

HECTOR M. DYER
1932 OLYMPIC GAMES
TRACK & FIELD



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1932 OLYMPIC GAMES - LOS ANGELES
400-METER RELAY
Gold Medalist

INTERVIEWED:

October, 1987
Fullerton, California
by George A. Hodak

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.

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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.

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Hodak: I'm in Fullerton, California, visiting with Olympian Hector Dyer, a member of the gold medal 400-meter relay team in the 1932 Olympics. Mr. Dyer, first off I'd like you to tell me when and where you were born and then talk a bit about your family background.

Dyer: I was born on June 2, 1910, in Los Angeles. My father and mother lived in Bakersfield but they figured it would be better if I were delivered in Los Angeles. So I was actually born in Los Angeles at Good Samaritan Hospital. I am an only child. My father was in the oil business. He was a manager of the oil fields for what is now Mobil Oil. We lived in Bakersfield until 1912 when we moved to San Francisco. They ran me out of town for chasing girls. (laughter)

My mother's father was Major William Newton Monroe, the founder of Monrovia. He was a farm boy and his wife was the daughter of a coal-mine owner. They got married quite young—she was 16 and he was 20—but that was alright in those days. He immediately joined the Union Army. He was a big, macho guy with a good shot. He was a good rider, so he was in the cavalry in Texas. She was a Southerner, but she went with him—she wasn't going to let him go. They went all through the Civil War. And when the war was about over she was wondering what they were going to do, and then Lincoln came by. She got a hold of him and said, "Mr. President, have you any suggestions for what we are going to do now?" And he said, "Well, they are trying to find somebody to build a transcontinental railroad clear to California. Why don't you have your husband talk to Collis Huntington and get out to Sacramento?" So her daddy bought her a wagon and a couple of oxen and they went out alone so they could get there in a hurry.

Well, he got the job. There was a \$5,000 prize offered to the team that built the most track in one day, and they won. I don't know who got the prize—I know he didn't. Anyway, there was a big celebration where they drove the final spike in. In the pictures of that, my grandfather is standing right on the front of the cowcatcher. Well, they asked him to give a little speech and he decided to tease Huntington. He said, "Sure, we won. But when he learns it's going to cost him at least twice that much for winning the prize, watch the smile come off that Scotchman's face." You see, they had been wasteful in their methods and left a lot of materials behind as they moved along the line. Well, that was my grandfather's work from there on, various construction projects. Some of his other projects included the construction of a pier at Nome, Alaska, which washed out to sea; a railroad from Nome out to the gold diggings; a seven-mile rail in Peru, six miles of which went straight up the side of a mountain; and a railroad from Los Angeles out to Redlands. His last project was working on the cascades for the L.A. Aqueduct at Newhall.

Later on, he went down to Southern California and ran into [Elias Jackson] "Lucky" Baldwin. Baldwin unloaded a lot of bare land out east of Arcadia. So he took over, and with his resources and whatnot he developed the water, built the town and all the streets. So he named it Monrovia, because in the railroad business via means by, and his name was Monroe—so Monrovia.

My mother was his last child—much younger than the rest of them. He had been in Mexico building a railroad down to Mexico City from El Paso. The money was wiped out in the Mexican Revolution. They had to get the hell out of there. All these people who were working for them were native Indians and Mexicans and they wanted their money, or else. Well, there was no money coming in for my grandfather to pay them with. My grandmother was the thinker, and she said, "We'll go to Nome, Alaska. They won't get us up there." So they got up to Alaska and my mother was about the only woman there. Her mother told her not to get married because the

men there weren't her type of men. But, that's where she got married. (laughter)

She was well protected but my father figured out a way to meet her. He had left his home in Grand Rapids, Michigan, when he was quite young. He moved to Seattle, and then he got the gold fever and moved up to Alaska, where he helped run a hardware store. Well, the doctor had told my mother she needed fresh air for her health and he advised her to take sleigh rides. So when they went to the man who owned a sleigh with a horse, they couldn't get it because it was tied up for my father, Tom Dyer. My grandfather, the major, came over and demanded that he release it. And my father said, "Well, she can have it on one condition—that I go along with her." That's the way it happened.

Hodak: Your father laid out quite a scheme there.

Dyer: Yes. They had their honeymoon on a dog team. His friend had the champion dog team. The snow was icy and the dogs would run so fast they'd dump her out. She got pretty tired of it and she said, "Isn't there any way you can control them?" He said, "Not in polite language." And she said, "Well, you go ahead and control them, don't worry about me. I don't want to get dumped." And she told me that he nearly melted the snow with his language, but they behaved very well after that. (laughter)

So after the gold rush, there was an oil boom in California. My parents moved down to Coalinga and soon afterwards to Bakersfield, at which time I was born. Then my father decided to move up to San Francisco, where the money and the people were that could help him get into oil prospecting and wildcatting. So I began to grow up in San Francisco. Then he moved down to Forth Worth, Texas, and worked on some oil prospecting there. My mother didn't want to go to Texas, so we moved down to Inglewood. My father came back to Los Angeles when the big oil patch came in at Signal Hill.

While I was in San Francisco, my mother was connected with all of the retired professional musicians during World War I. My mother was a very good musician and singer. So she lined up all these retired professional musicians to entertain the troops at the various camps in and around San Francisco. It was an immediate smash hit. She was so busy organizing it that she had no time off at all. And my father said, "You've got to give us Sunday night at home. And that's an order!" So she got the captain to call him up and he blasted him for being un-American. So my father said, "Alright captain, alright," and my mother went on her way.

Well, my mother knew two girls who were ballet dancers, and they were looking for students. They would teach them in their studio where they lived, near our house. So my mother said, "Sure, I've got a son about eight years old. Is that alright?" And they said, "That's fine." So I got a pretty good workout with those ballet instructors. A few years later, when I was 12 years old, I started high school. The class D sprint team was the only way I could earn a letter, and I wanted a letter. So I got onto the team and ran one race, the 50-yard dash, in the Bay League in Santa Monica. I won it, much to everybody's amazement. But I had a foundation in legs, probably due to the ballet work. My mother never cared about track. And my father was always chasing oil all over the place. That was his thing.

Hodak: So after moving to L.A. you attended Inglewood High School?

Dyer: I went to Inglewood for four years, but I was very young. After class D I went into Class C. Then I went into Class A as a junior. I ran the 100 in 10.4. I was about the fourth fastest in the south. The fastest was Jimmy Howell from Inglewood. He lived in El Segundo and would come over on the bus. The next one was Frank Lombardi of L.A. High and the next was Frank Wykoff from Glendale. We'd get into these West Coast high school relays and Inglewood would win because they had two of the faster men together on the same team. I was number seven on an eight-man

team.

Hodak: Did you compete in any of the state meets?

Dyer: Not at that time.

Hodak: How did you wind up at Stanford following high school?

Dyer: Well, I was valedictorian, so I could handle the academic requirements. And my father knew Harry Chandler and he gave me a letter of recommendation. From there on it was easy.

Hodak: I would think a letter of recommendation from Harry Chandler couldn't have hurt. (laughter) Were you recruited as an athlete?

Dyer: No, I was the perfect example of a fellow who is financed by his own family and got good grades. I got no favors. I had to be the model and no deviation. They didn't have to worry about me financially or about my grades.

Hodak: Did you intend to compete in track and field?

Dyer: You bet I did. I had been earning my letters and that was my thing. I went out for track under [Robert L.] "Dink" Templeton. He was a real kick if there ever was one. When I first went out for track I didn't know about the setup they had for us to get our track suits cleaned. Well, I had to have my suit laundered, so I sent it to be cleaned. I came out to the track in my sweat suit, with just my jockstrap underneath. Then Dink said, "We're going to have a time trial in the low hurdles." You see, my first year I ran the low hurdles, as we had a number of good sprinters, Les Hables in particular. After the first year I didn't do the hurdles, just the sprints and relays. Anyway, I tried to tell him but he wouldn't listen to me. He'd say, "Go on, get back to the start. I'm going to time you for 80 yards." Herbie Fleishhacker, Jr. was standing around the start and so I said to him, "What the hell am I

going to do? I don't have on any clothes except my jockstrap." (laughter) He said, "Go do it." So I ran that way and this time I beat [Roger] "Podge" Smith without the sweat suit handicapping me. Then Dink said, "Get back there and get into that sweat suit before you get thrown off the campus." (laughter) But he remembered me after that.

Hodak: What were some of your highlights during your college career? Certainly there were a number of important meets that Stanford competed in.

Dyer: Well, we were supposed to win every race we ran. That was expected of you. We didn't always do it but that was our expectation, and we worked hard. To be a runner, you've got to work hard and run hard. That's why you're good.

Hodak: Are there any particular meets that stand out that you'd like to talk about?

Dyer: Well, I beat Frank Wykoff at Occidental. That time we managed to get our own starter instead of one of Frank's starters. I got a perfect start and got a step ahead of him. He couldn't catch up. In the 220 I felt sympathetic and thought, "Well, I'll just beat him a little bit." They called it a tie but the pictures show that it was not a tie. But I didn't want to make waves. I'm not that kind.

Hodak: What about some of the national meets, the NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] or ICAAAA [Intercollegiate Association of Amateur Athletes of America]?

Dyer: I did run in the NCAA, that was with the Los Angeles Athletic Club in the summertime. But at Stanford we went to the ICAAAA. I went back as a sophomore and got a first and a third and made eight points.

Hodak: And you finished first in the 100?

Dyer: I finished first in the 220 and second in the 100 to Ralph Metcalfe. The guy from USC, Charlie Borah, who was a big sprinter, said, "Don't worry. All these guys are just a bunch of blokes. They're not like we are in California. It doesn't mean anything." So it helped me get cooled off and I wasn't worried. I thought that was real nice of him.

In the final race I had a pulled muscle from over-training on the start. It meant that we lost eight points. And it was the same way with the hurdles. So that's sixteen points that go to the enemy, USC. They won by two points. So it's too bad we didn't win that time. We would have had permanent possession of the \$30,000 silver cup they had at that particular time.

Hodak: I'm curious about your coach. Dink Templeton. What sort of a coach was he?

Dyer: Templeton was a wonderful man on the field events because he had a photographic eye. He took law and he could memorize by just reading something. He had that kind of a mind. He had a daily column in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. He was quite a writer. He'd give me the column and I'd get to downtown Palo Alto and get it to the train going up to San Francisco in time to make the paper. And I know they never changed a thing he wrote; they left them the way he'd written them. I took a course in coaching from him and that really paid off years later when I was in the Navy.

Dink Templeton had a great deal of respect. There's nothing that he would not accomplish if he was challenged. Like drop-kicking a football so far—he would do it; or hitting an oak tree with a golf ball from a great distance—he would hit that tree. He just never failed to come through. And he went out for the high jump in the 1924 Olympics, I think.

Hodak: I think it was the 1920 Olympics. He was coaching at Stanford soon afterward, I believe.

Dyer: Right, so it was 1920. Anyway, they disqualified the western roll. That's what he had developed, and he felt that it was okay or he wouldn't have tried it. So he was out. But on the final day he went out for the long jump and gave the official five bucks and said, "Call out Templeton next time." The guy took it and called out Templeton. He went and jumped and he placed third. They said he hadn't qualified the day before, and he said, "Well, I got third. What do you want to do?" So they let him go and he went on the trip.

Hodak: So that's how he made the Olympic team?

Dyer: Right. And as a coach, Templeton was always winning a clean-sweep in the field events at the ICAAAA. He had more than five fellows who could qualify for any of those field events. One day he and Herbie Fleishhacker were carrying on about who was going to get to go back to the ICAAAA in the shot put. So Dink said, "Okay, you can go if you throw it out past 45 feet," and he stuck a match in the ground right at 45 feet. Herbie put the shot and he struck the match. It lit and it didn't break the match. That got into *Ripley's Believe It or Not*.

Hodak: You had a number of notable teammates at Stanford at this time.

Dyer: Of course everyone knows Ben Eastman. He came over from San Mateo with his brother Sam. Sam was a good quarter-miler and Ben was a good half-miler; though they were each good in both of those events. Ben had the ability to beat everybody by many yards. He didn't look like much of an athlete but he could sure get out and do his thing.

They timed me once when they had to have an anchorman to go up to Seattle. Dink said, "Run the quarter-mile. Let's see if you can be an anchorman." Well, I had never trained for it. If you train for the 100, you can't run the 220, and vice versa. And here I had to run the 440. So I said, "How do you run it?" And Dink said.

"Just blast it the whole blankety-blank way, that's all." So I blasted it and I got around to the straightaway in the final and I started to walk. I just couldn't run anymore. I crossed the line and Harry Hayward said, "That was 50 flat with that walk. Don't say anything to Dink, or that I told you that." Dink had enough guys for the relay team anyway, so we just kept that a secret—even though the time was pretty good.

Hodak: What about others at Stanford such as Eric Krenz or Harlow Rothert?

Dyer: They were wonderful athletes. Rothert always made four letters. He was really into everything. He was a very quiet and modest fellow. He never got excited or anything.

At one meet, the shot putter from USC was getting ready to put his shot and Eric went over to say hello, and he ignored him. The fellow was kind of nonplussed. So he told Dink that he was pulling the "statue of liberty." That seemed to make Dink a little mad. So at the next meet we had with USC, I was telling Dink that I didn't get keyed up. I'd been running so much I wasn't keyed up. So he said, "I want you to promise you'll do something for me." And I said, "Well, what is it?" He said, "Just say you'll do it, will you?" So I said, "Sure." He said, "You go over to Frank Wykoff and say, 'Hello, Frank' and if he ignores you, haul off and smack him right in the kisser. Now you promised, go on and do it." So I walked over to him, wondering what he was going to do. I was kind of nervous, thinking I might have to punch Frank. I thought that might be a regular thing for all of them to do. So I walked over and said, "Hello, Frank." He looked at me and just said, "Hello." So I came back and said, "He said hello." And Dink said, "You damned fool." (laughter)

Hodak: I think you had a bit of a character for a coach. What about combining academics with your track? How did that work out?

Dyer: Well, I managed. I wasn't any top student—I was a C and a B

student. I majored in economics. I didn't know what to do. One of my composition teachers said I ought to be a writer and I thought that would be good, but my father thought that was for the birds: "You've got to get out and make money." I probably would have made more money if I was a writer. My dad didn't think that you should just settle into one profession—he thought that was a rut—so he just advised me to be a businessman. I asked him how I should go about that. He replied, "Well, you could be an apprentice for a second-story burglar." He was being sarcastic, you see. I guess he thought there were a lot of crooks around, but at the same time he thought I'd better get acquainted with business. So that's why I studied economics. I probably would have gone to graduate business school, but my father died and I went into the oil business after school.

Hodak: Getting back to the track. How often would you train? What were your workouts like?

Dyer: We trained five days a week until it was Easter or summertime. Then we'd train twice a day. We'd get out there and we'd work up a sweat. We'd work on starts. We'd work on timing the race. We'd do strides—220 strides. I ran a 22 flat in the 220 at Kezar Stadium one time. There was a 40-mile tail wind. The straightaway runs right into the curve where the bleachers are. I was going so fast with the wind behind me that I almost ran up over the seats clear out of the stadium. I couldn't stop, I just had to keep going. I don't know why I didn't trip. But everybody got a laugh out of that.

Hodak: I'm curious about some of the mechanics involved in perfecting your stride as a sprinter. The most important thing, I presume, is the start.

Dyer: Well, the finish is important too. You have to have your conditioning. The LAAC track man, Boyd Comstock, said you could get that in a jog. You don't have to kill yourself to get your wind

up. And then work on your speed. Just riding horseback or going dancing will show up on the stopwatch. I went out to a farm one time and sat on a horse, but didn't ride it. And Dink said, "Where were you this weekend?" It showed up in my time and he was onto me. I hadn't done anything wrong except sit on a horse.

Hodak: What about your start? What was your approach to the start?

Dyer: My approach was bum because I was so big. I'd hunch down and I'd look like an ostrich struggling to get going. There was a broken down brick fence nearby, and Dink thought maybe I could put bricks under my hands when I started and it would help. I was flatter and it showed up; two bricks under each hand worked just fine. [Glenn] "Pop" Warner came over to visit Dink and he was interested in this situation. The next day he had a big gunnysack full of wooden blocks that he'd made in his garage. They were one brick thick and they had a hole in them. He had some long spikes and a wooden mallet so you could drive them into the hard soil and they wouldn't roll over. So next time we had a meet with USC we brought these things out and all hell broke loose. They'd say, "You've got springs in those things!" and all this and that. And the officials kept changing their minds. I went to Dink and said, "They keep changing all the time. I'd like to have them settle on one thing. What am I going to do?" And he said, "I don't give a darn. Do whatever you want to." So I ran without the blocks and took third place—which was terrible. That upset him and he called all the men on the team, the track men, and said, "You're going to use blocks all day long, no matter what you do." So none of them got any points. I was the only one that made any points. Now, if I had run with the blocks, well. Dink would have loved me for that. He was that way.

Hodak: The AAU had not approved starting blocks yet?

Dyer: Yes, this was before that. So Dink was talking to Bebe Daniels and Ben Lyon, who were movie people and friends of his. She said.

"You'll never get that approved. Dink." And he said, "I'm going to do it next year and I'm going to put your picture on all sides of those things."

Hodak: And these blocks that Templeton developed were different than those eventually approved by the AAU?

Dyer: Yes, the blocks he worked on were for your hands; the blocks that came into use were the foot-blocks.

Anyway, in my event they treated me like a prima donna. They'd have me stay in the dressing room until it was time to come work up a sweat, do my race and then get back there and wait for the final one. I'd go home and people would ask who did this and who did that, and I'd have to say, "I don't know, I wasn't there." I didn't see anything. They didn't want me to get out in the sunlight. (laughter)

Hodak: What sort of stride did you run with?

Dyer: I had a nine-foot stride and the average stride is seven feet. In the pictures, I am up off the ground a few inches and nobody else is. Why is that? Well, I have a thrust and when I am running it's like being on a motorcycle—you turn on the juice. I turn on the juice mentally. When I ran I would dig off the ground with my tiptoes. That was my thrust. When I started the race I tried to get a terrific burst of acceleration and keep my weight leaning forward. Then I'd try to take as big a step as possible. That's where you get additional speed, by taking bigger and faster steps as you accelerate. But I ran way off the ground; that's something the other guys didn't seem to do. Little "Wee Willie" Carr, the famous 100-meter runner from the Olympics, had an 11-foot stride. He'd just lope along like a gazelle. We'd work out together at the Village and I couldn't keep up with him.

Hodak: By contrast, I read where Eddie Tolan had a six-foot stride.

Dyer: He's a little fellow too. A sad thing was that Metcalfe was the other black sprinter and they were put in the same room. Little Tolan was trying to psych him all the time. Metcalfe said, "Gee, I wish I'd been anywhere else. He's just driving me crazy. All the time he's rattling me." In the 100 meters there was such a close finish that even with these cameras there was no way to tell. So they gave it to the little fellow because he was ahead, but another step and he wouldn't have been ahead because the other guy was coming up so fast. In the 200, Metcalfe had the pole position and the fellow laying out the distance for the lanes staggered the pole twice the length it should have been. Why? Because he had the pole. Well, the pole shouldn't have any more of a handicap than any other lane. I know Metcalfe knew about it because I talked with him about it. I don't know where the official got the idea that the pole should have an extra handicap. Nothing was done about it and at the finish Metcalfe was just that much behind.

Hodak: Yes, I believe there were other similar mistakes made in the '32 Games. There are a couple of other things I wanted to ask you about regarding track. How big a problem were pulled muscles?

Dyer: You would warm up so that you were limber. If you had any stiffness from being out of shape, you shouldn't strain your muscles. You get a good warm-up and don't overdo it. Because sometimes, especially when you're starting out the season, you'll be real stiff. Don't try to strain your muscles to get a real quick reaction because the big muscles pull against the little ones and they don't balance themselves off. In running, we would always develop the forward muscles, not the stop muscles. You get out on the sand and the action in the sand, walking along or running, slows you down because you're developing the wrong muscles. And you don't go dancing. I went over to Catalina and I was dancing backwards with this girl so I wouldn't have to do that, and they threw me off the floor. She was so nervous about that. They thought it was in bad taste to dance backwards. I shouldn't even have been dancing. The little things like that are critical when the times are so close, as

in the sprints.

Hodak: In your track career, what was your best time in the 100?

Dyer: 9.5. I thought I was a little better in the 220. But I did 9.5 three or four times.

Hodak: Did you ever run indoor back East?

Dyer: No, I only ran indoors once, up in Seattle the first year their new facility was built.

Hodak: And you competed for the Los Angeles Athletic Club in the summertime?

Dyer: Yes. One summer I ran back in the NCAA at Soldier Field and I got second. Charlie Farmer, from Chapel Hill, was third . . . first place was Ralph Metcalfe. Charlie Farmer had never been anywhere, he was just from the South. We ran on a Friday night and Saturday. So I took him to see a live show—he'd never been to one. It was a Mae West show called Sex. She had not yet been in the movies then. Well, that was quite a show. And boy, if this fellow from the South didn't put on a show. He had no inhibitions; he hooted and stomped and hollered. The show was such a breach of propriety anyway, and he was right in the spirit of it. (laughter) And all the women just hollered too. This boy would let off his hoots and they got a big kick out that. The trouble was, he balled me out the next day when he only got third. If I hadn't taken him to see Mae West he might have gotten first, or at least beat me. He thought that was a dirty trick. But he was just kidding, of course. Anyway, he did have a good time. Then I brought him out to L.A. for two weeks afterwards, and he really enjoyed that. He looked better in my clothes than I did.

In 1935 I was married and my wife and I were going to Tahoe for our honeymoon. I had bought a 1935 Ford, but it didn't have

air-conditioning. It was in June so it was quite hot and we weren't wearing too much clothes, you see. Well, the ICAAAA was coming out to Berkeley for the first time because they had the new track, Edwards Field, all set up. So I said to my wife, "This is your honeymoon. And you know, Charlie Farmer's coach always brings a carload of athletes out to the NCAA, and we're apt to pass them along the way." And she said, "Oh, don't speak to them," because we had some of our clothes off—I was in just my shorts and she wasn't wearing much either. So here they come, just after I had said it—the timing was perfect. And all the guys are waving and hollering. And she said, "Keep going, don't stop." Well, I said, "I'm going to stop. I'm not going to do this." So she said, "What am I going to do?" And I said, "Just pull your sunsuit over you and nothing will happen." Well, they all came up and they leaned in the window and said, "Where you going? You're going in the wrong direction. You should be going to Berkeley for the meet." And I said, "Well, I'm on my honeymoon." They said, "Boy, it sure looks like it, the way you are dressed." (laughter)

Hodak: (Laughter) Okay, I'll move on to the next question. Now, prior to the 1932 Olympics you competed at Stanford in the tryouts, which also served as the AAU championships for that year. Tell me about the tryouts. What events did you try out for?

Dyer: Well, I had been injured my senior year from over-training on the starts. And then I graduated in 1931 so the coach at the LAAC, Boyd Comstock, actually coached me for the Olympics. And he thought I should contend in only one race. He thought there might be three or four trials. Well, there were only two. So I only ran the 200. When the gun goes, I go. I didn't jump the gun but I was ahead of everybody, and the starter stopped me and said, "Once more like that and you're out."

Hodak: Was this John McHugh?

Dyer: Yes, John McHugh. He wanted them all to go out even. He had

quite a fetish about that. He didn't want anyone to get too good a start so he'd hold us there all day until we settled down. So I went off slowly—and you don't do that in that kind of competition. Every one of us finished within a couple three feet of each other. It was hard to pick them out. I would say there were at least eight men at the trials who could run a 9.5 100. Tolan, Metcalfe and [George] Simpson got first, second, and third. Well, what are you going to do for the relays? Well, they're going to have enough running to do in the Olympics so let's just pick four guys. Well, they didn't happen to be black. So I said, "It's the white man's consolation—the relay team." (laughter)

After that I went up to see a fraternity brother for the weekend. When I came home Sunday night on the train, I bought a paper and found out that I had made the sprint relay team. But they didn't know where I was! They were trying to find me. I was through running and I was going back to answer the phone for my dad's office. So when I read that, I got off and thought I would go up to the training table at Stanford where the team was and maybe they'd give me a free meal. I went in there and they gave me a big cheer and they kept me on the team. And "Bullet Bob" Kiesel, a sprinter from Cat, hadn't initially made the team either. He had gone home to Idaho and was kind of disappointed. And then when they contacted him, well, they had to do a little persuading. So he made the relay team also.

Hodak: And who were the other members of the sprint relay team?

Dyer: Well, as I said, there was Bob Kiesel from Berkeley, a wonderful runner who was a little behind me in time; Emmett Toppino, who was from Louisiana; I was number three, I ran on the curve in the race; and then Frank Wykoff was the anchorman. We won because we had four men who could tie the world's record in the 100-yard dash consistently. The other teams—Germany and Italy—only had one man that could do that on each team. So we were yards ahead of them.

Hodak: So how then did the race go? I know you set a world's record.

Dyer: There were some problems. Bob Kiesel was embarrassed by his mother's bragging about him from the stand. He wouldn't keep his warm-up jacket on. It was cold weather at that time and he got chilled. So he ran without being properly warmed up. He pulled his muscle at the end of the first leg and he had to quit. He limped in and handed it to Toppino, who was able to stop at the very end of the 20-yard mark and take it out of his hand instead of passing it in to the arm on the hip. But when you stop in a race like that it costs you. Even with the handicap—being on the pole—when they got to the third man, me, I started even with everybody else. I was right up with them. So it looked real good to my mother. She had never seen a race before. I said, "Yeah, I ran faster." (laughter) And Frank Wykoff got a very poor take-off because he wanted to do it his own way.

Hodak: What do you mean by that?

Dyer: Well, he was timing the passing without doing the eight-foot scratch step, which gives you the good timing and means you don't have to worry about when to run and when not to run. It just works out. But he wouldn't do that. So on the final pass I just blasted way ahead of him and as he came by me I screamed at him, "Get going!" They could hear it all over the stadium. But he was already ahead.

Hodak: Despite these problems you still set a world's record at 40 flat.

Dyer: If we had only not had those two problems, we'd have finished another second quicker. We had the material. We could have done it.

Hodak: Let's talk in general about the Olympics. What do you recall about some of the pageantry behind the Olympics? Did the Opening Ceremonies leave a big impression on you?

Dyer: The one thing I noticed was that the Americans, when they came around in the marching parade, acted like a bunch of hooligans. They came last, being the host team, and were the biggest team. And they were just carrying on. Buster Crabbe and Georgia Coleman started with some Kleenex, sniffing it from nose to nose. Then they'd laugh and drop it after awhile. The girls would kick off their high-heeled shoes and pull their little hats back on the back of their heads. Then they let out the pigeons—1,000 pigeons. The pigeons can't just fly over the grade; they have to spiral to get high enough to get out of the stadium. Of course, every time they'd go over the Americans would cover their heads and go ducking around. People were quite shocked. I felt that was kind of too bad. They're still that way, even now.

One of the boys, I won't mention his name, didn't like the silly little tam with the red and white pom-pom. He was carrying on a great row with them. He wanted to walk bareheaded and they wouldn't let him. So he finally came out on the end and he was shaking along, furious, all by himself. It was kind of funny because his tassel would bounce up and down as he stomped around. His buddy was sitting up in the stands and he insulted him. He said he looked like a little pansy. Boy, if he didn't react. The salute that he gave the tribune section wasn't the proper salute. (laughter)

Hodak: What about the Olympic Village? How did you like those quarters?

Dyer: They were wonderful. The champion hammer thrower was an Irishman named [Patrick] O'Callaghan, and he was way out ahead of everybody. And Dink got to him and asked him what his technique was. He said, "Well, most guys get whirling so fast they just let it go. I stay ahead of the whirl and when I let go I have a half-slant. That's the difference." Anyway, he wrote his name everywhere he could, bathrooms, etc: "O'Callaghan, the tenth champion." He hadn't competed but he knew he was going to win. So he wrote it all over. He'd come in at night and he'd be feeling his drinks. He'd take a big poke at the wall, which was of course

fiberboard, so he could have fresh air in his face. And he'd take one of those wicker chairs and he'd heave it. It would go way over to about the second row of houses and hit the roof and the legs would go down through. They'd just clean it up every day.

Hodak: So it became a routine after a few days.

Dyer: Yes, right away it was a routine.

Hodak: So who did you room with in the Village?

Dyer: [James] Gordon, the LAAC quarter-miler, was my assigned roommate, but I stayed at my parents' home in Inglewood. Bill Carr was a big hotshot from Pennsylvania. It was between him and Ben Eastman; it was a big duel and Ben Eastman had the record. And Carr was annoyed by the people from the studio. They wanted him to test for a movie because he was attractive and prominent. But he wasn't the least bit interested in that "great opportunity." They pestered him, so I had him come to my home. He stayed at my parents' home in Inglewood. It was not far in a car. So he stayed there and was comfortable.

Then my coach from Stanford called me up—he was laid up—and said, "Go down and tell Ben not to worry about the half-hour delay being a big advantage for the little guy." You see, they just decided that they would wait a half-hour so they could rest between the preliminaries and the finals in the 400. He thought it would be to Ben's disadvantage comparatively and he thought he'd be nervous. He was laid up and couldn't do it, so he asked me to do it. So there I was; and they were sitting there together on the bench in their dressing room. They were very silent, kind of brooding, just concentrating. I had to tell them what Dink told me. One guy was staying at my parents' house in Inglewood, Wee-Willie Carr; the other was my Stanford track mate for years, Ben Eastman; and the other was the LAAC quarter-miler. Cordon, who was my roommate at the Village. It was kind of awkward.

Hodak So how did they respond?

Dyer: Nobody said a thing. It was as if I hadn't even been there. They didn't acknowledge me, they Just sat there. They weren't about to be interfered with. So I just went on my way. It was most interesting to see the three of them huddled together, concentrating so intensely.

Hodak Were you able to see the 100-meter race?

Dyer: Yes, I saw it. Ben Eastman had never had anybody up to him, they were always behind. He tied up and at the end of the race Carr was just loping along, breaking the world's record.

Hodak: Did that surprise you?

Dyer: Well, it did because I hadn't seen Ben like that. I'd worked out with Carr, but we were just jogging, it wasn't a race. But he did have a big stride. I knew that I couldn't keep up with him, the way he had these big loping strides.

Hodak Tell me about the awards presentation for your gold medal.

Dyer: Well, we had to wait because one of the other teams, either Italy or Germany, protested the first pass. As I said, Bob Kiesel was chilled, he didn't keep warming up. And he pulled his muscle and he was lame. He couldn't run and he stopped to a walk in the passing. The man that he was going in to pass to, Emmett Toppino, had to stop on the 20-yard line. As Bob fell, he put the baton in Toppino's hand. They weren't moving. But they still got up to me ahead of everybody else, even with the handicap. So from then on the race was ours. The protest meant: "What are they going to do?" Usually they let the visiting teams take it just to be polite. So we had cameras on us. The cameras go like 100 shots a second. They had to get the pictures developed, so we had to wait for that for an hour or so. So we just sat around in our sweat suits

waiting. They cleared us. Toppino was within the line so they couldn't say it was wrong. So that's how we got our place.

Then the marathon was to be finished about then. This was the last day of the track and field events and everybody was expecting to see that finish. I had made contact with the Argentine marathon fellow because he was training where we were training at Bovard Field. We'd go out twice a day and he'd go out once a day—all day. He didn't go twice a day, he just kept running all day. He'd been there the year before for the L.A. Times Marathon and burned his feet up because he ran barefooted on the hot pavement. He'd been there all year. He was not bilingual; he couldn't speak anything but Spanish. And I was running around trying to push the sale of the Olympic Village houses on options. I thought that would be good. I had to have a little income somewhere so I didn't have to punch the clock. So, I said, "Do you want to ride around with me?" And he said, "Si." He'd ride but he wouldn't say anything. So as he took off in the Olympics and was going out the tunnel, I was waiting for my final race. He gave me a wave and everybody looked at me like: "Who the hell are you that he waves at?" At the finish, he came out the tunnel at the end of the field and before he got around there were four other guys behind him. That was the first time they had been that close; usually the leader would be all alone. He sagged into the arms of his other Argentine teammates. So I went up to see him while he was in the shower. He was barely able to stand, but he was not being supported. I said, "How much did you lose?" And he said, "Five pounds." I said, "That's mostly water. Where did you go?" And he said, "Redondo." I said, "Redondo! And you got a medal?" He said, "Si." Then I said, "I've got something to tell you. I got a medal too. I ran a quarter of one lap and had three of the fastest runners on my team helping me get my medal. I don't think you're so smart as I am." He just shook his head and laughed.

At the end of the whole thing all of us stood up there and they took our picture and they played the music. They gave us our medals.

which were full-sized medals, not like the usual relay medals, which are miniatures. People have asked me how I felt standing there waiting. I said, "Quite conspicuous." I could hear people say Hector all over that stadium, because I lived there. My dad would save the news clippings and had said he'd be my press agent. But things got a little out of hand because there was so much press when the Olympics came up. So I said, "Have you been keeping all those clippings?" And he said, "I kept them up for five wastebaskets and it was a fire hazard, so I burned them."

Hodak: Are there other events you recall?

Dyer: Well, in the discus throw, a fellow from France named [Jules] Noel made an outstanding heave, a little out of line, but it was within the bounds. But nobody saw it because they were watching Bid Miller win the final of the pole vault and they had their backs turned. And they said, "Well, go take another throw." But you just don't go take another throw like that. He was at Pickfair at the party for the athletes afterwards and was drowning his sorrows in brandy. Like everyone else, I saw Bill Miller make that jump. It was his final jump and he made it. He really came from nowhere as far as the public was concerned. He became a general in the Army. He's retired now and his father's potato patch is now a shopping center in San Diego. Life's nice and he has three lovely homes here and there.

And I met Paavo Nurmi. He was a very fine, nice looking man. He wasn't running at all because of his problem. He'd never sign an autograph. He gave me a couple of his pamphlets and I said, "I appreciate your attitude about not signing autographs. But I'd be very glad if you would sign my books." So he went ahead and signed them in beautiful penmanship. I asked him why he signed them for me and he said, "You sportsman." That's why he did it. I haven't got them now; somebody got away with them. My daughter doesn't even let me have my medals. (laughter)

Hodak: Now, you mentioned you met Will Rogers during the Olympics.

Dyer: This was before the races. We were all out in the Village and Twentieth Century Fox studios invited the American track team to come to lunch where Will Rogers would be the speaker. So he had a few cracks about everybody. He said that Wee-Willie Carr, the most famous athlete there, was a small, dainty fellow. Carr didn't like that at all. And Will Rogers said I was lost because I was thinking about selling those Olympic houses. I tried to sell him one and he said, "See my wife. She handles the money." (laughter)

We saw a test made with Joan Bennett. She was impressive because she knew her lines perfectly. When Marion Davies was making her test she said, "I've only had one bottle of champagne." You'd never know she had a drink. But she knew her lines perfectly and she'd never take a second test. That was it.

Another interesting story is when I met William Randolph Hearst during the Olympics. I knew [Frederick] "Feg" Murray, who had been a hurdler for Stanford and a medalist in the 1920 Olympics. Feg was working for newspapers in New York as a cartoonist, but he wasn't making a lot of money and wanted to get into the movie end of that business. Well, a friend of mine, Bill Hollingsworth, my roommate in the DKE [Delta Kappa Epsilon] house, was a good friend of Marion Davies. So I told Bill that Feg wanted to meet Hearst. He was dating a friend of Marion's and was up at San Simeon a lot on weekends. So I asked Bill if he'd talk to Marion about it. So Marion sent a signal to Hearst that Bill was bringing Feg and I over for lunch. Well, Marion didn't really invite Hearst, she just told the staff to prepare a meal for us. You see, Marion knew the best way to get Hearst to come was to not invite him. And of course he was always spying on her. So Hearst showed up and barged in there at MGM expecting to see the three of us with Marion. But Marion was just eating her lunch with Lady Ashley, and we were down in the commissary. Then he understood he'd been maneuvered, you see. So as long as he was there he figured he might as well go ahead and

have lunch. He came down to see us in the commissary. He knew who I was and just said hello. But he was pretty friendly. He got on pretty well with Feg. He liked him immediately and signed him to a two-year contract. So that all worked out pretty well.

Hodak So Hearst was friendly, easy to talk with?

Dyer: He was friendly enough, yes. The thing that surprised me was how young he looked. He didn't look at all like I thought he did.

Hodak You certainly had your share of interesting encounters at the Olympics. Now, how did you get involved with the sale of Olympic housing units?

Dyer: Well, I had to be creative. Here I was training, and you have to do your training and that comes first. But I wanted to be able to earn a little money. The Depression was on and my father had no business at that time. So I asked them if they'd let us put up an Olympic house at B.H. Dyas Sporting Goods on Seventh and Olive. It was in the basement. It was a big store—the best one in town. They were selling out and closing their business shortly. So I ended up selling a little over 200 of those houses at 30 dollars apiece.

Hodak Before we discuss your professional career, there's one more episode in your track career—the British Empire Games.

Dyer: Well, I'd made a deal with my father that I would not run any more after the Olympics. Of course, when I won it my father said, "Now you have no place to go. That's it. Forget about track." Well, the next day they wanted me to run in the British Empire Games. It was a medley race, different races, and you get one point to win a race. I said, "Well, I have this understanding that I am not to do any more running." So they said, "Let us talk to your father." And they talked him into letting me run one more time.

Hodak: And this was held in San Francisco?

Dyer: Yes, in Kezar Stadium in San Francisco. I had relatives there who showed up. They were fans. This was a normal thing for them. They were always around. Then I had a date from Bel-Air. She had her grandmother's towncar. She was showing two horses at Menlo the next day and I was invited to that.

Well, in the passing of the stick, I was used to the eighth step and not twisting around to get the stick. In this race, the boys didn't have that experience. I had to do it their way. I put my foot out right under their foot. Well, their shoes had long, new spikes and they went clear through my track shoe, ripping it to pieces. Sure it hurt, but it wasn't impossible agony. It was under a tight shoe. So I just said, "Well, this is it. I'm not going to the horse show tomorrow." I bled all over the bunk that night. I was out two months with blood poisoning. So that kind of changed things.

Hodak: So that was your final race? And did you manage to win your event?

Dyer: Yes. We ran two different medleys. Each fellow would run a different distance. I'd run a short distance and somebody would run a longer distance in the same race. Then there would be another race with the same mix like that. They had field events too. And we won it by one point. So if I hadn't been there we probably wouldn't have won the meet.

Hodak: Now, tell me about your family as well as your professional career. What sort of things did you take up in the way of business following the Olympics and your college days?

Dyer: Well, I had to readjust my life because while I was at Stanford I was in the DKE fraternity with a lot of wealthy boys. It was quite glamorous. You'd come down here and go out to Bel-Air to [Alphonso] Bell's house and dance with his daughters. They were

there all the time. Then, my father died and my mother sold the house and we moved into a bungalow court. And I had to get a job. So some of my father's friends got me a job when they were laying people off at General Petroleum, which is Mobil Oil now. I was a summer relief truck driver and I had to sell gasoline to the General Petroleum stations in Beverly Hills. There were a lot of Stanford people I'd run into. Well, I wouldn't run into them in the truck, but I would say hello to them. (laughter) They'd look at me in amazement like: "What are you doing here?"

I was married in 1935. So after working at various jobs I entered the Navy. I served as a naval ammunition officer in charge of the 11th Naval District. After the war I had to start thinking about where I was going. We had a friend from track, Maynard Shove, in Shell Oil's personnel department. Well, my only experience in the oil business was vicarious—through my father's work. I went over and met with Loren Hillman and I ended up working as a broker for Hillman while also buying up leases for Shell in Sacramento. I continued to work for brokers in the oil business. I worked up in North Dakota for Union Oil. From there I went down to Midland, Texas, and that was interesting. I think we were there for about ten years. Then I came back to Los Angeles and worked here before moving up to Walnut Creek, California.

Hodak: How large a family do you have?

Dyer: I had four children: three sons, Tom, Bill and John, and one daughter, Mary. There's still three that are alive. Those three each have three children. The best athletes of the grandchildren are the girls. The girls are all built like me—tall and slender and very cute. (laughter) I remember when my daughter was in the first grade and she won the sprint for the first graders in the town of Midland. So she told her mother and her mother said, "You better watch out. The boys won't be able to catch you." Well, she never ran again. So now that's not repeated with her children; they really encourage them. Their father is very athletic and he's a

coach for volleyball. Their name is Rexroth. They're good in volleyball and he's right out there with them. One of my granddaughters is already being looked at by UCLA for volleyball, and she's only a freshman in high school. I should also mention that one of my grandsons, Dean, is a very good water polo player. He played at UCLA and is now in school at UC Santa Barbara and on the team there. Their parents go to see everything. My folks never even saw me run until the Olympics. That was worth seeing as a spectacle, but getting out and running seemed silly to them.

Hodak: Were you involved in the promotion of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics?

Dyer: Yes, but I was in Northern California. I lived in Walnut Creek and they had a spirit group there. It was small but very exciting. There were some good athletes and they were really working on it. They have wonderful relationships with business. The San Francisco area is that way. They really go all out. So we had lots of opportunities.

One opportunity was to come down to Disneyland in March of 1987 and ride in the parade and sign autographs. That was set up to raise money for the Olympic Training Site at Colorado Springs. In those eight days they made a half a million dollars, which was a record for them. Then I was given a free trip to Colorado Springs. I had my Olympic gold medal, so I was kind of the star of the show. They had me run some on the track. It wasn't much, but it was something for all the media people, I suppose.

I also was on the Spirit Team. At one event where I was the speaker, I had to walk up a number of stairs up to the stage to get to the microphone. As I was walking up the stairs, the guy at the microphone said, "He might've been a sprinter once, but it's going to take a little time." Boy, after that I took quick steps, and they all laughed because I practically leaped up there. (laughter)

Hodak: And how do you look back on your competition in the Olympics?

Dyer: The gold medal—that's important to people. In Greece, the athletes were taken care of for the remainder of their life. I talked to a Korean just recently and he said they'll do the same thing with a gold medal winner in Korea.

I was a small person in high school for my age. I was just a little guy. I didn't even weigh 90 pounds. So it was an interest for me and a great satisfaction to win a race. That kept me going. It kept getting more and more important. Finally, I managed to get into the Olympics. I wasn't a big winner, which I might have been if I had gotten a proper start or if I had run in both races.

Hodak: You might have won the 100 or the 200, too?

Dyer: Yes, I think I could have won them both, but I didn't.

Hodak: I think you did pretty well.

Dyer: To get a gold medal, yes. So I feel very grateful that I was able to do it. I appreciate that. Just like today, here we are . . . it's the same idea.

Hodak: What comparisons do you see between today's track competition and that of your era?

Dyer: Well, the training and all is so much more involved. The biggest difference in the Olympics is with the development of television and the money that is generated. I think the American athletes are a little handicapped because athletes are supported better elsewhere. But I think the athletes themselves are pretty much the same type of people—they just are better.

Hodak: Any advice you'd like to offer?

Dyer: Well, I took ten years and I would suggest to anybody to get in and give it your full speed. It's worth it eventually but you really have to hustle. You have to be an artist in how you do some things. And you have to work hard at it—no matter how much talent you have.

Hodak: Well, I appreciate you allowing me to come out and visit with you. It is certainly a privilege to have met you. I know the Amateur Athletic Foundation also appreciates your cooperation on this project. It's been very interesting for me, Hector. I hope to see you again.

Dyer: Well, it's an opportunity that I appreciate myself. I'm very delighted to do whatever I can.