

REGINALD HARRISON
1928 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.

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

AN OLYMPIAN'S ORAL HISTORY
METHODOLOGY

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

Family History

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

Education

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

Sport-Specific Biographical Data

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

General Biographical Data

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

General Observations

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

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

REGINALD HARRISON

1928 OLYMPIC GAMES - AMSTERDAM
WATER POLO

INTERVIEWED:

August, 1987
Santa Monica, California

by George A. Hodak

REGINALD HARRISON

Interviewer: George A. Hodak

Hodak: I'm in Santa Monica visiting with Olympian Reggie Harrison, who competed as a member of the 1928 American Olympic water polo team. Before we get into discussing your development as a swimmer, we're going to get to more basic details. First of all, when and where were you born?

Harrison: I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on November 22, 1903, quite a few years ago. My father was an artist. And in my early days we lived in and about Philadelphia and its suburbs for a number of years. Finally, my father contracted tuberculosis—I believe it was from the paints they used in those days—and after a long illness he died in 1913. My aunt took care of me and my brother and two sisters. We lived in New York, not in the best of circumstances. It was at that time that I learned to swim. We lived on the East Side of New York, as I recall, in a number of places. One of them was Forty-Eighth Street and Second Avenue, which is not the finest location. But the one part about it was that it was close to the East River. When I was about six or seven years old my brother and I would go down there—he was older, three years older—and swim off the docks. It was a little hazardous because there was no beach and you swam in deep water—you either swam or you drowned. There was always a number of older kids there so there was really no danger. I guess there was more danger in the pollution that floated down that river.

However, in 1913, when I was about ten, my father died. He had some good friends in Portland and they brought us out to Portland. He died in Portland. He was painting miniatures at

that time for some of the wealthier people in Portland.

So I lived in Portland for a number of years and I used to swim at a place called the Portland Natatorium. In those days it was common to have, in large- or medium-sized cities, a public swimming pool. Some of them had swimming teams and the Portland Natatorium had a swimming team in which I became a little better in swimming. I had learned a little in grammar school—at that time I was going to a parochial school in Portland. And a public school not too far away had a swimming pool. Of course, the parochial school didn't. Anyway, we'd get over there once a week and there was a swimming instructor, a fellow named Jimmy Burke. He put on some impromptu races. I was a little more skillful, I think, than the rest of them, so he spent a little time on me. I had the rudiments of swimming, so eventually it was polished a little at this Portland Natatorium I told you about.

As I recall, they had some swimming championships at the Multnomah Club, probably the Oregon state or some local meet. I won one and consequently met Jack Cody—he was a coach, he coached Thelma Payne [Sanborn]—and I became friendly with him. Then he asked me if I wanted to join the club and I said, "Sure." So I swam for the Multnomah Club. In the next several years we went to Vancouver, Victoria Island and Seattle.

So, in 1921 I came down here to Southern California, chiefly to become a lifeguard—which I did. At the same time I started going to high school here. I was a little older. I had fairly good success as a high school swimmer.

Hodak: In the sprint distances?

Harrison: Yes, the 50 and the 100. I'd even swim the 220. We played water polo too. At that time I lived in Venice and there was a swimming club in Venice. In those days there were many swimming clubs. The L.A. Athletic Club had a swimming team.

Redondo had a swimming team, and Bimini Baths, as I recall, had a swimming and water polo team, as did the Hollywood Athletic Club. In fact, we had the first organized water polo league: the LAAC, if I remember correctly, and Venice and Redondo and Bimini. Those are all gone now, as far as active participation in water sports. The Venice pool is long gone. In those days there was a big pool at Venice. It was 150 feet by 100 feet, about the biggest pool in Southern California. We had water polo and swimming. John Weissmuller swam there. A lot of real good swimmers would come out here.

Hodak: Weissmuller would come out with the Illinois Athletic Club? How would that work out?

Harrison: Well, what happened was that [William] Bachrach, who was coach of the IAC [Illinois Athletic Club], would take Weissmuller and [Harold] "Stubby" Kruger, who was a backstroke swimmer, a Hawaiian boy, and they would put on meets with local clubs. Of course, they would be paid some money; I suspect Bachrach might have made a living that way, besides the salary from the club. So, that went on and I played water polo. We would play the local schools. I played water polo in high school, too.

Hodak: And you went to Venice High?

Harrison: Yeah, we had a Venice team and we used to win everything.

Hodak: Was the competition confined to Los Angeles? Or did you engage in statewide—

Harrison: In those days there was a high school water polo league, just like there is today. There was Long Beach and Hollywood and Inglewood, four or five teams. So I graduated from high school and went on to Stanford.

Before we get to talk about Stanford, tell me how water polo was

Hodak:

played in your day. It seems the rules were being altered—

Harrison: Well, I don't think they were being altered. Really I haven't followed water polo much today but it seems like the players are bigger, for one thing. They are taller and they catch the ball higher in the air. In those days, they swam a lot and passed the ball back and forth and worked the ball to the opposing goal through the water. But nowadays they seem to throw the ball more. Of course, I haven't seen very many water polo games, I can tell you that.

Hodak: You played the English style of water polo.

Harrison: That's the only style there is.

Hodak: Well, there was an American version which used the half-inflated ball.

Harrison: The American version was kind of knock-down, drag-out. I've never played it but I have talked to people at the New York Athletic Club who had played it. That was played with five or six men on each side and the ball was semi-inflated.

Hodak: So it could go under the water easier?

Harrison: Yeah, and you could hold the ball in your hand and fend off your defender with your other hand and beat your way down the pool. Then, in order to score, as I understand it, you had to just reach up and touch some type of a board, similar to basketball. I don't think you had to throw it through a hoop; although, who knows; maybe you did, I never saw it.

Hodak: But there was much more brute force involved in that game?

Harrison: Yes, and if the guy wouldn't let you throw the ball, you've got a

right to drown him. Though, before that happened, he'd let it go. Anyway, we played international rules, the same rules had been played in England and on the Continent for many years.

Hodak: Were you recruited by Stanford? Was there anything in the way of athletic recruitment in those days?

Harrison: What happened was a very good friend of mine, [James] Wally O'Connor, who was quite a swimmer and an Olympic player too, had gone to Stanford in 1924. So he had paved the way. When I got a chance, after I graduated from high school, I contacted Wally and through Wally and the coach, Ernie Brandsten, they got me in. My grades weren't all that high, but I was older, 22, and I had enough recommended grades—not too many A's but a lot of B's. I had been president of the boys' league and all that sort of thing. That was one of the things that they looked at when they picked somebody—leadership . . . qualities besides scholarship. Scholarship is important too, and athletic ability had something to do with it. They were looking, as I understand it, for well-rounded people—which I certainly was. So that's about the whole story. I swam with some success at Stanford, particularly on the coast. I don't think I was ever defeated in swimming. But then swimming was a little bit different in those days. The Pacific Coast wasn't dominant. However, when we had meets with Northwestern or Eastern teams when they came out, I didn't do so well. They had some really good swimmers like [George] Kojac and [Albert] Schwartz. So they were better swimmers than I was, but I did alright.

Hodak: So you swam which distances in college?

Harrison: I did the 50, the 100, the relay, and I played water polo.

Hodak: And what position did you play on the water polo team?

Harrison: I was a sprint. I don't know what it is today, but in those days

they would drop the ball in the middle of the pool and each team would designate their fastest swimmer to retrieve the ball, pass it back, and then to deploy it into some type of prearranged play in order to have the initial advantage of passing the ball and possibly getting a shot at the goal. That's what I played, the sprint. I had good success there. Of course, I was a real good swimmer, a better swimmer than any of the rest of the boys on the team.

Hodak: Did you have a particular shot that you used more than others?

Harrison: You had to be versatile. You can't have just one shot, you have to have a number of them. One of the things you do is that you can kind of fake the goalkeeper out of position. You make a false move or something, get him up in the air, and he can't remain in the air very long. When he goes down, then you plop in the goal. Water polo is an odd game. The goalkeeper is treading water in deep water and he can get out of the water about two or three feet. But he can't stay up there; he's got to go back down. If you can anticipate his withdrawal going down, you can get a good shot. But if he's a big guy like Herb Wildman, who is about six-four or six-five, he covered a lot of the net. The goal is only eight or ten feet, but he could cover most of it. Then, you never get a straight-on shot, it's always from the side. So he can cover a lot of territory. It's kind of like soccer in that way, only the goalkeeper can't move as fast. He's more or less anchored. If you get a shot at the corners you can make it if you're close enough.

Hodak: So what would the typical score have been in the collegiate games?

Harrison: Well, as far as we were concerned, we would win easily because we really had no competition. Only UCLA, USC and Cal were playing water polo in those days and we dominated them. The scores were large, 7-1, 8-1. We beat USC in 1928 at the

Hollywood Athletic Club, 13-0.

Hodak: So Stanford was a step above the West Coast competition?

Harrison: Yes, they were. Ernie Brandsten was a very good coach. The other schools I had seen didn't even have a pool. In fact, we had to play the water polo game against USC at the Hollywood Athletic Club.

Hodak: And you played the Olympic Club in San Francisco?

Harrison: Yeah, we played the Olympic Club. They would beat us. They had a real good ball club. They had [George] Mitchell and [George] Schroth on the team, who were powerhouses. Several of them went to the Olympic Games. They had a real good goalkeeper. But it was a lot of fun.

Hodak: And what do you recall of Ernest Brandsten?

Harrison: Well, Ernie was a real good diving coach. He was a good water polo and swimming coach, but not nearly as good as he was in diving. He had a number of real good divers, like you mentioned a while ago; Al White and Dave Fall and Pete Desjardins and a fellow named Thronson. But he always had a crop of divers. As far as swimming was concerned, he had a number of good swimmers. But, like I say, the competition in those days, over 50 years ago, wasn't too keen. It wasn't like it is today, where they have Olympic teams that are studded with people from USC, UCLA, Stanford and Cal. In those days, no one out here ever made the Olympic team. It was always the Eastern schools like Michigan, Yale and Northwestern. They would provide most of the intercollegiate representatives on the team, like Schwartz.

Hodak: I'm curious, what would your average day at school have been? What were the practice sessions like? What was the routine at that time?

Harrison: Well, of course Stanford had kind of a rough curriculum. You had to maintain a C average or you washed out and were sent home and you had to stay out a quarter. Nobody wanted that to happen, so you had to study quite a bit. Then at three o'clock, when practice would start, we would just swim a little bit and play water polo the rest of the time. We'd play for a half-hour against the freshman team and swim some more. Not extensively, not like they do today. I was watching this team over here at Santa Monica College. Those guys come at six o'clock in the morning, the coach takes them down to the weight room and they lift weights for a half-hour. Then they go up in the pool and they'll swim for 45 minutes, starting out with 500 yards, then they'd swim two or three 100's, 50's, sprints, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly. I don't know how they do it. Then they are back later in the afternoon, I understand, for another hour. I was reading in the paper the other day about this new star, a girl named Janet Evans. Her coach said that she had been swimming 25,000 yards a day and he was going to cut it down to 13,000 a day. Do you know how far that is?

Hodak: More than I want to think about, much less swim.

Harrison: It was laid back when I was at Stanford. Swimming was a minor sport and the competition was not all that great. So they didn't push people too much.

Hodak: Well, the school was demanding in itself, as you mentioned. Were you consciously gearing up for Olympic tryouts while you were in college?

Harrison: No, not then. I had no idea that I would be on an Olympic team because, as a swimmer, I wasn't really Olympic caliber. I was a good swimmer, but not the record-breaking type. In those days, if you wanted to go to the Olympics in the 100 meters, you had to swim pretty good. They only took three.

In 1928 I tried out for the Olympics. They had the regional tryouts that year at Brookside Pool in Pasadena. It was a 50-meter pool, I believe. I swam even with Duke Kahanomoku in a dead-heat. Of course, the time was nothing to write home with—about 1:01—but it was close enough to justify the club that I belonged to sending me to the tryouts that were held in the summer at a pool called the Broad Ripple Pool in Indianapolis. I believe that the reason it was probably held there is because that was one of very few 50-meter pools that were around in the central part of the country. Anyway, they had nine heats and they picked the winner in each heat and the fastest second. They put me in Weissmuller's heat, so I didn't make it. [laughter]

Hodak: You had some stiff competition there.

Harrison: Oh yes. People like Weissmuller, Duke Kahanomoku, Walter Laufer, and Kojac or any number of people had no difficulty with a swimmer of my type at all. But I developed into a pretty fair water polo player. We were in the East in 1928 in the spring quarter. We used to make our trips during the Easter vacation. I think that we had a dual meet at Indianapolis at the Indianapolis Athletic Club. It might have been one of the universities, I'm not sure. The highlight of that thing was when we had a tour of the Stutz automobile factory. Did you ever hear of that?

Hodak: The Stutz Bearcat?

Harrison: Yes. Well, they built it in Indianapolis. And they had just come out with a new sedan, a Stutz sedan. Anyway, we went out and toured the place and they loaded us into two of these Stutzes and took us out to the racetrack. Seventy-five miles an hour around that track and I'll tell you, that was a thrill. In those days, 75 miles an hour was quite high.

So we had a meet at Yale, either Yale or Harvard, and then we

went to Chicago for the tryouts. As I recall there was the Olympic Club, the Chicago Athletic Club, the Illinois Athletic Club, our team, and Northwestern. But Northwestern was eliminated and we were eliminated. But we showed pretty good. Anyway, the winner was the Illinois Athletic Club. Then they picked the second team from the other participants and I was one of the ones selected.

Hodak: Yeah, I think that in the same year didn't you defeat Northwestern in the intercollegiate water polo finals?

Harrison: Well, they came out here and we beat them. They came out on the trip earlier and we beat them. We played them back there in their pool, which was a 60-foot pool . . . and the thing was shallow for half the way, so it was more of a wrestling match than a swimming meet. Anyway, we got beat back there, 7-6 or something like that. But that was the way it all went.

Hodak: So you were selected for the Olympic water polo team. What about the travel? Do you remember much of the send-off from New York?

Harrison: Oh yes. In those days you had to provide your own transportation to Chicago. Al Masters, at Stanford, gave me a hundred bucks and they had a swimming meet up there and I got a couple hundred dollars, which was enough to take me back to Chicago. We stayed at a big hotel called the Knights of Columbus. It wasn't a religious order at all, just a hotel. We worked out at the Illinois Athletic Club. The whole team was there and after about a week we all went to New York. We stayed at the McAlpin, I believe. Anyway, they were holding women's tryouts at Coney Island or someplace. After that was over they selected the women's team, boarded the boat, and away we went. We sailed on a United States shipping liner called the *President Roosevelt*. It had no swimming facilities except they had rigged up a couple of canvas tanks, as I recall. They

were ten feet by ten feet and four feet deep. You'd put on a harness and all the swimmers were entitled to, twice a day, ten minutes each time, to swim against this harness which was tied with a rope to a post. That was your workout.

To avoid the summer storms, they went the summer route which is southerly, and it took ten days. So we got to Amsterdam and they moored the boat in sort of a large estuary—quite large, a mile or so across. We sailed up a canal for quite a few miles to get to this place. They had the boat moored and they ran a shore boat back and forth to the dock. You could go anytime, day or night. We ate on the boat, slept on the boat. Bill Bachrach was in charge of swimming. He would arrange for a bus and we'd go different places. We went to Haarlem one time and went to different pools where he could get in a pool to work out. We'd play water polo with other teams. We played the Irish team one day. The Dutch officials directed us to an area in the canal they had roped off for us to practice. Well, our coach. Perry McGillivray, when he saw that with all the sewage flowing in said, "The heck with that."

So the Olympics came along and I didn't even get to play; like I say, they had a team of their own. I was an alternate on the water polo team.

Hodak: Weissmuller was included on the team even though he didn't try out?

Harrison: That's right. They put him in but our team was defeated in the first couple games. They won the first one when they played Malta, but after that . . . with Hungary I think they got beat. When the second team beat them, Weissmuller quit . . . well, he didn't quit, they hauled him out so he could swim. I think he won the 100 and the 400. I'm not sure, I don't recall.

Hodak: What advantages did the Germans, Hungarians and other teams

have?

Harrison: They couldn't swim as well as we could but they could handle that ball.

Hodak: Did they have better teamwork?

Harrison: Yes, better teamwork and they would pass the ball better and shoot better. I think that was the whole thing. Our teams were very loosely organized. We knew little about water polo. They are beginning, now It's a scientific game and if you have good coaches, like I assume they have now with the success they are having, they can produce. Ernie Brandsten never played water polo. His method of coaching was to let the fellows play and he would try to help them a little. But he knew very little about it. That was true with all the coaches in those days. So that's why our teams were beaten.

But finally, the last day, I and another fellow named [Joseph] Farley, who had been picked from the New York Athletic Club similarly to the way I had been . . . well, he and I and Owen Driggs flew to Paris for a couple of days. We went to the Folies-Bergere and New York Bar. You know, just fooled around for a couple of days. Then we took a plane to London, England, which was quite a deal in 1928. There wasn't too much flying in those days. Anyway, we flew over to London and at that time the track team had gone ahead. Track was held ahead of the swimming. At any rate, they had participated in a meet at a place called Stamford Bridge, the British Empire Games. They participated there and they all stayed at the Savoy Hotel, which was a very fancy place. And subsequent to the games, they had all scattered, some had gone to Ireland. We came here just in time to move into their rooms, because we knew many of them. When they were gone we used their rooms. So we stayed there a couple of days and took the train to Southampton along with the rest of the team that had returned by then. At the conclusion of

the Games, the boat had left Amsterdam and sailed to Southampton, arriving there the day before. So we just walked in and the boat took off and came home. That's all, period.

Hodak: Getting back to the Olympics, does anything really stick out in your memory?

Harrison: Well, I enjoyed the track. I like track anyway and enjoyed that. I remember the 100-meter race was won by somebody from Jamaica. It was a terrific race. Then I remember the quarter mile. Do you remember Barbuti?

Hodak: Yes, Ray Barbuti from Syracuse.

Harrison: Boy, In the final heat he had about a foot and he just fell forward and won that thing by a couple of feet and fell right on his face. I'll never forget that.

All the Olympic members sat in a particular location in the stands. We had no tickets or anything but we had a blue sweatshirt and a blue pair of pants marked with USA, and that was our passport. You went anywhere with that.

I remember I played chess with a hurdler, I can't even remember his name, but he was older and he was trying to teach me how to play chess on the way over. You know, traveling on a boat is probably the most boring thing in the world. You walk around the boat in the morning for about a mile (you were supposed to walk a mile). You don't have a thing to do all day long. It reminds me of something somebody said, Edgar Allan Poe or somebody, "The only difference between an extended boat trip and being in jail is that on the boat you are in danger of being drowned." I read that someplace and that's what I believe.

Hodak: Was there a pretty good camaraderie among the athletes?

Harrison: Oh yeah, everybody got along fine. They ate at two different stages there were so many of them. Everybody would go in and you had your own place. I sat a table with Schroth, Mitchell, O'Connor and [Samuel] Greller. He was a water polo player from Chicago. Greller was a real nice fellow. We sat at the same table every day and got along fine.

The boat was dry because, you know, in those days it was Prohibition. I'm sure there was quite a bit of drinking done over there; not before, as I recall, but afterwards. Most of them brought bottles back on the boat on the way home. There was quite a bit of drinking coming home.

Hodak: Now what about the return to New York? Was there a big homecoming for you?

Harrison: Well, as a matter of fact, they had it lined up. They had a ticker tape parade all lined up but the day we got there it was raining like hell. So Jimmy Walker, who was the mayor then, came down to the dock and gave a little talk and said on account of the rain, they had cancelled the ticker tape parade. But it didn't seem to bother anybody very much.

Hodak: So you returned then to California?

Harrison: We stayed a couple of days in New York and then we came on back to California. I went back to work on the beach to save up some money to go back to school.

Hodak: And you reached your best times in 1929 or '30, in the 100 meters? You continued to progress a bit?

Harrison: I don't really recall. My time was never much better than 54 or 55 flat. Sometimes not that well. But in those days, that was a pretty good time. I mean, it was good enough to win. I tell you, if we had had more competition we probably would have been

better. In those days, intercollegiate swimming wasn't as advanced as it is today. Just like I think I mentioned to you the other day, if Weissmuller were alive today, his fastest time wouldn't make the finals of the women's 100-meter—none of them could.

Hodak: Well, things are different, as you say. When did you graduate from Stanford?

Harrison: In 1930.

Hodak: And then from there where did you go?

Harrison: Well, that was the middle of the Depression. I still worked on the beach. I played water polo for the LAAC. The tryouts for the 1932 Games were held in Pasadena. Of course, I had been working on the beach as a lifeguard. And at that time the Illinois Athletic Club came out thinking they would cripple our team, which had a number of people on it who were suspected of being lifeguards, and so they protested. And the protest was allowed. I was removed from the team along with a fellow named Rich Daubenspeck, who was a pretty good water polo player. He was a lifeguard like I was, so we were both booted off the team.

Hodak: So you were considered a professional then?

Harrison: Well, it was a temporary deal. If you look in the rule book, I think that has been eliminated now, but you'll see that during the time that you were a lifeguard you were unable to compete in an AAU event. Now, the AAU was the big deal in those days. I understand that now it's more or less superseded, I have no idea. I never hear about it anymore. Of course, in those days, everything was AAU. You had to have an AAU card to swim in any swimming meet—maybe you do today, I'm not sure.

Hodak: Did you take much of an interest in the 1932 Olympics?

Harrison: Oh yeah. I went to watch them and it was an interesting spectacle. They had just opened the new swimming pool at Exposition Park, next to the Coliseum in Los Angeles. It was really a marvelous outfit. There were several pools and a beautiful place to watch it from with big cement stands.

Hodak: Did anything really stand out compared to the 1928 Olympics? Any real differences you saw in the way the Games were conducted or organized?

Harrison: Well, I think they were better organized here in Los Angeles than they were in Amsterdam. As a matter of fact, I don't recall much of the swimming events at Amsterdam at all. In fact, they might have been held at the same time the water polo was held because I don't remember going to them at all. But I remember seeing some of the events here, and watching the water polo too. We got third, I think.

Hodak: Did you continue to swim competitively beyond 1932?

Harrison: No. In fact, I didn't swim in 1932. The last time I ever swam was at a swimming meet at Lake Arrowhead, where they used to have an annual swimming meet. At this particular time I was a flying cadet. What happened was that the son of a brigadier general, a fellow named Johnny Presser, who was a fraternity brother of mine, wanted to get in the air corps. So he was going to the Presidio to take the examination one day and he wanted me to come with him. So I went up with him and took the examination. That fall, after I graduated, I went to USC law school, but the Depression landed on my neck about that time. I couldn't live. So I had to quit after one semester. Just about that time I got a letter from the War Department stating that I had been accepted as a cadet. So I went out to March Field and took the physical and mental examinations and passed.

When you're trying to be a flying officer, first you had to be a

college graduate. Second, you had to take this course which took a year. It was in three stages. The preliminary stage was when you learned to fly. I had little difficulty in that. I passed that alright. Then, the second semester was what they called basic training. At this time you went into a larger plane with the balanced steel run and the brakes and all. The first planes were just simple planes. Well, that was a little more difficult to fly and I didn't have much success with it. So I got washed out after a couple of months.

I came home and went back on the beach. I worked on the beach for a year or two. In those days, during the Depression, jobs were hard to find, whether you were a college graduate or not. And I worked most of the time, doing different things. But I took this examination and passed it and went to work as a Deputy in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. I put in 27 years and 7 months, and retired and have been retired for 23 years. I worked in a jail for 14 months. I worked a patrol unit for three years. I worked as a detective for burglary and robbery for nine years. I made lieutenant and spent the next 15 years as as a detective lieutenant. I finally retired and I've been happy ever since.

I should point out that Lillian Copeland, who was on the 1928 team and later won a gold medal in 1932, also worked for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. I worked with her in the Lennox Division, near Hawthorne. She had went to law school at USC. We got along well. I liked her a lot.

Hodak: And what were your responsibilities as a detective? What was your routine like?

Harrison: Well, it was similar, I presume, to the routine today. You came to work in the morning and if either one of the uniformed shifts had made any arrests the night before, why, they would be in the jail waiting to be disposed of. And the lieutenant would

assign the cases to you. You had to process whoever was in jail. And if you didn't, he would hand you a half a dozen cases that occurred during the preceding 24 hours. If you had somebody in jail you had to interview them and get a statement; an admission, a denial or whatever. Then you'd go out and check the thing, and if you were able to come up with any more evidence than already accumulated by the uniformed police, then you'd get it together and present it to the district attorney for a complaint. Sometimes he'd give it and sometimes he wouldn't. If he didn't think he could win it, he'd throw the case out, and you'd have to turn the guy loose. It was up to your skill to develop the case so it could be won.

Then, after the complaint and warrant was issued, then you'd arraign the guy, and get a time for the preliminary hearing. You'd attend the preliminary hearing, which, as you know, is merely a hearing to determine first whether a crime was committed, and, number two, whether or not the person in custody was likely to have committed it. You don't have to prove it, you just have to show there is every reason to believe he is the guilty person or party. Then you present the case and if the preliminary trial judge holds him to answer, then he sends him to superior court for trial. That happens within a month or two; sooner if he's in custody, later if he's on bail. You have to testify at the preliminary trial as to what the man said, what you found out, and how the circumstances surrounding the thing work. Then you have the witnesses testify, or you identify what was stolen in a burglary. See, you have to establish the *modus operandi*. You have to establish the crime was committed, and present the evidence and witnesses.

Hodak: Sounds like a detective is a surrogate lawyer.

Harrison: Well, he does have to know criminal law, but not other parts of the law. He sits in court enough and listens to prosecuting attorneys and defense attorneys argue cases back and forth, so

he gets a good criminal law exposure.

Hodak: Were you assigned to specific areas of Los Angeles?

Harrison: Yeah, I worked in Hollywood for several years and Firestone Park. I worked in a patrol unit at Malibu, and also as a detective, but not as much as I did in the city areas like Hollywood, Lennox and Firestone.

Hodak: Would you talk a bit about your family?

Harrison: Well, I was married and we had one daughter, who was born in 1934. She's a writer. She's married to an engineer, who is also a writer on technical subjects. At any rate, we bought the home that you're sitting in now in 1938 and have lived here ever since, almost 50 years. My wife died three years ago and I live here alone.

Hodak: And do you keep busy with swimming?

Harrison: Yes, I swim and I play golf. I play golf three times a week and I swim every day, or nearly every day. I still keep up my swimming. For a while I was interested in this master's swimming program.

Hodak: Did you have much competition in your age category?

Harrison: No, that's the reason why I dropped out of it. What happened was that I was swimming in the 80-84 class, and please believe me, at that age, people can't even swim, much less swim competitively. I was fortunate enough so I could go through the motions. My time in the 100 was 1:39 which, incidentally, set a record. [laughter] I went to two or three meets and I realized that all I was doing was getting a time trial.

Hodak: You weren't getting pushed by anybody.

Harrison: There wasn't anybody else in my class. That master's program is a tremendous thing. Hundreds and hundreds of people go to these swimming meets. And it is very well organized. They send a brochure and application blank to you. It costs you 12 dollars a year. As the meets come up, they send you the application. It costs you three dollars to enter and one dollar for each event. When they have your name, after you send it in, they prepare these mimeographed sheets which they hang on the wall. And you come out and check when you're going to swim. So I would come and check, and in my group there wouldn't be anybody but me. So I dropped out of it. Up until this year I had swam in some of them, but this year I haven't.

Hodak: In addition to swimming, you play golf?

Harrison: Yes. I play golf three times a week. I'll play tomorrow.

Hodak: Well, you do keep busy. Having been in the Olympics in 1928, and almost having made it in '24 and '32, how much of an interest have you taken in watching the Olympic Movement develop over the years?

Harrison: Very little. I've had other interests, like buying this house, raising a daughter, making a living. Police work is not too demanding but still, you've got to be on top of it. It is pretty hard to have other interests. When I was working, lots of times it was a day and night job. You just didn't quit, you had to keep on going. It limited your opportunities to participate in outside things.

Hodak: Did you follow the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, the water polo competition?

Harrison: I watched it on television, but to my mind the price of tickets was a travesty. They just completely eliminated the lower- and middle-classes.

Hodak: Yes, many sporting events are rather expensive, the Olympics included. But I can appreciate your sentiments. Well, I certainly thank you for your time and cooperation. It's a pleasure to have visited with you.