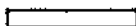


HERMAN BRIX  
aka Bruce Bennett  
1928 OLYMPIC GAMES  
TRACK & FIELD



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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.

HERMAN BRIX  
aka Bruce Bennett

1928 OLYMPIC GAMES - AMSTERDAM  
SHOT PUT  
Silver Medalist

INTERVIEWED:

April, 1988  
Beverly Hills, California  
by George Hodak

HERMAN BR1X

aka Bruce Bennett

Interviewer: George A. Hodak

Hodak: Today I'm in Beverly Hills visiting with Bruce Bennett, an Olympian who earned the silver medal in the shot put in the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics, Mr. Bennett, I'd appreciate if you'd tell me a bit about your family and childhood in Tacoma, Washington.

Bennett: Well, as you've intimated, I was born and reared in Tacoma, Washington, a number of years ago. I was the fourth of five children. We had a lovely home and lovely home life. I went to grade school and high school. In the high school period of my life I got interested in athletics and I think received something like 16 letters for participation in everything from soccer, football, basketball, swimming and a little baseball. From there, I went on to college at the University of Washington, following *in* my older brother's footsteps who became a member of the varsity football team while I was still in high school. So naturally, when I went to college I had to try out for the football team also. The same was true in track. He was more or less the inspiration for my trying out for the track team. He had put the shot and done various other things in the track and field category. Of course, being a younger brother I had to try to beat him.

Hodak: Was your father very involved in either you or your brother's development as athletes?

Bennett: Not really, the family was not oriented to athletics or to an interest in athletics. We were going to school for a college education. My father was a businessman and my mother the typical housewife. In those days, that was a full-time occupation with a family of five children. My father and mother were both

graduates of what was then the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma and were very bright, intelligent people; but with a limited interest in collegiate athletics. In spite of all of the attention that has been given to the development of the Olympic Games, they were not very well-known to the public at large. As a matter of fact, some of the members of the Olympic team, when they were told of the possibility of trying out for the Olympics at the ICAAAA meet in Boston, and that if they were successful they could go on to the Olympic Games, wondered, "What's the Olympic Games?" It was not that big a deal in those days unless you knew it. My coach at the university, [Clarence Sinclair] "Hec" Edmundson, was very well aware of the honor and prestige of being an Olympic team member. He had been an athlete of some renown himself. Of course, he was tickled pink that he had three boys that were qualified at least to go to the tryouts. So we were enthusiastic about it and knew about it before we went. But that was not true universally in the collegiate communities in the United States.

Hodak: How had you developed your physique? Certainly, weight training was not advised or encouraged at that time.

Bennett: No, it wasn't but I had a background of being very physically active in the logging business. My father was a lumberman and I spent a great deal of time during vacations from school going to the woods and working very hard, long hours. As a matter of fact, during the college days, sometimes I would come back from a summer vacation in such prime physical condition that the coaches would deliberately make me sit on the sidelines for a couple of weeks to soften up and to try to get some of the juices flowing. The first day of workout, those who had been inactive and lying on the beach all summer were gasping for breath. But it was just like working for an hour instead of 10 to 12 hours a day.

I think it probably took the place of some of the strenuous muscle building and toning exercises that people do nowadays to build up

their physique. I never did have an active weight program. After the Olympics when I came to Southern California I was introduced to the weight room down at the Los Angeles Athletic Club, and it didn't interest me very much because I'd been lifting practical weights in the woods all my life.

Hodak: What sort of arrangements were made for you to attend the University of Washington?

Bennett: There was no arrangement whatever. My family was in a position to help me and I had earned a certain amount of money to help myself. To the best of my knowledge, there was not one single athletic scholarship available to any person in any branch of athletics at the university while I was there. They did have a program whereby the athletic department had been able to get some of the local citizens to create or to offer jobs to some of the outstanding athletes who otherwise couldn't have made it through school. That was very limited though. I don't think I know of more than two or three that were helped that way in the entire time I was there.

Hodak: Was there anything in the way of recruiting? Did other coaches from other schools contact you about visiting their campus?

Bennett: I wouldn't know that. As a high school athlete, I don't think that I had enough prominence to be observed or known by college coaches. When I went to the university I was given some consideration as being my brother's younger brother and I had physical stature and desire to go out for the various teams. But, no, I had never been contacted by any coach or any person from the university before I went to school. I never had talked to anybody.

Hodak: You competed in a number of sports at the University of Washington.

Bennett: Football, basketball—a limited amount—and track. But track was my main occupation. Hec Edmundson, our track coach, was also the basketball coach. My ability in basketball was rather limited. I wasn't the quickest or fastest man in the world and after my freshman year he felt that there was a good possibility of my developing some of the track and field talents. He would let me warm up with the basketball team for the first few weeks and then the minute the track season started he'd cut me off the basketball team and say, "Report for track."

Hodak: Early on, you also competed in other field events.

Bennett: Well, I did almost all the field events, shot put, discus throw, javelin, high jump, and I even tried the broad jump but I wasn't very successful in that. I had a full day's activity when we got into the meets, in the field events. I was never a runner. I think if I had gone into, for instance, the decathlon, that I would have done very well in the field events. But when you got to such things as the pole vault and the distance running events I would probably have done rather poorly.

Hodak: I had wondered whether you had thought of the decathlon as an event for you.

Bennett: No. If it were limited to the field events I would have done well.

Hodak: You also played football at the University of Washington, Your first year, 1925, was a bit notable in the school's history.

Bennett: Yes, we wound up as the Pacific Coast Conference champions and played in the Rose Bowl against Alabama. We thought we had that game won but in the last few minutes the notorious pass from Poolie Hubert to Johnny Mack Brown caused us to lose that game by one point. That was New Year's Day, 1926.

Hodak: That same year you also defeated Stanford and Cal.



Bennett: We went through the Pacific Coast Conference undefeated that year.

Hodak: What can you tell me about your coach at the University of Washington?

Bennett: Enoch Bagshaw was a very aggressive, bulldoggy man who had played a good deal of football himself. Physically, he was rough and tough and a very good football coach. He was inspirational and very considerate of the development of the individual members of his team. I had great respect for him. For instance, in 1926 or '27, we had to play here in Southern California and he didn't even want us to come down here because he felt that it was a hardship on young athletes to come from the cold climate up there and come down here and play in the unusual heat. He felt the strain was too great for their physical benefit. There's a lot of merit to that. Nowadays the wonderful indoor facilities make it possible, if the ground is frozen or it's cold and wet outside, to practice indoors. In those days, we went out and practiced in the sleet, the rain, the snow, and the frozen ice on the dirt ground. We got ready for the games down here under those conditions. In December it would be very cold and we'd come down here and it was 93° on the floor of the Coliseum. Ten minutes after we'd get out there we were all wilted, completely bushed, gasping for breath.

Plus, you must remember, that in 1925 we had 15 players that we considered good enough to be on the varsity team as regulars. We played full time, offense and defense. If you were substituted for during the half, you had to wait until the next half to get back in. And if you were in the last half of the game and you were substituted for, you couldn't get back in the game. Having a limited number of players, if you had someone who was a dependable athlete on that field, you thought twice before you took him out, even for a breather—or even if they were hurt. It had to be something quite severe before they would take you out.

[ played full time in probably 90 percent of all the football games I played, both offense and defense.

Hodak: You were a lineman?

Bennett: I was a tackle, which brings up an amusing anecdote. My sophomore year I made the varsity football team. The very first games that we had was a double-header between Willamette University and Whittier University, two small colleges in the state of Washington. The scores of those games were 109-0 and 112-0 respectively. That means that you're running up and down the field constantly, because you've got to run the full length of the field to make a touchdown. I played full time in the first game, in the second game I was almost halfway through and I just completely gave out. I went over to the coach at the sideline and I said, "I just can't take any more. Take me out!" He said, "Oh my Cod, I forgot you were in. I forgot all about you," That was my introduction to varsity football. At any rate, it was quite an experience.

Hodak: Which player did you encounter in the Pacific Coast Conference that was your most impressive opponent? Who really left an impression on you in terms of ability?

Bennett: Well, the person that made the greatest impression on me was my own teammate, George Wilson, who was an All-American halfback. He played full time, offensively, defensively, did the punting, did the passing, did everything. He and Red Grange were considered to be the two outstanding football players of their time. As to opponents, you have to respect Ernie Nevers. I got a big kick out of "Tricky" Dick Hyland, who was a speedster, only weighed 160 pounds but was quick as a flash. He played for [Glenn] "Pop" Warner. He'd open on these wide reverses and chasing him up and down the field was no fun for big linemen who were not as fast.

Hodak: You played Nebraska to a tie in 1925. Tell me a bit about that.

Bennett: Yes, Nebraska is and always has been a very, very fine football team. We had kind of a bruising contest that day. I think we were quite disappointed that we didn't win it. We were not satisfied in tying it but that's the way it turned out. I can't really remember any outstanding person from their team on that day.

Hodak: So football season would end and then how soon afterwards would track season begin?

Bennett: The next day I'd turn out for basketball. I loved basketball. To me it was the greatest game in the world, but I was not a good basketball player. Hec would let me practice up through Christmas and into the first of the year and then he'd say, "I want you to go out for track." Hec, of course, had to stay with his basketball team during the basketball season. Again, the basketball season in those days was over, I would say, by mid-January. It was a very abbreviated schedule. Then you went into the track season.

Hodak: And when did you really start to specialize in the shot put? Was this something you had already focused on as your main event?

Bennett: No, I tried a little shot putting in high school in my senior year, just playing with it. None of the coaches knew anything about it so I never accomplished a great deal in track and field in high school. But I had the motivation of trying to beat my brother when I went to college. I think Hec Edmundson has recorded the fact that the first time I put the shot in college, the first measured throw and the best one I made was 32 feet, which is about what a good healthy woman would do today. (laughter) But, I took to it and to throwing the discus and trying everything. As a matter of fact, I remember we used to take starting exercises with the sprinters to develop speed off the

mark. Because of the football training, which is quick starting, charging, and exerting, I used to beat the sprinters off the marks for about 15 yards or so. But about that time, zoom, they went by me like I was standing still. Track was always a lot of fun, I enjoyed it very much. I even tried pole vaulting. In those days, pole vaulters had these stiff, old bamboo poles that were about ten feet long and you couldn't bend them or hurt them. All you could do was hurt yourself.

Hodak: And landing in the pit wasn't too comfortable either.

Bennett: I remember the pole receiving box in the Olympic Games in Amsterdam in 1928 was just a hole in the ground. It wasn't a nice box to slide that pole into. The track was soft and uneven. It was very difficult for Lee Barnes and Sabin Carr and some of those boys to even equal their best marks, let alone put new marks up—as they did!

Hodak: Would you say you made quick strides in the shot put?

Bennett: I developed rather slowly. I would say at the end of the first year I was up to 43 feet, which was a new freshman record at school. By the time I was in my sophomore year I won the NCAA at Chicago. I can't remember the distance, 45 or 46 feet. During my junior and senior year it gradually went up to 49 feet, 49 feet six inches. I went back to the national tryouts and I won them and set a new American record and it could have been a world's record if it had been measured the way it was the first time. When they first measured it they measured it 51 feet one-quarter inch. Then the tape broke so they had to go get another tape and reset the marker and do a lot of maneuvering. They finally gave me credit for 50 feet 11 and three-quarters inches, which was one-quarter inch short of the world's record, which had been 51 feet for 19 years. That record was set by Ralph Rose in 1909.

Hodak: Had you met many of the old shot putters?

Bennett: At that meet and in earlier AAU meets, I had met Pat McDonald and Matt McGrath, the old time shot putters. As a matter of fact, Pat McDonald had the Olympic record at 50 feet 3 inches. It was still on the books in 1928. They were big, clumsy, lumbering men. The brute strength was there but the technique was amateurish. I give them great credit for accomplishing what they did for they had never in their youth been coached or been aware of any type of coordination being necessary to what they were doing.

Hodak: They were contrasted pretty sharply with someone like [Lemuel Clarence] "Bud" Houser.

Bennett: Bud Houser, Eric Krenz and Harlow Rothert of Stanford and some of those boys were just as smooth as silk when they performed. I actually learned a great deal from watching Bud Houser as a sophomore. We went down to the Pacific Coast championships at Stanford. Watching Bud Houser I learned more about putting the shot than anything that had happened to me up to that time. I began to realize that it isn't size and brute strength, it's how easily you do it that counts. I made great progress from that time on.

Hodak: Aside from stepping outside the ring, where there limits imposed then by officials as to what was allowed as a shot put?

Bennett: I don't think so. The shot had to be held against the neck in the hand in any manner you wanted to and delivered from that position. The only limitation was that people didn't understand or hadn't developed the art of making maximum use of the space that they had. Of course, there's a toe-board in the front of the ring and if you step on top of that or touch the top of it, you are disqualified. You have to stay inside of it. You're allowed to hit against it but if you hit against it and fall out then you're disqualified. You could whirl, jump or do anything you wanted to inside the ring. I don't know anybody in my experience who had

enough experience to throw it, it would break your arm off to try to throw it. You had to push it, you see.

There are certain little tricks that you develop that, in my case, were very helpful. As a shot putter I was not a large man. The heaviest I ever weighed putting the shot was 200 pounds. I developed a technique of my own in which I would, just before delivering the shot, kind of drop it to a lower position off my neck. That gave me a little extra leverage. It was perfectly legal and perfectly all right. I had to do that because if I pushed with an explosive push, like so many shot putters have done and still do, it would break right through my hand. I couldn't hang on to it. So I had to have a smoother delivery.

Kodak: You've mentioned the NCAA meet in Chicago at which you were notified you were to attend the Olympic tryouts. Were there any other track meets you competed in that were especially memorable. Any other meets you'd care to mention?

Bennett: Well, one of the outstanding meets I went to was not the collegiate, it was after I got back from the Olympics in 1930 at an AAU meet in Pittsburgh. Incidentally, Pat McDonald was there and he won with the 56-pound weight throw, (laughter) He told me that he and Matt used to take the shot out of sheer exasperation and throw it like a hand grenade. They had a world's record that they had in that, some 70-80 feet. And I thought, "Gee, that might be fun. I'd like to try that." And I threw it over 90 feet. He said, "That's enough. I've seen enough." (laughter) But if you throw it like a hand grenade, you could do it. But you can't throw it like a baseball because it would break your arm off.

They used to have in the Olympics and in the AAU meets a combination of the 8-, 12- and 16-pound shot. Mind you, I don't think I ever practiced in my life with anything but the 16-pound shot. The 12-pound shot felt like a light weight to me and the

8-pound shot felt like a marble. On the second day of that meet they decided to reenact that event. Putting the three together again was a new experience for me, a lot of fun. I won the meet in record distance. That was one of the outstanding days.

Hodak: Certainly, the Olympic tryouts were noteworthy, but before the tryouts I believe that you spent time or trained at Bowdoin College in Maine?

Bennett: Yes, that was a unique experience for me and for many college athletes in those days because we didn't spend full time thinking and concentrating on nothing but track and field events. Up until that time I had won the NCAA meet in Chicago. Now we spent a couple of weeks thinking, eating, sleeping, drinking nothing but athletic development. It kind of inspires you to do your best. Then we went to Boston to the 1CAAAA meet, which was also the pre-Olympic tryouts. We were really psyched up and thinking nothing but athletics. As a consequence, my very first throw was the best one and the one that equalled the world's record and broke the American record. That put me in first place among the shot putters going to the Olympic Games.

Hodak: What would you say about the travel on board the SS *Roosevelt*? How did that go over with the athletes?

Bennett: I believe that I can speak for almost 100 percent of them that we had a very, very unique and wonderful experience. The boat was well provisioned. We were very well fed and very well taken care of. They had set aside different areas on the deck. One deck was for the runners to run around, another corner of the deck was for weight men to exercise and we'd throw the shot against a blanket or a pad and do our exercising. Wrestlers and boxers had areas where they could work out. Naturally, the camaraderie was great because we got to know everybody.

One of my great disappointments with what I call the

semi-professionalism of the more modern Olympics is that the glory or the emphasis is on the individual winner and not the team. We all pulled for each other. We wanted our teammates to do the best they possibly could so that we could bring as many points and as much honor back to the United States as we possibly could. Whereas, I feel nowadays—and I know it to be true—that competitors in your own event are your mortal enemies. You've got to do anything you can to beat them because the emphasis is on winning! The emphasis on the Olympic Games, the ideal, is on individual winners, it's true. But it is supposed to be done in the spirit of sportsmanship, athletics and enjoyment, a free-spirited sort of thing, which I felt that we thoroughly enjoyed as a team and as an athletic group in the 1928 Olympics. General Douglas MacArthur was the executive in charge of the 1928 Olympic track and field team and he ran a pretty strict ship. He was a disciplinarian but he also was quite inspirational. It was a wonderful experience.

Hodak: Maybe modern day athletes miss out on the environment that a ship would nurture. They benefit from modern travel and accommodations but at the same time they miss out altogether on that type of experience.

Bennett: I think that's true. I think the development of the team concept was much enhanced by going by boat together and spending all that time together. Nowadays, you might be in the Olympic Village together but you are in smaller quarters, section by section, and you fly everywhere. You don't get acquainted with a large group like that.

Hodak: So once you had come into the harbor in Amsterdam, were you able to train on the grounds of the Olympic stadium? What sort of training quarters were available to you?

Bennett: It was the largest ship that had ever been brought into the harbor at Amsterdam, and that was quite a thrilling experience. We lived



aboard the ship. And when it came time to have a workout, we would be transported from the ship to the shore and then by bus out to whatever field they had prepared for whatever event you were doing. Some of the athletes had to go as far afield as Antwerp and places like that. Whereas, for track and field practice we just went out into an open field. But no athlete ever set foot in the field of actual competition, in the coliseum, until the day it opened. The shot put took place on opening day, both the preliminaries and the finals, being the first event that was completed in the Games. When we walked out on that field it was the first time we ever saw it.

Hodak: Did you assemble in the stadium for the Opening Ceremonies?

Bennett: Yes, that was the morning of the same day, I think. My memory is hazy on that. But I know that there was an opening parade.

Hodak: Was it a rather impressive ceremony?

Bennett: Traditionally, the Americans, in their independent spirit, had a dislike of lowering the flag as they went by the stand of Queen Wilhelmina of The Netherlands. Bud Houser was the flag bearer and he kept that flag right up. Of course, that got a lot of criticism, it was discourteous. But that was part of the American tradition in those days. It's rather provincial, really, and ungracious. But, on the other hand, it was saying, "Look, we don't believe in monarchy."

Hodak: Tell me about your thoughts and what you can recall of your actual competition, which as you said earlier, was the first day of Olympic competition.

Bennett: The shot putting took place from two circles. Because of the number of contestants, they divided the preliminaries into two separate rings. The markings of the various distances were put out for each one. In the luck of the draw, the Americans from

one ring and the Germans from another ring. When the time came to make our preliminary throws, Emil Hirschfeld from Germany, who had reputedly been breaking the world's record and doing great things in practice, was putting ahead of me from the ring adjacent to mine. As I was just getting ready to start, I saw him throw and his throw went over the line that marked the world record line. The stands erupted, being mainly European. My first throw went right over the top of the flag that was on that line, obviously several inches beyond his throw in distance. Then, of course, the Americans in the stands all erupted. It was quite a thrill! If I remember correctly it was about 51 feet 8 inches, which is 8 inches over the world's record. I remained in first place during the preliminaries.

As a matter of corollary interest, John Kuck, a Kansas Teacher's College boy, who eventually won the event, had not proven to be a very good competitor. He seemed to tie up in competition. In the preliminaries, he had qualified in ninth place, which was the cutoff as there were just nine qualifiers. And if I remember correctly, he made it by less than one centimeter. John had, in practice and various other times, made explosive throws when there was no pressure on him, enormous distances around 52 feet. We knew that he had that capability but it never came out in a meet.

So during the half hour or so between the preliminaries and the finals—and the finals were all put from one ring--he came to me and said, "I don't know what the dickens to do. This is terrible." I said, "Well, I suggest that you lie down here on the field (it was a nice warm day) in your sweat clothes, and imagine you're back home on the farm in Kansas. And when you hear your name called, imagine it's your dad and mother sitting on the porch and they want to see you put the shot. Forget the crowd, forget where you are, forget everything and just get up and show your mom and dad how you do it." He did and he put 52 feet and three-quarters of an inch for a new world's record, which I tried

my darnedest to beat three times afterward but failed to do.

Hodak: What did he say to you afterward?

Bennett: Thank you. (laughter) He was very appreciative. Several times thereafter, publicly and otherwise, he said if it weren't for me, he felt he would never have done that. His next two throws were way down around 49 feet. After the Olympics, we had the British American Games in England and there were other meets in the United States after that where John competed and, before or since, he never once beat me.

I think, in that particular afternoon, I had only one throw less than the old Olympic record, which was 50 feet 3 inches. Correction, I think every throw I made was over that mark, and I had two or three that were over 51 feet, the old world's record, but none that eclipsed the 51 feet 8 inches that I had made. So on a mark of consistency, I was perhaps the best person there, but it was that one throw that did it.

Hodak: It's interesting that the Olympics or other major meets may cause someone, such as John Kuck, to tie up, if only initially as in Kuck's case, while it enhances or stimulates the performance of other athletes.

Bennett: It has always stimulated me. I always put better in a meet than I did in practice. I never put within a foot or two in practice what I did in a meet.

Hodak: Did you see other instances in the 1928 Olympics where athletes really surprised themselves with their achievements or accomplishments, such as Eddie Hamm?

Bennett: Well, I think Eddie Hamm is a case in point. He set a new record there in the broad jump and he practically jumped out of the pit on his first jump. I don't think he had ever jumped that far

before. There was a man named Bob King from Stanford, a wonderful, big, lanky high jumper who had a very good record. He was one of the most amazing competitors I have ever known. I had watched him for years. He would always jump high enough to win. But if he was in first place, he couldn't jump any higher. He didn't tie the Olympic record because he was in first place. They put the mark up for him to try to tie it and he couldn't make it. But I swear to you, if somebody had tied him he would have gone higher. He's that type of a competitor.

I can't really put my finger on any particular person or event that I think was outstanding, except maybe Ray Barbuti. Ray Barbuti had a tremendous record in the 400-meter run and, just on heart alone, won that even as well as anchoring the victorious 1,600 meter relay.

Certainly another one of the outstanding examples of competitiveness and competitive spirit is Bud Houser, who, as you know, won the Olympics in 1924 in both the shot and discus. He made the discus team for the 1928 Olympics. Bud weighed about 185 to 190 pounds but he was like a cat. He was a very powerful man for his weight, and very smooth. His first two throws in the 1928 Olympics I believe he fouled out. Then he only had one more chance. The average person would say, "Well, I'm going to make sure that this is good just to qualify and give me three more chances." Not Bud, he let fly and it was a record throw and it won the Olympics. If he had fouled again he would have been out completely. Talk about competition, and what we usually term "guts," that was it!

Hodak: What about other athletes from other countries? Was there much interaction during the Games?

Bennett: I think there was a great deal of interaction. The German shot put team, for example, were very friendly and cordial. Some of our team went up to Berlin afterwards. That turned out to be not

much of a meet, but it was a good social event. (laughter) The British were very warm. I can't say enough about the way we were met and the way we were treated. The generosity of the country, the athletes and the people of the country that we were visiting, they were delightful. Queen Wilhelmina had a dinner for us and she was just charming. Everybody was wonderful to us. So, all in all, it is a very memorable experience and very wonderful to have been a participant, regardless of where you placed.

The swimming and diving events were kind of pet events of mine. I knew most of those people and they did very well. I don't--.think any athlete ever does as well as he thinks he could have done. I just don't think it's possible. You always think, "Well, ! could have done that a little bit better." But, I must say that I think in an event such as the Olympic Games, everybody did their darnedest to be the best they possibly could. I don't think there was anybody that just went along for the ride.

After the Games were over, [Robert L.] "Dink" Templeton came up to me on the boat and said, "God, ! wish I could have come down on the field. All you had to do was slow it down a little bit and get a little more elevation. You put those last three puts out there so hard, they would have gone to China if you'd have put them up higher." (laughter) You see, coaches were not allowed on the field then, and I don't think they *are* now.

Hodak: Were you notified that you were to compete in the British American Games? Was the majority of the track and field team invited to go to London?

Bennett: Yes, I think practically 100 percent. The whole boat went out of the harbor and over. We wound up in London for the British American Games. Again, we were treated to a wonderful dinner at the King Edward VII Hotel in which the very gracious Prince of Wales was our host. That was a memorable occasion because a lot

of us were not quite used to the pomp and ceremony that went on,

Hodak: And this was a pretty tightly contested meet?

Bennett: Yes, it was a good meet. The British are very athletic-conscious. They are great fans. Lord David Burghley, who won the 440 hurdles, was in the meet. Of course, he was cheered on and he won again.

Hodak: He later became an Olympic official and was very involved in the Olympic Movement.

Bennett: F. Morgan Taylor was our champion 440 hurdle man and I think that he and Burghley had a very close contest, but Burghley won. It was very interesting.

Hodak: Did you get invitations to attend other meets? Were other countries interested in having American athletes visit while they were on the continent?

Bennett: I'm sure they were. The Germans got part of the group to come up there as well as the British American Games. But the total of the Olympic Games takes about two weeks to run through. So you can't get the entire group to go anyplace until the Games are over. And once the Games are over, they want to bring them home. If I remember correctly, we went to the British American Games and sailed for home from there.

Hodak: Was the trip home memorable?

Bennett: It was rough! The Atlantic can get pretty rough. I remember standing on the deck with Bud Houser and his lovely wife Dawn, bemoaning the weather and hoping we could get to New York without getting too seasick, (laughter)

When we got to New York we had a ticker tape parade down

Broadway, which was kind of impressive. Then everybody broke up and went their own way to go home. I went back to my home in Tacoma, Washington, and was met by the mayor's entourage and my family to honor one of the first Olympians from the Northwest part of the country. Steve Anderson did the same in Seattle. Steve placed second in the 120-yard high hurdles in the Olympics.

Hodak: So what did you intend to do at that point in Tacoma? Had you graduated?

Bennett: Yes, I graduated when I was in the Olympic tryouts in Boston. I had completed my academic requirements and they notified me that I had received my diploma while I was in the tryouts. I didn't know exactly what I was going to do at that time. After spending a few weeks pondering about it I went back to school and started in the school of medicine. I had decided I would become a doctor. That involved some very strenuous scholastic activity. Well, anyway, I didn't last too long at that. I decided that I wouldn't continue with that. I found a job and went to work. Shortly thereafter I was called and given the opportunity to come to Southern California as a member of the Los Angeles Athletic Club track and field team. I came down here and I've been here ever since.

Hodak: And you competed under the sponsorship of the L.A. Athletic Club from late 1928 until 1932?

Bennett: That's right. I won four national championships for them in the shot put, and placed several times in the discus. I was kept on the L.A.A.C. track and field team but in 1932, at the height of the Depression, the athletic department of the L.A.A.C, which was member-sponsored, just petered out. There was no money in the till and they didn't have enough money to send us anywhere, so we had a difficult time getting to the Olympic tryouts in Palo Alto. Finally, I got there by virtue of borrowing a car from Harold Lloyd, and I took several of my teammates and we drove up

there the night before the meet. I felt that I would have no problem qualifying, but I didn't qualify.

Prior to that, in the spring of 1932, I had been in my first motion picture. I had broken my shoulder playing the part of a football player and that hospitalized me for some time. When I got out of the hospital I was in pretty tough shape. I never got back into condition by the time the tryouts were taking place. But I felt that since I had been undefeated in the United States for four years, almost five years, that I could at least qualify, then use the time between the tryouts and the Olympic Games, a period of at least three weeks, to really get into some serious training. But, that didn't happen. That was a great disappointment. I never competed after that. From that point on I decided I better try to make a living.

Hodak: You then served as an official?

Bennett: Yes, at the 1932 Olympics they gave me a job as a field official.

Hodak: Was there anything noteworthy about the shot put competition, other than your not being there?

Bennett: No, I was jealous of them and what they were doing. I think the most noteworthy thing as far as that is concerned is that I helped measure [Mildred] Babe Didriksen's world record javelin throw. The amusing part about that is that when she let go of that javelin and threw it, she turned her back to it and said, "Hell, the damn thing slipped." And it was a new world's record! (laughter) She was a great athlete. She was a very likable girl, but she was tough. She was just like a boy with those long, sinewy, strong muscles that a good athlete has.

Hodak: Are there any other events that really stand out from the 1932 Games that you were able to witness?



Bennett: I think anybody who saw the sprints that year couldn't help but be impressed by Eddie Tolan and Ralph Metcalfe, who placed first and second in the 100-yard dash, respectively. They were both black boys. Eddie Tolan was not more than five foot three, and he ran like a sewing machine, but so fast you could hardly see his legs move. Ralph Metcalfe was at least six foot two, big and powerful, and he took great, long leaping strides. In the 100-yard dash, Eddie Tolan was off the mark so fast that Metcalfe *never* caught him by the end of the 100 yards, so Eddie Tolan won it. The 200-yard dash came afterwards, and they were way out ahead of the rest of the pack in a class by themselves. Eddie Tolan won it and Metcalfe placed third. It was very impressive. Pictorially, the picture of this little man and this big man running down there together gave a lasting impression.

One of the most outstanding athletic events I ever recall seeing was in the 1928 Olympics, the 5,000-meter run. Willie Ritola of Finland, Paavo Nurmi and a Swede, Edvin Wide, stepped in each other's footsteps, just like a machine. They went around and around and around until they came to the final lap, halfway from the end, and all of the sudden Willie Ritola had more left than Nurmi and he sped out ahead and won it. Nurmi had won the 10,000-meter race the day before. Nurmi, of course, was in a class by himself, and this was toward the end of his great career.

Hodak: He had hoped to compete in the marathon in Los Angeles but was ruled a professional just prior to the 1932 Olympics. That brings up a topic you might want to talk about a bit. Certainly, staying amateur was something that you had to be very abreast of.

Bennett: You had to be very careful. In those days, if there was even a suspicion that you were being paid or endowed in any way or got more expense money than was legitimate for the events that you were in, you were disqualified. Like [Charlie] Paddock, who was not accepted for the 1928 Olympics originally because he had accepted excessive expense money from various places and they

knew about it and refused to place him. Then, as I understand it, he made a special plea to MacArthur and MacArthur accepted him. MacArthur was the sole judge at that point as to who competed and who didn't. So he was reinstated.

Hodak: Is this something that you had to be very careful about?

Bennett: No way. I never received a nickel from anybody for anything in my entire athletic career. The closest thing I had to a subsidy was Harold Lloyd loaning me his car to drive up to the tryouts. He even gave me two extra quarts of oil because the old car burned oil. (laughter)

Hodak: We won't let the AAU hear about that. (laughter) I think that somewhere prior to the 1932 Olympics you met Douglas Fairbanks. People know him today as an actor and one of the original owners of United Artists Studios, but he also was very involved in sports.

Bennett: He was very athletic. He loved sports. He created a game called "Doug," which is nothing but a variation of badminton. He was vitally interested in all sporting activities. He played a very good game of golf. I met him at the 1929 Junior Olympics here in Los Angeles. It was held in what was then the UCLA campus on Vermont [Avenue]. He was a sponsor of the Junior Olympics and I was asked to come out and give an exhibition. I met him there and he invited me to come over to his quarters to train. That was a Godsend to me because those were tough days. He eventually was instrumental in having me make my first screen test. At one time, I broke the world's record in practice in the back of his office at the studio and he was very pleased by that. He insisted that I make a test, which he showed to some people over at Paramount and they decided they would use me. I was on a train going back to the 1931 AAU track and field meet in St. Louis when I got a wire from Doug that said: "Paramount liked your test very much. Be sure to contact so and so when you get back."

And that first film that I did was the one where I broke my shoulder. According to a bone specialist, it never was set properly. But I get along very well with it.

Hodak: I came across an article describing a tour which Douglas Fairbanks went on with his son and also Charlie Paddock and Loren Murchison, a worldwide tour or exhibition of running. In addition to that, Douglas Fairbanks was known for performing various feats of agility. What sort of things would he do?

Bennett: He liked to do everything he could himself. They talked him out of some of the things. In a film he made called *The Black Pirate* there is a scene in which he puts a knife through the sail and escapes from his pursuers by holding on to the knife and going down the sail. That was a hooked up stunt, but he did it. In back of that knife, on the other side of the sail, was a rig and the knife became a handle he could hang on to as he went down and cut the sail. In the front you couldn't see it, it looked like the knife was cutting it and he was coming down. In *The Thief of Baghdad* he was constantly jumping in and out of all kinds of situations.

Hodak: You mentioned the injury that you sustained during your first film. Did this knock you out of a possible role in a *Tarzan* film.

Bennett: Yes, Douglas Fairbanks and L.B. Mayer had more or less agreed that I was to play *Tarzan*; or at least that I was to try out for it. When I had this accident and broke my shoulder, I was hospitalized during the period that they had to go ahead with making the *Tarzan* film. Among others that they tested was Johnny Weissmuller. When I got out of the hospital my shoulder was all deformed and wilted, Doug Fairbanks said, "Oh my Cod, he'll never be in shape to play *Tarzan*." He told that to MCM, and so they signed Weissmuller and that was that.

Hodak: But eventually you did play *Tarzan* in a film in 1934.

Bennett: A couple of years later Edgar Rice Burroughs himself selected me to play *Tarzan* and I made that *Tarzan* film. It is a long, long story that I don't think we need to pursue too far, other than to say that it is, as of this date, accepted by *Tarzan* fans as being the most authentic and the best and most realistic *Tarzan* film ever made. I did all my own stunts and never had a stunt double. It is more or less of a classic of its kind because we played *Tarzan* as an English lord, Lord Greystoke, a polished, well-educated English gentleman, who was called on a mission to Guatemala to try to extricate an old friend of his who had befriended him in Africa and was in Guatemala someplace. That was the basis of the story. I spoke in a normal fashion and behaved as a normal person, except when I was in the jungle, in which I was Tarzanesque. It was quite an exciting film but it was never widely distributed in this country because before it was due to be shown Edgar Rice Burroughs lost interest in it and he re-optioned the rights to making the *Tarzan* films to MGM. MGM put the quietus on our film being shown in any of the major theaters. They said, "We don't want that competition." So, while I was widely seen by vast numbers of youngsters in the neighborhood theaters, I never got any type of publicity from major theatrical distribution.

Hodak: So I imagine the conditions under which you filmed were a bit arduous. It was actually filmed in Guatemala?

Bennett: Actually in Guatemala. Really, the main problem was protecting yourself against tropical disease and tropical infection. Anytime you had an abrasion or any open wound, you had to be extremely careful that it didn't get infected in some way. Eventually, a couple of mine did get infected and I wound up in a hospital at Quiriqua. Playing *Tarzan* is always arduous because there's a lot of physical things to do but you live through it and after you do it you wonder why you ever did.

Hodak: You came back pretty lean?

Bennett: Yes, lean and full of abrasions.

Hodak: Following your return to the United States, tell me the direction your career in the film industry took.

Bennett: Shortly after the *Tarzan* film, the company that made *Tarzan* went into the production of other little, quickie films. I was in a couple of those and I did some films for Victory Pictures, little five or six day quickies. Then I got into doing some serials for Republic Studios. *The Lone Ranger* was the first and the most successful of all the films made in that category. There were several others like *Daredevils of the Red Circle* and *The Hawk of the Wilderness*. From that, I got a contract at Columbia and did a number of films at Columbia. I then went to MCM where my first film was *Mildred Pierce*, an Academy Award film in which I played Mildred's husband. My career kind of took off from that point to become one of some merit.

Hodak: We can't let a classic American film such as *Mildred Pierce* go by so quickly. What can you tell me of working with Joan Crawford.

Bennett: She was very professional in her attitude in the studio and was a very competent and fine actress. In that period of time she was completely under the dominance of Mike Curtiz, the director, who told her that he would give her that part—but she had to play it his way. It was a very harmonious film and a very successful one. It got her the Academy Award.

Hodak: Did the writer of the novel, James Cain, have any say in the filming or the screenplay?

Bennett: I'm not aware of James Cain being around at all. I think the screenplay was pretty much set upon and very closely followed. I think it had been very carefully scripted and programmed so there wouldn't be any material changes in it. To the best of my recollection, that film was made almost 100 percent as it was in the

script. I don't know whether the script was faithful to the novel or not because I'm not familiar with the novel. But the film that was made was faithful to the script.

Hodak: Following *Mildred Pierce* what type of roles became available?

Bennett: As a result of *Mildred Pierce* I was given star billing at Warner Brothers and I made several pictures a year for four or five years. I worked with a lot of the outstanding people there like Bette Davis, Errol Flynn, Humphrey Bogart, etc. In those days, there was a lot of contract players and they were the primary assets of the studios. They hung on to them and nurtured them. One of the best films I ever made there, in my judgment, was a picture called *The Man I Love* with Ida Lupino. I worked with Ann Sheridan and Jane Wyman. I had good, substantial parts in films. I made a picture called *Smart Girls Don't Talk*, which was well-received but was not one of the really major films. I played a real mean heavy in that one, so that was kind of fun to play.

Hodak: Were you a natural as an actor? Had you ever studied acting? Did you have any kind of theatrical experience?

Bennett: Prior to getting in the film business, I had been fairly active in high school in a couple of plays. I once played the lead in *The Pirates of Penzance*. I learned my trade in the trade. For a long while I did very, very small parts. The first serials that I did, such as *Shadows of Chinatown* with Bela Lugosi, simply called for a young man with physical ability to do a lot of fighting, running around and a lot of physical activity. But you learn your craft because you learn all about camera angles and you are able then to study how the more competent actors, like Bela Lugosi, deport themselves and how they carry the scenes. You learn from these experiences. I made five or six serials at Republic Studios and, believe me, it's an education because you get to do everything that an actor is called upon to do before you get through. And, I also took theatrical training from some of the best theatrical

coaches in Hollywood at the time. For instance, when I was at Columbia we always had very good coaches there. When you're not active doing something, you're studying, taking parts of scripts and playing parts so they can see what you can do, and developing your talent. That was part of the buildup of the star system and the stable of actors that studios all had in those days.

Hodak: Beneath the glamour there's an awful lot of hard work.

Bennett: If you were on salary and you weren't working, you were in there practicing and learning. Incidentally, the first year I was at Columbia Studios I had speaking parts in 44 pictures in 40 weeks. That's pretty good training.

Hodak: You played in *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, which was another American classic. Many will be familiar with the script so tell us who you play in the film.

Bennett: I played Cody, the itinerant fortune hunter from Waco, Texas, who's in Mexico hoping to strike it rich looking for gold. The character in the picture sees Tim Holt in this little store buying equipment and he knows damn well that he's going off to a mine somewhere, so he follows him up there and makes the proposition to join them. They decide to kill him and before they can kill him, bandits come by and he warns them about the bandits and is killed for trying to protect them.

Hodak: In the process you get one in the jaw from Humphrey Bogart.

Bennett: Yes, Bogart played his belligerent self.

Hodak: He's down with the gold fever; you're the bedrock of stability in the film, if only a fleeting temporary bedrock. I hope you had a double or a stunt man for that part.

Bennett: Oh no, not for that. If you know your trade, those things are

easily faked. I can make it look like I'm taking your head off in a film. Put the camera at the right angle, then I hit at you and you roll your head back, and they'll swear that I'm beating up on you.

Hodak: How was working with John Huston?

Bennett: Absolutely the joy of my life. John was a wonderful person and director; one of a kind! He had a lot of characteristics that some people may or may not understand. He was a wonderful artist. Few people know of his ability with paints, oils and watercolors and drawing. But as a director, he was the first director that I ran into who didn't have a completely preconceived idea of how a scene should be played. He knew what he thought of a scene, of course. He was instrumental in writing and selecting the actors for it. But he would say to the actors, "Look, you know the scene. I'm not going to tell you a thing. Here's where it's played, right here, go ahead and do it." Then he would refine it from there to accommodate the camera and what he wanted. But the naturalness of what the actors perceived to be the natural moves and positions, he would respect. For instance, many times I have heard the cameraman say, "Look, if you'd just move over a little bit and face this way." John Huston would say, "If we want to get that, we'll change the camera to get it. Don't you bother the actors, that's the way it's being played." That made the actor feel very comfortable; because in quickies, such as serials and many other films, you have to make a very awkward turn or an awkward move to accommodate the camera angle. But he wouldn't allow that. As a consequence, his pictures have a wonderful naturalness. I can remember many actors who were very distraught by the fact that they had to make a false move to accommodate the camera.

Hodak: I think it would have been interesting dynamics to have John Huston directing his father, Walter Huston.



Bennett: He had great respect for Walter and Walter had great respect for him. They got along absolutely beautifully. Walter was a great actor, in a class by himself. I never will forget some of the scenes that he played. We'd stand on the sidelines as actors and just say, "Ah, if we could only do that."

Do you remember in *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* when they are walking up the trail and he suddenly starts shuffling and dancing a jig, and they ask him if he's going crazy? He said, "You darned fools, you don't know when you've struck it rich. You don't know anything about it. We're standing on gold!"

Hodak: And where was the filming done?

Bennett: The majority of the film was done in Mexico, just outside of San Jose' de Purua, which is a watering spa about 45 or 50 miles west of Mexico City. It's right on the side of a huge canyon. There's a nice hotel there. But the surrounding little villages and areas were very rugged and primitive. They lent themselves perfectly to what we were doing. John would select the place that he wanted and that's where we'd go to shoot.

Hodak: How was Humphrey Bogart to work with?

Bennett: Bogart, believe it or not, was a highly educated, very sensible and practical man. He was very sincere and didn't slough anything in front of the camera. He might make it a little tough on a director if he felt uncomfortable with what he was doing. Until he felt comfortable, he didn't want to shoot it. But, as a person he was delightful. His reputation as a tough guy was part of his act. He very often said to me, the old cliché, "It isn't what they say about you, it's the fact that your name is in the paper that counts. So he would create situations lots of times that people were aghast at, but he did it on purpose.

Hodak: And it worked out to the benefit of the film generally.

Bennett: And it worked out to the benefit of his personal publicity and his bank account.

Hodak: Following *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, or even before, what would be some other films you'd care to mention?

Bennett: While I was still at Columbia, Bogie did *Sahara*, which is another very famous film. It's been on TV quite a lot, even today. That was done during my last year at Columbia so it must have been 1942. That became quite a classic too. There was an international cast *in* that: English, French, Dutch and Italian. I'll never forget J. Carroll Nash. The cast of that picture was very memorable. Bogie was the tank commander and he was on loan from Warner Brothers. He and Zoltan Korda, who was the director, were at loggerheads half the time. Zoltan didn't catch on until the film was almost finished that Bogie was at loggerheads with him because he hadn't studied the script the night before and he wanted to thresh it out and get it in his mind before his shot. So he argued with him all morning but then when he finally did it, he did a wonderful job.

I had a letter from one of my fans a month or two ago, who listed 163 films in which I had screen credit. There were several that were not there that I remembered afterward. As a consequence of being in that many films, you meet and see an awful lot of people at a lot of studios in a lot of ways. One of the interesting experiences I had was playing a captain of the Union Army in a film called *Love Me Tender*, which was Elvis Presley's first film. He was a private in the army and I was his commanding officer. We didn't actually have much to do together in the scene, but it was part and parcel of the story. Elvis, at that time, was the most likable young man. He played baseball with the crew and he was eager to get into everything. He wanted to know all about the camera and every reason for everything that was being done. "How should I play this?" and "What should I do with that?" He was just delightful. That was the only time I ever met him or

talked to him at all. But my memory of Elvis from that film was of a delightful young man who was eager to get on with his life.

Hodak: Tell me of the circumstances behind your decision to change your name from Herman Brix to Bruce Bennett.

Bennett: When I came back here after doing the *Tarzan* film, there was a long period of time when I couldn't find anything much to do. That's when I started doing the serials at Republic, *The Lone Ranger*, *Fighting Devil Dogs*, *The Hawk of the Wilderness*, *Daredevils of the Red Circle* and so forth. But those are rather small-time, limiting activities, paid very small and were not anything that gave you the future prospects of developing in the picture business. That was rather irritating to me so I decided to try to get into major films. I decided that the best thing to do was to change my name, go to dramatic school, and get into some local plays with a different name and see what happened.

Well, I went to see Oliver Hinsdell, a very famous voice and dramatic coach who had coached many of the prominent stars in that period of time. He was a wonderful man. I went to his dramatic school, and he endorsed my name change and put me in a local play called *Pennywise*, a comedy. Several scouts from several studios came and a scout from Warner Brothers asked me to come out the next day to the studio. He thought there might be something that they could place me *in*. So I went out and the casting director agreed and said, "We're making a test day after tomorrow. Here's the material. Learn about it and come on in tomorrow and we'll give you a wardrobe and makeup checkup." I was very elated, of course. So I went back out the next morning and the man at the desk in the casting office said, "Oh, by the way, the boss wants to see you." I went in to see him and he said, "Were you ever *Tarzan*?" I said, "Yes, I was." He said, "Is this you?" and he opened a display of all the former *Tarzans* in *Life Magazine*. I was using the name of Bruce Bennett as a new name but in this article it was Herman Brix. He said, "Is

this you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Goodbye, we can't use you." I said, "Why?" And he said, "Well, in the first place, we've had very bad success with athletes, and in the second place, anybody whose been in the type of films that you've been in is just not attractive to us. We just don't feel that there is any possibility of your developing. I'm sorry but that's the way we feel. Goodbye."

Hodak: *Were you pretty bothered by that treatment?*

Bennett: Of course, I was very disturbed and very upset. However, I was invited to an audition at Columbia Studios. After being released from my onerous contract at Columbia and peculiarly enough—this was four years later—my agent took me out to Warner Brothers where he felt they needed someone of my type for their contract list and they gave me a contract. The first thing I did was to go right into playing the husband of Joan Crawford in *Mildred Pierce* and as a result of that they immediately gave me star billing.

Hodak: Were people in the film business aware of your athletic background? Did you feel it necessary to remain quiet about this?

Bennett: I had to keep that very quiet because you only have to get hit in the head once. As an athlete with a Tarzanish background, which is physical, athletic, and doing serials which are physical and athletic in their main import, people feel that you couldn't have the sensitivity or the ability to be a competent actor. That's the impression that I got from the casting director when I went out there, even though I had changed my name. So I said to everyone that associated with me, "Forget that Herman Brix ever lived. As far as the motion picture business is concerned, Bruce Bennett is a new character that's come on the scene here." Obviously, through the years various people learned about it but they did keep it quiet. In the picture business I was Bruce Bennett, that's all there was to it.

A very interesting corollary to that is when I got out of the picture business and went into commercial business with a friend of mine. I was a salesman for a commercial operation and when calling on people I purposely used the name Herman Brix. I felt it was my legal name and since it was a business operation it was appropriate. Secretaries and even principal executives that I saw would look at me and say, "Why are you using the name Herman Brix? You're Bruce Bennett?" So I thought, "The heck with it, I'll use the name Bruce Bennett." So I have used it in all my business associations ever since because it is the easiest identity that I could come up with. In this area, everyone associated me with films rather than athletic background. It wasn't until just the last few years that I began connecting with the early Olympic activities and the early athletic records.

Hodak: I want to ask you about what prompted you to move out of the film industry? But before that, I'd like you to discuss, if only briefly, your role on the Board of the Screen Actors Guild.

Bennett: I think it was concurrent with my activities at Warner Brothers. I was under contract there for four or four and a half years. At the end of my Columbia days, I had been elected as a representative on the Board of the Screen Actors Guild. For a couple of years there I was a regular member of the Board of Directors. During that time, Ronnie Reagan was the president of the Screen Actors Guild. It was a very interesting and very informative activity, the emergence of the guild and its power in the industry.

At the time that I was there we formed the Screen Actors Guild Pension, Health and Welfare Fund. That's an interesting story too. That came about because television was coming on scene with all its residuals. They were using all the old pictures and selling them to television and we were getting nothing from it. But people who were currently in television were getting residuals. So we went to the producers to say, "Hey, wait a minute! We ought

to be getting some money for these old films that are being shown in a new media that didn't even exist when we made them." They said, "Well, that's fair enough. We understand that but how can we do anything about it? We have complete control of these films and we've sold them. How can we do anything about it?" A compromise was worked out whereby they created a fund of close to five million dollars to create the original pension, health and welfare fund. That was used to compensate the actors in the Actors Guild for the payment that may have been due to them had residuals been in effect when these films were made. But whatever portion of that income was derived from our prior activity went into the formation of this fund. I have benefited by it because I have been a pensioner for some years. So, in all fairness, it turned out to be a fair resolution.

I don't really remember why I dropped out of the Screen Actors Guild. I had something that interfered with it and I dropped off the board. Of course, you're only elected for a certain period and I know that I didn't run again after my period was up.

To answer the question you asked about why I kind of dropped out of the picture business and went into commercial activity, there was a dual timing there. In the 1960s, there was a long 10-month Writers Guild strike when nothing happened in the picture business. Just prior to that time I had been offered about three or four films in a row. The films themselves were distasteful to me because of the nature of the film and the nature of the characters in the film. For instance, in one of them my wife was to be a lesbian. In another one, my daughter was a promiscuous little tramp and in another there was a drug-related situation in the family. I turned them all down.

Then when this long strike came along I began wondering what the dickens I was going to do with myself and my growing family. A friend of mine had just started in the vending business. Just invented at that time was the hot coffee machines. He suggested

that i come out and look over what he was doing. To make a long story short, I became a salesman and subsequently a sales manager for what became a large, national institution in the food and service industry. I was very successful at it for about three or four years until the company was sold to public offering through a financial interest in New York. They changed the management and the people I was with went out and I went out with them. So then i had to find something else to do *and* went into the real estate business. I've been in the real estate business for 20 years now. I've been a broker for 15 years, and here we are.

Hodak: Tell me to what degree you've identified with the Olympic Movement, having been an Olympian. Have you followed it closely?

Bennett: Not really too closely. During the '32 and '36 Games I was very interested in it. Then the war came along and they skipped the Games. After the war I began realizing that the Olympic Movement had been commercialized a great deal. They began paying expenses and doing things that seemed to me to be less than the ideal of the Olympic Games, which was promotion of amateur athletics, pure and simple. I can understand why it happened because a lot of our foreign competitors were being subsidized by their countries and in our country there was no subsidization. Almost our entire store of athletes came through the colleges and universities because that was the only place they had to train and develop. So I understand that and that portion of it I think is just great. But then when I read in the paper here that some of the more prominent and successful Olympians and athletes of international repute are actually wealthy people from the amount of money that they have received for appearing in track meets worldwide, that, to me, is professional. That's not just a group of fun loving, athletic-minded young people getting together and trying their darnedest to beat one another and laughing and joking and having fun.

It also disturbs me that it takes away the enthusiasm for the team

attitude. The United States as a team, even today, are very grateful for the number of winners that they have in relationship to the other teams, but the emphasis today is on what financial benefit the winner is going to receive. That financial benefit makes him an arch-enemy of his own teammate. So they *are* fighting each other rather than helping each other. What I used to love about the 1928 Olympics and the '32 Olympics was that everybody was helping one another. When I failed to qualify at Stanford for the 1932 Olympics, three of the men that beat me came to me and said, "I wish there were some way we could give you our place." Because they knew that by record and ability that I probably should have qualified. I'm only saying this to illustrate the feeling that existed at that time. I don't believe that exists today. That disturbs me. The ideals of the Olympics, as Baron Pierre de Coubertin resurrected them and as they were originally meant to be, are wonderful.

Hodak: And you think that the '28 team certainly embodied this spirit?

Bennett: I feel that they had 95 percent more of that than any of the subsequent teams that I was aware of.

Hodak: Alongside your career in film and outside of film, what interests have you maintained in the way of hobbies or travels?

Bennett: For many years I have played golf and tennis. I like to garden and I like to walk. We have dogs and every morning my wife and I take a hike for a mile or two with the dogs to keep the bloodstream going. It keeps you alert and feeling well. I am a great believer in exercise in moderation. I think some people go off the deep end and do too much. I can't conceive of how it can be physically beneficial to pound the hard pavement running miles a day after you are 40-45 years of age. And I see people doing it all the time. I just feel that it might be overdoing it. My wife and I enjoy traveling very much. We've been around the world and we've been almost anyplace you can talk about. You name it,



we've been there.

Hodak: And you've been back to Amsterdam in the old stadium?

Bennett: Yes, that was an interesting trip. I went to Amsterdam four or five years ago and went out to the old coliseum to see where I had originally competed. In 1928, the brand new coliseum was completed just hours before the Olympics went into competition. As a matter of fact, the runways were pretty soft and pretty bad. But it was a beautiful coliseum surrounded by open country, grass and trees. It was very pleasant, kind of on the outskirts of Amsterdam. But when I went back to look at it I found a very aged exterior which looked like a commercial building. And it was surrounded by industrial warehouses and buildings of various kinds with a lot of soot, grime and dirt around them. There were streets on all four sides, some with streetcars. About half of the windows were broken out and I inquired about it to the people who were taking me around. They said, "Oh, don't you realize about two weeks ago we had the championship soccer game here and Holland lost. These people don't believe in losing. When they lose they go crazy and tear up the seats, throw them through the windows and do all sorts of things. It will take a little while to refurbish." At any rate, it was quite a different looking place than it had been. I think the stadium was in poorer shape than I was after 60 years, (laughter)

Hodak: Do you care to talk a bit about your family? You've had children?

Bennett: I have two grown children of whom I am very proud. They are both very successful and very active in the community. And I have my lovely wife that I have been married to all these years, one marriage only.

Hodak: You've described the differences, as you see them, between modern athletes, their perceptions, motivations and so on, but, despite these differences you might have some advice to offer

athletes and others.

Bennett: I've never been prompted to give advice to athletes. I am a great admirer of athletic achievement. A dancer, for instance, has tremendous physical requirements. You take the famous Nureyev and people like that, who have gone through a regimen of training, dancing and physical control that is very admirable. I feel that athletics, particularly in high school and college, have been very beneficial to a lot of people, especially underprivileged youngsters who have had an opportunity to do well in society and do well intellectually and to get an education that they might have missed if it weren't for their physical aptitude. And that I applaud, I think that's wonderful. I deplore some of the things that are done whereby just because they have athletic prowess they are excused from their intellectual activities and they grow up to be athletic successes and intellectual morons. That, to me, is putting the wrong emphasis on it. An athlete that excels in any sport has certain natural aptitudes that have been developed and have given them a feeling of accomplishment. Whether they win or lose, the competition, the striving to excel, the regimen and the discipline is beneficial. I wish that more of our young people could get involved in these competitive sports because the discipline and training that they go through to try to improve themselves is fundamental and very good for them and for society. What more can I say? I applaud athletic endeavor.

Hodak: When were you inducted into the University of Washington Hall of Fame?

Bennett: It was about two or three years ago.

Hodak: Were there any athletes that you had competed with at the proceedings?

Bennett: Steve Anderson is a member of it. I think he went in a year ahead of me. He competed in the 1928 Olympics with me. He's

still in Seattle. Most of the inductees were of later years than I although a lot of them were inducted in memoriam. I left Seattle in 1929 and I hadn't been back there for 25 or 30 years. I've been down here in Southern California. For that long period of time I was kind of disassociated from direct contact with the athletic program up there.

Hodak: You still have a little Husky pride?

Bennett: Oh yes, that's true. When their teams come down here and play or wherever they are, I am certainly interested in pulling for them.

Hodak: Well, we've covered a lot of ground. I really appreciate your time and the opportunity to have interviewed you, as does the Amateur Athletic Foundation. Thank you, Mr. Bennett. It's been a pleasure getting to know you.

Bennet: Well, thank you for your interest.