

FRANK C. GRAHAM
1932 & 1936 OLYMPIC GAMES
WATER POLO



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.

FRANK C. GRAHAM

1932 OLYMPIC GAMES - LOS ANGELES
WATER POLO TEAM

Bronze Medalist

1936 OLYMPIC GAMES - BERLIN
WATER POLO TEAM

INTERVIEWED:

March, 1988
Anaheim, California
by George A. Hodak

FRANK C. GRAHAM

Interviewer: George A. Hodak

Hodak: Today I am in Anaheim, California, interviewing Frank Graham, who competed in the 1932 and 1936 Olympics on the American water polo team. Before we get to that, we have a lot to cover in terms of how you developed an interest in swimming, diving and water polo. First of all, tell me your date of birth, where you were born, and then talk a bit about your family background.

Graham: I was born way back when, October 12, 1909, in South Pasadena, California. I was the youngest kid in the family. I had a brother who was seven years older, a sister five years older than I, and another brother that was about two-and-a-half years older. I started out living in Altadena in the foothills. I spent most of my first few winters climbing the mountains up to the Alpine Tavern at Mt. Lowe.

Hodak: Was the tram still there that went up Mt. Lowe?

Graham: Yes, we went up to Echo Mountain on the tram. We'd take a sled—crazy knuckleheads—and slide down from Echo Mountain to where the trestle came, and then we'd have to get off because there wasn't enough snow on the trestle. It's a wonder we didn't kill ourselves, but we lived through all that. Of course, we climbed up the pole line to Echo Mountain and then we'd go around through the paths back to Mt. Lowe. We'd go over the top of the hill to get to Pine Flats and stay for a week or so there. So we had a lot of good outdoor life.

Hodak: Your parents gave you pretty free rein?

Graham: They didn't worry about us too much. Of course, when I was nine years old my dad was killed by a Red Car, a Pacific Electric Red Car, coming back from Winchester where he had a ranch. So I was brought up mainly by my mother, my brother and my sister . . . but not so much my sister. My brother was like my dad.

When I was nine years old I was on my dad's ranch and I mashed a finger on my right hand, and that taught me to use my left hand a little because I just couldn't use my right hand. But I never did turn out to be a left-hander, I stayed with the right hand. It helped later on in water polo—that I could pass as good with my left hand as my right hand. At least I learned to be semi-ambidextrous. Although I definitely stayed a right-hander.

Hodak: And so your family then moved from Altadena to Pasadena?

Graham: My dad died and we stayed in Altadena while my older brother and my sister went through high school. My brother, who was near my age, had a slight handicap, and we were then in the same year in school. After we spent a summer at Santa Monica swimming and having a good time, my mother had a house built in Pasadena about three blocks from the high school. So I grew up, as far as real sports were concerned, right next to the high school. I was lucky.

Hodak: And this was Pasadena High School, which is now Pasadena Junior College?

Graham: Well, I went through high school in Pasadena. Of course, I went to grammar school in Altadena. In grammar school I played every sport, whatever came up.

I saw Charlie Paddock one day at Tournament Park in Pasadena, before the Rose Bowl was built. Three events earlier I had won the sack race for ten-year olds. (laughter)

Hodak: Did you take formal lessons in swimming?

Graham: The background of my swimming is that I didn't learn to swim until I was about nine years old. But then I learned. And every day, every summer, my brother and I would ride our bikes down the hill to Brookside Park. I'd dive for pennies and make enough money to get into Brookside Park the next day. So it didn't cost me a penny. And I had a time at Brookside Park . . . and you know how lifeguards are. I was a little guy, only weighed about 80 pounds or so. They got me on that 10-foot springboard and it's a wonder they didn't kill me. They got me to try everything there was. I learned to do a one-and-a-half and other silly dives off the 10-foot springboard. And that started me in diving. They thought it was fun and to me it was fun, too. I was proud to be able to do something for the lifeguards.

Hodak: So did you develop pretty serious ambitions in diving?

Graham: No. At that time, they used to have summer meets where they'd give merchandise out. I can't remember what all I won, but I won a sweater and other merchandise. It was in swimming mainly. It was a 50-meter pool, which was one of the few 50-meter pools in Southern California. So I learned to be a "water dog," you might say, just before I went to high school. By the time I went to high school, I thought I was going to be a diver because the lifeguards told me I was the greatest thing alive. (laughter) I wasn't but I believed them at the time.

Hodak: What turned you away from diving and more towards swimming and water polo?

Graham: Well, I went to high school and earned my letter in diving in my freshman year. I wasn't big enough to swim yet; that is, in the high school competition. Our team had won the state championship that year. I can name a few of them, but they won the state championship in my sophomore and junior years at Pasadena High School. Don Novis was one of the divers at Pasadena High School. He later was a tenor at the time Bing Crosby came along. Then

when I got to my junior year they elected me captain. I was captain both years, junior and senior. I don't know why—I guess because I was the one that was crazier about it than anyone else. But I got a letter in diving and that second year I got my letter in swimming and diving. Anytime they needed someone to swim a race, I said, "Okay, I can do it." I didn't know the difference between breaststroke, backstroke, the crawl, or any stroke. I even entered the plunge, which was a fat man's race. I weighed 90 pounds and other guys weighed over 200 pounds. But I could enter the water smoothly, so I'd enter the plunge and win us a few points there. As far as I was concerned, swimming and diving were all the same thing. Whichever I could do the best in and make some points for the team.

Hodak: When did you shift away from diving?

Graham: After I graduated from high school in 1927 I placed in the Southern California championships in diving. I think that's the only thing I placed in. That's what I was the best in. I dove at the Pasadena Athletic Club. Stan Kistler was their only male diver until I came there. He was pretty good. He was right up there in Southern California. In practicing diving there, I chewed through my lip. And I had grown about five or six inches that year and lost all coordination. Aileen Allen, the coach, said, "Sharkey, you better quit diving and take up swimming until you get through growing." Well, I took her advice and gave up diving. She was a great Olympic women's swim coach and had come from LAAC, and she was also the Olympic women's diving coach. So I quit diving and took up swimming, but I still wasn't quite big enough to be the tops in Southern California in swimming. So I played water polo. I had always loved water polo. We had a water polo team at Pasadena AC, and that's when I took up water polo seriously.

Hodak: And this would be roughly 1928?

Graham: About 1929 or so. Then, the Pasadena AC was thinking of giving

up their water polo team. I can remember Fred Cady at one of the games we had, we played LAAC. They had Duke Kahanamoku on their team—a great guy. Boy, was he a lovable guy. Fred said to me, "Sharkey, come to LAAC. As soon as you're eligible, you're on the team." And I said, "Boy, that's the lift of a lifetime." Fred was the best coach in Southern California—in fact, in the United States. He was the Olympic diving coach . . . and him telling me that I'm on the team, well, that was great. It took me about nine months before they'd let me play because I had to transfer clubs. But from then on I was on the LAAC team. I got lucky there because that was about the time that Southern California decided to get a star team together for the 1932 Olympics and see if we couldn't make it the Olympic team. Well, I was lucky because I was part of the LAAC team, and it turned out that they let me train with the team to try out for the Olympics.

Hodak: What were you doing following graduation? Did you go on to college or junior college?

Graham: No, I went to work at the Pacific Pipe and Supply Company in 1928. That was the first regular job I had after I graduated from high school. I started at about 20 dollars a week and then I became shipping clerk and made 24 dollars a week. I was going along great and then all of the sudden the Depression came and just before the 1932 Olympics they closed the plant. So I didn't have a job. But I had the Olympics to go to anyway. Luckily, they had the tryouts in Pasadena and I was picked as one of the U.S. Olympic team.

Hodak: Do you recall much of the tryouts?

Graham: The competition was plenty tough. The Illinois Athletic Club came out, the New York Athletic Club came out, and they also had UCLA that year . . . and maybe USC. I remember Jimmy Smith played on the USC team. I think they went in the tryouts too. Jimmy Smith later was a famous swimming coach at Fullerton, probably the most famous local swimming coach up until the '30s, '40s or '50s. He was

also a very close friend.

Hodak: What position did you play on the water polo squad?

Graham: Well, in my last two years of high school—that was the only time I was big enough to play water polo—I played centerback, which is the center position in the back that rolls and does a lot of passing. At the Pasadena AC I also played centerback. But when I got over to LAAC, they had some guy that came up to us by the name of [Charles H.] "Dutch" McCallister, and he played centerback, so I went to sprint. The sprint at the LAAC had retired—I can't remember his name—so that left the sprint open. And Reggie Harrison, as I understand, was made a pro because he lifeguarded or something. So the sprint was open and I grabbed it. Luckily, I got a chance to play in the Olympics as sprint. I think a guy from Stanford, Austin Clapp, played sprint too. He was pulled in from Stanford and was a former 200-meter swimmer in the 1928 Olympics. But he played water polo with us in the 1932 Olympics.

Hodak: Yes, I think he had been with the Hollywood Athletic Club.

Graham: Yes, and I remember playing a game, as a member of the U.S. Olympic team, and they put Duke Kahanamoku on our team. I played sprint and Duke played centerback. We played against the Hungarian team, just an exhibition game. It was the Hungarian and German teams mixed. I can't remember the name of the Hungarian centerback, but he was the greatest water polo player I ever played against in my life. And he only had one leg. He had been the European champion in the 400 meters. But he had one leg and I played that game against him and I remember that stub hitting me in the side. I was black and blue from the shoulder on down. But it was a great thrill to play against the greatest water polo player, I think, of all time. I'll never forget that. That was just an exhibition game. We loved to play water polo enough, so that even though Hungary won the 1932 Olympics We got third. We tied Germany, but through the point totals we got a bronze medal.

We were tickled to death to get that. (laughter) Don't let them kid you. It doesn't make any difference what medal you win in the Olympics. Whether it's bronze, silver or gold, the biggest thrill that I ever had, and I think most athletes in the United States have ever had, is to make the Olympic team.

Actually, as a little kid growing up, weighing 50 pounds, I had a football bigger than my two hands, and I thought I was going to be an All-American football player. Well, I didn't grow up enough. (laughter) I had a catcher's glove that was as big as I was, and I was going to be a big league ball player. It just didn't work out. It just turned out that as things rolled along I found out that the water was the place I could do as well as anyone else, whether I was big or little. That's the way it turned out. And probably the only reason that I ever made the Olympics was because I loved to play and I wasn't afraid of working. And I picked out the right sport. I wouldn't have made it in anything else.

I can tell you this: most athletes are great people. Johnny Weissmuller was my idol. Duke Kahanamoku was another idol. Johnny Weissmuller set a record in the 100 yards under 50 seconds and they said it would never be equalled. Now they swim 100 meters under 50 seconds—well under 50 seconds. Johnny Weissmuller was just that far ahead of the world at that time; he set times no one could believe. He used to practice swimming at the Hollywood Athletic Club where we used to play water polo and have swimming meets. Johnny Weissmuller would come in there and he was just out of this world. He skimmed on that water higher than we could surfing at the beach. The whole front of his chest was out of the water. He had the most powerful arm stroke that you've ever seen, and he knew it—but he was friendly. He'd do anything to help anyone else. He knew he was good, but he was still just as friendly as could be.

Herb Barthels swam at the LAAC, and once in a while I'd join him and swim laps for training. Herb was the swimming companion of

Buster Crabbe; they were neck and neck, but Herb got sick and couldn't compete in 1932 and Buster went on to win the 400-meter race and become famous. Herb later went on to work with the Red Cross in Santa Barbara.

Duke Kahanamoku was the most lovable guy there was in this world. He was civic-minded, he loved his people. He loved swimming. In fact, the biggest thing I remember about him was that at the 1932 Olympics, which was two or three Olympics after his prime—he was 51 years old—he came within a tenth of a second of making the U.S. Olympic team.

Hodak: He'd actually competed in the 1912 Olympics.

Graham: Right, in 1912, and this was 1932. He was 51 years old. He was a great swimmer and a great guy. I knew Duke real well. I saw him some years later. He came out to Newport Beach and I went down there to see him. All I could do was say hi to him because he wasn't feeling well, and he didn't live too much longer after that, I don't think. He didn't invent the American crawl, but he was just about the first one to swim it. He used to swim the Australian crawl, they used to have a one-kick and the old style of kick-kick-kick. But I think he was the first one, even before Johnny Weissmuller, to swim the fast-flutter kick, American crawl.

Hodak: He is also credited for having introduced or popularized surfing in America.

Graham: Yeah, I can remember he brought his big surfboard with him. Les Henry, who he lived with and who was his adopted dad in the United States, came from the LAAC. He took him down to Corona del Mar and surfed with that 50- or 60-pound board, 8 to 12 feet long. He was one of the first people to surf and taught a lot of us to take it up.

Hodak: So you took up surfing?

Graham: Took up surfing right after him, yeah.

Hodak: And these boards were roughly 12 feet long, 50 to 70 pounds?

Graham: That's when the paddleboard started out, which was a plywood board. It was fast enough so you could pick up smaller waves and it was also good for lifeguarding. They were 10 or 12 feet long. They were light enough so you could pick up smaller waves and pick the curl up before it broke. Sometimes you could stay in that curl ahead of the break, but generally the curl would catch the tail end of your board and that's when you rolled. But we sure had a lot of fun. Now that they have the short board they can handle that. They ride right out of the curl. It's beautiful to watch.

Hodak: You mentioned lifeguarding. Did you also serve as a lifeguard?

Graham: Yes. After the 1932 Olympics I got a job through Les Henry of the LAAC. He got me a job in a warehouse at Safeway. So I wasn't without a job, I was lucky. I worked with Safeway in the warehouse at nights for a year or so. Then I thought, "Well, wait a minute, I haven't been back to college. If I'm going to have to work nights all the rest of my life, I'm going to school." So I quit Safeway in 1933 and went to work at the beach during the summer. I worked at Santa Monica state beach in the summer and went back to Pasadena Junior College in the winter.

Then, we were practicing and getting ready for the 1936 Olympics. We were still practicing with just about the same players. So we were trying to get ready for the Olympics in 1936, and I'll be a son of a gun if they didn't tell us it made us pros if we worked as lifeguards. Here I was making enough money in the summer so I could go to school and I couldn't stop lifeguarding—or I couldn't eat! (laughter) So I got a job as a maintenance man at Crystal Lake, up in the mountains about 50 miles from the beach and about ten miles down the mountainside. I worked all summer prior to the 1936 Olympics at Crystal Lake. I traveled two or three times a week

down to Venice or Santa Monica where we practiced water polo, and then I'd drive back up to Crystal Lake again. With the kind of cars I drove in those days I don't know how I ever got up and down that hill, but I did.

Hodak: The team you referred to that, in effect, served as the 1936 American water polo team, were you still supported by the Los Angeles Athletic Club?

Graham: We didn't get any support. Oh, I guess they took care of balls and things like that, but we didn't get any money. We were still sponsored by the Los Angeles Athletic Club. There were about four from Venice, a couple from Long Beach, one or two from L.A.; and that made the seven-man team for water polo. But it was called the Los Angeles Athletic Club and was supported by the LAAC. In 1936 we had to go to Chicago for the tryouts and they took care of that. In fact, we didn't have to pay anything.

Hodak: Who were your coaches?

Graham: Frank Rivas was the water polo coach for the 1932 Olympics. For the 1936 Olympics, it was Clyde Swendsen from the Hollywood Athletic Club.

Hodak: How much coaching were they able to do?

Graham: [James] Wally O'Connor did more coaching than they did. Unofficially, Wally O'Connor played on the team and was coach. Clyde Swendsen didn't know which end of the water polo field to throw to compared to Wally O'Connor and some of the others. At that time Wally was about 35 or 40.

Hodak: He competed in four consecutive Olympics.

Graham: Yes, and he was a flag bearer.

Hodak: What can you tell me of the 1936 tryouts? Were they as spirited as the 1932 tryouts?

Graham: They were just as spirited. They were held at Chicago. They had a full-sized, roped off water polo field. Illinois Athletic Club, New York Athletic Club, UCLA, Jimmy Smith's Fullerton bunch, all the top teams of the United States were there. We won all the games.

We played a little different then than we did in the 1932 Olympics, with what we learned from the Hungarians. We did more moving. Actually, I played one game at right forward, which was Wally O'Connor's position. He hurt his hand or something so instead of playing sprint I played right forward. I had to do the passing in that game against the New York Athletic Club. That was one of our toughest games. It was rough. Those guys were tougher than hell. Bill Kelly and some others. In fact. Bill went over to the Olympics with us. Fred Lauer was the goalkeeper for the Illinois Athletic Club. Ray Ruddy was New York Athletic Club's center forward. They really were tough babies. We were tough too, though.

Hodak: So what else had you learned from the Hungarians?

Graham: We learned to move our guards a little more. They moved down and did some short passing, instead of long passing and leaving it up to the centerback and center forward to do all the moving. Now, the center forward would have to come back and get it from the goalkeeper. But then maybe they could pass it on to a guard moving down the field and replace him. We didn't do that before. It was a long pass. We were used to short field play. So then you could pass from the guard position down to the right forward to pass into the center. But we had more mobility. That meant that Dutch McCallister didn't have to do all the moving downfield. We had Charlie Finn and Cal Strong. That cockeyed Cal Strong, don't get in front of him when he starts to move. Those arms, boy, they'd get you. But we played better water polo in 1936 than we did in 1932. (laughter)

Hodak: You mentioned the left forward. Was the left forward the scoring position?

Graham: The left forward was the hole man, the scoring threat.

Hodak: He would receive the ball in the slot with the best vantage point to score?

Graham: That's right. Short passes to him paid off because Phil Daubenspeck was one of the best. He was fast, tough, big and rough. He wouldn't swim much but he could move his arms fast. He was a former world champion in swimming, but you couldn't get him to swim--he wouldn't go after the ball. But when he got that man on him that was trying to drown him, he'd get that ball off. We had as good a left forward as any team. I don't know what they call them now, but I always called them the hole man.

Hodak: So you defeated the New York Athletic Club in the final.

Graham: Yes, we beat them 3-2 or something. There were no giveaways.

Hodak: They were all tightly contested. What did you do in the time period before the ship left for Berlin?

Graham: We just had a couple of days. We had to go from Chicago to New York. We went to New York and I went to see a friend of my best friend, Peg Lowry. Dixon Fiske and I went to their apartment in New York City and drank ice water. I got dysentery. Boy, my insides just came out. It took me the week crossing the water to get over that . . . but I got over it. I still swam and practiced every day. It took me a week to get over it but I lost ten pounds. So instead of 145 pounds I weighed 135 pounds. (laughter)

Hodak: You didn't have much to lose to begin with.

Graham: I didn't have much to lose so it didn't matter that much, but I had

to get well. That dysentery can really kill you.

Hodak: Did traveling on the ship bother you?

Graham: That was okay. We played shuffleboard. I won the quoits championship. And we played all kinds of other games. I remember we had a contest. I won the thing, I can't see how because I wasn't that big or that good. I was just determined. I played every game there was to play through high school. I played paddleboard. I won the junior tennis championship once. Anything you played, that was for me. Work was play to me.

Hodak: On board the ship to Berlin, how were the other members of the water polo team keeping fit?

Graham: We swam every day. We couldn't play water polo because they had a small pool. We swam every day and stayed in condition. Then when we got over to Berlin we lived in the Village and they had another pool, not the Olympic pool, that we could practice in for two or three days before the Olympics. And we played local teams in pre-Olympic competition. The local German teams were darned near as good as the Olympic teams.

Hodak: I read in the Olympic report that the American water polo committee had arranged for the team to travel to Hungary before the 1936 Olympics for some preliminary competition, but the funding fell through.

Graham: Well, we stayed in the Village and went to a river someplace near Berlin and played local teams. And they were good.

Hodak: How did the Olympic Village in Berlin compare to that in Los Angeles?

Graham: The one in Los Angeles was just as nice, but more temporary. The one in Berlin . . . we lived, as I recall, four to a room, or maybe

only two. Dixon Fiske was my roommate, I remember that. But they were more permanent, they were cement-type structures. They were there for after the war.

Hodak: Yes, they were later used for military training headquarters.

Graham: That's right. They didn't make any bones about it that that was going to be the military living quarters. The Gestapo don't kid you. The whole country was behind Hitler. Don't let anyone try to tell you that they weren't behind Hitler. He may have had them buffaloed, but they were all behind him.

Hodak: What things did you observe in your travels before and during the Games that gave you those impressions?

Graham: We played the first week of the Games and the second week we were free because we were eliminated. Water polo was over the first week anyway. The people were friendly, they loved us. I ate dinner out with a young German fellow, about 15 or 16. I went to his family's house and they loved us. I could speak a little German, not much, but they'd laugh and enjoy it. (laughter) Most Germans could speak a little English. The impression I had was that there was no question about it that Hitler thought he was the greatest, professed he was the greatest, and that the Germans were going to rule the world. He made no bones about it. That was the impression you got from the people. But you didn't really expect a war in the next week or two.

In that stadium—we were there, we went to all the track events in the stadium—when Hitler stood up, as one person, "*Heil Hitler*," they all stood up and said, "*Heil Hitler*." They'd sing "*Deutschland Uber Alles*." It would make chills run down your spine.

Hodak: Did Hitler take any particular interest in water polo?

Graham: He came up to the swimming and water polo events. And they had

some good swimmers, too, besides water polo. They didn't win the Olympics. Hungary won it again in 1936. But the Germans were up there in the finals. And when they would play, Hitler was out there about 40 or 50 feet behind the pool, in the best seating area halfway up the stands, which held about 5,000 people or so. They were full. The Gestapo were all around him—don't think they weren't. But when he came in, boy, just like that the people were on their feet: "*Heil* Hitler." That "*Heil* Hitler" with the hand up, you got so you could do it just as good as they did.

Hodak: Was it much of a disappointment for the American team to not go a little further in the competition?

Graham: Yes, it was quite a disappointment. The games we lost, the reason we didn't go on It was probably our fault, because we had a young guy—both times it was the same one—who got kicked out of the pool for moving. And so it was lack of experience that probably cost the game. We didn't blame him, don't get me wrong, but it takes a lot of experience not to move when you get a little advantage. That was the main reason they kicked you out of the pool in those days. As I say, we had a man that got kicked out of the pool in the games, and that's when we lost the goals; twice in one game and three times in another game. And in the Olympics, you can't substitute.

Hodak: So you were playing shorthanded?

Graham: Yes, that's right. And we felt disappointed but we'd been there and done our best. We'd worked hard and made the Olympic team. We were the best in our own country, anyway.

Hodak: There were more teams competing in the 1936 Games.

Graham: More teams competing and it was a bigger sport in other countries than it was in this country. You have to recognize that, in this country, in water polo you wouldn't even know there was a team at

that time. Some high schools would maybe have one but not very many. Now the girls have water polo teams. If I were going to try to make the Olympic team today, with the abilities I had in those days, I doubt that I'd make it. But I'd probably try. (laughter) You have to be in the right place at the right time.

Hodak: Do you have any other general recollections of the 1936 Games, any athletes you met on board the ship that you became close with?

Graham: Yes, I've got a picture in my den here that has the signatures of Jesse Owens, who I met and knew quite well; all of our swimming and water polo athletes; other track athletes; and Jack Dempsey, who met us in New York. Jack Dempsey came to the boat and met us. He had a special program at his cafe with the greatest tap dancer of all time who danced for us. He had special programs, greeted every Olympian, and made us feel like we were the greatest. After all, imagine us compared to Jack Dempsey. (laughter) He was the greatest but he made us feel like we were the greatest.

Hodak: Did the Opening Ceremonies vary much between 1932 and 1936?

Graham: To me, the greatest thrill I had in 1932 were the Opening Ceremonies. Walking down there with the greatest athletes in the world, I said to myself, "What am I doing here?" But it was the biggest thrill of all, even bigger than making the team. That year we stood on the podium and got our bronze medals . . . but that wasn't as great a thrill as the Opening Ceremonies. They were simple. In those days, we didn't have all the fireworks and all the things we have today. It was the athletes themselves.

Hodak: Would you say the Germans put on a more lavish spectacle?

Graham: It was more lavish, more military, more pro-Hitler, more nationalistic. Ours was international, in my feeling, and theirs was nationalistic. Certainly there was respect toward all the athletes, but it overplayed the nationalism.

Hodak: Following the 1936 Olympics you then went on to Frankfurt for a post-Olympic competition.

Graham: Yes, we had a little game. We didn't do much but it was fun.

Hodak: Do you recall much about Eleanor Holm and the situation that followed after she was dismissed from the team? Were you able to see anything that you could mention that brings to light what happened?

Graham: All I can remember is that I knew of Eleanor Holm's activities and what a great swimmer she was. She was pretty well ahead of the rest of the world in women's swimming, the backstroke. I was there when she came down the stairs, surrounded by Olympic officials. I don't remember seeing any other U.S. athletes in the group. I found out later on that they were going to banish her from the Games and not allow her to compete. Personally, I thought that was being a little prudish and that she hadn't done anything. It was a week away and they certainly could have handled it some other way.

Hodak: Did other athletes feel the same way?

Graham: The other athletes, in general, felt the same way: If she could win the event, why shouldn't she? There was no law against having a cocktail. Why did the officials give the party? I thought they were as much to blame as she was. They should have put a tight rein on her and said, "No more drinking." But they didn't even give her an opportunity. That's the way most of us felt. We didn't worry about it. It was one person's worry, not ours. But, I suppose maybe it is somewhat similar to the problem they have with drugs now. Drugs are different because they raise the ability of activities, and alcohol lowers the ability, if anything. But, with many of the drugs they take, they can become better athletes. That shouldn't be allowed, there's no question about it.

Anyway, Eleanor Holm was a very wonderful person. Later on in

life she married and became more famous than ever before, so it didn't hurt her. It hurt her pride and it hurt a great athlete not having the chance to compete against the world. And it wasn't fair to our country, I don't think.

Hodak: You mentioned that the people in Berlin were quite friendly. Were you able to see much of the night spots in Berlin following your own competition?

Graham: We were lucky because our competition was the first week. The second week all we had to do was to watch the other competition, which was mainly track. I saw Jesse Owens and all the activities that went on. So during the nights we were free to go into Berlin. We had an hour that we were supposed to get back by, and if we didn't get back by that time we had to go in the back gate so we wouldn't bother the other athletes who were still competing and make them think we were getting away with something—which we weren't because we were all through.

We went to a dance and were driven in by the chauffeur of a high-ranking German officer. Dutch McCallister went to the dance too, and what they liked better than anything was western music. They just loved western music. They had all kinds of music and they had one room where they'd climb up a greased pole to get the bologna, and what a howl would go out from the crowd when they got it. You wouldn't believe those Germans! No Americans got it. We didn't know how to climb poles like that. It was a great spirit and we were welcomed, in our Olympic uniforms, with open arms by all of them. Dutch and I met a couple of cute little gals. Dutch went with one sister and I went with the other sister. We went out two or three nights with them. Ursula Bohne was the name of my gal. I don't know what Dutch's was, that's his worry. (laughter)

Anyway, we did have a very good time. In fact, I went out with a gal one or two nights, Fritzie Zivick, and her boyfriend was in the Gestapo. That's dangerous! But he was as friendly as she was.

We weren't boys and girls as much to them as we represented friends. The people were very friendly. But they were also behind Hitler, I'm sure—as it was proven later. Not all of them . . . there's always some who aren't behind anyone. But there weren't many who weren't behind Hitler, because I don't think they dared to not be behind him. The Gestapo were rough!

Hodak: And the Gestapo was pretty much in evidence?

Graham: They were everywhere, yes. There was no fake about it, they were there. They were surrounding Hitler, Goering, or anyone. They were always surrounded by Gestapo. They had good control, but you could enjoy yourself as long as you didn't do anything they didn't like.

Hodak: Was there any particular event in track and field that really stands out that you were able to see?

Graham: Well, I was there the day that Hitler didn't acknowledge Jesse Owens' victory. And you didn't think much of it. As far as I know, from talking to Jesse Owens, he didn't think much of it either. But when the media got ahold of it, it was blown bigger than it really was.

Hodak: Some have suggested that that was misunderstood.

Graham: In the United States I think they made much more of it than they did there. Of course, over there it would have been hushed up. We didn't read newspapers anyway. And I couldn't read German that well. So we didn't think much of it. But there was a little lapse, as I recall. When it came out, people asked you about that. I said, "I vaguely recall there was kind of a lapse." But he didn't think anything of it. It could have happened anywhere. I guess it may have been intentional.

Hodak: Did you come to know Jesse Owens pretty well?

Graham: Yes, I knew Jesse in passing at mealtime around the Village and in the meeting area in the Village. I knew him reasonably well. As I say, to be perfectly honest with you, no one particularly wanted to know me, except for the fact I was a fellow Olympian. Who I was, they probably wouldn't know. I knew who they were because they were famous. I was never really famous, I was just happy to be part of the group. It was an honor to me to be able to be in that high class group and be able to compete against them—win, lose or draw. That's the way I felt about it. I didn't expect to be revered by the U.S. public or anything. I was part of a team.

Hodak: Were a lot of people curious about your experience in Berlin when you returned to the United States?

Graham: Yes. I went right to the University of California. Of course, when we returned to the United States we spent a week in New York. Mayor [Fiorello] LaGuardia gave us personal presentations of a medal that looked just like the Olympic medal, except it had LaGuardia and New York City. But they footed the bill for a week for all the Olympic athletes who stayed there. I can remember riding a rollercoaster at Coney Island with a girl track athlete. There was even a picture that came out in the paper that week. I think I have another picture of me reading the newspaper in our room with the 3-meter diving champion, Marshall Wayne. I knew Marshall Wayne quite well because in Pasadena he had come by to try out for the 1932 Olympics. He stayed at my house one night because he didn't have anyplace to stay. (laughter) He didn't make the team in 1932 but he won in 1936. Anyway, he and I roomed together at the New Yorker Hotel in New York. He's a hell of a nice guy and a great diver. I was no great diver; after all, I gave it up. But, anyway, we had a wonderful week, everything on the city of New York. They took us where we needed to go. We had fun, had a good time, and didn't have to spend any money. I spent all my money for a camera over in Berlin and took pictures. I didn't even have enough money to buy any more film. But they gave us a little expense money—the city of New York, not the Olympic Committee.

And we had a great week there. Then, when we left there and got to California, I went immediately up to the University of California.

Hodak: What was the choice there? How did you settle on the University of California as opposed to other schools?

Graham: Well, I had gone to junior college because I could do it cheap. And I also coached their swimming team there, for free. And I worked in a supermarket to work my way through junior college. I could have gone to USC. Fred Cady was the USC swimming and water polo coach and he was my close friend, besides being the Olympic coach. He had offered me a scholarship and jobs. Well, I had a hole in my head I guess. My brother had graduated from the University of California; I went to the University of California. I guess my brother meant more to me than anything else. Frankly, I went all the way through school and I owed 250 dollars when I got through. I paid them back when I went down to coach in Peru. I also got married before I went down there. Anyway, when I got up there in this boarding house, to the guys there I was a hero. And the old man that ran the place, or the husband of the gal that ran the boarding house—30 dollars a month for food and room—made the frames for my picture from Berlin. And he made the frame for the All-American team that came up in 1936. I was named on the aquatics team along with some other friends in the Olympics from water polo, the fellow who swam the 1500 meters from Miami, Ralph Flanagan, and several other swimmers, [Adolph] Kiefer—they were all great swimmers. I wasn't nearly as great as any of them. But that old man made the frame for it. He was proud to do it and wouldn't charge me a penny. They are beautiful frames.

Then I went into a co-op house, which was 35 dollars a month for room and board. And I didn't have to wash dishes. They made me president. All I had to do was just hold their meetings for them. To the fellows there . . . you'd think I was kingpin. But I can understand it. Some of those guys were just as great as I was, even greater, in their own field. It just happened to be that mine

was work and play. (laughter)

Hodak: Did you continue playing water polo at Cal?

Graham: I played water polo at Cal. In fact, the greatest victory I ever had in water polo was up at Cal in 1937 or '38. The Los Angeles Athletic Club water polo team came and played an evening game against Cal. The University of California beat them, 4-3. So we beat the best team in the United States, 4-3. My own team, my own pals, my own friends, but there is nothing as great as being able to be "top dog" among your present friends and cohorts. That was the greatest victory I ever had in water polo.

Hodak: Were some of the guys on the L.A. Athletic Club team the same guys that you had competed with in the Olympics?

Graham: They were the same fellows, except without me. And Dixon Fiske wasn't on it because he was down at UCLA. But it was the same team with the Daubenspecks, Wally O'Connor, Kenny Beck. They came on a summer tour. They were going up to the Olympic Club. And we had a little center forward that wasn't nearly as tough. Ken Wheeler was his name. He was the center forward and he wasn't nearly as tough as Phil Daubenspeck, but he was quicker. He really did it—not me. We had a good team. We played hard, we fought our hearts out and beat the best team in the country. So that was a great victory. That night I went out and celebrated with the LAAC team. (laughter) We were still friends.

Hodak: So when did you graduate from Cal?

Graham: I graduated in 1938. Then I went to work that summer in "Gloomy Gus" Henderson's camp over at Catalina Island, a boys' camp.

Hodak: Gus Henderson had been the football coach at USC before Howard Jones.

Graham: Yes, Gloomy Gus, that's right. Gloomy Gus Henderson along with the head of the physical education department at Cal, [Frank] Kleeberger. He and Gus ran a boys' camp. In that boys' camp we had some great kids from Hollywood. They were Hollywood kids. Movie stars kids would come to this camp, like Barbara Stanwyck's son. And the counselors were mainly people that Gus and Kleeberger knew like [Angelo] Hank Luisetti, the greatest basketball player up to that time, from Stanford. We had a wonderful camp. That was just before going back to get my teacher's credential. I had graduated from Cal, then I went back the next semester to get my teacher's credential. It turned out that they had written a letter trying to get a national swimming coach for Peru. The coach turned that over to me, I followed it up, and by golly if they didn't accept me. You know why? I answered, told them what I had done, who I was, and that I had coached swimming at Pasadena High School, been on the Olympic teams, and had coached diving and so forth. I also told them that I'll accept the job but you'll have to pay the passage for me and my wife, not just my passage. If you do that, I'll accept the job. By golly, they took me and they told me that's the reason they took me. They said, "My God, if you can do that, you must be good." One of the Ruddy brothers, Don Ruddy, applied. He was one of the biggest athletes in New York City. Dan Ferris recommended him. But they accepted me because I told them they'd have to pay for my wife's passage.

Hodak: So you lived in Lima?

Graham: Well, I went to Lima and they gave me a leave of absence before I had to go and take the last part of my teaching credential. I had to do another semester of practice teaching. They gave me a leave of absence from Cal. Anyway, I went to Lima and the first thing I had to do was get them ready for the national championships. I got them ready for that. And then the guy that won the 100 meters in the Peruvian national championships at Lima got TB. He was a mountain boy. So I lost him. Then I didn't have a sprinter. So I turned the distance man into a sprinter and he won the 200 meters

and was second in the 100 meters. My diver won springboard diving, got second in the platform diving. I had Pepe Salinas, a 17-year-old kid. He was a freestyler and he just barely made the relay team. In other words, he wasn't good enough to make the flat events. So he was going to make the relay team. Then I turned him over on his back and he won the 200-meter backstroke in the South American championships. He was a two-time winner in the South American championships. He went from being an average swimmer to the best in South America, just by turning him over on his back. I was lucky. I wasn't the greatest coach in the world, but I was lucky.

Hodak: So you were preparing Peru for the upcoming 1940 Olympics?

Graham: Supposedly that's what I was taken down there for, to get them ready for the South American championships and the Olympics. Then 1940 came and along about May they cancelled the Olympics. SO I arranged to come home. I came home in the middle of 1940.

Hodak: In Peru you met another Southern California Olympian, Nick Carter?

Graham: When I went down to Peru, two of the guys that met me at the boat were Nick Carter and Paul Crawford. We came into Cayel, the seaport, and they were part of the arriving crew. Nick was coaching track and Paul was coaching basketball. So we spent a lot of time together off and on down there in Peru. Nick did a good job with the track team and Paul did a good job with the basketball team. They came back late in 1939, just before 1940. I stayed on a little longer.

Hodak: So, upon your return to the United States, you enlisted in the armed services?

Graham: No, when I returned to the United States, that was 1940, I went back to Cal. They sent us back to New York, rather than California. I bought an old car and drove it across the country.

My wife Lois worked as a dental assistant and I worked at all kinds of odd jobs. I went through one semester of graduate work. And then Paul Laxtell, the principal of the junior high and also superintendent of schools in Redlands, met me in Bakersfield, halfway up, to see if I would take a job. They wanted a swimming coach. So I took the job at Redlands High. I dropped out in the middle of the semester at Cal early enough so that I could go down to Redlands. I got special permission from my friends at Cal to get the last half of my practice teaching as a Spanish teacher in junior high. So I taught mathematics and science in junior high, which of course I was qualified to do. I couldn't teach in high school yet but I could coach, so I coached the swimming team. We did pretty good. For two years I coached the swimming team.

I enjoyed teaching, but then the war came along and I couldn't stay out of the war. I almost got a divorce one day because I came home and told my wife I'd gone over to try to volunteer and they wouldn't take me. They said, "Well, you go get yourself a good job. You don't want to be a sergeant or an enlisted man." So they gave me advice. I tried to get into Gene Tunney's program. I had a mashed finger and they said I wasn't a perfect specimen, so I couldn't go in the Navy as a warrant officer in physical training. So I applied for the Air Force and they accepted me as a second lieutenant. I went to Miami at the officer's training school as a six-week wonder, and got in the Air Force. And I couldn't have been luckier.

Hodak: Where did you go from Miami after your officer's training?

Graham: Well, they sent me to Randolph Field in San Antonio, Texas, in the physical training department. So I gave exercises to the cadets, I gave exercises to the wives of the officers (laughter) and worked with the physical training on the field for two or three months.

I met Hank Greenberg when I was part of the physical training group at Randolph Field. He was in charge of the physical training of the flying training command in Fort Worth, which controlled our

Then I gave that all up in 1952. So I came back to California without a job. I had two little kids that we'd adopted. It was pretty tough the first year or two. I worked in Fullerton as sales manager for La Vida Bottling, which later became Dr. Pepper Bottling Company. I worked day and night the first couple of years. I had to take night jobs to make ends meet. We made ends meet and then we got the Dr. Pepper franchise and progressively did better. I was the plant manager before I retired.

Hodak: When did you retire?

Graham: Nineteen seventy-five, when I was 65 years old.

Hodak: You continued other forms of work following that?

Graham: I had been in real estate in the '50s. I sold some houses (to help us eat) for a company that owned La Vida Bottling, the Jewett brothers. I went into real estate again and managed to make a few bucks, until about 1977 or '78. Then I retired from real estate and got on as a school bus driver for Taylor Bus Company.

Hodak: You weren't too eager to retire.

Graham: I didn't particularly care to retire, no, I like to work. For my whole life work has been a pleasure. For Taylor Bus Company I drove handicapped kids, either speech-impaired, physically handicapped, or something. And you could see those kids smile and raise hell. They were just like normal kids and they still could smile and be happy. It made you think, "Hey, things can't be as bad as you think they are." These little guys, despite their handicaps, can sure smile anyway. Some people tell me it would discourage them. Not me! Sure it's too bad, but look what they make of it. They go on in spite of it. If I've got a headache, it's not so bad. They were a godsend and were good kids. But they were full of the devil too. (laughter) Watch out!

Hodak: Tell me about your children.

Graham: We adopted a baby girl in New York in 1946, right after the war. About three years later we adopted a boy. We brought them to California with us. One was three-and-a-half years old and the other was about six or seven. They are still out here. My boy is working with Hughes Aircraft. He wasn't very good at mathematics—and now he's a computer specialist. (laughter) He got through college at San Diego State. My daughter is an artist, but she never has carried on with the artwork. Well, she did for awhile. She's in San Francisco. She pays more for her apartment than I made in wages not too long ago. They are good kids. Neither one are married but they are making their living and working. And we're just tickled to death because we've got something to worry about. We don't worry about ourselves too much, but I worry about her and she worries about me.

Hodak: Did you have the opportunity to work much on the Spirit Team before the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles?

Graham: Oh yes, I was quite active on the Spirit Team. I went down to their meetings and got a Spirit Team setup with all the information. I went to the big meeting at USC where Peter Ueberroth gave a speech and I was very impressed with it. In fact, he came out halfway through the meeting after he had talked and discussed individually with us what it meant that the Russians weren't coming to the Games. I liked his answer very well. Just to our little group of five or six people Peter Ueberroth said, "We're not concerned. I'm not concerned. We'll live with them, or without them. If they don't want to come, it's their loss, not ours. And we'll put on a great Games." That was the word from the top man about what we were going to do. No one knew at that time. He went back in and announced it to the group, the whole Spirit Team. He thought he'd better make it clear what his attitude and his group's attitude was. It was to welcome them, we'll get along great with them, or without them. And that's the way it turned out and

People are all the same and you can make them different by training and work. You can't train five hours a day, work eight hours a day, travel two hours a day, and still get enough sleep, or have enough energy to live. Training five hours a day takes all your energy. I admit it, they shouldn't be training all through the four years between each Olympics, but at least some time toward the end our team should be chosen and they should have the same opportunity to do the extra training as other countries provide. We don't have to win every event, but it is nice to be able to compete with them on an equal basis.

Hodak: I think that's a good way of looking at the Olympics. Well, I really appreciate having the opportunity to come here and interview you. And the Amateur Athletic Foundation appreciates your cooperation with this project. Thank you very much.

Graham: Thank you, George.