

CHARLES H. McCALLISTER
1932 & 1936 OLYMPIC GAMES
WATER POLO



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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President
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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.

DR. CHARLES H. McCALLISTER

1932 OLYMPIC GAMES - LOS ANGELES
WATER POLO
Bronze Medalist

1936 OLYMPIC GAMES - BERLIN
WATER POLO

INTERVIEWED:

February, 1988
San Marino, California
by George A. Hodak

DR. CHARLES H. McCALLISTER

Interviewer: George A. Hodak

Hodak: I'm in San Marino interviewing Dr. Harold McCallister, who competed in the 1932 and 1936 Olympics in the water polo competition. First off, Dr. McCallister, I'd like you to tell me a bit about your family background. When and where were you born?

McCallister: I was born in Madison, South Dakota, October 14, 1903. I stayed there with my family until the family came to the Los Angeles area in 1913 when I was ten years old. My father was a banker and had been born and raised in the United States. My mother was born and raised in the United States and she was somewhat Pennsylvania Dutch. She was a schoolteacher in Madison for years. I was raised there, and had one brother. He is three-and-a-half years older than I am and is still alive and lives in Leisure World down in Orange County.

I went through grammar school in Long Beach and through high school in Long Beach, and attended [Long Beach] Poly High School when it had an enrollment of 2,300 students and was the only high school in all of Long Beach. Now there are six high schools down there. I attended Stanford University and took my pre-med schooling there and one year of medicine. Then I took my last three years at the University of Colorado. The main campus is at Boulder but the medical school is in Denver.

I came out to Los Angeles and took a one-year internship at the Methodist Hospital right near USC and then took a one-year rotating residency at the Queen of the Angels Hospital. I then went into medical practice and practiced for 15 years in general

practice, with most of my work doing workman's compensation and accident work. I retired 13 years ago after practicing for 45 years.

Hodak: Okay, let's talk about how you combined athletic competition alongside your medical studies. First off, I wonder what provoked an interest for you in swimming? Were there any influences such as your father or your brother?

McCallister: Yes. Our town, Madison, South Dakota, is just three miles from a nice lake called Lake Madison in the southeast corner of South Dakota. It was at that time even, that many years ago, a residential lake that had a big hotel, comparatively speaking, and had a chautauqua and many private cabins for people who lived in Madison and the environs. So, at the age of six I started swimming in the lake. My brother, being three-and-a-half years older than I, was a better swimmer than I was and was bigger, so it was my thought to try to do as well as he did. So I would swim in all the little events, the competitions that they had there. I could do alright in the six-year group and my brother did very well in the nine-year group.

So when we moved to Long Beach we moved to a home that was just four blocks from Cherry Avenue and Ocean, which is one of the main beach centers of Long Beach. So I was exposed to the swimming and the ocean all the time. Then in high school I became a member of the swimming team, then of the water polo team. I also played football at Long Beach Poly. I was quarterback on the second team. In 1919 we won the state title in football. Morley Drury, who later starred at USC in football, was on the water polo and football teams. He was a freshman the year I was a senior.

I went to Stanford for four years and played on the varsity swimming and water polo teams for three years, because the

first year you were a freshman and that separated you from the varsity. I was the captain of the swimming team one year and the captain of the water polo team another year.

I was also a yell leader at Stanford—we didn't have the cheerleaders and all that they have today. I remember my senior year we played in the Rose Bowl against Notre Dame. Ernie Nevers, who had just come back from serious ankle injuries, played a tremendous game, but he had two passes intercepted and returned by Elmer Layden for touchdowns. So we lost that Rose Bowl in 1925.

Hodak: Who were some of your teammates at Stanford on the swim team and the water polo team?

McCallister: Well, many of them were in the Olympic Games then and even before. [James] Wally O'Connor, who was from Herbie's [Herbert Wildman] bunch from Venice, was in school three of the four years that I was at Stanford. Austin Clapp came from Stanford, but didn't enter Stanford until I had been out of school for about three or four years. Then he entered Stanford and became a very strong swimmer and water polo player. Another one of the players that was very good, but didn't go into Olympic competition, was Bob Myers from Long Beach, who at that time was the top swimmer from Long Beach; while I was the second swimmer at Long Beach High School. Then there was Al White and Dave Fall, who were on the diving team.

Hodak: You had played water polo in high school also?

McCallister: Yes. I played water polo in high school for two years but, by coincidence, that was right at the time of the transition in water polo from the old, very rough, vicious game to the international game; which is what they've played all the time in the United States up until the new "rapid transit" group of

players started.

Hodak: You referred to the earlier style of water polo. Would you describe a bit of what that involved?

McCallister: It was altogether different than anything you could possibly imagine unless you had been in England where that game originated, or on the East Coast. The game started with the two teams at opposite ends, the ball was thrown out into the center, and the people rushed out to get it. Then whoever got that ball tried to get it into the goal at the other end. He could carry the ball underwater, he could carry it in both hands, or do anything he wanted with the ball. But, likewise, the opposing players could attack him, try to take the ball away from him by means of wrestling or anything, and could try to take it underwater and get it away so as to get it down so they could score.

Hodak: I believe the ball was not fully inflated at that time.

McCallister: The ball was nearly inflated, but not completely. So it wasn't a soft ball. The year before, that was when they played the rough game. Then it was a softer ball.

Hodak: This transition that you referred to, was it still a bit rougher than today's game?

McCallister: No rougher than today's game, but approximately as rough. But staunch conditioning wasn't required as it is now; because although you had to fight to get the ball, you didn't have to cover the great spaces of time and distance that you do now. And there was time-out every time the ball was stopped by the referee. There was a few seconds time-out, as you will recall; now the time-outs are very sparse and they keep going at a more constant pace. So it is a faster game now and needs more conditioning than ours did.

Hodak: Now, tell me about your high school competition? Was the water polo competition pretty widespread in the Los Angeles area?

McCallister: Not too much. There were two or three teams in Southern California that were fairly good. One of them was a small town then, Huntington Park. They had a good team. Then we played some of the teams from the Venice area. Then there was a group of teams that played in the north. Every year the two teams challenged each other for the state championship and we won it all the time because they never played us. They would challenge us but wouldn't play us. (laughter) So we won the state championship two years in a row when I was there.

Hodak: How does your entering Stanford correlate with your affiliation with the L.A. Athletic Club? Did that come before, after, or during your time at Stanford?

McCallister: It comes well afterward. My competition at Stanford was from 1920 to 1924. I knew practically nothing about the Los Angeles Athletic Club at that time. Although they did have a water polo team that was very good and at one time—while I was playing against them at Stanford—was headed by Duke Kahanomoku. He played for the Los Angeles Athletic Club. So I eventually got to know the Duke pretty well. He was one of our advisors on the water polo team at the Los Angeles Athletic Club.

Hodak: What sort of things do you recall of Duke Kahanomoku? What things could you tell that would give a feel for what sort of man he was?

McCallister: He was a very great athlete in swimming and in water polo also. He was very modest and very quiet and reserved. His so-called godfather was the head swimming administrator at the Los Angeles Athletic Club, Les Henry. When Duke Kahanomoku came over from Hawaii he was made a godson of this Les Henry

and his wife, who were very good friends of my wife and myself.

Hodak: Was Les Henry your coach at the LAAC?

McCallister: No, he was not a coach. He was the administrator and got the four teams together to make a strong team. Les Henry figured that the Los Angeles Athletic Club had a good team but it wasn't good enough to try out for the 1932 Olympics, if and when the Olympics were ever held in Los Angeles . . . which they didn't know they would have them then. His team couldn't compete with the Illinois Athletic Club and the New York Athletic Club, which were the predominant powers of water polo in the United States. So he got permission from the Los Angeles Athletic Club and got members from the Pacific Coast Club in Long Beach, which was a subsidiary of the LAAC; also members from the Venice Swimming Association, where Herbie Wildman, Wally O'Connor, Charlie Finn and Phil Daubenspeck played; and then also the Hollywood Athletic Club, which had two or three good players. This group was put together and for two years we practiced and eliminated players gradually as they either lost interest or didn't think, they were getting anywhere, until a team of 14 of us was picked to try out for the Olympic Games in 1932. The tryouts were at Brookside Park in Pasadena.

Hodak: How did the Olympics first come to your attention? Through your affiliation with the L.A. Athletic Club?

McCallister: That's right. In other words, when I started to practice medicine in Los Angeles a fellow that I had played water polo with at Stanford for just one year, Jimmy Smith, had become an advisor of the swimming and water polo team at the Pacific Coast Club in Long Beach. I had known him at college so he asked me, in spite of the fact that I was starting out in the practice of medicine, to come down and play and swim at the

Pacific Coast Club, which I did. We had no thoughts then at all of Olympic competition. But then as the Olympic Games were formed and came into closer proximity, we made this team that I have described. So then we tried out for the Olympics and had the fellows from Venice, Austin Clapp, Cal Strong from Long Beach, and myself.

Hodak: Tell me a bit about the tryouts at Brookside Park in Pasadena? How did they go for you?

McCallister: At the beginning, the Illinois Athletic Club, which had been the top water polo team in the United States for years, was favored first; the New York Athletic Club was favored second; and we, because we were a local team of fairly good stature, were rated third. There were three other teams from the United States: The Olympic Club, one from San Diego, and one from someplace in the East—I think it was from Philadelphia.

It was just straight elimination play. In the first round we met a team and we defeated them. In the second round we met the New York Athletic Club and defeated them. Then we played the Illinois Athletic Club and defeated them and so we were in the Olympic Games.

Hodak: Did this require that you take a leave of absence from your medical practice?

McCallister: That's right. I worked with a group of doctors and I was the newest one in the group. There was only four in the group. So I said to them, "Now, I have a chance to go to the Olympic Games, although they are right here in Los Angeles, and I will want my vacation during the Games so that I can play in the Games." And they said, "That's very fine. You go right ahead and do that." So it was arranged that way. But the deal was altogether different in the 1936 Olympics.

Hodak: Did you stay at the Olympic Village in 1932?

McCallister: Yes, I stayed at the Olympic Village, but I was living at the Phi Psi House. I had been a Phi Psi at Stanford and was living at the Phi Psi at the University of Southern California as a guest member from the fraternity. I stayed there for two years.

Hodak: Tell me a bit about what you recall of the 1932 Games, outside of the water polo competition? Are there anecdotes, personalities you'd like to tell about?

McCallister: Nothing like Herbie probably told you. (laughter) He remembered all that, he was younger, I was 29 years old—and that's pretty old for an athlete.

Hodak: You were one of the elder statesmen on the team.

McCallister: I was the elder statesman. Of course, several of us were older. Charlie Finn was nearly my age and Wally O'Connor was just a year or two younger. Cal Strong was three years younger. He had been at Stanford one year that I was there, but he hadn't played on the team because he was a freshman when I graduated.

Hodak: What would you say about the accommodations at the Village and the camaraderie among the athletes?

McCallister: It was really very interesting because everybody thought it would not be a good Olympic Village. They didn't think they could build it up that well. But it was carefully built and very well-built and the accommodations were very good. There was plenty of room and very good food. And, as you say, the camaraderie was terrific. People of the various countries, although they could only say, "hello" or "how are you," were all friends.

Hodak: Were the travel arrangements and practice arrangements made rather easily for you?

McCallister: Fairly easily. You lived at the Village and usually they came down with someone. But they had buses for all the foreigners that brought them right from the Olympic Village down to the training quarters.

Hodak: Do you recall the Opening Ceremonies? Was that something that left a big impression on you?

McCallister: It was a marvelous event. According to the statistics, there were 105,000 seats and every seat was absolutely filled. Then, as you know, the President of the United States [Herbert Hoover] was supposed to be there but was unable to attend for some reason or another, so Vice-President [Charles] Curtis came and opened the Games. After all the teams had entered he came to the podium and opened the Olympic Games.

Hodak: Let's talk of the water polo competition itself in 1932. Who did the U.S. team initially play? Who were your first opponents?

McCallister: To start with, there were only five teams entered. Two of those were highly reputed teams from Europe; one of them was Germany and the other was Hungary. At that time, in fact, Hungary was rated first and Germany second. But Germany had won the Olympic Games a time or two before. These were all experienced players and were hardened to the Games as such, while we were all novices. We had only played with colleges and things like that. But when the Games started, we played one of the teams and then we were to play Brazil. Two or three days before we were to play Brazil, one of their players chased the umpire completely out of the stadium. (laughter) So they crossed the Brazilians off the roster.

Well, we had beaten Japan in the opening game, 10-1.

Although the Japanese won all the Olympic swimming events, they were new to water polo. They were very good but were new to the game, it was their first competition. Then we were to play Brazil but they were already out. They had just been in one game. So we played Germany, who had already lost to Hungary. We played Germany to a 4-4 tie. So when we went into the final match against Hungary, we were playing for the title, as such. But we were defeated sufficiently by the Hungarian team and Germany was given second place instead of us, although we had tied them. They had made one more point during the course of the competition than we had. So we were given the bronze medal, Germany was given the silver, and Hungary won the gold; and rightfully so, for they were the best team by far.

Hodak: What were the strengths of the Hungarians that set them apart from the other teams?

McCallister: Mainly their experience in the Olympic Games. Their team had been in two or three Olympics during the 12 or 14 years before that. So that as their older players wore out or quit, they had new players coming up that had already been in one Olympic Games or so. In Europe, water polo is a far more important game than it is here in the United States. Over there it rated very favorably with the most popular sports of any kind.

Hodak: So, following the water polo competition, or perhaps before the competition, were you able to take in much of the other events in the Olympics, like swimming or track and field?

McCallister: Well, we saw some of it, but not too awfully much because our games were going to come up right about in the middle of it so we had to stay in tip-top shape for that. Then afterwards we saw some of the events, but not as many as you'd anticipate.

Hodak: Where was the water polo competition held in Los Angeles?

McCallister: In a great big stadium that was right by the Coliseum. It's right next door to the Coliseum and it held 11,000 people, I think. Say here's the big Coliseum, 105,000 seats. Backing up not 200 feet to the Coliseum was a nice swimming stadium. It had to be 50 meters long with room to accommodate all around. All the seats were on one side and the other side, then they put up bleachers down at the end. So it had to have at least 9,000.

Hodak: And was the event well-attended?

McCallister: Yes, it was filled.

Hodak: Were you somewhat surprised at the crowds that came to the Olympics? There was some concern about that prior to the Olympics. It was, after all, during the Depression.

McCallister: Yes, that's right. The Depression was terrible. People were practically broke. But of course, the prices for the seats weren't as bad as they are now, or as bad as for the Super Bowl. As I remember, it was completely sold out.

Hodak: What position did you play on the water polo team? Maybe you could describe a bit more of what distinguishes the game today from the game of your era.

McCallister: I was called the center-back. In those days, water polo was played similar to the way basketball is played now. There were three guards, three forwards and a goalkeeper. Now the forwards . . . one was a sprint forward that is to sprint and get the ball and then force down into the way. Then one of the bigger players, who wasn't quite as fast, would go down facing the goal that he advances toward, which would be on the right-hand side. Therefore, the sprint swimmer and the left swimmer could pass the ball to him and he could throw from that angle. Now that looks like kind of a bad angle, but it

isn't. But this fellow's got to be just about as good as this one and he can throw in from this angle. Now the center one is the speed swimmer, and that's what Austin Clapp played. But Wally O'Connor had also won the NCAA 200-yard while he was in college. So he had won the 200-yard just as Austin Clapp had done, and they both later swam in one of the relay races for the United States in the 1928 Olympics.

Now, to get to the guards. The two guards at the back were big fellows and then I was a smaller, faster fellow and I played out in the middle. It was my chore to get the ball down to the forwards.

Hodak: Kind of a passing position primarily, with a little less emphasis on scoring?

McCallister: Yes, I scored practically nothing. I could be called an assist-man.

Hodak: Following the 1932 Olympics were you determined to take part in the 1936 Games? Was this something that you focused on or thought much about?

McCallister: In a moderate sort of way. All of the players took it a little bit easy for a few months afterwards, but then we all became a little restless and figured that we're a good enough team to win the American championship, why shouldn't we be able to do it again. So we went back to training in moderation and played games either amongst ourselves or with any of the colleges that were just barely getting started. I played at Stanford and we had done pretty well, but USC and UCLA did not play any water polo at all while I was at Stanford.

Hodak: Did you continue your affiliation with the L.A. Athletic Club?

McCallister: When I was at the Pacific Coast Club, which was a subsidiary

of the L.A. Athletic Club, I wasn't considered as a full member of the L.A. Athletic Club. But I was on the athletic list. In other words, I could represent the Pacific Coast Club in any events that they had. But if there were going to be any events at the LAAC, I wasn't eligible for those. In 1931 I was formally taken in as a member of the L. A. Athletic Club and was given a membership and a number. So then I could train either at the Pacific Coast Club or at the L.A. Athletic Club.

Hodak: So, following the 1932 Olympics you continued with the L.A. Athletic Club?

McCallister: Yes, I continued with the Los Angeles Athletic Club and so you can see, I have been a member continuously from 1931 to 1987, which is 56 years without any break. I have competed in all kinds of athletics at the LAAC. Even while I was still training for the 1936 Olympics, I was playing handball, badminton and table tennis at the Los Angeles Athletic Club.

Hodak: And these were sports that were organized competitively?

McCallister: Yes, in the club.

Hodak: And have you continued an interest in any of these other sports over the years?

McCallister: Yes, that's what half of these trophies are for. While I was a member of the Los Angeles Athletic Club I was the badminton champion for six years; three years at one stretch and a lapse of three years while some better players came in from the East. Then I won the championship again for three more years. I played handball at the club from 1937 to 1962 and at one time was rated the third best in the Los Angeles Athletic Club. In table tennis, they had good table tennis players but because I was working as a doctor in southeast Los Angeles and they held their tournaments at noon, I never got to play in their

tournaments until years later. But starting about ten years ago I started playing table tennis at the club and in the last six years I have been the club champion three times and the second-place champion two other times. I am the club champion now at the L.A. Athletic Club, which has 5,000 members.

Hodak: That's quite remarkable!

McCallister: Well, they seem to think it is at the age of 84. We just finished the big yearly tournament just three weeks ago and I defeated one fellow that was 33, one that was 35, and one that was 37. So you can see that I was playing against all the best players in the club. I'm still pretty good at it. I play it all the time. And I swim all the time in master's swimming.

Hodak: And you've continued that competition?

McCallister: Yes, I started that about seven years ago and have swum yearly in the bigger swimming meets that they have here. I've won many prizes and at the present time I am rated the third best in Southern California in my age group, which is 80 and over. That does weed out all the real good ones.

Reggie Harrison used to swim on the same swimming team as I did in masters swimming at the Industry Hills Aquatic Complex. That's a fabulous place that's just 20 miles right out here at Industry Hills. I swim for that team. I don't swim for the L.A. Athletic Club team because they don't have a big enough membership of swimmers to compete in the big tournaments in masters swimming. Our team out at Industry Hills is 50 members, 50 swimmers on the team. Because of my age group I win more gold and silver medals than anybody else.

Hodak: Again, I wouldn't take anything away from those accomplishments. They need not be qualified by age or anything else. Let's move from the present back to the past

and talk a bit about events preliminary to the 1936 Olympics. Before we discuss the tryouts, is there anything you want to mention about your continued training with the L.A. Athletic Club? Did the team stick together from 1932?

McCallister: Yes, the team stuck together. We practiced at intervals, we can put it that way. But we practiced sufficiently enough to attract attention so that in 1934 our team was still picked as the best team in the United States in water polo, even though we didn't play any matches to prove it. Then we played in the 1936 Olympics. Then in 1938 we were again claimed the best team in the United States, so that if the 1940 Olympic Games had been held we would have been seeded number one. Whether we'd have won it or not we don't know but we would have been seeded number one.

Hodak: And the 1936 tryouts were held in Chicago, I believe.

McCallister: That's right, they were held in Chicago. Again, it was considered that the Illinois Athletic Club and possibly the New York Athletic Club would stage a comeback and win the tryouts. Our team played very well but one of our players, Austin Clapp, had swum in a swimming meet at Seal Beach for which he was paid ten dollars. For accepting ten dollars for swimming one mile in the ocean, he was declared ineligible. So a fellow that was just out of high school in Los Angeles by the name of Kenny Beck took his place. Kenny was a good player. He was tall and very fast but not as good as Austin because of the experience he lacked. But he was good. He played with us in the 1936 Olympics.

Hodak: Did either the New York or Illinois Athletic Club present much of a challenge at the tryouts in 1936?

McCallister: Yes, the games were very close; not one point but maybe two points apart. One point is where it gets pretty irksome. But

they were pretty good and had their top teams. Then we went to New York for two or three days before we left for Berlin.

Hodak: Tell me a bit about the travel on board the ship, the SS *Manhattan*.

McCallister: Well, the *Manhattan* was a very lovely ship. It was the biggest of the American ships at that time and was rated as a 35,000-ton ship, which is awfully big. It was the top ship of the United States fleet of commerce ships. There were about 380 Olympic athletes all on the one ship. We all went over on the one ship but came back in two different ships. So, going over, we were all together and had fine camaraderie and good meetings and dances. There was a place to train, a swimming pool which was very small, but it was good. Then, of course, Eleanor Holm had her trouble.

Hodak: How did athletes hear about Eleanor Holm's dismissal? Was it something that came indirectly—

McCallister: No, it was right there. I was just about 25 feet from where Eleanor Holm was taken downstairs by the chaperone that had her fired. You see, we were all on what's called the third deck, the third deck down. She had been invited to be upstairs with Helen Hayes, the motion picture actress, for a party up on the first deck. In fact, she wasn't even supposed to go up on first deck. Somehow or other, they seemed to think that she drank some wine or something, so when she was found on the top deck she was brought down by the chaperone. Then, the next day, the committee had a meeting and ruled her out of the 1936 Games.

Hodak: Was there a response on the part of other athletes or Mrs. Holm? Were there any thoughts that this could have been avoided or could possibly be overturned?

McCallister: Not really. At least all the ones that I know who had anything to do with it just figured she made a mistake. And the ones that are in charge are in complete charge and what they say has to go. So as far as I know, maybe some friends of Eleanor's quibbled, but there was not much quibbling.

Hodak: How did you get to Berlin? Where did the ship land initially?

McCallister: We stopped first at La Havre, France. Then finally we got off the train at Berlin and without even getting into the main part of the town, we were put on a train and shipped right out to the Olympic Village.

Hodak: Were you impressed with the Olympic Village in Berlin?

McCallister: It was lovely. It was very nice and big and spacious, They had very good food.

Hodak: What sort of things did you see in Berlin prior to the Games or during the Games? Were you impressed or taken aback by anything you saw in Berlin at the time?

McCallister: Yes, we were very much impressed with everything. From the Olympic Village we could go right into downtown by bus, which was a military bus. But we sometimes didn't even have to wait for a bus because officers, from captains on up, would be coming by and they would stop and pick up one or two of the men. And they would take you right into the middle of Berlin and let you out. Then you could go where you wanted to go. So, although I rode the bus most of the time, there were two times that I and one of the other fellows was picked up and taken into the city. On the way into the city we stopped at one of the country clubs and had a soft drink and then were taken right into town.

We all had a general idea from what other people had told us of

where the various things were in town to see and so we saw all the little things. But I didn't get to any of the big museums. But we did get downtown and we were very cordially accepted. People who knew some English would try to say something to us and sometimes we'd get lost and have to ask them. If they couldn't answer in English, they'd get someone to answer in English to tell us where to go. Everything was very friendly.

The only thing that impressed some of us was: Why were there so many airplanes flying around in the sky? Why were these big cement roads built all over? And why were there so many great, big trucks with soldiers in them wandering around? As far as we knew, the American press and no one realized there was a war in the offing. But from those things you'd think something was amiss.

Hodak: Were you able to compete in any practice sessions before the Olympics?

McCallister: Yes, just outside the Olympic Village there was a big pool and we were allotted times to practice in there but we had to make our own arrangements. If we wanted to play another team our manager would make arrangements. We played two or three of the other countries' teams in practice games. So there were full training facilities there for everybody, particularly the swimmers.

Hodak: Who was your coach on the 1936 water polo team?

McCallister: Clyde Swendsen, who had been the athletic director at the Hollywood Athletic Club, was the coach for the 1936 Olympic Games. Mr. [Frank] Rivas, from Venice, was the water polo coach for the 1932 Olympic Games. He was very close friends with and I guess had been the coach for Wally O'Connor, Daubenspeck, Finn and that bunch when they were playing as the Venice Swimming Association team.

Hodak: What was the role of the coach in the Olympics? Was it an administrative role?

McCallister: Well, they actually came to our trainings and coached us. Rivas had been a real water polo coach but Swendsen had been more a diving and swimming coach. He had been in the Olympic Games as a diver once. He was the water polo coach and knew a lot about it, but he also took a lot of advice from Wally O'Connor and those fellows who were really top men in that area.

Hodak: Water polo coaching was not particularly advanced in those days?

McCallister: That's right, except for two coaches. There was [Ernie] Brandsten from Stanford, who was the head water polo coach for one of the Olympic Games other than what we were in. And there was a star coach, [William] Bachrach, at the Illinois Athletic Club. I met him two or three times at the various meets. When I was at Stanford we went back to the Illinois Athletic Club and competed in the national water polo championships and also the national relays. Then, all those swimmers came out and swam at one of the big pools in San Francisco, Fleishacker Pool. We also played water polo there.

Hodak: Before we talk of the water polo competition in 1936, I wonder, were the Opening Ceremonies in Berlin impressive?

McCallister: Yes, they were very impressive. When they found out that they were going to host the Olympic Games there they decided to build an Olympic stadium just as we had here. They built a stadium that held 100,000, but 20,000 of them stood up the whole, entire meet. They were in queue about this size. You had a ticket for your queue. You'd come in, get in your queue and there you were. They were scattered in certain places so you could get a good view. So it held 100,000 people but only

80,000 had the room to sit down.

But it was a beautiful stadium. It was very nicely handled and there was good weather most of the time we were there. And the Opening Ceremonies were very impressive. Though, to tell you the truth, I don't exactly remember them real well.

At the 1936 Olympics there were several of the athletes that became quite famous. One of them was Kenny Carpenter, who won the discus. I've seen him a time or two in the local area, but not recently.

Hodak: What about some of the runners? Did you get to know Jesse Owens?

McCallister: No, none of us got to really know Jesse. We knew who he was and if we saw him he said hello, just like we all did.

When we went to the Olympic Games there was a big dispute about how the people were going to be accepted in the Opening Ceremonies, and all of the countries, or at least a lot of them, had decided to raise their hand in the "*Heil* Hitler" salute. But then, I think it was Brazil and ourselves who wouldn't do that. So Brazil didn't do much of anything and we, instead of doing a "*Heil* Hitler" salute, took our straw hats off and held them out to the right side and then put them back on as we went by. So through organization of the members of the team, we decided not to do the "*Heil* Hitler" salute.

Hodak: Did the German athletic officials respond to this?

McCallister: No, they didn't mind us doing it at all. Of course, they wanted it because they were making all the visiting athletes do it. They were glad to have them do that to recognize Hitler.

Hodak: Did you have much contact with high-ranking German officials.

including Hitler?

McCallister: The only one that I had any contact with was just by coincidence. [Frank] "Sharkey" Graham, who was an alternate on our team from the LAAC, had just finished two years of college in German so we knew he knew a little bit of German. So just by coincidence we were walking through the Village and [Hermann] Goering and two aides came along and we all went, "*Heil* Hitler," because that's what we were supposed to do. We thought it was Goering and he said stop, in German, so the two aides stopped. Then he said something and Sharkey talked to him in German. Goering was kind of interested in that so we talked for maybe two-and-a-half minutes. Phil Daubenspeck, who was our star forward outside of Wally, and myself were just standing there nodding while "Sharkey" was talking in German to Goering.

Hodak: You were just absorbing what you could.

McCallister: We knew nothing about it. Daubenspeck is a German name but he didn't know any German.

We did make one trip down to Frankfurt and played an exhibition game. This was after the Games, though. That was very interesting to play in another town there. Also after the Games were over, some of us played in an all-star game where an all-star team of players—I happened to be one of the players—was to play against another all-star team from countries other than the United States, and one or two other teams. And players from Hungary and Germany were all on one team. That was called the Intercontinental Games.

Hodak: Let's talk of the water polo competition itself. There was a larger number of competitors in the 1936 Games.

McCallister: There were 16 teams entered. I guess they were going to do it

regardless of how many teams there were, but it was broken down into brackets of four. Then, the brackets of four played a round-robin, where you play each other team. Then they figure out, percentage-wise, which team is going to go up to play in the next round. Out of our round-robin, Belgium was put in our bracket, which we were kind of upset about because we were seeded third in the whole thing. You see, Belgium was seeded about third in Europe out of 12 teams. So we figured that Belgium shouldn't have been in our bracket. But they were. So we defeated the other team, Uruguay, in our bracket, and Belgium beat us by one point. Then we lost to Holland.

We figured that we should have gotten another bracket. And we had played some of the other teams, like Sweden and some of those teams, and beaten them easily. We had played them in practice matches. So it was Belgium that really knocked us out. I guess Holland was favored over us anyway because they were a cracker-jack team. But if we'd have beaten Belgium, then we'd go up into another round-robin. Then they play off and the final two winners play for the finals. In those days, they weren't so interested in thirds but there was a third picked.

Hodak: Was the team a bit disappointed that you weren't able to advance to the next round of competition?

McCallister: We were disappointed. In fact, we were disappointed when we lost to Belgium because it was 2-1 or something like that.

Hodak: The score against Holland was close, too.

McCallister: Yes, it was close.

Hodak: It was unfortunate seeding, as you say.

McCallister: Well, for us it was. But I can see their viewpoint. They had to put Belgium someplace and it happened to be in our bracket.

Hodak: Did you see the final matches?

McCallister: Yes, we saw the final matches. They were nicely played. They were both strong teams. Each one of those teams had at least one or two men that had played in the Olympics before, like Rademacher.

Hodak: I believe there were two Rademachers on the 1936 team.

McCallister: Yes, there were two Rademachers on the 1936 team, [Erich and Joachim].

Hodak: And then the Hungarians stayed strong. They continually replenished their talent. Following the Games . . . you referred to some post-Olympic competition at Frankfurt?

McCallister: Yes, and the one right there that was called the Intercontinental Games. So those were the only two post-Olympic games.

Hodak: And how did you return to the United States?

McCallister: Well, the *Manhattan* was not scheduled to be in at that time so we were divided up just about half and half to two ships. We came back on the *President Roosevelt*, which was about a 22,000-ton ship, and a lot smaller than that 35,000-ton *Manhattan*. But it was a very nice ship and the only trouble was that when we got about one day out of England, we had a storm. It was a real storm. Half of the United States team that were on the ship didn't even get down to breakfast at all. I went down for breakfast; I don't know whether I ate much but I went down. There was practically no one down there. They said that the ship was just sailing at an angle that was

semi-dangerous, but not completely dangerous. In other words, if one big, extra wave had come along it could have flipped one of those ships. There were great, big waves. We asked the crew members that could speak English if it was dangerous. They said, "A little bit dangerous, yes. A bad wave could do an awful lot of trouble, but not flip us." So they just sailed like that for two or three hours before it ever had a chance to straighten out again.

Hodak: And then you landed in New York to a big reception?

McCallister: Not too much of a reception because the Olympic Games had been over eight or ten days. It takes six days to even make the trip.

When I asked them if I could go to the Olympic Games in Berlin some people that were in my medical group said I could. But they said so reluctantly because I was going to be away from work so long. Before, I had my two weeks vacation during the 1932 Games, but this time we were gone 11 weeks. You had to go to Chicago first for two or three days, then to New York for three or four days. Then it took seven or eight days on the ship going over to Berlin. And it was a little train ride down to the Olympic Village from Berlin. Then, coming back it was the same way. We were there for four weeks. Now, they ship some of the athletes over to the Olympic Games, they do their event and they bring them right back—don't they? Back then, when you went there, you were there for the whole Games. So we were there for four weeks.

Hodak: That's quite an outing for you. When you returned to Los Angeles were people rather eager to talk about the Olympics with you?

McCallister: Yes, they were eager. If they knew that you'd been in the Olympics they were very eager to do so. Of course, at the

LAAC a lot of people knew that we'd gone so they were all interested.

Hodak: Was there much publicity or media attention?

McCallister: I don't really recall too much, It wasn't like we had won something.

Hodak: So, you returned to your medical practice?

McCallister: Yes, I went right back into my medical practice and continued practicing, always in that southeast Los Angeles area: Vernon, Huntington Park, part of southeast Los Angeles, and the City of Commerce. My last seven or eight years of practice was right in the City of Commerce on Telegraph Road. I was with three different medical groups.

Hodak: Tell me a bit about your family. At what point were you married?

McCallister: I met my wife, who is seven years younger than I, when I was living at the Phi Psi House at USC in 1932, the year of the Olympic Games. She had just graduated from USC and I met her through a couple that I knew in Long Beach. I met her as a blind date. I courted her for five or six years and we were married in 1939.

In that time, my father had died but my mother was still alive and living in Long Beach. My brother was living in Long Beach and was married. My wife and I lived in Huntington Park for about ten years and then we bought and built here, in San Marino, in 1949.

Hodak: You've mentioned your various pursuits today, including table tennis in particular.

McCallister: In all the years that I had been playing water polo I had been playing in lower-class ping-pong, or table tennis as it is really called. I won my first tournament in 1919 in Long Beach at a YMCA when I was representing my Bible class. I've been associated somewhat with the Long Beach YMCA ever since. That's the meeting that I'm going to tomorrow in Long Beach. The YMCA is also tied in with the graduates from Long Beach Poly High.

Then, up until 1938 our water polo team was intact and ready to play in the 1940 Olympics. But then when the 1940 Olympics weren't played, I took up ping-pong again. I also played handball and badminton, as I described to you earlier.

Hodak: You had fully expected to compete in the 1940 Olympics, had they been held?

McCallister: That's right. That's why up until 1938 we had still been in training. In fact, I met Esther Williams at the Los Angeles Athletic Club because she was training there at the Club trying to get ready for the 1940 Olympics when they cancelled them. And that's when she went into her motion picture career. I was swimming there once and the coach said, "Do you know who that girl is over there?" And I said, "No." And she said, "Well, she's a good swimmer. She might make the Olympic Games and she might not. But she's also interested in motion pictures, her name is Esther Williams." So she and I talked for about half a minute, and that's how I met Esther Williams, (laughter)

Hodak: So, over the years have you followed the Olympics rather closely? Have you taken much of an interest in observing or seeing the progress of the Olympic Movement?

McCallister: Moderately so. In 1964 we took a tour to Japan and had planned on going to the 1964 Olympics there. But with my

schedule as a doctor I couldn't quite make it. So we were there about two months before the Olympic Games. But we had also attended the 1960 Olympics in Rome, Italy. We went from Los Angeles with a group of 22 people going to the Olympic Games. Included in that group was the mother and father of Gary Tobian, who won the high diving in the 1956 Olympics. He was in two Olympic Games. I used to play ping-pong with him. I could beat him at ping-pong—and that irked him because he was about 25 or 30 years younger than I was. He was a good ping-pong player but I was a little better than he was. Still there were two guys in the club that could beat me—that's why I had never been the club champion before. They were just better than I was. But when they left, another fellow became the champion of the club for five or six years, then I became the champion, and have been the champion off and on for the last seven years. Two years ago I lost it, then I won it back again.

Hodak: You'll have to show me a little english, or a little trick you might have after the interview.

McCallister: As far as my ping-pong is concerned, I try to slice them. My game is primarily a consistent, moderate drive without a hard drive, a percentage game. I can get them and I'm agile enough to get them, even in my old age. Guys that you'd think would murder me, I'll beat them out in a match. But then when I get to play the good fellows . . . like down here they have a good place to play ping-pong in Alhambra, 25 or 30 of the best ping-pong players in Southern California play there at least once or twice a week. Well, put me in with any of those guys and I wouldn't get over five or six points. They are just that much better.

Hodak: There's a lot of competition out there in any sport.

McCallister: I'll show you a couple of the trophies that I have won.

Hodak: Were you involved in promoting the 1984 Olympics? Were you involved in the activities of the Spirit Team?

McCallister: I was on the boxing venue with Danny Villanueva, he was the head of it. Having been an Olympic water polo player I thought that all I had to do was apply to them and I would be accepted on the water polo group of workers. So I sent it in, but five or six other water polo players and swimmers had already applied for those positions. I thought there wouldn't be anything like that at all. So I applied for boxing because I had been on the boxing team at Stanford and had also been a doctor for the Golden Gloves competition in Southern California. So I was well-versed in boxing. I applied for the boxing event. Danny Villanueva didn't pick the groups, but when he found out who I was and that I had been in two Olympic Games and was an older man—older than anybody else—he thought that was great to have me in his group. So we had to go for several meetings to get accustomed to the whole setup. Then I worked every day of the Olympic Games except one day when I tried to go to see one of the water polo games and couldn't get in because I was too late for the tickets.

So whenever we would have a joint meeting of all of the group, and there were about 54 in the group that worked on the boxing, he would always introduce me as a past Olympian and not only that, but that I was the oldest man in the group. Of course, I was just over 80 years old at the time.

To get back to the Olympic Games in Rome in 1960, we had good tickets for that and it was put on very spectacularly. Of course, it's a very busy place. The traffic is awful and when we left our nice hotel and went to the Olympic Games we didn't know whether we'd even get back again.

But those Games were marvelous. And of course, it was nice to be with Gary Tobian's family. Sammy Lee was in those

Games and I had known him a little bit at the LAAC. He dove for the LAAC for a while. It's a terrifically big city and very busy, but we enjoyed it very much there. I introduced myself to Bob Mathias and we, each being Stanford graduates, hit it off real well.

Hodak: What are your thoughts on the 1984 Games in Los Angeles?

McCallister: Of course, they were out of this world, as such. I had an opportunity to go to the Opening Ceremonies but I had to work in the morning at the boxing venue that day. I would have gotten off at about two o'clock and tried to get over there. All the Olympians that had won an Olympic medal were taken as guests by the ARCO people to the Closing Ceremonies. So they put us right up in the \$100 seats, or whatever they were. They weren't that much but they were very expensive. So my wife and I went with a whole group.

Hodak: What do you think when you see water polo played today? What comparisons come to mind?

McCallister: Well, the speed and dexterity of it is very outstanding. The fellows are bigger. Our fellows were pretty big . . . but like the Czechoslovakians had two or three guys who were six-four or six-five and were fabulous players. Our team wasn't exactly small, they were big. But the new style of play, when I saw it played—this was mainly at a match between USC and Stanford up at Stanford about five years ago—you could see the movements that they made and the training that they had to have to get around as much as they did. They'd all rush down at the same time. It's a very spectacular game and, as I say, it's harder to play than what we played.

Hodak: When you think back on your various athletic pursuits and your Olympic competition, is this something you think fondly back on? Are there any lessons learned, any values that you would

attribute to athletic competition?

McCallister: Oh, yes. All of us were good athletes, naturally, and all of us were in fairly good condition when we started training for this. But then, I think, just like any good athlete, if he's going to try to make a team You see, I wasn't on any team in 1929 when I started playing with the Pacific Coast Club; all we had was a pretty good team, although a lot of them did become the team at USC later. We played other teams around but there was no complete organization. So it wasn't until we made this team conjunction where we all went together to make one good team out of the four teams . . . then that really did spirit you up. Everybody started training harder, although we didn't train like they do now. We trained once a day and we trained for about two hours. Now it's twice a day at least an hour and a half to three hours each training. We didn't train like that. Maybe we'd have lost interest or maybe we'd have gotten more interested.

Remember, we were competing against other good players just to get on the team. For example. Duke Kahanamoku tried out for the team. One of the articles in one of the books down at the Los Angeles Public Library says he was a substitute on our team. Well, he really wasn't. He was kind of an advisor or consultant, but he never really played on our team. I had played against him when he played at the LAAC and I played at Stanford, just like I played against Wally O'Connor and Daubenspeck and all those fellows while I was at Stanford, as I said.

Hodak: Are you impressed by the strides made in the organization of sports in general?

McCallister: Very much so. Then, things were kind of haphazard. We were brought south once to play as a water polo team against Venice and LAAC. They just put us on a train, brought us

down, we played and they took us back. But it was very interesting even to do that. Then they took us back to Chicago once to play . And those teams came out here to play at Fleishacker Pool in San Francisco. It was the pool out by the ocean. The pool was 1000 feet long. It isn't there now.

Hodak: What would you offer in the way of advice. Certainly having been an athlete, an Olympian and a doctor, you're in a good position to offer advice to athletes and others. What sort of things would you suggest?

McCallister: To participate in as many things as you possibly can. As I said, at Long Beach I was the high school yell leader, and at Stanford I was the head yell leader. That exposes you to people and crowds. I was the president of my Rotary Club. When I came back from the 1960 Games I gave them a half-hour talk on the 1960 Olympic Games. So they gave me a nice plaque showing that I had been their speaker for the day. Although I don't really enjoy public speaking, I get nervous, I think you've got to participate in all those things so as to even be able to do them at all. If you can't do them at all then you're at a loss. I'm also a member of the City of San Marino Club and the Old-Timers Club. I've been a member of the Old-Timers Club of Southern California for over 30 years. I became eligible for that club because of my handball competition for the LAAC.

So the main thing is to participate in everything. That's what I did. I participated in swimming at the lake in Madison, South Dakota. I swam all the time in the ocean. I lifeguarded on the beach at Long Beach for three years during my summer sessions while I was in med school. That's an experience, to lifeguard at one of those big breaker places. They didn't have the big breakers as they do now, but they had seven- and eight-foot breakers sometimes. Then, to compete and join in all the activities. So wherever I was and somebody was doing

something, I was doing it with them.

Hodak: Is there anything further you'd like to add, anything you'd like to say about the Olympic Movement?

McCallister: Of course, the Olympic Movement has increased so spectacularly the Russians came in, and are possibly coming back again. Are they coming back for 1988?

Hodak: Yes, they'll be in Korea.

McCallister: Well, that's good. As for further advice, I think it's also important to belong to a good club. The LAAC is a big club, and it has lots of meetings. It participates in any Olympic event that you can have in Los Angeles because it's so big and it's had so many Olympic athletes. They don't have many Olympic athletes now but, according to the books and people I know, at one time in the women's high diving in the Olympic Games that the Los Angeles Athletic Club took first, second and third. (laughter) But now they don't have any competitive sports like that at all, against other people or other teams. They used to have track teams, basketball teams, swimming teams, everything.

Hodak: The role of the large clubs in each big city has changed altogether. There are other clubs and organizations that are now involved.

Well, Dr. McCallister, I appreciate your cooperation on our project.

McCallister: And I certainly have appreciated it.

Hodak: It has been a pleasure and a privilege to have met you and I thank you, as does the Amateur Athletic Foundation.