, and there were a few others. Ultimately, we all went together to one real big bash, which compared to others in those days was absolutely gigantic. Now we look back and we had a bash that USC put on out at the Olympic stadium in the fall of '83 for the '84 Games, and it was thoroughly that

size and then some. But when I look at it in the perspective of those days, I was very impressed by it. The Olympic teams were the guests of Goebbels, the propaganda minister, at his home on the *Pfauen Insel*, which is an island in the River Spree right outside of Berlin. And they had a summer evening party for the team out there. The whole team went. There were grassy lawns with the big tables with the white tablecloths with these collections of Rhine champagne sitting in the middle of the tables. There were bands and good food, marvelous service and a nice dinner. A few of the athletes consumed quite a bit of the champagne. Margie got pretty upset that night because there was still competition left for some of them.

I also enjoyed very much something else about the Olympic experience and being housed with other women athletes of the world in the *Friesenhaus*. Not only was the U.S. women's team there, but there were women's teams there from the other countries—France, Holland, Romania, and so forth. And I made particular friends with a number of girls from the Dutch team. And I knew several of the swimmers like Dina Senff and [Hendrika] "Rie" Mastebroek. A particular friend who evolved was "Ali" de Vries, who was a 100-meter sprinter on their track team and a member on their 100-meter relay team. Ali and I became good friends and we exchanged addresses to communicate after we returned from the Games, and did so. And for the years up through 1939, we kept in touch. Then I heard no more from her as of the date that Hitler and the Germans occupied Amsterdam in 1940. I wrote and nothing came back to me in 1946, '47 and early 1948. By late 1948, after the London Games, I was thrilled with a response. I did hear from her. She had gone to the Olympic Games in London and this brought her back to wanting to communicate, after the experiences that she had in occupied Amsterdam all during the war. And so we have been in touch each year since. In fact, some of my family went to visit her on two occasions during the '50's. They visited in Amsterdam but I hadn't had any

opportunity to go to Amsterdam and visit her. I took up the option to be able to see her again at the time our daughter went to Europe and through Amsterdam in 1982. I made contact with AM on the phone and not only did she welcome our daughter, but she accepted my challenge to come join me for the '84 Olympics.

That opportunity, and the special impetus to meet the other athletes from some other nations, in this case, the women athletes, and to make friends, was a wonderful experience of the Games. We shared a certain very special common experience. So we were able to come to the end of the Olympic Games and share in the Closing Ceremonies, having some more good times with not only our hosts in Germany but with members of other teams and, in particular, people such as the Dutch women athletes. And we all stood together on the floor of the stadium in Berlin for the Closing Ceremonies, and certainly no less exciting than the Olympic Games in 1984. They were a thrill of a lifetime and something people will never, never forget. We still had the two feelings; one that the Olympic spirit was completely on top and over everything, and the other was the privilege of the competition in the Games. In those days, you didn't go around counting gold medals, you counted scores per place. And the Germans were not very popular because they tried to count gold medals. But the fact that you were a competitor, in the pure sense of sport and in the spirit of the Olympic Games, was very evident and it superceded all else. However, there was a little something else that we couldn't help but realize; the sense of the impending future, a sense of the wish for dominance by the Germans and Hitler. And their part in the Closing Ceremonies, of course, showed their powerful opinion of themselves. But that was overshadowed by our own personal experiences between athletes.

After the Games, the groups divided up; some of the teams

came home on the first sailing of the *SS Manhattan*, and some went back a couple of weeks later. We were given the choice and my mother was able to arrange for us to make the trip to Paris and then out to meet the *Manhattan* at Le Havre and return on the second sailing. So we left Berlin. I believe we were taken to the train station by the German *Ehrendienst* girls and then we went west to Cologne and then up on a boat to the Moselle Valley and Koblenz, where my father had been during 1918-1919. Then we traveled through the Saar basin to Paris and were in Paris probably a week at least. And in this case, my mother was very excitedly sharing part of her life, because she had been in Paris acting as a guide for our AEF soldiers at the termination of World War I. She was very knowledgeable about Paris and the location of the works of art, the music, and the buildings and the history. She was terribly well read in French history and spoke the language. She was enjoying it. "I will take you into the Louvre and I'll find for you the 'Winged Victory of Samothrace' or the 'Mona Lisa,' because in 1919, they were still buried in the basement." In 1919 she had found out where they were, where the French had hidden them to protect them from the bombing raids of the Germans, and took the American soldiers down there to show them so they could go home having seen a bit of French art. She would run them through on the tours and show them one or two pieces. But they were not upstairs in the museum. So we saw these things back in their place, in a restored Paris. That was a very wonderful experience for me and I appreciated that sensing of that country.

Then we went to La Havre on the train and came home on the *Manhattan*. We were then on the right timing to be in New York for both sets of the team to get together for the welcoming ticker tape parade on Broadway. We received greeting and a medal from Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, which was shared by all of us. The spirit and the thrill and the pride of our country and the idea of amateur sport came through very

clearly on that occasion and in subsequent welcomes, such as the one in Los Angeles at which the Mayor again presented us with a certificate. They're proud of sport, but because I'd been a little bit observant of sports through my father's experiences in track and field officiating, I had this occur to me—and that must have been the growing teacher in me—that they had us up in front and gave us a medal and talked to us about how wonderful it was that we were Olympians, and they were really speaking to other young people out there who were seeing us and would be coming along the way and might be inspired by seeing some of the American athletes. This, in fact, was then very actively a part of our next three or four years. We were frequently invited to dedicate swimming pools and open up track meets and do things which now the Southern California Olympians do on a regular basis. We did that a great deal.

Anyway, we returned from the Games to our own communities where we were asked to tell about our experiences to each of the service clubs or, in my case, the high school, Redondo Union High School. I addressed the assembly in the auditorium and told them about the experience. And the communities took the sense of the sport and the spirit of amateur sport and built with it.

I can remember the Department of Recreation of Los Angeles, Aquatics Division, which was headed by C.P.L. Nichols for so many many years, and his participation with young people and sport. He took care of the water polo teams when they needed jobs getting them work as lifeguards for the city, and also the young sports admirers and potential participants or athletes of the future. We were asked to come and be there for the different events. Sometimes we'd swim at night, and once in awhile they'd ask the girls to dive at night, which wasn't too smart from a lighting standpoint. But there were men's and women's team members who were asked to come and swim a lap

or two. And there were lots of young faces; they were the age to come along into sports later. I really regard C.P.L. Nichols' leadership to try to build a number of aquatic facilities in parks and recreation facilities at Los Angeles as quite a leadership stint. And there wouldn't be anywhere near as many pools without his involvement. I think we opened up most of them. And we've done these things for a long time. Now they don't ask us to swim anymore, but they used to!

After returning from the Games, during the next three years up through 1939, I continued to swim in competition in the summers. I competed in the national swimming championships in '37, '38, and '39 to defend my national championship in the 200-meter breaststroke, and I would frequently swim the medley relay for the Los Angeles Athletic Club. By 1939 I had decided that maybe swimming unattached would be quite sufficient. I did swim in late '38 and in '39 unattached, however, by '39 I think the edge was kind of wearing off of things too. For one thing, I was a sophomore in college in physical sciences and mathematics, and I was old enough to start learning to fly. I had already started making treks to the airport and was taking courses that were going to support that. Also, by the summer of 1939 I think most people were pretty well convinced in the sporting world that there would not be an Olympic Games in 1940 that was scheduled for Tokyo. We were not betting on it, and very shortly, as I remember, by the time we finished that summer national's meet . . . well, it was early fall when Hitler invaded Austria. And it was within a very few months of the summer competitions that we were pretty convinced that there would not be any 1940 Games. There were nationals in 1940, as I recall, and I believe people like Margie Gestring went to them, but I did not.

I had made my decision that with the fall of 1939 I focused on my college education—my final 2-years, in addition to taking aeronautics courses at USC, learning to fly and flying through

training for primary acrobatic and advanced aviation. I earned my pilot's license in the spring of 1940 at the earliest stage that you could get it—at that time it was 18. I was then invited to participate in the civil pilot training program at USC in the advanced and acrobatics work and then on to other courses. By the time I graduated from USC, I had acquired some of the instructors' ratings to teach some of this basic aeronautics material. And when I left USC, having graduated in '41 in physical sciences and math, I went to work instructing on the civilian pilot training program. I was busy on my first job doing that when Pearl Harbor occurred. And then our lives were forever changed. The flying that I did was moved and I continued training flying up until a year-and-a-half later with the College of the Pacific and then went with the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron, later to become the WASP [Women Airforce Service Pilots], from December 1942 to December 1944. I was assigned as a civilian ferry pilot with the Air Transport Command, Sixth Ferrying Division at Long Beach. There were four ferry bases in the country to which they assigned women pilots who were already qualified pilots who could step in and relieve a man for active duty abroad. They were short of pilots abroad. This was another fabulous experience. We were volunteers and civilians, but those of us who had enough experience and background were transitioned rapidly into fighter aircraft. I flew all four of the single-engine fighters and all the twin-engine bombers in the ferrying division. These years with the WASP and the Ferry Command were brought to a conclusion with the deactivation of the WASP in late December 1944.

During those war years, I had met my husband Howard at a base where he was stationed and which we used as a ferry stop, and we were married shortly after the WASP deactivation. As an Army air force pilot, Howard completed his service period later the next year and we started our family. In 1946, my friends from USC who had been the engineering department

professors who had conducted the civil pilot program when I was a student, called and asked me if I would help them with a need they had. This was a result really of a nationwide need; with so many veterans coming back from the service and wanting to go on with their college education there was a major expansion in the enrollment. USC didn't have the facilities here at the Los Angeles campus and they had been given what amounted to a small campus at Santa Maria.

USC had been the fortunate recipient, for a number of years, of gifts from C. Allen Hancock. And they already had a Hancock Building and so forth. Well, C. Allen Hancock also was an aviator and a prominent Southern California resident. He had a beautiful airport adjacent to his ranch at Santa Maria. This Hancock Airport, in 1938, was one of the first the Army air forces selected when they expanded military pilot training from San Antonio into seven places across the country. It was the first spreading out of Army air force pilot training. C. Allen Hancock gave them the airport for this purpose. It had five hangars—a regular military primary training base—and was used all during the war. When the war was over, G. Allen Hancock saw that that was a big facility that needed use. Why couldn't USC have it to expand from its campus for the needed years? It had buildings and classrooms and space to expand their engineering curriculum so that they could accommodate more veterans.

So USC established the regular courses to provide the first two years of engineering at Santa Maria. Then they had local housing, which had been military and cadet family housing. Then USC had this airport with five hangars and about 25 airplanes. They wanted to put in an aeronautics curriculum and wanted it to be accredited at USC so that these veterans could not only come and study engineering at Santa Maria, but they might also learn to make professional use of their military piloting experience. They could also acquire the civilian

ratings so they could go on with the airlines. These students would come to get their commercial license and their instrument rating, and finish up another two years of school so they could get a job with the airlines. There were quite a few veterans who took them up on this, among them my husband, who then went to school there while we lived there from '46 to '48. For six or seven semesters I developed a curriculum, got it approved by the Curriculum Committee at USC, and taught all four of the courses; their primary, their advanced, their instrument and their airline transport and multi-engine course. I was responsible for that curriculum and responsible for all of their instrument pilot training. This was a bit unusual because there were experienced instructors up there from that military school, but they were not experienced in instrument flying. I happened to learn to do instrument flying as a part of my experience with WASP. Well, I enjoyed doing that but it was very intense. Again, it was like the wartime experience in which we had no time off—we were going all the time. This was the post-war: "Get these veterans through, they need to get out." We ran not three quarters a year, but three full semesters a year—three 16-week semesters. So it was a very intense schedule teaching three semesters a year.

After Critch finished, he decided that he'd like to go to work for the airlines. Of course, he had the piloting background and he elected to go to work for Western Airlines. The veteran needs were beginning to taper down. We returned to the Los Angeles area, Critch went to work for Western Airlines and I stayed home then, and for the first time was at home and was enjoying being at home with the family. We had our second youngster in 1952, our daughter. So I was at home with them through all the '50s. I kept my flying up by just flying several mornings a week or conducting some classes in my home at the kitchen table for a few students. Then I would give flight instruction to only one or two people. I flew out of Torrance and Hawthorne airports and kept in touch. I also

became happily involved with the 99s and the Powder-Puff Derby, and became one of the board of directors with the Powder-Puff Derby for six years. I flew in 14 of those races and placed well in a number of them, and a number of other stock aircraft races around the country.

By 1960, I had met and was helping to teach to fly in her own airplane a lady named Isabel Bates. She was a middle-aged lady for whom learning to fly had a special significance in that she not only found herself learning, gaining confidence and mastering a lot about herself and becoming what she felt was a more complete, bigger person for the discipline she had to master, but she also saw in it that the airplane might be a remarkable educational tool for helping young people in various stages of their growth. She used to talk to Critch and me about this a lot. She was a moderately wealthy lady who in 1961 elected to establish the Bates Foundation. I had developed aviation curricula for several FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] schools and colleges, including the College of the Pacific and then USC. At the request of Isabel Bates, I prepared a curriculum for adapting the aeronautics subjects and sciences and coordinating them with the learning in flight, not leaving them separate. This was done for junior high school, then high school, and then for college-age students. We ran our junior high school program for a couple years while we were still in Palos Verdes. It's interesting, but, of course, the students are too young to fly a lot and they fly with you only dual; they are not old enough to fly solo. The high school manifestation of this we carried out with Redondo High School and provided the actual flight experience. This high school program had an inspired teacher, Ted Misenheimer. He got a lot of kids off the streets and interested in learning about aviation. We gave them their flight experience in flying a few flights per year in the airplanes owned by the Bates Foundation. At that point, we had developed a college curriculum because Isabel Bates said she would like to see

students go all the way to solo and on to a license. Well, for a license you had to be 18, and it does fit better at the college level. Then I was in home territory because that's the age at which I had dealt with civil pilot training from 1939 to 1941 when I was at USC. And that program was probably the finest pilot training program the country ever had. It was very successful at the college level. It was run by the college and not by a local business, the educational process being uppermost in their minds.

This is what Isabel Bates wanted. She wanted this to be something which would help develop the individuals, challenge them, provide them with a confidence level and mastery in an environment they wouldn't normally get involved in. Plus, it would help motivate them to do better in school and work harder. They would see a reason for continuing their education and staying in school. Also, becoming a pilot could be an excellent complement to the students' normal growth and education because it had a practical side and was challenging, as well as depending on academic fundamentals. I put together a curriculum for this and we studied several schools in California at which it could be located. Of course, USC was all for it, because I had been associated there. But because it was a small program, we thought it should be located at a very small school. Friends brought us into contact with Harvey Mudd College and in 1961 we selected this site as the most applicable for the program. In 1962 we started with our first class. Critch resigned from Western Airlines to devote full time to doing this program with me, and together we handled all the jobs of all the flight instructions and the classwork. I was director of the program and chief flight instructor for the flight operations. He and I divided all these jobs and he administered the Bates Foundation as its president. We started our first class in '62 and this year we are flying our 27th class. Our alumni are graduates of Harvey Mudd College, one of the six Claremont colleges. This particular college is one that grants

degrees in physical sciences and mathematics; that is, chemistry, physics and engineering. We have found that the goals of the Bates Foundation very closely parallel the goals of Harvey Mudd College. These students are not the gung ho all-American kids that are going to go into the Air Force. These are academically-talented, serious students who probably would not have looked into very much else. They find flight experience to be a "neat" challenge that they really have to work at to master. They enjoy the practical, the physical and the mental challenge. It has been a very interesting challenge and we now treasure among our dearest friends 26 years worth of these very fine alumni. Our house could hold some swimming and flying trophies, but most of all are the student training trophies and mementos of 27 years here with Harvey Mudd College.

Critch retired from full-time instructing back in '79 and I'm still with it but I'm hoping to retire within the year back to at least half-time or less. At present, I'm the chief flight instructor and director; a member of the faculty all these 27 years. I have a couple of instructors and a staff member working for us. I've been teaching as a flight instructor over 45 years and have all the flight instructor ratings and numerous aeronautical ratings. And I'm a designated pilot examiner for the FAA to give flight test for certificates. It's been another new and very rewarding experience and we've loved being here in Claremont.

Hodak: You mentioned you have children. Tell me a bit about them.

Critchell: Well, our son Robin works for CBS as an engineer. He is the oldest and the one with children; we have four grandchildren. And my daughter Sandra went to Scripps College and now works as a paralegal. She also has her commercial and instrument pilot's license.

I tried 10 or 12 years ago to kind of renew my acquaintance in aviation and the WASP, and particularly in swimming and sports. It was one of the times when those things were working together because we were approximately eight years from the 1984 Games, at which time those wonderful people who were pitching on the top level with the city of Los Angeles were in there battling—losing some and winning some—toward possibly getting Los Angeles to become the sight of the '84 Games. I can remember a number of real knock-down, drag-out meetings or affairs at which Pat McCormick said that our backs were to the wall and we had to fight in order to do this. It was very sad at times when it didn't look like it was going to happen, and then great at other times when we were making progress. But from 1978 on there were meetings and many efforts. Pat was one of five who were working on this at the L.A. Mayor and City Council level. She reached us through Southern California Olympians. People such as Velma Ploessel and myself had remained on that mailing list. I remember well when Bill Schroeder helped activate the Southern California Olympians at the Helms Athletic Foundation in Culver City. My husband and I have very much enjoyed sharing in many Southern California Olympian events since. We both worked on the '84 Games. This proved for us again the glorious vitality and importance of the Olympic Games.

I was pleased that Critch, who had no particular association in sports, went with me to these things and found himself just as excited about it. He'd let me do my kind of flying and he did his, or whatever, but in this case, he hadn't been in the sports world but he followed me. He went with this and was caught up with the enthusiasm. Two or three years before the Games, we were going to committee meetings and people were volunteering to work on this and that site. Well, he volunteered and he worked all the way through the Games on a site down here—the shooting site here in Chino. We didn't want him to be on a site to which he would have to commute all

the way across the city, so he picked one that was out here. He had picked a couple on this side of town and said, "I don't care what it is, I'll do it." He worked out here as one of the volunteers at the shooting site. He said he didn't know anything about shooting, but that didn't seem to be a problem!

As the thousands of others in our community became swept up with the enthusiasm and the appreciation and the spirit of the Olympics, where did that come from? I'd like to think that really the existence of the Olympians themselves and their willingness to come back and be seen, heard, and to participate and get people enthused was a self-multiplying momentum that then made for events where people began to understand it better. I think that helped a lot to build this enthusiasm that brought us our volunteers. The Southern California Olympians certainly were not the only volunteers. I think the Committee used them wisely. They used them as communicators of the excitement of the Olympic experience. "What's it like to be in the Games?" And then you've got 40 people volunteering to help after the meeting. Well, this kind of experience was fun. We enjoyed seeing that spirit alive. I met Olympians whom I'd never seen before and a few that I had known through the many different years.

Added to this was our interesting experience that brought Ali de Vries, the Dutch woman track competitor, and myself together for the '84 Games. I called her on the phone and suggested that she come here for the '84 Games. Her family worked it out to help her with the finances and she was here for the seven or eight weeks that summer. Prior to her arrival I had signed both of us up for many of these events to do what the Olympians were doing. She was welcomed with them as an Olympian from Holland. We not only did our own touring of California but she participated in each of these events with me. Also, I was lucky and managed to get tickets for Ali's track event and for my swimming event, which we then attended

together. I had the opportunity of a lifetime to hear about her life after I knew her in the '36 Games, her strong participation in women's track, and then the disappointment of the loss of the 1940 Games and of course, the '44 Games. I learned of her life in occupied Amsterdam and her marriage and her two children, and the difficulties and hardships of raising a family in those war years in German-occupied Amsterdam. The '48 Games had revived her, and she went to London and got enthused and she wrote to me and we got in touch again. She has worked on women's athletics in Holland for 50 years.

The renewal of the Olympic spirit began before the '84 Games with the many events simulating the Games, like the gala event at a USC football game. They had the parade and Opening Ceremonies and we marched with flags. All the Olympic team members who could be found put on uniforms and marched around the stadium and through an Opening Ceremony. It was thrilling! It was done so beautifully and people were so thrilled to have the Olympians participating aile over that campus. They didn't just stand there and say, "Oh gee, a gold medal winner." They said, "Oh, what does this mean?" and translated it right away for the upcoming youth. And this was most clearly evident in every direction. Folks were admiring the athlete but immediately translated it to the younger generation. And there were children's games held while the Olympians were on the USC campus. I remember standing out there on Cromwell Field with the Olympians watching 12- and 14-year-olds doing track events. When they're surrounded by Olympians, it seems to help! We just simply enjoyed ourselves.

This world-wide, human race-wide spirit, which was the goal of the early Games, the 1896 revival, that I had sensed as a youngster at the '32 Games and experienced in the '36—that Olympic spirit prevailed again. I know you don't always get to relive things but it was very close to it. I felt that I could

feel again, but now with new people, our own Olympic experience. It was a universal spirit, crossing all boundaries, dedicated to the importance of giving our very best to the growth of young people, and particularly of helping them to see the importance of striving to do their best. The answer and their reward in life does not lie in winning, it lies in the privilege of being a participant, the privilege of competing, of sharing in life. You can't win them all, and you may not win any, but it's worth your best effort.

The athletes whom they were seeing represented some winners and some losers, but each better for the experience and the privilege of that competition in that universal spirit which the Olympic Games brings to us. We have trouble remembering as world citizens for the next four years, but then it comes back and it's rekindled. And it was certainly rekindled in 1984 for the citizens of Southern California and the United States. The critics said, "Why have the torch come from Greece and go across the country?" Remember how they opposed that idea and how much furor it took to get that taken care of? Peter Ueberroth just moved at the right time and you know what happened! Wow! Communities became excited over this, and people's horizons expanded and it was so thrilling and helpful to them all, especially the effect on the young people.

In a new way the Olympic idea encourages people to do their best and to continue to struggle, not to win over someone else, but to do their own best in competition with themselves. The Olympics express a pure essence of some truths of living that we may hand down to our young people, and which will stand up to the test of review by time.

Hodak: You express those sentiments very well, Mrs. Critchell. Thank you for letting me come out and visit. I've enjoyed today and I certainly enjoyed dinner and meeting your husband. The Amateur Athletic Foundation appreciates your cooperation and

the time you've given on this project. We both thank you.

Critchell: Well, it's my privilege. I thank you, and it's been a pleasure to be able to meet and to see one of the manifestations of the Amateur Athletic Foundation.