

# MEMBERS FORUM

---

painstaking research regards the early Games. Volume 6 (in a series of seven) has just been published and deals with the 1912 Stockholm Games. Mallon got for this volume more than considerable help from Ture Widlund, also well-known to readers of the Journal of Olympic History.

One day I hope to find the time to compare in detail what Kluge did for 1912, compared to Mallon/Widlund's book, but a hasty comparison made clear that these works are complementary. We need both.

Highlight for me in Mallon/Widlund's book was the 16-page chapter 'In the Matter of Jacobus Franciscus Thorpe'. It gives the full story of this infamous case with a lot of new material, anyway with many things I did not know. I was also surprised to learn that the team of Russia contained only a few native Russians.

This is not the place to mention all the particulars I found. Each branch of sport gets full attention with all the results and an almost exhaustive list of notes. In the end all competitors are mentioned with their dates of birth and death. And there is a very handy index which is too often lacking in reference books.

What a work it must have been! I take off the hat I never wear for the authors.

## **ADVERTISEMENT:**

Dr. John A. Lucas, Professor Emeritus at the Pennsylvania State University, has been re-appointed the "Official Lecturer of the International Olympic Committee" by IOC President Jacques Rogge.

Dr. Lucas would be pleased to visit your community or campus for several lectures.

There is no honoraria required and absolutely no expenses, except one night's lodging.

Dr. Lucas lives at 645 Berkshire Drive, State College, PA 16803.

Telephone: (1)-814-238-3623;

Fax: (1)-814-863-7360 or 814-865-1275.

## **OBITUARIES**

### **DICK SCHAAP**

ISOH Member Dick Schaap died in New York on 21 December 2001 after a lengthy illness, caused by complications from surgery. A former college lacrosse player at Cornell, he was one of the best-known sports reporters and broadcasters in the United States. During his career he wrote over 30 books, many of them best sellers. His Olympic involvement began with the publication of his book, *An Illustrated History of the Olympics*, which went through several editions. He later edited the 1984 United States Olympic Committee Official Report, and also wrote biographies of several U.S. Olympians, among them Bob Beamon and Tom Waddell. His most recent book was his autobiography, *Flashing Before My Eyes: 50 Years of Headlines, Deadlines, and Punchlines*. For the past decade, Schaap was seen frequently as host of the Sunday morning show, *The Sports Reporters*, on ESPN Television. A life-long New Yorker, Schaap was also a theatre critic and claimed to be the only person to vote for both the Heisman Trophy and the Tony Awards. He is survived by his wife, Trish, and six children, among them Jeremy, also a sports broadcaster and ISOH Member. Our condolences go out to Jeremy and his family. Dick's famed weekly table at Rao's Italian Restaurant in New York now sits empty.

### **PHILOMENA 'BONNIE' JOHNSTON (nee MEALING) 1912-2002**

By KEVIN BERRY\*

Champion swimmer, Philomena "Bonnie" Mealing, the last surviving medallist of the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic team, passed away on New Year's Day. She was one of a few select Australian women swimmers who won an Olympic medal in the pre-World War II era.

Born on 28th August 1912, Mealing was chosen to compete at the Amsterdam Olympics of 1928. She was one of only four women to be selected in that

# MEMBERS FORUM

---

team, the others being Edie Robinson (athletics), Edna Davy, Dorothy Thompson and Bonnie, all from swimming. At the time, she had had less than a year's experience in top-class swimming.

The team sailed from Sydney on the RMS Naldera and they had more than six weeks at sea with very little opportunity to train. It is reported that Bonnie put on weight during the long sea voyage to Europe and suffered from homesickness at the Games. However she finished third in her heat of the 100m freestyle and fourth in her heat of the 100m backstroke. Following the Amsterdam Games she abandoned freestyle swimming.

Bonnie Mealing broke the world record for 100m backstroke in February 1930 with a time of 1 min 20.6 sec. This accomplishment should have earned her a spot on the team for the inaugural Empire Games held in Hamilton, Canada, that year but what was considered as a blatant case of sexism, the selectors only chose two male swimmers to attend those Games.

By the time the Los Angeles Olympics came around in 1932, the controversial American swimmer, Eleanor Holm, had emerged as the leading backstroke swimmer in the world. Holm went on to win the 100m event in L.A. but Mealing took out the silver, one of only 5 medals won by Australia at those Games. The other medallists were Dunc Gray (cycling), Bobby Pearce (rowing) and Clare Dennis (swimming) who all won gold, and wrestler Eddie Scarf who won bronze.

Legendary Olympian and one of Australia's greatest all-round sportsmen, Reginald "Snowy" Baker, writing in a leading sports paper of the day, described Mealing's style as being the "effortless backstroke". "Never have the critics seen a swimmer with perfect balance, cleaner leg work or more scientific arm action, both in drive and recovery."

Mealing set another world mark, this time for the 200m distance, in 1933 but dropped out of swimming shortly afterwards. Had she continued she would have probably been crowned the Empire

champion at the London Games held in 1934.

During the Sydney Olympics, Bonnie paid a visit to the Olympians Reunion Centre at Customs House and had a great time chatting to her many swimming friends, both past and present.

Bonnie is survived by her son, Fraser, daughter, Denise and several grandchildren and great grandchildren.

\* (Kevin Berry is an Olympic historian and won a gold medal at the Tokyo Games in 1964).

## **JACK SHEA, 1932 SPEED SKATING CHAMPION**

By Steve Harris

Jack Shea, the 1932 two-time Olympic speed-skating champion who declined a chance to compete in the 1936 Games in Germany for political reasons, was tragically killed in a car accident in January. Shea, who won gold medals in the 500-meter and 1500-meter races at the Lake Placid Winter Games, was 91. His grandson, Jim Shea, Jr., competed in the Salt Lake Winter Games as a member of the U. S. Skeleton Team. And Shea's son, Jim, Sr., was on the U. S. Nordic ski team at the 1964 Winter Games in Innsbruck.

An alleged drunk driver slammed into Shea's car head-on in Saranac Lake, New York. Shea had been planning a trip to Utah to watch his grandson compete when he was killed.

In 1932, Shea, who took the Olympic oath on behalf of all the athletes, captured a pair of gold medals in two controversial races. In the first, the 500, one of the favorites withdrew in protest when it was learned there were to be actual races with a half-dozen skaters facing off in each of the heats. Clas Thunberg of Finland, an Olympic champion and world-record holder, wanted to race against the clock. Instead, when he was told the race would be run under North American Rules, Thunberg angrily dropped out of the competition. In the second race, the 1500, officials stopped the event in the middle,

# MEMBERS FORUM

oddly claiming that the competitors were loafing around the track. In the rerun, Shea took the gold when the leader Herb Taylor, his teammate, lost his balance and plunged into a snow bank.

Shea was only 25 and in the athletic prime of his life, when the Winter Games were scheduled for Garmisch-Partenkirchen. But he stunned the racing world, especially the U. S. Olympic Team, when he refused to go to Germany. As he told a newspaper reporter, "I knew what was going on in Germany and I didn't like it. And I didn't compete again because in those days, 25 or 26 years of age, was over the hill, and I had four kids then."

Born in Lake Placid on 7 September 1910, Shea was a graduate of Dartmouth College. His father was a local politician and New York State assemblyman. After the Olympics, Shea served the Lake Placid area as a postal carrier, ran a family-owned gourmet food market and was golf secretary of the Lake Placid Country Club. He was actively involved in bringing the Winter Games back at Lake Placid in 1980, as vice chairman of the Olympic Regional Development Authority for the State of New York.

With his grandson about to compete at Salt Lake, the former champion carried the Olympic torch through the streets of Lake Placid where seventy years earlier he had won his two gold medals. Three weeks later he was killed on the snow-covered roads near his hometown.

## **ADHEMAR FERREIRA DE SILVA**

By Gesta de Melo

The only South American athlete to win two Olympic gold medals, the Brazilian Adhemar Ferreira da Silva is considered one of the 100 most important track and field athletes of the twentieth century. Da Silva was born on September 29, 1927 in São Paulo, and passed away in the same city on January 12, 2001. He was one of the most popular Brazilian personalities abroad, and died at age 73, after being hospitalized for five days with lung problems.

Adhemar started practicing athletics during the nineteen forties. He was helped by the German coach Dietrich Gerner, who had developed a new jumping style based in equilibrium. In the nineteen fifties, he became an Olympic Champion twice, in Helsinki in 1952 and in Melbourne in 1956, and three times a Pan American Champion, in Buenos Aires in 1951, in Mexico-City in 1955 and in Chicago in 1959.

Da Silva established five world records: on December 3, 1950, in São Paulo during the São Paulo State Championships, he leaped 16.00 metres and equaled the mark of the Japanese jumper Naoto Tajima, who had ruled the triplejump in 1936 and whose record had stood from the same year. In Rio de Janeiro, during the Brazilian Trophy, Da Silva jumped 16.01 metres. On July 23, 1952, in Helsinki, during the Olympic Games, he bettered the record twice; first with a jump of 16.12 metres, and later with a mark of 16.22 metres.

Finally, on March 16, 1955, in Mexico-City, during the Pan American Games, he floated to a mark of 16.56 metres.

After he stopped competing in 1960, Adhemar worked as a journalist and diplomat. He was the Brazilian Cultural Attaché in Nigeria, the native country of his ancestors. He also participated as an actor in the movie "Orfeu Negro", directed by the Frenchman Michel Camus. This movie won the Palme d'Or in 1959 at the Cannes Film Festival.

Da Silva graduated in Law, Journalism, Arts and Physical, Education. He was able to speak fluently Portuguese, Spanish, Italian and English and he could communicate in some other languages too.

During the nineteen seventies, he started working in sports projects, dealing with improvements on the social level of poor athletes. In his last commitment, he worked in the Amazonas Government Program of the Manaus Olympic Village, which is considered by the International Association of Athletic Federations [IAAF] to be the most important "High Level Training Center for Track and Field" in South America.

## MEMBERS FORUM

---

He was still Foreign Affairs Director of the Brazilian Athletics Federation and Member of the Athletes' Commission of the Sports and Tourism Ministry of Brazil.

In 2000, Adhemar was decorated with the Olympic Order in silver, a title granted to him by the International Olympic Committee.

During his mourning, held at the São Paulo State Congress Hall, several authorities and sports idols were present. Messages regretting his death were received by his daughter Aydel and his grandson Diego Ferreira da Silva, from all over the world.