

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

***Australia and the Olympic Games.*** by Harry Gordon. St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1994. Reviewed by Ian Buchanan.

From the day in December 1889 when Leonard Cuff of New Zealand first met Australian Richard Coombes in Dunedin, through to Sydney's successful bid to host the 2000 Olympic Games, this splendid book tells the full story of Australia and Olympism. Harry Gordon was the editor of the *Melbourne Sun* for five years and relates the vast amount of original material he has uncovered in an entertaining and readable style. Notable among his discoveries are the diaries of Edwin Flack, which give some interesting sidelights into the 1896 Games and also reveal that when Australia was first officially represented at an IOC Meeting (17th IOC Session in Paris in June 1914) Flack was a member of the delegation.

The mysterious death of IOC member David McKenzie, of whom, I confess I knew very little, is fully explored and on the lighter side, the story of a "con-man" posing as Lord Aberdare relieving IOC Members of a considerable amount of cash after an IOC meeting in Melbourne makes entertaining reading. The skillful placement of such "stories" within the more academic work shows clearly why Harry Gordon reached the top of the journalistic profession.

Historians will find much of interest, not least the well documented saga of the "on-off" relationship between Australia and New Zealand as they sought collective - and then separate - recognition from the IOC.

Entertaining, of historic value, and profusely illustrated, one can only hope that other countries with a long Olympic history will be inspired to produce a similar work.

***Coubertin's Olympics: How the Games Began.*** by Davida Kristy. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 1995. 128 pages. English language. ISBN 0-8225-3327-8. No price given. Publisher's address: 241 First Avenue, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401. Reviewed by Bill Mallon.

This is an unusual book on the Olympics. I had not previously known of the author, but the jacket bio mentions that she is the author of several children's books and the co-owner of a children's bookstore. She is an avid philatelist and became interested in Pierre de Coubertin after seeing his image on many postage stamps. The book is obviously intended as a children's introduction to the Olympic Games and to Pierre de Coubertin.

The unusual aspect of this book is that I have never before seen a children's book which was footnoted! This 128 page book contains 54 footnotes and Kristy has obviously become an avid student of the Olympic Movement. Her sources and her footnotes are excellent. One could quibble that the bulk of her footnotes deal with the yet-to-be-published First Century Project on the 100-year history of the Olympic Games. Having dealt with that group myself, as has Ian Buchanan, we have know well of the depth of the research performed

by that project. Thus, although Ms. Kristy's footnote references to that project can not be checked at this time, I would suspect they will turn out to be reliable sources.

The book contains 14 well-planned and obviously well thought out chapters. Kristy begins with the Ancient Olympics and then discusses the interregnum and several attempts at revival of the Olympics, before exploring the life of Pierre de Coubertin in depth. The book is profusely illustrated with a number of photos of Coubertin which were new to me. In addition, throughout the text, various "sidebar" pieces of interest are included. These added to the interest, and my enjoyment, of this book. Some of these dealt with the German Turners, Amateurism, the IOC, and Women in the Olympics.

I would highly recommend this book as an excellent introductory text to the Olympics. Although it is intended for children, I would think it is better for an older child - either early teens or just before that. Despite its excellent references and research, the book does not become pedantic. It is wonderful that Kristy has been able to combine her specific aim as a children's text along with excellent research. She should be commended for this.