

## The archives of

Avery Brundage



A catalogue of the Olympic documents left by President Avery Brundage was issued in 1977, under the signature of Maynard Brichford and published by Karl Hofmann Schorn-dorf (Cologne, FRG).

All these documents have been put on micro-film. Mr. Willi Daume, IOC member in the Federal Republic of Germany and president of the Organising Committee of the XIth Olympic Congress, presented a set of these microfilms to the IOC on the occasion of the meeting of the Tripartite Commission at Baden-Baden on 23rd January 1981. The President of the IOC, Mr. Juan Antonio Samaranch, warmly thanked Mr. Willi Daume and the German National Olympic Committee for their gesture.

These Avery Brundage archives have a history, and I now feel it is appropriate to summarise this here.

At the end of the Varna Congress, Avery Brundage sent a message to the Chateau de Vidy asking me to call him as soon as I returned. On the telephone, he explained to me that he wanted to meet me to talk about his archives, which were in Chicago. I immediately referred the matter to Lord Killanin since, straight away, it seemed that a basic question ought to be asked. These were obviously Olympic and sports archives. These documents, whatever they were, (with the exception of those of a strictly private nature) belonged, in my opinion, to the IOC.

Lord Killanin, had the same feeling, and instructed me to do all I could to find out what the archives contained and to get Avery Brundage to agree to having them brought back to IOC headquarters. Lord Killanin added: "Apart from the fact that the IOC has an undeniable right to recover these documents, there is another aspect. My predecessor very probably retains letters, reports, and such like which are of a confidential nature. They were addressed to him not as Avery Brundage, but as President of the IOC. If these documents fell into outside hands, the principle of the secrecy of private correspon-

dence could be infringed. Here is a matter in dispute which has worried me ever since I took charge as President."

"I shall write an official letter to Avery Brundage claiming the return of the Olympic archives he holds."

I consequently made an appointment with Avery Brundage, confirming to him by letter that I was particularly pleased to meet him on this subject since Lord Killanin felt that it was a problem which needed solving urgently.

Divergent views soon appeared.

Avery Brundage thought that he had complete and valuable archives spreading over the entire eras of his Olympic activities, that is from his first international athletics competitions in 1907 up to 1972. He considered that the archives in their entirety were his property, and his alone. Despite my arguments with him, both in conversation and in writing he remained unshakeable. I hoped that the firm demands of Lord Killanin would meet with more success than my attempts had. We soon had to face the fact: Avery Brundage would not change his mind.

What the former IOC President wanted was to provide for a foundation which would bear his name and among other things inherit all his archives. Strangely enough, he did not want it to be based in Chicago. He hesitated between Barcelona, Cologne, Munich and Paris...

Even more unexpected, this man near the end of a long and extraordinary existence during which, among other exploits, he had made, lost and re-made his fortune several times over, was still rich, extremely rich. Yet he refused to devote any of his personal wealth to the establishment of this foundation which was so close to his heart.

Of this I have my explanation : Legitimately Avery Brundage took pride in his Olympic achievements. The whole world in this field owed him something. At the very least an or-

ganisation, whether official or private, should therefore take over the material effort and all the expenditure arising from the honour of housing and running the Avery Brundage foundation.

To my surprise and, I should add, to my concern, the former President of the IOC wanted me to undertake not only the filing of all his archives, but also the future Avery Brundage foundation. My first task was to approach possible towns and patrons... and then to organise the new institution. Yet all this was to be carried out in complete independence of the IOC, to which I belonged.

First step – go to Chicago. Avery Brundage explained : “Frederick (Fritz) Ruegsegger (personal assistant to Avery Brundage in all his professional and Olympic affairs) has already received all the necessary instructions. He is waiting for you at the La Salle Hotel in Chicago. You may bring with you anyone you feel useful since it will not be a small task. My faithful Louise Waterman and Mrs. Ashmore will help you. Fritz also of course. It will take at least a month.”

With Lord Killanin’s agreement, I arrived in Chicago on 26th July 1974 after various episodes of which I will spare you the details. A monumental, crushing task was ahead of me.

I spent my entire summer holidays plus one week locked in the air-conditioned premises of the now defunct La Salle Hotel. In Suite 1825 and its annexes were stored phenomenal quantities of mobile and fixed cabinets, wooden and metal containers, bags of all types and materials, souvenirs, books and files. It was an Ali Baba’s cave of archives and dust.

And that was how I listed, then catalogued item by item, all the documents – I repeat, ALL THE DOCUMENTS – which are included in the work entitled the “*Avery Brundage collection*” and in the microfilms presented to the IOC by Mr. Willi Daume.

Spending the whole of each day clearing and filing, I took written notes, assisted by Judy Davis, on the references and contents of each file.

To be more sure I took photocopies every day.

When I emerged from my retreat at the La Salle Hotel, I had made the inventory and catalogue of everything that was in the premises. Were there any more boxes, any other documents ? Naturally, I asked Avery Brun-

dage the same question not once, but ten times. He assured me that there were not.

When Lord Killanin saw the results of my trip, he wrote again to Avery Brundage asking him for the return of these archives to the headquarters of the IOC. No answer.

I do not want to go into details here regarding the painful negotiations which ensued. Suffice it to say that one after another the towns or institutions which had put themselves forward or had been considered by Avery Brundage had to withdraw. I must say that their reasons for doing so were valid ones. Indeed, Avery Brundage’s ideas about the foundation had changed. At least Lord Killanin had obtained that the archives be kept where they were -they remained locked up at the La Salle Hotel. No outsider had access to them.

What a setback when at the last meeting I had with Avery Brundage I suddenly heard : “I have just decided to bequeath my archives to the University of Illinois.” I could do no more than remind him that the archives belonged to the IOC. He smiled, but said nothing. That was the way he was. He had his certainties. His will took precedence. He turned the conversation to the subject of a television broadcast that I had arranged for him. He had just enough time to record the broadcast before he died. Incidentally, he came over remarkably well in it.

Lord Killanin wrote to the University of Illinois on behalf of the International Olympic Committee stating that it claimed full ownership and exclusive rights to use Avery Brundage’s Olympic archives.

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