

EVELYNE HALL ADAMS  
1932 OLYMPIC GAMES  
TRACK & FIELD



AN OLYMPIAN'S ORAL HISTORY  
INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

ANITA L. DE FRANTZ  
President  
Amateur Athletic Foundation  
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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.

EVELYNE HALL ADAMS

1932 OLYMPIC GAMES - LOS ANGELES  
80-METER HURDLES  
Silver Medalist

INTERVIEWED:

October, 1987  
Oceanside, California  
by George A. Hodak

EVELYNE HALL ADAMS  
Interviewer: George A. Hodak

Hodak: First off Mrs. Adams, I'd like you to talk a bit about your family background, when and where you were born, and how you became interested in sports as a youngster.

Adams: Well, it is very gratifying to be asked about my background and family, my early beginnings, my interest in athletics, how I became a pioneer in women's track and field, and of course the changes of the rules and equipment, the Olympic Games and some world events, and how all of this, put together, changed my way of life.

I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, September 10, 1909. My mother was 16 and my father was 19. I was a premature baby and my mother had such an ordeal that the doctor thought we both would not live. In fact, I was thin and underdeveloped most of my early life. They thought I would die before I was ten years old. I had double pneumonia and scarlet fever. Then when I was about 11 or 12 I developed scoliosis. I should have been in a body cast for about a year or more, but my parents were very poor and we didn't even have enough money to go to a clinic. So I had to live with this double scoliosis.

Hodak: Did these infirmities or debilities in some way encourage you to develop yourself as an athlete?

Adams: Yes, I think they did because as an only child I grew up in a neighborhood where they had large families. In order to survive in that kind of environment I had to develop some skills of my own; that is, I was quick and I was wiry and I learned to run. In our neighborhood, we had a lot of running games. We would sit on

these high front steps on the tenement houses, gather around a lamp post and everyone in the neighborhood would be divided into teams. We would run around the lamp post playing "statue" or "run sheep run" or a lot of those other games. I think that started me on athletics.

After I was about 12, I didn't have any more major illnesses but I still was very underdeveloped and very short for my age. To digress a little bit, after I was born, my mother divorced and moved to Chicago. I was put in an orphanage for a few years and I think that kind of helped me grow a little stronger. During that time, my mother remarried.

As a child I really was a daredevil. We lived near a railroad switching yard and, believe it or not, I used to hop on the ladders of the boxcars and ride into the switching yard. Another exploit of mine was in the wintertime. Since I was the smallest and the quickest of our group, I would throw a rope from my sled under the axle of an electric car and we would hitch our sleds together and ride behind the car until we either got to the corner or the owner chased us off. Then I would let go of the rope and we would all swing into the snowbank.

It seems like, as a youngster, I was very busy attending a lot of picnics where they had competitions and prizes. I used to compete in the dashes and the cartwheel and bike races. The JPI, or the Jewish Center, was the only place that was open to youngsters of any creed, and I would spend my Saturdays there. There were instructors in various types of exercises, crafts and dancing. But I think the greatest thrill was running the relays. They had an indoor track on the balcony of the gym. Also, they had bars against the walls and those long ropes hanging from the ceiling, which we could climb up and down. That was loads of fun. I think this attributed to my development.

Then, later in 1926, one of the park instructors entered me in a

race—my first race. When I got to the track I had gym shoes on, a middy-blouse with long sleeves, and black bloomers down to my knees. In that race I won my first medal and that's what started me on the road. However, I didn't race again until the following year, which was in 1927, the same year that I got married to Leonard Hall.

In 1927, when I first learned about the Olympic Movement, I had no idea what it was really all about. But I knew it was something that would benefit boys and girls and help them to represent the United States. So I volunteered to help. I stood on corners with a tin can collecting money. Every time there was a sporting event, I ran up and down the stadiums passing these cans and that started my interest in the Olympics. Then, in the end of 1927 and into 1928, I had a friend that worked in the same office that I did, Nellie Todd. Nellie was a broad jumper and a hurdler. She invited me to go down to the Illinois Women's Athletic Club (IWAC). That was a club for women, located on the top floor of a huge downtown building. It had a swimming pool and a small indoor track and one room that the instructor used for giving fat ladies exercises. That's where I first met Jane Fauntz Manske. She was a diver and she later became a 1928 and 1932 Olympian.

The instructor asked me if I would go over one hurdle, which I did. She was so pleased that I went over it so easily that the next week she entered me in the central AAU track meet.

Hodak: And you hadn't hurdled before at all?

Adams: I had only gone over that one hurdle, and I mean I really jumped the hurdle.

Hodak: You mean you didn't have any particular form or technique?

Adams: No form. I think it goes back to when I played jump rope as a child. We would play "higher and higher." Two girls, each one holding one end of a rope, would keep raising it. We would run

straight at the rope and jump over it. That's why I think hurdles came, more or less, naturally to me.

Well, to go back to the central AAU first hurdle race, I wore a second-hand uniform—it was a knitted blouse with half-sleeves and a knitted pair of trunks. I also had a pair of track shoes, which were the first track shoes I had ever had. I was so excited about competing that when I was trying to get the shoes on, I broke the strings on both of the shoes and someone had to help me tie knots in them. All this time I was holding up the race and I was getting more embarrassed by the minute. The upshot of the race was that Helen Filkey, who was the national hurdle champion, was first. I was second and Nellie Todd was third. This was a 50-yard hurdle race. It had 4 hurdles with 15 yards to the first hurdle and 10 yards in between and 5 yards at the finish. Some of the races had 10 yards at the finish. The yard races came very easily to me because I was a right leg hurdler and I could go over the hurdles with the same foot. I took five steps between and it was very easy for me. But then in 1928 the outdoor national championships were held in Chicago. For the first time I learned that this wasn't going to be a yard race, it was going to be figured in meters. I didn't know it until all the hurdles were on the track. There were eight hurdles for each contestant and they were set 39 feet 1 and a half inches to the first hurdle, and the finish, and 26 feet 3 inches in between.

Hodak: So that presented a few problems for you.

Adams: That presented a host of problems. I got over the first hurdle okay. Then the second hurdle was too close, but somehow I got over it with my left leg. This was the way it was through the whole race; first one leg, then the other. It was way up high, and then way down low. Again, I finished second to Helen Filkey, who was the champion. She had a difficult race too. The hurdle race was not an official event in the Olympics until 1932. If it had been one of the official Olympic events in '28, I would have been on the 1928

team. But it was not until 1932 that the 80-meter hurdle event was added.

Most of my teammates in the IWAC lived on the north side of Chicago and I lived on the far south. We could only practice twice a week because we didn't have enough money for gas. In fact, we used to have these five-cent White Castle hamburgers and that would be our dinner, or maybe a hot dog. I didn't get to practice with my teammates very often. When we did, it would be more of a social session. We would practice starts by somebody clapping their hands. We would practice wind sprints and some of the field events. The park on the north side that was within walking distance of the IWAC, was the only place that had four hurdles available. We had to go in the storeroom and take the hurdles out, measure the track, and return them. So that was quite an ordeal.

Hodak: Did you compete in any unofficial type of event, alongside your official AAU competition?

Adams: Besides practicing with the IWAC track team, we went to many outdoor picnics. Large companies would hold huge picnics and they offered wonderful prizes. So my husband and I would go to these picnics hoping to win prizes. Then there were the Gaelic meets. There was German-American meets, Swiss turnvereins. We took them all in and that way I seemed to improve. I was getting better and better all the time. Then sometimes at the park, F. Morgan Taylor, who was a 1924 Olympic hurdler, would come and hang around the track. He gave me a lot of good pointers in track and field. But I had no coach of any kind. My husband was my only coach and supporter. He was a pole vaulter and a standing broad jumper. Together, we learned how to perfect my form. We would measure the track, see where I landed, see where I took off, and how I could improve.

Hodak: And what were the basic improvements that you would make as a hurdler? Just getting your foot down quicker?

Adams: Well, most of the time hurdlers tend to fly over the hurdles—really just float over the hurdles. So I had to learn to get down just as quickly as I could and to be on my way.

In 1930, the outdoor national championships were held in Dallas, Texas. It was on a very hot, sizzling Fourth of July. I won the hurdles and I placed in the broad jump and was the starter on the winning relay team. Those were my three events—the broad jump, the hurdles and the relay. That's when I first met [Mildred] Babe Didriksen and I thought she was good-natured, though she was a cocky girl.

Hodak: Given your quick development as a track athlete, how did you see your chances of making the 1932 Olympics? Were you thinking much about the Olympics at this time?

Adams: No, at that time I didn't think about competing in the Olympics because the hurdles were not an Olympic event until 1932. But I did enjoy doing the hurdles, the relays and the broad jump. In 1928, Betty Robinson, who was one of my teammates at the IWAC, made the Olympic team. When she came back, naturally we all were interested in the Olympic Games. Not only did she make the team, but she was the first woman to win a gold medal for the United States. So that was a big homecoming. Later on, Betty was involved in an airplane accident and couldn't try out for the '32 Games. But again she made the 1936 Games.

Hodak: Do you remember talking about the Olympics with Betty Robinson?

Adams: Oh, yes. We talked and she brought all of her teammates a little hand-painted handkerchief as a souvenir from Waterloo, that I still have. She was a delightful girl.

Hodak: And you had other interests at the same time?

Adams: About that same time my husband and I were interested in flying.

About ten fellows formed a little group and we had a little flying club. All together they bought a second-hand monoplane. I was the only girl in the club and I enjoyed going up in the plane while they were practicing. And I would practice flying too.

So then in 1929, I was offered 25 dollars to make an exhibition parachute jump. Of course, 25 dollars in those days was a lot of money.

Hodak: And you were naturally a bit of a daredevil?

Adams: Yes, I was one of those that would take chances without giving it a thought. In 1929 I was invited to make a parachute jump. The pilot was a captain, but he still overshot the field. Of course, it was a very small field. Checkerboard Flying Field right outside of Chicago. And when the pilot overshot the field, I had to hang on the struts while he circled the field before it was time for me to let go. There was a river right alongside of the field and I almost landed in the river. I was pulling on the strings to see if I could drop quicker so I wouldn't float over into this river. Then, when I did land people said I landed like a rabbit—I just hopped along. I would have kept doing this because 25 dollars was really something 60 years ago, but members of my team said they were afraid that I would hurt my ankles. So that was the end of my jumping career. But I did enjoy flying for some time afterward.

In 1930, we had no televisions and no refrigerators, only iceboxes. We made our own crystal radio sets. I stayed up night after night helping my husband solder little pieces together to make crystal sets. There were no freeways and all the main roads—if you can believe this—were all flat on the curves. So if you went scarcely more than 20 miles an hour, you would fly off on the curve. How our transportation has changed! On the plus side, however, we had a lot of beautiful ballrooms. I remember the Aragon and the Trianon in Chicago with all those name bands; Guy Lombardo, Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman. They all came to Chicago because these two

ballrooms, one on the north and one on the south, were beautiful.

I think I have already mentioned about the 1930 outdoor championships, but I also won the 1930 indoor championships. Most of the track and field for women was concentrated on the East Coast and I was about the first girl that traveled east to compete in these meets. My husband and I had to scrape and scrape money to get gas for our little old car. We traveled through blizzards and up and down the mountains to get to New Jersey. I had a friend, Eleanor Egg, from Passaic, New Jersey. We stayed with her. She was a top athlete and should have also been an Olympian but hurt her leg in the trials. I was elated because I set a new record in the 50-meter hurdles. It was the custom to pay each champion athlete's way to the next years game. However, they didn't do that. We tried every way we could to save money so that we could drive again to the East Coast for the 1931 championships, but because I lacked 15 dollars, I had to stay home and forfeit my championship. What a disappointment!

In the summer of 1931 the outdoor national championships were held in Jersey City. That's when I met the Babe again. Babe had entered the hurdles and she and I were in the same heat together. I was running alongside of her and she took three steps and I took three steps—I followed stride by stride. But each time, since I was so much shorter than she, I kept losing a few inches. So at the sixth hurdle, I hit the hurdle and between the heat and the final my foot swelled up. The swelling broke my shoestrings and I had to have my shoe taped on. So from then on I realized that I would have to take three steps in order to bring the same foot over each time, which was 100 percent easier than trying to alternate. When I went back to Chicago, that's what I worked on—my form. My husband and I experimented with, instead of floating over the hurdles, how to drop my lead leg and get down to the ground as quickly as possible. I really had to stretch for that first step. So that's how I developed a fairly good form.

I had a nervous stomach and when I competed I found it was better for me if I would just drink hot tea and eat unbuttered toast. Nowadays people eat steaks and what have you, but because I was so nervous on the inside I found that that worked better for me.

One of the reasons I hit the hurdle in the 1931 races was that the hurdles were different at that time. They consisted of heavy tee standards with a frame-like hurdle that was bolted in on the sides. It would swing if you touched the top bar. That's what I did in that race. I touched the top hurdle and the bottom of the hurdle swung back and caught my trailing foot. Leonard and I tried to make balsa wood hurdles but, of course, they were too light and would fly right out.

I'm sure you know that there has been a lot of changes in all the equipment and tracks. At that time we had cinder tracks and no starting blocks. We had to dig our own holes and hopefully cover them up every time so nobody would stumble in them. All the broad jump, high jump and pole vaulting pits were of sand, and believe me, a jumper could really get hurt when he landed on that sand. If anyone did the Fosbury Flop at that time he would have surely landed in the hospital.

At that time, the high jump had standards with a bar across it which could be raised or lowered. To raise the bar they would just raise these pegs up. So if you high jumped, which I did also, and you brushed the top of the bar and if it wiggled but you got out of the pit before it fell, it was a fair jump. Now the high jumps have the bar on the very top, so if you just brush it a little bit it will fall.

Hodak: So tell me about the 1932 women's Olympic tryouts. held in Chicago.

Adams: The Olympic tryouts were held at Northwestern University in Evanston. The IWAC had a very strong all-round team; Annette Rogers, Ethel Harrington, Nan Gindele, Evelyn Ferrara and others.

I was the captain of this team. The AAU rule, at that time, was each girl could only enter two running events and one field event, or two field events and one running event. The relay counted as a running event. I was entered in the 80-meter hurdles, the relay and the broad jump. All of the competitors were shocked that afternoon when Babe Didriksen, for some unknown reason, was allowed to enter nine events. She had a press agent, which was the first one we'd ever heard of. It was like a three-ring circus. This agent had photographers out taking pictures of Babe doing this and doing that, going over this and throwing that. The rest of the competitors had to wait until she was through with her event and was ready to compete. None of us really could figure out what was going on. In the final of the 80-meter hurdle race, I waited at the finish for the officials to announce the time. The clerk asked the two judges that were judging first place, "Who was first?" They both said, "Hall." Then he asked the second place judges, "Who was second?" And they both said, "Hall." So he queried, "Where was the Babe?" And then he said, "Well, she must have been first." And so that's the way the Olympics started for me. Incidentally, that's how Babe got her publicity as a "one-girl track team."

Hodak: And these are still the tryouts?

Adams: And this was what I had to look forward to.

Hodak: So there was somewhat of a rivalry developing between you and the Babe? Or was it more between you and the press agents?

Adams: All the girls were very put out by the idea that she could go into nine events. Since most of us were all-round athletes, we could have entered more. But we didn't know this. Naturally, we were put out to think that they would let her do that. Of course, that's what started all this "Wonder Babe Didriksen." There was no rivalry between any of us. We were all out to win but we were all teammates.

Hodak: Well, she did win six events.

Adams: She was a wonderful athlete. I would say that she could do just about anything. She was very boyish and had grown up with a lot of boys. It was just a natural thing. She played baseball and golf and all the rest of the things, all year long. In Texas they could do that, but in Chicago we had our cold weather and could only work on it part-time.

The tryouts were held on a Saturday. On Sunday we had a big banquet at one of the leading hotels in Chicago. They took pictures for our passports and gave us instructions to meet Tuesday at the train station. That was a very exciting time for us. Our team had a special sleeper car on the Santa Fe. On the side of the Santa Fe coach were big signs saying: "Women's United States Track and Field Team." I mean, we were in seventh heaven. All during the trip we went back and forth all through the coaches to the observation car and talked to everybody. It was really a wonderful experience.

We'd stop at various places to eat. We didn't eat in the diner, we'd stop at these Fred Harvey places along the Santa Fe. When we would stop, people would hold up flags and banners and welcome us and wave American flags. To jump into that limelight was quite a change for young, inexperienced girls. We were taken off the train at Denver and there was some car agency that had a new car and a driver for each girl. We drove up to Pike's Peak. I also met Buffalo Bill up there. We tried to practice up there but the air was so thin that it was very hard on us. Then at night they had a big banquet at the Brown Palace in Denver. Later on we stopped at Albuquerque and got out, and there were a lot of Indians sitting alongside the tracks in their colorful dress. They were selling little handmade beaded rabbit's feet as good luck items. I've still got mine to this day.

In 1932, we were in the throes of the Depression. Under President Hoover we had long soup lines because money was very, very

scarce. No one today can fully realize how hard those times were and how they affected the athletes. I had five dollars in my purse and that was a real sacrifice. Since I was the first married girl in the Olympic Games, my husband and his mother drove out to the West Coast in our jalopy and they were able to find a little housekeeping room while I stayed at the Chapman Park Hotel on Wilshire Boulevard. Then I was given the money for the return train fare and with that we were able to all drive home together.

Hodak: How were you greeted upon arriving in Los Angeles?

Adams: The people of L.A. were just wonderful. They went all out for the Olympic Games. Olympic flags were flying everywhere with red, white and blue buntings and Olympic banners all across the streets and on the lamp posts. It was a very exciting time. Everyone was so friendly and high-spirited. This was the first time that they had an Olympic Village for men, located in Baldwin Hills. That was something new that was instituted that year. The Chapman Park Hotel was the headquarters for all the women athletes. The Chapman Park Hotel was on Wilshire near Western Avenue, near the Ambassador Hotel and the original Brown Derby. We could walk around and visit all these places. We had no fear of anyone molesting us. In fact, no one thought of security. It was unheard of in that day.

On our team, we had two black girls. One was Tidye Pickett, whom I knew from Chicago. The other one was Louise Stokes from Massachusetts. I can't remember during my stay at the Chapman Park Hotel where those girls were, but I felt no discrimination because I had roomed with Tidye several times. She was a very nice girl. I think it was last year, when I was reading Tidye Pickett's obituary, she had mentioned to people that she was discriminated against and that she and Louise had to stay in a room close to the Chapman Park Hotel but not in the Chapman Park. I wasn't aware of any discrimination but I know that there was some. Later on I met Frances Holmes who was a 1908 standing high jumper

from Brazil. He was on the American team in 1908. He said that the Americans did not fully accept him as a member of their team. But I think the discrimination was very slight.

One of the beauty shops on Western Avenue—I think it was called Bobby's—offered free haircuts, makeup and I think I even had my eyebrows tweezed there. Everyone was so friendly to us. They would greet us on the streets and of course we rode on streetcars free—all we had to do was wear our uniform. But this was the first time I had ever been in a beauty shop and had my hair cut and my eyebrows tweezed, so it was quite an experience for me.

Each morning at the hotel there would be a long list on the bulletin board of places to go to. Some of the invitations were for athletes from different countries and some were for everyone. There were invitations for luncheons, parties and dinners so we had a great round of events. All we had to do was sign up in the morning and we were whisked away that afternoon to some very interesting place. I was so thrilled to be invited to all these different parties.

I had never been in contact with girls from foreign countries and that was quite a revelation to me. I remember one afternoon I had a string of glass colored bracelets on my wrist and was surrounded by the Japanese girls. I took one off and gave it to one of the girls. Then they all wanted one so I gave them all a bracelet. I guess I had about a dozen on my wrist. Then when they tried to give them back to me it was all I could do to make them understand that I wanted them to keep them. I said, "Present. Present." I would push my hands toward them and finally they understood that I meant them as a gift. The very next day they all crowded around me and whisked me off to their rooms. I was trying to say that I was going to practice but, of course, they couldn't understand me. We were only communicating by using our hands or smiling. So off to their room I went and they dressed me in all their beautiful kimonos and robes, the shoes, the fans, the whole works. Then, when I tried to give these things back to them, they protested. I told them I

couldn't accept these very expensive gifts, but while I was protesting, the manager, who spoke English, said to me, "Please Evelyne, keep these. They have elected you Japan's adopted daughter. They want you to accept their humble gifts." So that was a thrill—to be Japan's adopted daughter. I was also really honored when I was selected as the friendliest girl in the Village,

I enjoyed changing costumes, or changing our regular clothes. Sometimes we even changed uniforms back and forth. I changed with one of the German girls, Tilly Fleischer. I wore her costume for pictures and she wore mine. I also changed with one of the Japanese girls. This was only for pictures because we only had one uniform and couldn't trade them. But I did trade all my own clothes and all the jewelry that I had, which wasn't much.

Fred Steers from Chicago was the manager of the team and George Vreeland—he was the coach for Jean Shiley, the high jumper—was the Olympic coach. We had a general meeting and we were given our parade uniforms, which was a one-piece silk dress with a sleeveless jacket and belt that was made of red felt and a cute white French beret with a little blue and red tassel on it. We were also given a couple of other items and a bathing suit. Then we were given our track suit. When Mary Carew and I saw the track suit and tried to put it on, we really had to cry. We complained and said we weren't going to wear it. It was a man's wool track tank suit, it was cut way down the sides. Mary and I absolutely refused to wear it so they had to call in the tailors and there was a lot of commotion around while all the girls were getting the sides of their suits sewn up. The trunks that we wore were white satin, a cotton, and it had loose legs with red, white and blue stripes down the sides and around the waist. Because I was a hurdler, I had to go out and buy elastic to put in the legs. Also, we were given new white buck shoes. If you knew how hot and stiff those were . . . and those are the shoes we had to wear in the opening parade.

It was a steamy, hot day for the Opening Ceremony and all the

teams were stationed underneath the tunnel. Since the United States was the host country, we were the last ones to march in. The track girls were wearing these brand new, stiff, buckskin shoes, and after two or three hours we finally joined in the parade and got into our places in the center of the field. Several took off their shoes, including me. We all had big blisters. So I had to compete with blisters on my heels.

The Opening Ceremony was a very moving and a very stirring ceremony. It really filled everyone up to the brim with the Olympic spirit. We were so excited when they gave the Olympic oath and when they released thousands of pigeons. And this large chorus sang the Olympic hymn. It was really something to swell inside of you. It was something that people never forget. In fact, it was really electrifying.

Hodak: What about the time between the first day of competition and your competition. How much time was there?

Adams: Very little.

Hodak: So the 80-meter hurdles was held pretty early on in competition? Go ahead and talk a bit about that.

Adams: The day of the 80-meter hurdles arrived. We had the preliminaries one day and the finals the next day. In the final race, all the girls were quartered underneath the stands in the Coliseum. We were in different rooms and at a certain time, we went through the tunnel to the field. On my turn to go through the tunnel, I was so nervous I was bumping the tunnel from side to side. And when I came out on the field and looked up and saw all those thousands and thousands of spectators, my legs turned to wet noodles and somebody had to get me a chair so I could sit down at the beginning of the race. When I went to dig my holes, it was the same way. Someone had to dig my holes for me. There were no starting blocks then.

One of the things that had made us nervous was that they told us that we might have a foreign official that would start us in a foreign language. Since I had no knowledge of any foreign language, I was petrified. But I can remember how wonderful that great big German starter was. And he said, "*Auf die Platze*" and "*Fertig*," and zoom, we were gone. I was on the inside lane; Babe [Didriksen] was next to me; then Marjorie Clark, a South African girl; then Alda Wilson; Simone Schaller, from California; and in the last lane was Violet Webb of Britain. Babe and I went over the last hurdle together and when we crossed the line my neck was cut by a strong piece of yarn—at that time they used a finish yarn. It cut my neck from one side all the way around to the other side. As I walked back, the officials were conferring among themselves about the placings of the contestants. When I went back and walked by the tunnel where all the athletes from all the foreign countries sat, they were all cheering and clapping and saying, "You won, you won, you won."

Hodak: And that was your feeling too?

Adams: That really was my feeling because I could feel this strong cut on my neck. Of course it was bleeding, so I really cut it. But it took a long time before the officials finally decided the placings of the girls. The officials were on the outside and I was on the inside and Babe was right next to me. So it was hard to see me, because of the Babe. After a while they came back and announced that Didriksen was first and I was second and that the time for both of us was 11.7 seconds, which was a new world's record. And incidentally, the national record stood for 17 years.

Hodak: So you were a bit surprised when they announced that Didriksen finished first?

Adams: Yes, I was surprised and I was disappointed, very disappointed. But since that episode in the tryouts, it was really not unexpected.

Hodak: Did you and Babe Didriksen exchange any congratulations after the

race? Was there any interaction between you two? Did you talk about the finish at all?

Adams: No. When we were at the finish all she said was, "I won." That's all she said.

Hodak: Certainly, anyone who looks at a picture of the finish would think of it as an absolute tie, at least—

Adams: Well, that's true. They didn't have any ties at that time. But they did have the Kirby Camera, a photo-finish camera, which was just being introduced at that time. But it was not official. About a week later I was invited to attend the showing of the finish of [Eddie] Tolan and [Ralph] Metcalfe's race and my hurdle race. Tolan and Metcalfe's race was decided in a short time because Tolan was thinner than Metcalfe and you could see a slight bit of light behind Tolan's back. So it was decided that Tolan was first and Metcalfe was second. But it was actually a dead heat.

Then when they started to show my race, Didriksen and I had been in adjoining lanes, both wearing all white uniforms. It was hard to tell where her body ended and where my body started. So the officials used large pointers to try to pick out which was the final, deciding picture. At that time, it was whosever breast hit the tape first, or whosever torso crossed the line, or whosever foot crossed the track first—and my foot was ahead in one of the pictures. Didriksen had turned sideways and she had thrown one arm up into the lane so that's what the officials saw. Then the officials decided that the least it could have been was a tie. Some of the officials that were there at the time were Avery Brundage, who was President of the International Olympic Committee; William May Garland; Custavus Kirby; Dan Ferris, who was secretary of the AAU and was known as Mr. AAU; George Donahue and many others. They said that since we were two American girls they couldn't change the standings because of the foreign officials, but they would give me a duplicate medal, either a gold or a half-gold and

half-silver. But to this day I have never gotten it. It has been quite a disappointment all these years.

Hodak: Now this viewing was specifically intended to explain how the judges had arrived at their decision? What were they trying to explain to you?

Adams: This was one of the first Olympics in the United States—they did have one in 1904 in conjunction with the World's Fair—but this was truly the first Olympics in the United States. They were trying to learn from all the different pictures and the different mistakes that had been made. There were several errors, as history will show. They were trying to talk over all these different technical points.

Hodak: So it doesn't sound like you had been sufficiently convinced by this viewing.

Adams: No, I have never been convinced. I thought for sure that 1984 would be the year that they would recognize that it really was a tie and do something about it. I felt that it wouldn't take anything away from the Babe because she was a well-known athlete and a good athlete. But it would certainly have helped me in many, many ways. It would have given me the satisfaction, if nothing else,

Hodak: So this obviously has been a bit of a disappointment.

Adams: Yes, it has been.

Hodak: Well, tell me a bit about the awards ceremony. Certainly a silver medal isn't such a bad thing in itself.

Adams: The victory stand was used for the first time in 1932 and, believe me, all Olympians will tell you that their greatest thrill was standing on the victory stand. We did not have a complicated or impressive awards ceremony as they do now—putting ribbons around your neck with the medals. They just handed them to us. All Olympians will

tell you that the greatest thrill of all was when they stood on that victory stand. I can still close my eyes and remember that thrill—the pride and the excitement I experienced when I stood on that stand. Really it was a thrill of a lifetime. When I looked in the stands and saw the thousands and thousands of spectators, it was like a sea of white, with the men all in straw hats. They were all waving American flags and cheering and clapping loudly. Then suddenly it became very quiet. We turned and faced the peristyle and saw the flags from all the nations blowing in the breeze and the flaming torch, then slowly two American flags and one South African flag were raised to the top. Everyone sang the American national anthem with gusto. I was so proud to be an American and to win a medal for my country that tears filled my eyes and I tingled all over. A thousand words would not describe my thoughts.

Hodak: Do you have any further summary thoughts on the Olympic experience and its significance for you?

Adams: I feel that the Olympics give people all over the world an opportunity to be together and to know and understand each other. All people want a better life, a comfortable life and they want to love and be loved. That was Baron Pierre de Coubertin's idea of the Olympic concept in itself. I think that it furthers a friendship and a peaceful movement among the athletes and peoples of the world.

Hodak: Did you have thoughts of being on the American Olympic team for 1936? Was this something that you looked towards?

Adams: After the 1932 Games I remained an amateur. In fact, even during the Depression I couldn't get a job working in Sears selling sports clothes because that would have made me a professional. But I did work for the World's Fair in 1933 and 1934 as a cashier. The Olympics really changed my whole life. It opened up a whole new world for me because I became aware of my education. I went back to Chicago and I was offered one of the first, if not the first.

athletic scholarships for women. I was admitted as a special student. Then I became a recreation instructor for the Chicago Park District.

Hodak: And you received a scholarship at which college?

Adams: At American College, Physical Education, which is now Depaul University. I would like to say here that right about then the war broke out. It's true that when you know somebody you tend to like them. When the war broke out with Japan and with Germany I was beside myself because I felt that they weren't our enemies, they were our friends. As individuals, we liked each other. If more individuals would like each other, there would be less and less wars. So I think that was one of the main reasons for the Olympic Games—to really promote peace among all the peoples of the world.

Hodak: I would like you to talk a bit further about your career as an athletic instructor and your long and varied involvement in other facets of the Olympic Movement.

Adams: When I was in school I was working as a recreation director for the Chicago Park District, as I said. In addition to my regular duties I was coaching track and field of all ages. I had pee-wees, juniors and seniors. Remember, this was still in the Depression. Since I liked to sew and was interested in crafts, whenever I got a yard of material—I could buy very good cotton material for ten cents a yard—I would cut and sew a pair of shorts for one of my kids. All my kids were outfitted in little track pants that I had made for them. But my senior team had regular uniforms. They were called Hall's Hurricanes and they made a good showing in different track meets around the country. We went up to Canada and we also went to Cleveland. We were invited there by Stella Walsh, who was the Polish Olympic champion in 1932. I had known Stella for years because we had competed together in the Polish Games.

I also taught various crafts and I enjoyed teaching that as much as

athletics. During the war I taught Red Cross first aid and life-saving classes to about 1600 men and women. My husband was in the service and, after the war, on a vacation to California in 1946, I was offered a wonderful opportunity to become the first supervisor for women and children for the city of Glendale. So as soon as we could, my husband, my daughter and I moved west. I was given a free hand to develop and organize my own program. Glendale had one of the few Olympic-size swimming pools. I immediately initiated AAU swimming and diving championships and started the first AAU 10k runs. I also had a tiny tot program, baton and dance classes, exercise for women, ceramics and lampshade classes, and so on. Then on Saturdays, which was my day off, I had water classes for handicapped children in the morning and craft classes for them in the afternoon at Verdugo Park in Glendale, which is adjacent to the pool. Really, that was the beginning of the Special Olympics program.

After the birth of my son, I became the first swimming instructor for the Crippled Children's Society or the Easter Seal campaign in Canoga Park. In addition to my swim program, I taught cooking to young adults. Recently, I was delighted when I read that Diane, a legless and an armless child I had introduced to the water, had graduated from UCLA. It is a great satisfaction that many of my students still keep in close contact with me after all these years. I haven't been in Chicago for over 40 years and some of the girls from Chicago still write to me.

Hodak: As you had moved west to California, how did you see the state of track and field for women? Was it being actively promoted by high schools in this area or by athletic organizations outside of high school?

Adams: When I was in Chicago I was chairman of the women's track and field for the Central AAU. When I came out west I was immediately made chairman of the Pacific Coast AAU. I worked very hard to have women's track events included in men's meets. But the women

physical education instructors were very much against it.

Hodak: What was the source of their resistance to track and field for women?

Adams: I felt that they knew about all the games and tournaments and such, but they had very little instruction on track and field, particularly for women. I felt bad that they felt this way because I would have gladly given any clinics or sessions to coach them on these things.

Hodak: So they simply weren't prepared to sponsor or promote women's sports?

Adams: No and we could have no official meets around. However, I did start a team in Glendale. I gathered some of the girls that were interested in track and gave them coaching in Glendale. The Glendale Lions Club sponsored my team and outfitted them with uniforms and sent us to Texas for the national championships. They made a very good showing. Also, in 1949 Paul Helms, Sr. included a 100-meter race and a relay event in the Coliseum Relays. Fanny Blankers-Koen from Holland, who is the only girl that won four gold medals in one Olympiad, competed in that event. Of course, you do know that Jesse Owens won four gold medals in the 1936 Olympic Games and Carl Lewis duplicated that in 1984. Included that year was a team from Canada and Myrtle Cook, a 1928 Olympian, was the coach. I was in charge of Fanny and her husband. She was a guest in my home too. My Glendale Lions Club also competed.

Many of the coaches from the various universities were very helpful to me and wanted to include women's events to get it started. But, as I said, the physical education instructors from these universities threatened drastic measures if women's events were included.

Hodak: What sort of measures did they threaten?

Adams: I don't know what they did but the coach from the Compton Relays was very apologetic and I just said, "Well, we'll withdraw rather than have a problem." He said, "I want to keep my word." But I knew he was suffering, or would be suffering, so I withdrew. It was an uphill battle to get a girls' team together and finally get some of these instructors interested in women's track and field.

I had as my guest Marjorie Jackson, from Australia. She was the Olympic champion in 1952. She came to Glendale to star in the Coliseum Relays and I think an interest in women's track and field was created then. I was Marjorie's host and chaperone for the 1952 Games. In 1979, Brad and I visited Marjorie and her family in Adelaide, Australia. So these friendships do continue for a long period of time. I still hear from Tilly, Fanny, Marjorie and others.

Hodak: Overall, you've certainly seen steady progress made, but it was rather gradual in the late '40s and early '50s?

Adams: It was rough. But I think when women's sport directors and college teachers realized that track and field was a good sport, they started to jump on the bandwagon.

Hodak: What other activities have you been involved in over the years?

Adams: In 1949 and for a few years after that I was National AAU chairman and also U.S. Olympic Chairman for Women's Track and Field.

In 1951 I was the coach/manager of the women's team representing America at the first Pan American Games. In the early spring we flew to Buenos Aires in a Stratosphere, or double-deck plane, making a few stops along the way. All the girls were in my charge, and represented the various sports. It is interesting to note that synchronized swimming was an exhibition event. My son was born in October of that year.

It was a thrilling and very high honor for me to be selected by this

group to present a huge bouquet of long roses to Eva Peron during the Opening Ceremonies. I walked across the whole field amid blaring lights and between rows of honored flag bearers from all nations. The red carpet I was following led me up many steps to where the dignitaries sat, including the Perons. It was a scary moment to thereafter retreat backward down those same steps!

Following these games, some of the American team were invited to Santiago, Chile, for an international invitational meet. Flying high above the Andes in a small plane was an awesome experience. In Chile, we were treated royally. As I was also the goodwill ambassador from the city of Glendale, I was happy to present keys from that city to Evita and Juan Peron and to the sponsor of the meet in Chile.

To go back a bit, in 1949 Bill Schroeder and Sam Gerson from the East Coast got together—and I was with them—to organize the Southern California chapter of Olympians. We had our meetings at Helms Hall. They had a nice hall, an outdoor hall, where we could have our meetings. That was a wonderful meeting place for all the athletes, not only locally but when any out of town officials or athletes would come we would meet there. People interested in sports came from all over the world to visit Helms Hall. What a great place! I was the secretary of the Southern California chapter of Olympians for many years and the president for three years. I have been on the board of directors ever since 1949.

I have been so interested in sports all my life and I still continue to be a part of it. As I told you, I started a program for the crippled children in 1947 and I continue to be interested in that group, which is now called the Special Olympics. In 1984, I was presented with the first Freedom Award that was given by the Special Olympics. I also work with the ARCO Games, which has beginning boys and girls competing in track, those who have never won a medal in a big race, and the games for disabled boys and girls.

In 1983, I was appointed a member of the 1984 Olympic Spirit Team. For two years I was extremely busy giving talks at different service clubs and schools and universities about the Olympic Games to encourage boys and girls to be aware of their health and to be interested in sports. I would talk about what the Olympic Games mean—the ideals and the goals and how children can become Olympians. I spoke about the history and the future of the Games. I believe, in life, everyone needs some sort of a goal or dream. And you have to work toward that. If you keep your body clean and you have a good diet and you do exercises of some sort or compete in some kind of athletics, it will make you stronger. You will be able to achieve your goal. I myself live by these rules. I still exercise. I still ride the bicycle. I love to dance. I am active all the time and rarely have a free minute.

Sports have been my long-time love. I have been continually involved in the Olympic Movement for 60 years and will keep doing so as long as I am able. As I told you, outside of my family, my concerns relate to sports and the Special Olympics.

I have two children, a son, Les Hall, and a daughter, Lynnelle Hall Gaeta. In 1965 I married again. I married Bradford C. Adams. He has a daughter, Margie Adams Leon. Brad is a retired micropaleontologist, or an oil geologist. He has so many wonderful virtues; he's caring, thoughtful, gentle and kind. I could say so much about him but I think the best thing is that he is a true gentleman in every way. And now my life is complete.

Hodak: Okay, well I'm going to complete this interview. I thank you for allowing me to come down and interview you. Did you have any general summary thoughts on the Olympic Movement and the changes you've seen over the years?

Adams: I think I could say that the Olympics has changed from the general concept in the beginning. In the beginning years of the Olympics, it was a mastery over self. You competed because you enjoyed the

sport, not for any material benefit that you received. But now, everything is really turned around. People have to be paid to compete and there's so much politics and money involved. I can't say whether it's good or it's bad because people have to live. But, to me, it takes the thrill out of it because I think being a true amateur was the highlight of my life, I think when you are paid to do something it's not really as much pleasure as if you do it because you want to do it.

Hodak: I can appreciate those sentiments. They are common sentiments on the part of the Olympians I have spoken to. I wonder if there is anything that you would like to add in the way of advice?

Adams: Children should look less at TV and work more at enjoying themselves out in the sun and out in the healthy air. And they should watch their diets, not to be a fanatic, but to stay away from things that are harmful. We all know that drinking and smoking and drugs are harmful to our bodies. If they could stay away from them when they're young, then they will develop healthy habits. I wouldn't say stay away totally from TV because there are a lot of learning experiences, but it should not be the only entertainment that they have. Children should be encouraged to run, swim, climb, throw and play, both indoors and outdoors.

Hodak: I thank you for allowing me to come down to interview you. The Amateur Athletic Foundation also appreciates your time and cooperation. Thank you. It was a pleasure to have met you.