

# FOND MEMORIES OF AVERY BRUNDAGE

BY C. ROBERT "BOB" PAUL, JR.

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**A**mong my fond memories of "Life in The Olympic Movement" are the kindnesses of Avery Brundage, International Olympic Committee President from 1952-1972.

Previously, Brundage had been President of the Amateur Athletic Union and the United States Olympic Committee.

How well I recall a stormy afternoon when Brundage came for his first visit to AAU House on New York's West 58th Street. He asked the receptionist if Mr. Dan Ferris, long-time AAU Secretary, was "in". He didn't seem bothered when the receptionist said Ferris had retired earlier in the year.

At that point I happened by the front desk and recognized Brundage. I introduced myself and asked if I could be of service. Cautiously, I said the new AAU Executive, Col. Don Hull was in and would like to see him. It appeared that Brundage was well-known in most of the world's major cities, but New York.

Leading up to the 1964 Tokyo Olympics one of the "hot" discussion topics was the ban against South African athletes because of the nation's apartheid policies. One day New York Times Sports Columnist, Arthur Daley called to see if I knew anything new on the ban.

"Arthur," I replied, "I read the same stories you read. Why not call this phone number in Chicago? It's Avery Brundage. If he is in Chicago he will answer his own phone."

"Will he know who I am?" replied Daley.

"Of course he will. He probably has read your authoritative book on the Olympics."

The next day, Daley's column was replete with new information on the ban. It was a fresh approach to a nagging problem that would continue for another 25 years. The columnist was kind enough to phone that day to thank me for the tip, saying "Why didn't I think of doing that?"

Usually when Mrs. Monique Berlioux would come to New York on business, Mr. Brundage would phone me to make reservations for her at the Waldorf Astoria and to instruct the hotel to send him the bill. Several times Mr. Brundage asked me to meet her at the airport and escort her to the hotel. The perfect gentleman!

**B**y 1968 I was the press chief for the United States Olympic Committee leading up to the Mexico City Olympics. We had "struck a deal" with the Mexican Organizing Committee to secure complimentary tickets for spouses of the American Sportwriters. It would be the first time that most writers would be taking their spouses to the Games.

You can imagine my consternation to learn 48 hours before the Opening Ceremony that the organizers had reneged on their kind offer.

Fearlessly, I called Mr. Brundage in his office in the headquarters hotel. Again he answered his own phone and said calmly, "Stay where you are for the next thirty minutes."

He was as good as his word. Before half an hour had elapsed he called. "Everything is set. Go to the main ticket office to pick up the tickets." What a relief to know the spouses of American writers would have excellent seats for the colorful Opening Ceremonies.

The last time we were together was at a retirement testimonial dinner for Mr. Brundage at the New York Athletic Club. Prior to the dinner I mounted the dais, shook Brundage's hand and blurted, "Mr. Brundage, you will be missed."

His laconic reply, "Say it again, Bob."

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