

The article we are publishing in the following pages has been sent to us by Mr. Sven EKSTROM.

Born on 24th August, 1914, Sven EKSTROM has been a sports reporter on several daily papers since 1935 and now works for the Swedish newspaper "Aftonbladet".

Always interested in the Olympic Movement, Mr. Sven EKSTROM has attended all the Games since those of Berlin in 1936, only missing one, those of Mexico.

At the time of the Berlin Games, he published a book: "A Journalist at the XIth Olympiad".

His first meeting with Mr. Avery BRUNDAGE goes back to 1947 and was held in the La Salle Hotel in Chicago.

Mr. Sven EKSTROM has been Vice-President of the Association Internationale de la Presse Sportive, President of the Swedish Journalists' Association, of which he is now an honorary member, and President of the Göteborg Press Club.

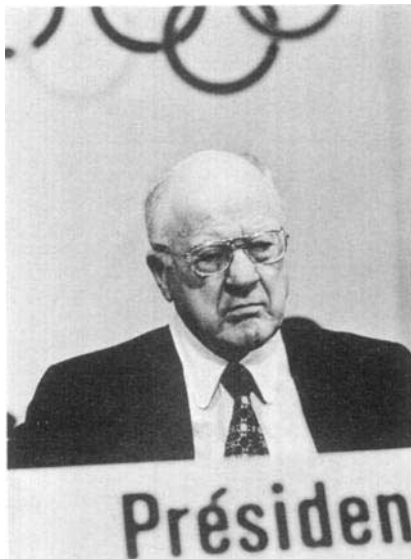
Now over to Mr. EKSTROM:

*M. Sven EKSTRÖM*



# IN DEFENCE OF AVERY BRUNDAGE

by sven ekström



Will the public opinion of Avery BRUNDAGE gradually change, once this tough-skinned defender of the antiquated doctrine of amateurism has retired?

The question is an interesting one and it is not unlikely that the answer may be yes. It is common knowledge that nobody is praised as much in his leftime as after his death, something that in the case of BRUNDAGE should not be interpreted in bodily form but from the viewpoint that remarkable changes in the evaluation of persons holding public positions often occur when they leave the limelight of their life's work and are put into the shades.

I am almost certain of one thing - Avery BRUNDAGE's undeniable qualities will be much more accentuated once the testimony of his work is to be formulated, even by those who are the most fierce opponents of his amateur ideology today.

A provocative question: wouldn't it be possible to show also today's Avery BRUNDAGE a little more appreciation and understanding than is the case? Or at any event, wouldn't it be possible to avoid suspecting, mocking and belying this man of honest ambitions, particularly in a case like the gruesome Karl SCHRANZ affair at Sapporo?

One of those unsuspecting judgements based on poor knowledge of the IOC President's character was formulated as follows by a newspaper commentator: "Karl SCHRANZ was sacrificed for the prestige of the supergod Avery BRUNDAGE."

BRUNDAGE has never felt any need to look after his personal prestige. If so, he would not have gone against the opinion of the public so often and taken the responsibility for unpopular measures.

He may be criticised for his lack of "sense of evolution" and because he sometimes appears with blinkers (e.g. as regards the "amateurism" of the Eastern countries), but there

is nothing blameworthy to say about his statements of sympathy for the altruism and idealism of athletics nor about his opinion that rules should be respected.

#### This is how he was elected

BRUNDAGE demonstrated his disinterest in personal popularity already at the time when he was "only" President of the Olympic Committee of the United States. BRUNDAGE was the one who had to take the official responsibility for the sensational disqualifications (in 1928 and 1932) of the swimmer Eleanor HOLM - the "champagne queen" who had rather too many bottles uncorked during the passage to Amsterdam of the American Olympic team - and the baseball star Mildred DIDRIKSON. The same was the case with the declaration of Jesse OWENS' professionalism. In all cases the action taken was based on decisions by the Executive, but the responsibility fell on BRUNDAGE and he took it without hesitation.

The Sapporo comments in the Swedish papers were repeatedly naming BRUNDAGE the "self-appointed Olympic God."

God may be one thing - but why "self-appointed"? Avery BRUNDAGE was elected IOC President at the IOC Congress in Helsinki in July, 1952 by a regular parliamentary procedure. The only other candidate was the British Marquess of EXETER, supported by, among others, Prince AXEL of Denmark and the Soviet delegate ANDRIANOV. He was defeated by 30 votes against 17.

One detail in this context: the IOC Executive Committee had sent out a circular letter prior to the election in which the acting President, the Swede EDSTROM, pointed out that "it was desirable to elect a President who had a private fortune and could sacrifice all the time his assignment required."

This sentence gave rise to strong and naturally justified criticism from the other IOC members and the Congress deleted it from the text. Instead it was simply stressed that athletic qualities would be decisive at the election.

#### What became of the ski leaders' threats?

If the IOC President is given the right to fight for his convictions (and for the rules which he has to guard), his "ideological" opponents should naturally also have the same right to say what they consider right and proper.

But it is rather surprising to see the reaction among some anti-BRUNDAGE sports organisers with acknowledged international reputation. Already two years ago, the leaders of the International Ski Federation began to show their hostility and threatened to eliminate skiing from the Olympic Games programme, if BRUNDAGE undertook some actions against the alpine professional stars and refused to accept the FIS liberalism as regards contributions.

Nils STENBERG said he found "Avery BRUNDAGE's amateur rules be a breach against the human rights" and Sigge BERGMAN described the 83 year old IOC chief with his acknowledged sharp intellect as "suffering from arteriosclerosis". As late as a few weeks before the Olympic Games at Sapporo, the threat of a ski boycott was still put forward by FIS leaders, but what happened? Not even the Austrians for their part dared take the announced intention of the International Ski Executive seriously and turn their back on the Olympic Games, if SCHRANZ was disqualified.

Later the Swedish paper "Idrottsbladet" gave the following explanation to this subdued attitude: "It is mainly in consideration of tourism that the Austrians must participate and be seen at Sapporo. This is where much money is and this is why the vexation over SCHRANZ' disqualification must be swallowed."

Avery BRUNDAGE is not wrong when he pictures a chaotic future to the Olympic Games in case selfish publicity and capital interests are permitted to play freely in this field.

#### The Wall Street crash made him bankrupt

Not much is know about Avery BRUNDAGE as a private person, not even in the athletics world.

The label he mostly gets - except the "noms de guerre" which he has received in the athletic world - is "the multi-millionnaire BRUNDAGE". It seems that his critics want to imply something negative here - the man who can afford to pay for his costly international job himself, who can afford to make athletics an exclusive hobby and who denies others the right to put materialistic aspects on this hobby.

Avery BRUNDAGE has made his money in the construction field and as a hotel owner - but it is wrong to believe that his business career is simply a tale of a lucky chevalier

coining money. During the Wall Street crash in 1929-30, constructor BRUNDAGE lost the fortune he had labouriously scraped together, but the banks' confidence in the determined and industrious young man was so great that he could borrow the money he needed to get his company started again.

Avery BRUNDAGE was born in Detroit on 28th September, 1887 but moved to Chicago with his parents as a young boy. Already at school appeared the qualities upon which he has built his remarkable career: independence in mind and in action, energy, self-discipline and a strong will.

It is characteristic of his quick mind and the versatility of his hobbies that in addition to his engineering and architecture studies, he devoted time to economy, philosophy and psychology, and also developed a literary talent which led to the first prize at the age of 14 in a short story contest arranged by the Hearst press and later to a job as editor of the literary monthly of the University of Illinois.

Avery BRUNDAGE was not more than 28 years old when he started his own business, a building company in Chicago called Avery Brundage Company. In the following years, he participated in creating a dominating profile for the million-peopled metropolis on Lake Michigan. He built sky-scrapers, department stores, hotels, factories and bridges.

#### His hobby - Oriental Art

On the basis of his increasing fortune, Avery BRUNDAGE gradually made himself another "career": that of the international art collector.

Before giving the major part of his collection to Memorial Museum in San Francisco, he owned one of the world's greatest and most precious collections of Oriental art, mainly Chinese, which he had acquired during his many travels around the world.

In 1941, BRUNDAGE had a "summer house" built at Santa Barbara, California, a magnificent hacienda-style villa. He brought part of his collections from the two homes in Chicago to that house.

In the autumn of 1964, shortly before the Olympic Games started in Tokyo, the summer house burned down and only around sixty of the thousand irreplaceable objects could be saved.

This was a hard blow for the art lover BRUNDAGE, but two years later (he had in the meantime built a new villa at Santa Barbara), when he decided to donate his collection to the San Francisco Museum, there were still 6,000 objects there. These can now be admired in an annexe to the Memorial Museum, "The Avery Brundage Wing", and their value reportedly amounts to around 50 million dollars.

Many acquaintances - few friends

The whole world knows the sports leader Avery BRUNDAGE and his acquaintances are innumerable. However, behind the public facade he is said to be a lonely man with few personal friends. That is possible. He is reserved by nature, gives a rather cool impression, something that makes nobody approach him without a reason. Still, it has also been said that in the company of a few people, he is pleasant, open-hearted, good-natured and even humorous. One can believe that as well.

For 42 years he was happily married to Elizabeth DUNLOP-BRUNDAGE who may not have shared all her remarkable husband's sports interests but so much more his artistic ones. Mrs. BRUNDAGE, who died in June, 1971, was above all a music lover and as a pianist, her skill was almost professional.

S. E.

