

GORDON B. ADAM
1936 OLYMPIC GAMES
ROWING



AN OLYMPIAN'S ORAL HISTORY
INTRODUCTION

Southern California has a long tradition of excellence in sports and leadership in the Olympic Movement. The Amateur Athletic Foundation is itself the legacy of the 1984 Olympic Games. The Foundation is dedicated to expanding the understanding of sport in our communities. As a part of our effort, we have joined with the Southern California Olympians, an organization of over 1,000 women and men who have participated on Olympic teams, to develop an oral history of these distinguished athletes.

Many Olympians who competed in the Games prior to World War II agreed to share their Olympic experiences in their own words. In the pages that follow, you will learn about these athletes, and their experiences in the Games and in life as a result of being a part of the Olympic Family.

The Amateur Athletic Foundation, its Board of Directors, and staff welcome you to use this document to enhance your understanding of sport in our community.

ANITA L. DE FRANTZ
President
Amateur Athletic Foundation
of Los Angeles
Member
Southern California Olympians

AN OLYMPIAN'S ORAL HISTORY
METHODOLOGY

Interview subjects include Southern California Olympians who competed prior to World War II. Interviews were conducted between March 1987, and August 1988, and consisted of one to five sessions each. The interviewer conducted the sessions in a conversational style and recorded them on audio cassette, addressing the following major areas:

Family History

Date/place of birth; occupation of father/mother; siblings; family residence;

Education

Primary and secondary schools attended; college and post-collegiate education;

Sport-Specific Biographical Data

Subject's introduction to sport—age, event and setting of first formal competition; coaches/trainers/others who influenced athletic development; chronology of sports achievements; Olympic competition; post-Olympic involvement in sports;

General Biographical Data

Employment history; marital history; children; communities of residence; retirement;

General Observations

Reactions and reflections on Olympic experience; modernization of sport; attitudes on and involvement with the Olympic Movement; advice to youth and aspiring athletes.

Interview transcripts were edited and may include additional material based on subsequent conversations and/or subject's own editing.

GORDON B. ADAM

1936 OLYMPIC GAMES - BERLIN
ROWING - EIGHT-OARED CREW
Gold Medalist

INTERVIEWED:

May, 1988
Laguna Hills, California
by George A. Hodak

GORDON B. ADAM

Interviewer: George A. Hodak

Hodak: Today I am in Leisure World in Laguna Hills interviewing Gordon Adam, a member of the U.S. Olympic rowing team in the eight-oared crew from the University of Washington, which won a gold medal in the 1936 Olympics. Before we get to that, I'd like you to talk a bit about your family background, where and when you were born, your education and like matters.

Adam: Well, I was born in Seattle, Washington, on May 26, 1915. My father came to this country from Scotland. He lived there until he was about 25 years old. Then he moved to . . . he gave up trying to make a success out of running a grocery store, because people were too entrenched in their ways I guess. He came west to Nanaimo, British Columbia, where he lived with his sister for a few months, and then came to Seattle. While in Seattle he met my mother, who had immigrated from Minnesota to Seattle, also to seek her fortune and work as an assistant cook or some such thing—in those days, such employment as she could get. The two of them were married and he worked as a laborer at this and that, and eventually they rented a small place and started a small mom-and-pop grocery store in Seattle.

When I was in second grade, my father made the mistake of buying a small dairy farm in the northern part of the state of Washington, near the Canadian border, in the Nooksack Valley. He struggled with that from then on. It was never a very successful operation; but it was a great place, I guess, for me to grow up because there were woods and streams and a lot of wide, open space. So I grew up attending a very small two-room country grade school, and then a larger, more modern high school in Deming, Washington.

When I graduated from high school I knew what I was going to do: I was going to go to Washington State College and study engineering. But I found out two great things: One, I didn't have any money, and number two, I hadn't had the required courses in chemistry. So in addition to helping my dad on the farm, I went back to high school for a year and got chemistry and couple of other things that I thought would be useful. I still didn't have enough money at the end of that year so luckily I got a job with a salmon canning outfit in Alaska. I spent five months in Alaska working on a piledriver putting in salmon traps, pulling them out in the fall and fishing them during the summer, I came back to Seattle in the fall, and by pure chance I registered at the University of Washington instead of going on over to Washington State.

Hodak: What determined that?

Adam: Just a whim, I guess. I arrived in Seattle with a few hundred dollars in my pocket and the university was only a streetcar ride away, so I went out to the university and discovered that registration was underway. My high school diploma was good enough to get me entry, so I paid the tuition, which was pretty low in those days, and went back up to Whatcom County and informed my folks that I had enrolled at the university. They were tickled to death because neither of them had attended any school of higher education and were quite pleased that I would pursue it.

Hodak: Where did your interest in rowing take root?

Adam: Well, my parents, as I say, neither of them were natives of the Northwest. Neither of them had attended an institution of higher education but they became quite big Husky fans. My dad used to jump up and down whenever the University of Washington won a football game. But my mother somehow got interested in rowing. That really didn't much rub off on me. I think she liked rowing because they were a bunch of tall, pretty good looking people performing, and they didn't hit each other and knock each other's

heads off. She thought that was a pretty good thing.

I played a little football in high school, not well, but I played at it. So I turned out for football at U of W. I was a walk-on. I made the freshman squad, but I was smart enough to discover that I was not likely to make the first team. There were a couple of All-Americans—at least one in that freshman squad, Vic Markov, who became an All-American—and a couple of other fellows who were all-coast. So I was likely to be a third-stringer all my life and I said, "Well, I'm not sure I like football that well." So after about three weeks of that I turned out for crew, and I liked it and it liked me. I made the freshman crew. That was an interesting thing for a kid from the country, because our freshman crew rowed against California in April, and if we were good enough and were promising we went back to the national championships in Poughkeepsie, on the Hudson River, and rowed a two-mile race against other freshman crews. Our freshman crew won that year, so I was quite encouraged to come out for crew again the following year.

As a sophomore—which happened to be an Olympic year—I made the varsity crew. Our varsity crew had three sophomores and five juniors—the only senior was the coxswain. Well, we went back to Poughkeepsie and won the national championships at four miles and then went on to the Olympic trials at Princeton, which was only 2000 meters. We hadn't had much practice at 2,000 meters; we knew how to row three- and four-mile races. So what we did was row about the way we did in the long races, conserved our energies in the early parts of the race and turned it on at the finish. That worked for us and we won the Olympic trials at Princeton.

Hodak: Had your coach from Washington been priming you for the Olympics? Was this something that you had talked much about?

Adam: We never talked about the Olympics really. Our coach, Alvin Ulbrickson, was a pretty smart fellow. He had been a great oarsman, but also majored in psychology so he used enough of that

on us that we had our minds on the next goal ahead, not some pie-in-the-sky thing that might happen months later. He probably had the Olympics in the back of his mind, because we occasionally did practice more high-stroke work than we would have for a four-mile race. But the Olympics were not in our heads at all, or not much anyway, until after we had won the four-mile. It was about two weeks after that that we went down to Princeton from Poughkeepsie for the Olympic trials.

Hodak: Before we talk further of the tryouts, I'm curious about what sort of collegiate competition there was for you on the West Coast. You mentioned the nationals. What schools boasted good rowing squads?

Adam: In those days not very many schools on the Pacific Coast were big competitors in rowing. Quite a number of schools had crews, but the crews that were major were the University of California at Berkeley and Washington. So we annually had an early spring race with California. Then in June, if we looked promising enough, we went back to Poughkeepsie for the national championships.

Hodak: What teams would have competed in the nationals from other areas of the country?

Adam: They were all from the East, with the exception of Wisconsin from the Midwest. There was Cornell, Syracuse, Navy, Columbia, and Pennsylvania. They would invite California and Washington and Wisconsin, and occasionally MIT or somebody else who might be looking good that year.

Hodak: And Washington had a strong tradition of rowing.

Adam: Since the '20s, Washington crews had been looking pretty good. They had won in 1925 and '26, I believe, and placed a number of seconds and thirds. We were the next ones to win in 1936. In fact, [Carroll M.] "Ky" Ebright, who coached the University of California crew, was a graduate of the University of Washington.

Hodak: While you were attending college and studying engineering, how often would you work out together with the rowing team?

Adam: We worked out six days a week. We didn't start fall practice quite as early as football, but within a couple of weeks after school started rowing turnouts would get organized. We would row up until at least Thanksgiving. Then, we resumed again as soon as the winter quarter started at the university. Our season continued then until late June when the national championships were held. So we put in a longer season than any of the other athletic squads, with the exception maybe of a few athletes who turned out for a couple of sports. We had folks who played football and baseball, for example, but we were the longest continuous turnout of any of the major sports.

Hodak: As far as working on conditioning or strength and stamina, would you do anything outside of rowing, or was that sufficient in itself?

Adam: Our coach believed that the way to get muscles for rowing was to row, and that we did—a lot of it. We rowed a lot of long miles. Lake Washington is a large body of water that's about 25 miles long. We never rowed all the way from one end of it to the other, but we covered a great deal of that lake in our training.

Hodak: As far as the positioning of the eight-oared crew, is there a logic to the positioning?

Adam: Well, some. First, you have to decide if you are going to row on the port or starboard side. I guess that's a matter of what you feel comfortable with. I happened to turn out for starboard side. I tried to be scientific about it because I figured that I wasn't necessarily equipped to be the stroke, who has to have a real good form and rhythm and sense of timing. He's on the port side. So I figured that rules that one out, I'll turn out for the starboard side. But you need somebody on the port side for stroke who has a sense of rhythm and who is very consistent in his timing and has good

form. The rower in the seven-seat would be of average size. You try to put the powerhouse, the bigger boys, in the middle at number five or number six. You want somebody a little lighter and pretty smooth up at the bow because his miscalculations or errors will result in the bow jiggling about and bobbing up and down too much. So you need a smooth oarsman up there and maybe also at number two. Number three and four are sort of ordinary . . . I was number three. [laughter]

Hodak: Now what about the coxswain?

Adam: The first requirement is that he be light so we're not carrying around a lot of extra freight. I suppose a little bit like some of the characteristics of a quarterback in football, he has to be a little bit of a take-charge guy. He has to be somebody who doesn't mind issuing directions in which the rest of us have confidence. His primary job is to steer the boat straight and to keep us posted on our position in the race. But if he is good enough he can act almost as a coach to tell somebody they are catching a little early or they are leaning or they're doing something wrong. A good coxswain can do a little of that, although it's a little late by the time you get into a race. You're either doing it right or you're not by that time.

Hodak: You talk about carrying extra freight, what about the shells that were used in this era? What sort of weight would they be?

Adam: Well, I don't know if I can tell you exactly how much the shells weighed. The only big difference between shells then and now is that now a lot of them are made of a polycarbonate fiber or carbon fiber material; in those days they were wood. There are some who still think the old wooden shell is just as good as today's carbon fiber. Perhaps the new shells are a little bit better but the older shells were beautiful pieces of workmanship. They were built like a violin maker builds violins. Somebody with the knowledge and the love of wood put those together and put them together right. I

guess a shell weighed about 260 pounds or something like that. It was 62 feet long, ours was anyway. They were all quite similar.

George Pocock built our shell. He was the son of an English shell builder from Eton. He became a single sculler in England and won a prize which enabled him and his brother to come to the Northwest.

Hodak Did you compete in any of the other classifications of rowing?

Adam: No, I didn't. I was only in the eight. In fact, that was the only thing that the university sponsored. They did have a couple of four-oared shells and a few single sculls, but it wasn't done much at Washington for some reason; probably because there weren't people to compete against nearby. In the East there was a lot of rowing in smaller boats because there were a lot of colleges, boys' schools and whatnot who competed in those events. But that was mostly on the East Coast.

Hodak You mentioned earlier the tryouts at Princeton, New Jersey. Did the University of Washington bring with it its own shell?

Adam: Yes. We traveled by train in those days and it was a pretty long and tedious trip across the country. Our shell was in a baggage car. If you bought enough tickets you got a baggage car free. The shell and our coaching launch were transported in a baggage car. We took three crews to the national championships: the varsity, the junior varsity and the freshman. We also carted along a four-oared shell; our coach had realized that there might be a four-oared competition for the Olympics so we did have a four-oared shell along too.

Hodak How was the financing arranged for you to travel to the nationals and the tryouts?

Adam: The university athletic department had some funds for that purpose

but the rest of it was raised by a voluntary crew drive on the streets of the city of Seattle. A day was set aside and volunteers went around with tin cans and did a little flag waving and collected enough money to buy us round trip tickets and accommodations to go to the East Coast and back. So it was kind of a public-minded sport, rowing was in those days; people in the city felt that they were stockholders in the operation, as it were.

Hodak: Now, once at the tryouts in Princeton, who provided the stiffest competition for the University of Washington's eight-oared crew?

Adam: Pennsylvania was second and California and Navy were third and fourth. There was also the New York Athletic Club and Princeton. Any established eight-oared crew who wished to enter the Olympic trials could do so and those were the ones who competed. Princeton wasn't really very good, but they were the home school so they competed. New York Athletic Club obviously thought they had something, so they came down and competed. They had a lot of enthusiasm but not really a great rowing style.

Hodak: Were you surprised that the competition went as it did in the tryouts?

Adam: Well, all of our races that year were pretty interesting really. I'll get back to our four-mile race at Poughkeepsie, on the Hudson River. At the end of a mile we were in seventh place out of eight boats. At the two-mile mark, we had moved up to about fifth place. At the three-mile mark, we were in third place and were probably half a length behind California and Navy at that point. In the last half mile, we moved out to win by a quarter of a length of open water. So we had a terrific high-stroke finish, which was a little unusual—but that's the way our boat went.

At Princeton, in our finals, the same sort of thing happened. It was a glassy smooth, beautiful day and Pennsylvania jumped out to a pretty good lead. By the time we had gone halfway they were a

good three quarters of a length ahead of us. We started holding our own about then and at the 1,500-meter mark we were beginning to gain a little bit. We went past them like the express passing the local milk train. We won that by a length and a quarter. It was a tremendous finish. We just put them away. It was rather surprising.

Hodak: So once you won the Olympic trials, did the ever-present issue of financing enter into your ability to travel to Berlin?

Adam: It certainly did. That could have been traumatic and dramatic. The Olympic Committee said, "Well, now it will cost \$5,000 or so to send you over to Berlin and back." Well, the university didn't have funds for that purpose and we had no other funds, so Pennsylvania immediately stepped up and said, "We'll finance our crew, send us. We're the second place." So the sports editor of the *Seattle Times* and the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* newspapers were both there and they said, "Hold the phone a minute." They telephoned Seattle and put out extras on the streets and generated another drive and raked up in excess of \$5,000 overnight, which provided funds for us and a little spillover for some of the other competitors who were low on funds.

From Princeton we went up to the New York Athletic Club where they have an out-of-town place at Pelham Bay Park near New Rochelle on Long Island Sound. We had about 10 or 11 days to kill between July 4 and July 15, when the ship sailed from New York, so we stayed up there. I guess we got very low-cost accommodations, and it was ideal because we were right on Long Island Sound and it was a nice, cool place to stay. We were able to practice rowing a little bit. We went out early in the morning and rowed on Long Island Sound adjacent to Pelham Bay Park. It was quite a hot spell so we went out in the mornings only. It was an interesting place to stay because there were a few athletes staying there who were still in the running for Olympic positions. The Olympic trials in track and field didn't occur until several days later at Randall's Island

Stadium. There was the dedication of the Triborough Bridge, as you probably are well aware. Several of us went in and watched those trials which were very interesting.

Then, the day before the ship sailed we all moved into the same hotel in New York City and got ourselves signed up and officially squared away. We got Olympic passports and got to meet some of the rest of the Olympic team. Then, the following day the ship sailed. Prior to that though we had an interesting time. Our shell had been brought from New Rochelle down to pierside and the question was how to get it on board the ship. It was 62 feet long and rather fragile. It had to be stowed up on the top deck and we had a dickens of a time but we finally managed, practically on our hands and knees, to get it snaked up through an inclined baggage way up onto the deck of the ship and then at arms length boost it up from one deck to another up to the top. There we and our shell rigger, George Pocock, who was also the shell builder, secured it on the upper deck on some blocks and covered it with canvas and hoped that nobody would come along and mistake it for a bench and sit on it or something.

We were eight days on the ship going over and the ship stopped in at Cobh, Ireland; Plymouth, England; Le Havre in France; and finally sailed up the Elbe to Hamburg. The trip over was great. We got to meet a lot of the other athletes and mingle with them. It was a great thing for us to meet them. Some of them were well-known names, world-record holders like Glenn Cunningham, Bill Sefton and Earle Meadows in the pole vault, and other people like that who were already known names in track and field. So it was quite a thrill for us to meet those folks.

Hodak: What sort of arrangements were made on board the ship for you to train?

Adam: There were rowing machines mounted on the deck. The four-oared crews and maybe the single scullers and some of the others worked

out somewhat on those. We did for perhaps a day or so and our coach decided that those were bad for our rowing form, those particular machines, the way they were adjusted. He'd rather have us just stay in shape by jogging around a bit and being sensible. So we tended to avoid the rowing machines thereafter.

Hodak: How were you greeted in Hamburg and then later in Berlin?

Adam: Well, that was tremendous. When the ship docked in Hamburg there was an enormous crowd at pierside, and bands and welcoming speeches. I don't know whether the citizens were ordered out to attend the event or whether they were just that enthused about the Olympics and the American team. Then a fleet of buses took us to the city hall where there was more reception, some champagne toasts and this, that and the other thing, and then we boarded a train for Berlin. As I recall, we had lunch on the train and arrived in Berlin to an even larger crowd. There was a huge gathering at the station and then a bus trip down through the middle of Berlin. I could easily say 100,000 people lined that parade route just to welcome the team to Berlin. Then we scattered off to our respective destinations. Most of the team went to the Olympic Village, and the rowers went to the village of Kopenick, which was east of Berlin and not too far from our rowing site which was at Grunau on the River Spree and Lake Langen See.

Hodak: So you were altogether apart from the Olympic Village?

Adam: I never saw the Olympic Village in 1936.

Hodak: What sort of quarters were set up for you there at Kopenick?

Adam: Well, rowing was in three different places. One group was in a girls' school that was vacated for the summer; one was in an old castle; and we, with three or four other countries, were in a police officers' training school. It was kind of a barracks, the *Polizeioffizierschule* in Kopenick. There were a few of the police

about with their vehicles and horses, but they had been moved out or detailed elsewhere so that we got their barracks for the duration. The other countries were Yugoslavia, Canada, Holland, and I forget who else. There were about four or five countries that lived in that school.

Hodak: Prior to your competition, was there much interaction with other athletes?

Adam: Not much really, no. Of course, we met the rest of the American team; the four-oarsmen and the single scullers and whatnot. But we had an army bus assigned to us and an army sergeant and lieutenant who took us back and forth to the rowing course. They were at our beck and call when we wanted to go row, which we did usually twice a day. They took us to Grunau and then brought us back.

Hodak: So you mentioned you never saw the Olympic Village? Did you ever get into the Olympic Stadium to see the track and field events?

Adam: Oh yes. We, of course, attended the Opening Ceremonies. And then one Sunday when we were not rowing we went in and saw some really great track and field events. We saw the 1,500 meters and one of the relay races at the stadium.

Hodak: What things most impressed you about Berlin aside from the enthusiasm of the crowds as they greeted you?

Adam: Well, Berlin was, of course, under Hitler. We, as athletes, or at least on my part, didn't think much about the political aspects. We were quite aware that Hitler was running the country and that it was a National Socialist country and under a rather strict, ordered regime; which showed itself in the fact that there seemed to be no crime in the streets, everything was orderly, everything happened on time, everything was running right. The streetcars and the elevated railroad . . . everything functional. The stadium was new.

all the facilities were new. The crowds were tremendous at the Games, they were jammed. One thing that impressed us was that when Hitler entered the stands, which was apparent—he had a box that he occupied, and a little flag was raised when he was in attendance. The minute that flag went up the entire stadium erupted with "*Heil!*" It couldn't have been turned on with a switch any better than that spontaneous reaction. They were behind Hitler, believe me. He was a popular leader. He was a dynamic leader.

Another thing we couldn't help but notice all over Berlin was that wherever you went or whoever you bumped into, nobody said hello, nobody said good morning; they said, "*Heil* Hitler." They were all friendly and helpful but the standard greeting was "*Heil* Hitler." We, of course, got smart once in a while and would answer them, "*Heil* Roosevelt," which I don't think they noticed.

Another thing that was noticeable was the number of people in uniform. There were field grey military uniforms, SS blackshirts and there was the brownshirt political army. It was quite a noticeable percentage of people on the streets who were wearing a uniform of some kind or another. I don't mean the majority of people but a much higher percentage than you'd see anywhere, or that we were used to seeing.

Hodak: You mentioned that you had rather strenuous training before your competition. You were training twice a day?

Adam: Yes, our competition occurred on the next to the last day of the Games, which is quite fortunate because after that long layoff and the long travel on the ship we needed that time to get back in top shape. Also, our stroke, myself and another fellow caught colds. The most severe was our stroke. He got a rather severe cold to the point that he couldn't row for a couple of days. So we had to go out with a substitute stroke, which doesn't do anything for your form. But he was able to get back into the shell for our semifinals

and finals, although I think he wasn't in top physical shape but he was obviously in good enough shape to row. And he had a great will to win. He was driving himself, believe me.

Hodak: Tell me of the semifinals, and then the final race.

Adam: In the semifinals our big competition was Great Britain. We and our coaches thought that they were the second best crew over there in the competition. They were made up of a combination of Oxford and Cambridge. They'd been put together to make a British national crew. In the semifinal we beat them by almost a length, I guess. It was a pretty tough race—we thought it was anyway. The finals were on kind of a gloomy day with a crosswind. We were against . . . the big competition turned out to be Italy and Germany. Those were national crews in every sense of the word. They had been subsidized by their government for at least a year. They were all army officers. The German crew were . . . I think they were all lieutenants—and they'd have been captains if they'd have won. All we got was a gold medal. (laughter) They would have received a big promotion. The Italians had at least two members who had been in the 1932 Olympics so they had a pretty experienced crew. They were a little bigger and a little older crew than we were and they had been training all year at the expense of the Italian government.

Hodak: Was it a good day as far as weather went? You said it was gloomy but what about the conditions on the river?

Adam: It was gloomy and we had a crosswind. The crosswind affected us. We were in the outside lane and were more affected by the wind than anybody else. The Germans and the Italians had a more protected lane; whether by design or by random we'll never know. It was supposed to have been a random draw but it didn't really look that way. So when we finally got into the calmer water near the finish line I think that too was one of the things that helped us. We were far behind early in the race. At the halfway mark we were about a length behind and Italy had just made a big drive and moved out to

about one length ahead of us. We began to gradually catch up a little bit, but by the time we began to near the finish line the noise from the crowds was so great that we couldn't hear our coxswain. We couldn't hear a sound except the large crowd chanting "*Deutschland!*" at the top of their lungs. It was just a din. So we were enough of a team, we just sensed the stroke going up without being really told and edged them out by about 10 feet. I wouldn't have wanted it to be any closer because they didn't have a photo-finish in those days; it was an eyeball judgment. And I expect that if we had won by two or three feet they might have come up with a different answer. But it was enough to be decisive, just barely, with Italy second and Germany third. Great Britain came in fourth that day.

Hodak: Did you immediately know you had won?

Adam: Well, we really didn't. We sat there and as soon as we could get our breath somebody in our crew said, "Who won?" And then our bow man said, "Well, we did, I think." Then, after what seemed an interminable length of time, this guttural voice came on the PA system: *Achtung, Achtung!! Erst: USA.* (laughter) We about fell out of the boat, because that clinched it. It was quite a trip.

Hodak: Was there an official awards ceremony for the rowing?

Adam: We had to row a couple of hundred yards up and down in front of the crowd and then we pulled over to a float where a huge wreath was given to us. Our coxswain didn't know what to do with it so he put it on the stroke's head, and the stroke kept passing it back, and that's about all there was to that. But we got our medals the next day at the Olympic Stadium, we didn't get them at the rowing site. All medals were handed out in the main stadium.

Hodak: And that was memorable in itself?

Adam: Yes, of course. It's quite a thrill, as all the other folks have

undoubtedly told you, to see the stars and stripes hoisted to the highest flag and to listen to the "The Star-Spangled Banner." That stays with you.

Hodak: Were you surprised to finish first?

Adam: No, I don't think so. We had a lot of confidence in ourselves. I don't think we figured this was going to be any shoe-in. When we saw these experienced, nationally-subsidized crews from Italy and Germany, we knew it was going to be pretty tough. The British were a combination of Oxford and Cambridge, so obviously they were good. And our conditions were a little against us at the finish so I don't think we were that confident on the final day. We were running scared from start to finish, believe me.

Hodak: Was there any post-Olympic competition for the rowing squad?

Adam: No there wasn't. Some of the track and field people toured Europe and maybe a swimmer or two, I'm not certain of that. But most of us came back. A certain number of people came back on the first ship that left, which was the *SS Roosevelt*. Quite a few got their tickets extended a week so that we had a chance to see a little bit of Europe. I went out on my own and took an overnight train from Berlin to Frankfurt and Mainz. Then I caught a Rhine River steamer and did the Rhine River tour down to Cologne. Then I took an overnight train and boat through Holland and ended up in London. There I caught a train up to Scotland, where I had relatives, and I visited an aunt and couple of cousins who lived in Dundee, Scotland, where my father had come from. I was able to visit the old house where he had lived. I stayed there about five days and then took the train back down to London, spent a night and a day in London, and then caught the *SS Manhattan* home from Southampton.

Quite a number of the Olympic team were on board the *Manhattan*. So when we arrived in New York, while we were out in the harbor.

the New York Hotelman's Association sent representatives on board and we were all assigned hotel rooms in New York. We were entertained by the city of New York. The people who had arrived a few days earlier on the *Roosevelt* were there too. They'd been kept there waiting for this. So we had a big majority of the Olympic team there and we had a ticker tape parade up Broadway, a regular Lindbergh-type parade. Then we were put up for two days and nights and had access to nightclubs and this and that. We were awarded some commemorative medals and things by dignitaries. Mayor Fiorello La Guardia was there. We got our medals from Jack Dempsey, which was kind of interesting.

Then we had return tickets, I had a return railroad ticket back to Seattle. So I went down to Philadelphia with one of my teammates and spent a couple of days there with a relative of his. We went out and saw Atlantic City and enjoyed ourselves a bit, and then took the train back to Seattle.

Hodak: Was there a greeting in Seattle?

Adam: No, we straggled back individually. Our shell was being shipped home by steamer and so we all came in at different times.

Hodak: And you continued your studies and your rowing at the University of Washington?

Adam: I returned to school for my junior and senior year and rowed two more years. The following year we had the same lineup except for the coxswain, so we easily won the national championship that year. We had everybody intimidated, I guess. Here was our identical lineup, an Olympic-winning lineup. So we won rather handily at Poughkeepsie and other national championships.

Hodak: You graduated in 1938?

Adam: Nineteen thirty-eight was my last year. I was a senior then on the

crew. We came in third at Poughkeepsie. We didn't have quite such a good boat that year. Actually it rowed pretty well but it didn't perform well on the Hudson for some reason. We came in third, which disappointed us.

Then, as I was finishing my last year of school, I was running out of money, as usual, so I went around looking for a part-time job. Jobs were still pretty hard to find In 1938—actually it was January of 1939 by then. So I went down to the Boeing Company and asked if they had any part-time jobs. And they said no, they didn't, but asked why did I want a part-time job. And I told them I wanted to stay in school. Well, they said I could work nights perhaps and go to school in the daytime. So I said, "Alright, I'll try that." This was about two-thirty in the afternoon and he said, "Okay, come back at quarter to four." (laughter) So I phoned my girlfriend, who would later be my wife, and went to work that night at Boeing, and I've been there ever since. I worked there 38 years.

Hodak: In which capacities did you work at Boeing?

Adam: I was an engineer, but they didn't have openings in the design engineering department so I went to work at any job I could get. I was expecting it to be a rather temporary second-shift job while I finished school. So I went to work in the manufacturing department. I wound up in what was in those days simply called production planning; later it was dignified a little better to be called production engineering. I handled engineering changes. I was head of what they called the production change board eventually, on the B-17, B-29, early 707s and 727s. All of the engineering changes for the engineering department came through my group and it was our job to see that they got introduced into the production line and on what airplane they would start during production.

Hodak: Seattle has always been Boeing's main production site.

Adam: Boeing continued to grow. Of course, it had a lot of violent ups

and downs. But the net result is that the Boeing Company grew and became a very large factor in Seattle, which was very timely because it replaced a diminishing timber and salmon industry in the Northwest.

Hodak: You mentioned your girlfriend who later became your wife.

Adam: We met at the start of my junior year at the university and we got married in 1939. We have two children. Our daughter lives in Illinois and our son lives in Tucson, Arizona. We had nothing to keep us in Seattle really, so we looked around at retirement time and settled on Southern California as being a pretty good bet for year-round weather. We are very pleased here at Leisure World. It's a very enjoyable community to live in. We made a lot of friends rather promptly and it's been very enjoyable.

Hodak: What other hobbies or interests have you had over the years?

Adam: Well, when we lived in Seattle I had a large lot out in the suburbs with native trees and whatnot. I always cut my own firewood and things like that. That was really about it. I played a little golf but not much, because I could only play on weekends. I play more frequently here. I have a garden plot. I seem to be too busy to keep up with everything here somehow. Retirement isn't all that simple. (laughter) Not in Leisure World anyway. It's a pretty active place.

Hodak: Tell me what sort of advice you'd offer to athletes or others.

Adam: I'm a believer in athletics. I think it is a great thing if there isn't excessive over-emphasis on winning. It's great to win—it's better than not winning, believe me. But it is also great to compete. My sport was rowing, which is not an individual sport. Rowing is a beautiful thing if you can do it well, it's a great feeling. It's probably the feeling that Chi Chi Rodriguez gets when he hits a golf ball 300 yards or when somebody pole vaults 19 feet. A perfect

rowing stroke is almost beyond anybody's abilities, but the closer you get to it the more grand a thing it is.

Hodak: Have you followed rowing over the years? What differences have you noticed?

Adam: They are putting a lot more emphasis on pure strength. They are running people up and down stairs and working out with a certain amount of mechanical weights. They're measuring strength with ergometers. Our coach firmly believed that if you wanted rowing muscles you got them by rowing, by taking some long hard workouts. I think because of all the emphasis on the 2000-meter and shorter races, there is a lot more emphasis on power than there is on finesse. We were led to believe rowing was an art and that you had to perfect it to row efficiently. That is a difference.

Hodak: I think it is interesting that you mentioned ergometers. That probably goes across the board in a number of other sports, which are more scientific in the approach to training.

Adam: Yes, and I can see where it is needed more perhaps in things like football, especially linemen who have to have powerful upper arms and whatnot. But rowing is a leg push, back muscles, and muscle tension pulling that oar in. You might as well get the workout from rowing as from anything else, it seems to me. Of course, today rowing . . . the Olympics for example are a different thing than they were. In our day, and up until 1956 at least, any established eight-oared crew turned out for the Olympics, and whoever won the trials was the Olympic representative from the United States. Since that time they have started picking a national squad, similar to the basketball situation, comprised of people who have been selected or recommended by individual coaches. They have tried to pick some from the East and some from the West, and somebody then puts together an eight-oared crew out of this and tries to select the best eight from this squad.

Hodak: You have reservations about this means of selection?

Adam: Well, all I can say is I don't think they have won a gold medal since that started. Maybe the competition is that much better and an individual crew wouldn't do better—I can't say. But I'm kind of old fashioned; I believe the crew has to row together for a long time to be good.

Hodak: What other differences have you noticed outside rowing that strike you about the evolution of the Olympics and the Olympic Movement?

Adam: Well, it surprises me that such a big to-do is still being made about the Olympics, because there are so many national championships and world championships being held, particularly world championships. Athletes fly to locations all over the world and become world champions here and world champions there. Yet the Olympics still seem to be a big pinnacle, which is rather surprising, because in the 1930s, '40s and the '50s we didn't have the jet airplane, and people weren't traveling all around the world to compete. The Olympics were just about the only thing that athletes from other countries could participate in together.

The other difference is the transportation. We went by ship. We were all together for quite a while and got well acquainted. We got to know the rest of the Olympic team. Today, they tend to fly in to an event and fly out again. I wonder if they feel like part of the whole team really. They are seldom together as a team except in an opening day parade. But that's the way the world is now.

There is some difference in financing, but it doesn't effect rowing too much because rowers never got paid anyway. My friends here who happen to know that I participated in an Olympics said, "Well, you were on a scholarship, weren't you?" Heavens no! I worked part-time all the way through school. I worked helping the janitor on the U of W campus, washed windows, scrubbed floors and augmented my costs in that manner. It was part of what then was a

government program called NYA, National Youth Administration, it provided some funds similar to the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] and WPA [Works Progress Administration] for college students, I think I got 15 dollars a month out of that, which I had to work for. But 15 dollars a month was a pretty good part of my expenses, as far as that goes.

You may be interested to know that our eight-oared crew still keeps in fairly good touch. There are seven of us still living and over the last 20 years we have had an annual reunion, usually in the Seattle area. Then in 1986, to honor the 50th anniversary, the University of Washington put on a show. They got the shell down, dusted it off, checked it for cracks, and we rowed it a bit for the cameras. We also were inducted into the Helms Hall of Fame in 1971, in conjunction with the national rowing association [National Association of Amateur Oarsmen]. Then in 1979, our entire eight-oared crew was inducted into the University of Washington Hall of Fame.

The Olympics were a great, great event and I think they gave me a lot more self-confidence. For a kid from the country, or maybe this applies to most kids . . . young people look a little brash but basically a lot of them are pretty insecure. And to succeed, or at least to know that they can compete in a sport does a lot for them. There are a lot of kids who need this feeling of confidence, learning that if you do something on your own and get somewhere you have to work for it. Nobody hands it to you. You don't just become the fastest runner or the best this or that, you work hard. And if you have the talent, and you work harder, then you get the reward. I think that's a great lesson, too.

Hodak: Well, I certainly appreciate your cooperation and the opportunity to come visit and spend time talking with you. It has been my pleasure. The Amateur Athletic Foundation is also appreciative.

Adam: My pleasure, George.