

FRANK J. LUBIN
1936 OLYMPIC GAMES
BASKETBALL



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 J. LUBIN

1936 OLYMPIC GAMES - BERLIN
BASKETBALL
Gold Medalist

INTERVIEWED:

May, 1988
Glendale, California
by George A. Hodak

FRANK J. LUBIN

Interviewer: George A. Hodak

Hodak: Today I am in Glendale interviewing Frank Lubin, a member of the gold medal 1936 American Olympic basketball team. Mr. Lubin will be our tour guide through the early history of basketball in Southern California and elsewhere. First off, I'd like you to talk a bit about your family background. Please give your date and place of birth and then talk a bit about your parents and family.

Lubin: First, I want to thank you for including me in your program, and I'd be glad to tell you my history. I was born in the east side of Los Angeles, in the Belvedere area, on January 7, 1910. I came from a family of four boys and two girls. None of us were interested in sports in the beginning. But as we went along in years I was the only one that took to sports very drastically and was excited about going on.

Hodak: Did your father have much influence in your sports? Tell me a bit about your parents' background.

Lubin: My father and my mother came from Lithuania. They were forced out of Lithuania by Russia, which occupied their country. They came to Boston, Massachusetts. My father was never in sports at all. He'd been a hard working man; having to raise quite a large family, he didn't have time to enter into sports. I don't know what sort of education he had. In those days, you never questioned what your father did in his early years. But I know he was a tailor and he provided a good living for a family of seven.

Hodak: Tell me what sort of things you were interested in as a youngster? You mentioned you were the only one in your family that was

particularly drawn to sports. What sports, in addition to basketball, did you compete in or take up?

Lubin: Actually, in grammar school. Belvedere Grammar school, there were no sports; no intramural sports. They just had a playground area where you played. The only place where I took up any sports was behind a church in that area where they had a basketball court on dirt. My first interest in organized basketball was in high school where I tried out for the track team, the baseball team and the football team. Finally, as I was growing fast at this period of my life—I grew from about 6 feet to about 6-foot-5—one of the players on the basketball team asked me to come out for basketball because they needed a big center. But I wasn't too interested. He said he'd show me how to shoot and how to do the little tricks in basketball. I was more interested in track; I thought I was a great track athlete. I was long and slim and The funny thing is that I thought I was a pole vaulter. I used to pole vault up to ten feet. But when it came to the city tournament, I was the second man on the team in the pole vault. They set the bar at 12 feet to start out. Well, I ran under the bar three times and realized I wasn't a pole vaulter. (laughter) So I found this athlete and said I'd like to take up basketball. Then in 1927, without any help from my family or anything, I graduated from high school and went to UCLA.

Hodak: And you had attended Lincoln High School?

Lubin: Yes, Lincoln High School. Actually, in my last year, 1927, I made the all-city team as a guard. As I didn't take up basketball until late, I was not a good shooter, so they used me as a jumping center. I jumped for the tip-off and dropped back to guard. I hardly ever scored during basketball games in high school.

Hodak: What would you do as the guard? You were the off-guard, not the shooting guard?

Lubin: I was the defensive guard. I got the rebounds and got the ball out to the players to get the fast break. And I continued that at UCLA. No one had taught me how to shoot and play the pivot position; which I later learned to perfection.

Hodak: How did you decide on attending UCLA?

Lubin: Well, there were no scholarships at that time. I went to UCLA with my family's help. None of the other boys or girls had gone to college. They finished high school and then went on to work to provide help for my dad to raise the family. But they said one of us had to go to college and they selected me. I don't know why; maybe they thought that someday I might prove helpful in the sports world.

Hodak: So when you decided to attend UCLA, did you have it in mind to play on the basketball team, or did someone approach you about it?

Lubin: I was never approached. I tried out for everything. I tried out for baseball, football, track, and I even went out for the swimming team. I knew how to swim quite well and thought I was going to be a great swimmer at one time. I was a good backstroker. The coach of the Olympic team saw me swimming at the Hollywood Athletic Club, where the UCLA basketball team practiced, and he said he wanted me to go out for the swimming team. He was going to make me an Olympic champion in the backstroke. But I was taking to basketball about that time. Still, I was not the scoring type of player until after I got out of college.

Hodak: Let's talk further about your college career at UCLA. Who were some of the other players that you played alongside?

Lubin: I played alongside the first All-American selected from UCLA on the national All-American team, Dick Linthicum. I played with him for three years at UCLA, and it was a great honor to be playing alongside Dick Linthicum. He was a great scorer and that's where

he got his recognition. Sam Baiter, Carl Knowles and Carl Shy joined in the UCLA program after I had been there for some time. So all four of us played together for two to three years. That was the basis for something to come later on.

Hodak: Which we will get to. Tell me a bit about your coach at UCLA, [Pierce] "Caddy" Works.

Lubin: The coach at UCLA was more of an honorary coach. He was not strictly a basketball coach. He was a lawyer who coached us during the evening. Our basketball workouts were held at night—at five to seven o'clock, after our school day was finished. Since he was only a nominal coach, he couldn't teach us the fundamentals. All he knew was to pass the ball around to each other and have somebody shoot the ball. Again, the only use he made out of me was to jump center, because of my height—I had grown to be 6 foot 6, and drop back, and play defensive guard in getting the ball off the backboard and start what he called a fast break.

Hodak: And where did UCLA play its games in those days? They didn't have a gymnasium of their own, did they?

Lubin: UCLA started at the campus on Vermont. Then they went to Westwood and we did not have a gym at that time, so all our workouts and games were played in high schools and also at the Hollywood Athletic Club. That's where I saw this swimming coach who wanted me to take up swimming. I'd dive in the swimming pool a lot after our workouts. But, over the years I must have showed something at the defensive position because in 1931 I was picked on the second All-Coast basketball team.

Hodak: So following your graduation from UCLA, what were your intentions?

Lubin: Well, my family thought that I should become a lawyer because that was a good profession and it paid well. To get a good paying job was uppermost in most people's mind. So after graduation from

UCLA in 1931, in the regulation time of four years, I went to the University of California at Berkeley where the law school was. They didn't have one at UCLA at that time. But in between, basketball was in my blood. Before I went to law school at Berkeley, in 1931 right after graduation, I started playing basketball for a local team called the Pasadena Majors, which went to the national AAU tournament held in Kansas City. Our team did fairly well, I think we got to the quarterfinal round and then were eliminated by superior teams.

Hodak: Who sponsored the Pasadena Majors?

Lubin: There was a man, I forget his name, who ran a bakery there and he was very interested in sports. He heard about the different players coming out of UCLA and USC, so he got a group of eight or ten of us to play for him to advertise his bakery. Although we were called the Pasadena Majors, I don't know whether his bakery was called the Major Bakery or not. But I stayed there a year and then I went north to the law school, Boalt Hall.

Hodak: While you were attending law school at Berkeley were you also competing for the Olympic Club in San Francisco?

Lubin: At the time, another athlete that played at UCLA, Carl Knowles, had moved to San Francisco. His family was running an oil station there. Carl contacted me up at Boalt Hall and said he was playing for the Olympic Club in San Francisco and that they needed a big center. He asked if I would have time to come out and play basketball. I said, "Oh gee, that's my second love." So I said I would come over and play for them. We had a strong team and won the Northern California championship in basketball and were invited to go to Kansas City again. Our team again went to about the quarterfinals before we were eliminated, but we showed a lot of promise. Carl Knowles and I continued and got to a sensational finish.

Hodak: Take us from your days in school at Boalt Hall and competing with the Olympic Club to your move south back to Los Angeles.

Lubin: Well, in 1933 I wasn't doing too well in school. My grades were suffering from my playing so much basketball. I think my secondary love was taking over. Although I went to a law firm and was making 50 dollars a month, it wasn't enough to keep me in school. At that period of time things were kind of rough at home. My dad lost his business; he was in the tailoring business and things were kind of rough in the years 1929 to 1932 or so. So I came back home and while looking for a job I was contacted by a gentleman from Universal Pictures. He was the makeup man at the studio. He asked me to come out for the team there at Universal Pictures, which I did. And he got me a job there which helped with my family affairs. I continued working there for three or four years.

Hodak: At what point did you become a more refined center? When did you start to learn the nuances of playing the pivot?

Lubin: At this time at Universal Studios, in 1934, they had a player that I considered the greatest in the United States at that time, Charlie Hyatt. He had played for Pittsburgh University. He was the all-round player that I always admired. He was 6-foot-1 or so, and he wasn't the center type, but he was a very fast player, a good defensive man, and the leader of the team. He told me, "Lubin, you've got to play center for us. You've got to get up on the front line there. I've got a man who will teach you to play the pivot position." So he brought out a man he knew from Chicago that had taught basketball for some time. He taught me how to go right and left and shoot the one-handed shots under the basket. That's where I remained from then on.

Hodak: Let's talk a bit more about your play at the center position. You would play with your back to the basket and try to get the ball near the basket?

Lubin: Absolutely. In those days, there was no three-second time limit in the key slot and you could back your defensive man right under the basket. I'd have him on my back and I'd have my teammates pass in to me, and they learned that I could shoot either left- or right-handed. And I had a quick step at the beginning to get away from the defensive man. So I started scoring very prominently.

Hodak: And you would get a lot of rebounds too?

Lubin: Naturally. I'm 6-foot-6-and-a-half and I could rebound with the best of the basketball players at that time. Not too many of them were that tall.

Hodak: Would you say you jumped pretty well?

Lubin: Well, they didn't allow dunking at that time but I got up near the basket. I mainly banked my shots in; I wouldn't try to dunk them. So I was safe on that score, where a lot of players trying to dunk would be called for having touched the ball over the rim of the basket. In those days they had a ruling against dunking.

I'd like to say that about that time the rule changes started to come into play. The first one was the center jump. Some of the centers were so tall, and then some of the other teams did not have a tall center; so the taller team would have the tip every time. So this was to their advantage. The better team would get the ball, score the basket, and go to the center to get the center tip. Then they'd get the ball again and go score again. So the scores would be in favor of the better team and the taller team. So about that time different coaches asked the rules committee to put in a new ruling. So the rule came in that after a basket the team that was scored upon would get the ball out of bounds under their own basket. This would neutralize the big centers.

Hodak: So this is a rule that was in effect by the '30s?

Lubin: That's right.

Hodak: And that's a very basic change in the game. Well, let's talk a bit more about the Universal Pictures team and Jack Pierce in particular.

Lubin: Jack Pierce loved basketball, though he never played. He was a smallish man and a makeup artist at Universal Studios. And he'd invite players to come to the studio and he'd get them jobs in the business; some of them in the laboring, some in the camera department and other various departments. About the time we were playing and traveling around a bit to the Midwest—to Denver, Kansas City and Tulsa—he was a makeup man on the *Bride of Frankenstein*. So he asked me if he could make me up as Frankenstein when we made this tour to publicize the *Bride of Frankenstein*. I said, "Oh, sure, of course." So he brought along the makeup to put on my face and my hands, the little raised shoes about six inches high, the ragged coat, a little headdress and the little metal things to put on my neck. And I really looked like Frankenstein. I have pictures to prove that.

Hodak: And you would come out before the games?

Lubin: (Laughter) I'd come out before the games and stimulate the crowd, walk in front of them and they'd get excited. I wouldn't play in that uniform; I'd go back to the dressing room after five or ten minutes and our team is already playing, maybe losing, and I'd come back out in my regular uniform and start playing in the game.

Hodak: So I imagine the sportswriters started to call you Frankenstein.

Lubin: I became known as Frankenstein all around the Midwest and I don't know how far east. But I was "Frankenstein Lubin," that's where I got my nickname.

Hodak: So the team at Universal Pictures would play AAU teams in the

Southern California area and elsewhere, Would you also play colleges?

Lubin: In those days there was no ruling that said you couldn't play against college teams. We played against UCLA and USC with the Universal Pictures team. In that era, the pros were not in effect yet. No one was playing pro basketball except back in the East. The Globetrotters, the Celtics and the German Spas from Philadelphia were the only pro teams that would travel around the country just showing off basketball skills. But here in Southern California, and I think all over the United States, organizations, clubs and studios in Hollywood were organizing basketball teams for publicity purposes, and perhaps write-offs. They'd sponsor teams and get these boys jobs. With Universal we played against Twentieth Century Fox, MGM, RKO and several other teams. But other organizations also came in. There was a cafeteria that sponsored a team. Bank of America sponsored a team, and an aircraft plant sponsored a team. There were several of them and they formed a big league in Southern California. I think in all the years that I've played in Southern California, the teams that I was on normally won that league tournament, which gave us the right to go to the national AAU tournament. That was originally held in Kansas City. Then, by 1931, it was transferred to Denver. For over 25 years I went to Denver, and in that period of time I think our team won that tournament one time, 1941, with the Twentieth Century Fox motion picture team. We went to Denver and won the tournament there. And I think in that period of time I was named to the ten-man All-American team ten times, more than any other nationally-known athlete in the amateur ranks.

Hodak: Carry us up towards the 1936 Olympics. Was this a focus of the team? Had you even heard much about the Olympics and the possibility of basketball being included in Olympic competition?

Lubin: Actually, I think the athletes themselves didn't even think about the

Olympics. We didn't feel that we were Olympic material. But our Universal Pictures team played here in Southern California and we won the right to go to Denver. Jack Pierce was involved with his *Bride of Frankenstein* movie and he couldn't go, so one of the sportswriters here in California sent a coach out to Jack Pierce and said, "This man just came from San Francisco, Jimmy Needles, a well-known coach in Northern California. He could possibly help your team." Since he was a good coach we thought he could help our team. And since this was an Olympic year we thought he might help us get somewhere on the road to the Olympic competition. So we went to Denver and we lost there in the finals to the McPherson Globe Oilers. However, we lost by 13 points, very badly, so we never felt our team was worth anything.

Hodak: You fouled out in the second half of that game, very early.

Lubin: That's true, and we didn't have another big center so our team kind of failed.

Hodak: And the Globe Oilers were a team that averaged 6-foot-5, I believe.

Lubin: That's right. They had a 6-foot-9, a 6-foot-11, and a 6-foot-7 man in their front line.

Hodak: And Joe Fortenberry being possibly their top player.

Lubin: Yes, he was their Ail-American. Anyway, the Olympic Committee didn't have the money that the '84 Olympics had. Bobby Knight had 100 athletes to select from. In 1936, the Olympic Committee didn't have this privilege, or the money either, so they decided to select one organized team to be the Olympic team and represent the United States in Berlin, Germany. So, they selected the five collegiate champions in the various areas of the United States; the top YMCA team; and the top two AAU teams, which included the McPherson Globe Oilers and Universal Pictures. We all met in New York, and in the finals the McPherson Globe Oilers had to meet the Universal

Pictures team.

Hodak: Talk a bit about these tryouts. As you mentioned, there were eight teams selected from which the Olympic basketball team would be chosen.

Lubin: Well, in the first round, the Universal Pictures team had to play the University of Arkansas, who had won their district championships. We sort of waltzed through them, 40-29. They had been ahead of us by 12 or 13 points. They had a different style of shooting; one-handed and shooting from every angle of the court. So we made up our mind: We've got to stop this. So we tightened our defense, played our own style of game, and finally won.

Then at the other end of the bracket the McPherson Globe Oilers were playing another area champion. Temple University, which they beat, 56-18. In between, the University of Washington played DePaul, and Washington won there. And the Wilmerding [Pennsylvania] YMCA team played Utah State College and won there.

So we played the Wilmerding YMCA in the semifinals and McPherson played the University of Washington. Both our teams, Universal Pictures and the McPherson Oilers, won.

And in the final game, we defeated a team that once beat us by 13 points by the margin of 44-43, so Universal Pictures won the right to represent the United States in the Olympic Games in 1936. The only dramatic thing was that we won by one point. We played a regular game and, because we had played them before, we utilized our experience against them and learned how to attack their zone defense, their big men. So we were running around in the corners and getting shots that they never expected us to take.

Hodak: When you say your regular game, what style of play are you talking about? Talk about some of the players who were instrumental on your team, aside from your own accomplishments.

Lubin: Well, I will tell you one big thing. Although we went to New York with nine players to play, two players were called on the carpet by the Olympic Committee which thought that they had played pro baseball or somewhere along the line were pro athletes. A fellow named Lloyd Goldstein and myself were called on the carpet. So when Lloyd got there they asked him if he had been a pro and he said, "Well, I played semipro baseball and it was paid for." They said, "Well, you can't play in the Olympic Games." And then he said, "It wasn't Lubin. We left the other player, the big, tall fellow at home and he couldn't get away to go to the playoffs. It was not Lubin." So we were down to seven players and played seven players all the time. We interspersed them in the game. And I think we tired out the McPherson Globe Oilers by running them so fast. No one individual on our team stood out. But they had a big 6-foot-9 center who scored quite well, Joe Fortenberry. And he was instrumental during the Olympic Games in helping the United States win.

Hodak: So how did you fare against Fortenberry?

Lubin: I didn't score as handily as he did but I scored well enough to get our team in the lead. Then we protected it in the last few minutes and won, 44-43.

Hodak: So as a result of this final game, you and the other members of your Universal Pictures team were on the Olympic team. But there also was a number of selected members of some of the other teams in the tryouts who were chosen to make up the Olympic basketball team.

Lubin: Well, in the Olympic rule book you were allowed 14 players on a team. However, when we got to Berlin they said only seven could play. So, in the beginning they selected our seven men that played throughout the tournament in New York; six of the McPherson Globe Oilers; and one from the third-place team, the University of Washington, Ralph Bishop. So 14 of us were on the Olympic team.

Our manager. Jack Pierce, received this telegram saying the team should be in New York by July 12, the boat sails the 13th. And we did not have a sponsor. Universal Pictures took their name off our back and said they could not sponsor us to go to Nazi Germany. So we were in a bad way.

Hodak: How were you able to get back to New York then?

Lubin: As I said, when Universal Pictures heard that their team had won the right to represent the United States, they told us they could not sponsor us to go to Berlin. Well, we were stuck here in Los Angeles and Braven Dyer, Sr., who was sports editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, said that he would organize a team to play our team in the Olympic Auditorium to raise a sum of money to get us on our way—which he did. We played an all-star team here and, incidentally, the team, which was made up of a lot of very good college players from USC, UCLA and Loyola, beat us, 22-20! (laughter) And people were saying that perhaps they should send that team to the Olympic Games, that we weren't strong enough. But we had a lot of discouragement there trying to play and pay our own way to get to New York to go to the Olympic Games.

Hodak: And in addition to this game you had to also play a number of other exhibition games before getting to New York.

Lubin: Yes. Somehow someone organized it so that we'd play in Denver, Tulsa, and Kansas City, until we got enough money to get to New York. As a matter of fact, I telegraphed my wife and my dad and my wife's sister, who were in New York, and I said: "Don't get on the boat to go to Berlin until you see us there." (laughter) Because we were still playing and paying our own way to get to New York. This was a great disappointment to us; the Olympic Committee at that time did not have the financing that they have today. It's just wonderful the way the athletes get treated today to get to where they want to go.

Hodak: So talk a little about the travel on board ship.

Lubin: Well, they did not have planes at that time so we traveled seven or nine days on the boat. We didn't have anyplace to practice basketball; all we could do was just jog around on the ship to keep our legs in shape and pass the ball to each other. On a rough day, the wind would blow the ball away, so we had to be careful. But we watched other members of the different sports practice. We saw the divers practicing with the ropes tied to them. We saw the gymnasts and the weightlifters and just made a good study of all the athletes there.

Hodak: Once you arrived in Berlin did you find the Olympic Village in Berlin pretty impressive?

Lubin: The Berlin Olympic Village was really impressive. The Germans must have had an idea about the Olympic Village. They built it of stucco with strong living quarters for the athletes, because they had visions of using it as a military encampment later on—which we understand they did. We had wonderful facilities there.

But, our basketball facilities were nil. They did not build an indoor gym. Hitler apparently didn't have a team and he didn't see fit to build a big basketball pavilion to house basketball because it wasn't important to them at that time. So we had to go out and practice on a dirt court. We played the games outdoors in rough gravel and the dust would get on our hands. It was very uncomfortable playing in this situation. But we waltzed through all the teams until we played the final game against Canada. It rained that day—and in the second half it poured! There were two inches of water on the court. If I could show a picture of that you'd see a wall around the court and the water just laying all over the court. There was absolutely no dribbling; it was just passing. You couldn't dribble, it would just splash in the water. I think the only people in the stands were our friends and wives and husbands of the officials. We finally won, 19-8.

Hodak: Had you traveled with members of your family to Berlin?

Lubin: My father, my wife and my wife's sister traveled with me to Berlin. We had intended to go to Lithuania, my dad's homeland. It would have been the first time for him to return there and for my wife and I and Florentine, my sister-in-law, to see Lithuania where my father was raised. This proved to be a very instrumental thing in our lives. At the time we'd won the tournament in Berlin, an official from the educational department contacted us on the streets of Berlin and in broken English he invited us to Lithuania.

Hodak: Before you discuss that, do you want to talk further about the Berlin Games? Are there other things that you saw in Berlin that stand out? Did you find the Games particularly well organized?

Lubin: Well, as far as basketball, we found out the facilities were atrocious. Playing on the dirt is just like playing behind that church in Belvedere where I first started playing basketball. And then playing outdoors in the rain was horrible.

But for the general Olympics, it was attended beautifully. There was a big stadium there and all the facilities were just wonderful. As I said, we lived in wonderful quarters. It wasn't in tents and little cabins like they did for several Olympics in different places around the world that I have read about. In the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles they lived in little camps. But there we lived in wonderful buildings. And the food was just wonderful, prepared mainly by our American chefs, of course. But we went to different facilities and tasted other foods and it was just wonderful. There was a lot of camaraderie amongst all the athletes in the Village there. In the 1984 Olympics you saw a lot of pin trading. Well, in those days they didn't have the pins but people started trading their uniforms. I don't think I got one piece of my uniform back. I met Japanese and Afghanistan I got an Afghanistan sweat outfit. I traded mine to them. We traded our hats, our playing outfits, and our shoes with the different athletes for various things

that they had. There was just a wonderful friendship among all the athletes.

Everybody was warning us about going to Nazi Germany, but we didn't think anything about that. Everything was so beautifully arranged. We could see nothing except the flags Of course, we saw the Nazi flags all over the city and we saw the German soldiers. There were young kids who were our guides. They were young 10-, 12-, 14-year-old kids who would guide us around the city whenever we wanted a guide. They were dressed in little white uniforms. It was just wonderful the way they treated us all. We had passes on the buses and we could go anywhere in the city we wanted to. We ate at the Village anytime we wanted. We'd just go to our restaurant and eat.

All this seemed so beautiful until after the Games. I stayed there a week after the Games to make arrangements to go to Lithuania with this athlete that came down from the educational department in Lithuania. He asked my dad, my sister-in-law, my wife and me if we wanted to see the city. And we said yes. He said, "Well, would you like to eat some food?" We said yes and so we traveled around on a bus until we saw a nice restaurant. Then we said, "Let's go in there, it looks very nice." And he said, "Oh no, we must not go there. Do you see that Star of David there? It's their restaurant. If we go there we'll show sympathy to the Jews and it might prove harmful to us." So we said, "Alright, we'll find a different restaurant." We finally went into another restaurant and ate, and then he said, "Do you like swimming? Do you want to go to this swimming hall?" So we went to a swimming hall and in the doorway there was a big sign that said: *Juden Verboten*. We asked him what that meant, because I didn't know languages that well, and he said, "That means that Jews are forbidden." I said, "They weren't here before." He said, "No, since the Olympic Games are over all these signs have been returned to these establishments." So I saw a harbinger of things to come. It made us feel very glad to get out of Germany and get up into Lithuania, where it was a friendly

nation.

Hodak: So how did your six-month stay in Lithuania go?

Lubin: Well, there were some beautiful things and some bad things. I will tell you first about the good things. When we got there we were met at the station by this young athlete from the educational department. He took us to a hotel where they had everything all set up for us. We met the President of Lithuania and all the different officials. It was just wonderful. We went to banquet after banquet and for a week and a half we just had a beautiful time. But while we were on our way home, we were in a wagon traveling in the countryside to visit my father's sister-in-law on a farm way out in the countryside. It had been drizzling and raining and the horse veered by a puddle of water and tipped the wagon over. My sister-in-law was the only one hurt; she broke her leg. We had to return to Kaunas, Lithuania, where the hospital was, and we stayed another three and a half months.

My dad returned to America because he had to get home to his work. But my wife and my sister-in-law and I stayed there while she recuperated from her broken leg. Since I had to stay there for three-and-a-half months, and this was during the basketball season, they asked if I would train some of the Lithuanian athletes; so I did for three or four months. In the meantime, they also asked the Latvians, who were the previous year's champions, to come to visit us. I said, "Oh no, these athletes aren't ready to play a championship type of game." But we played them anyway. They allowed me to play and, fortunately for us, we beat the Latvian team. Then they were ready to not let me come back to America. They said, "Oh, you must stay here." I said, "No, I'm going to law school." "You can study law here," they said. Finally, they said, "Would you consider coming back next year because we are having an all-Lithuanian Olympics in 1938 and the European championship will be here in 1939?" Well, I told them I would consider it.

So late in November we left Lithuania to go back to the United States, with my sister-in-law in a big cast with her broken leg. We finally got home and I received letter after letter from the Lithuanian government asking me to return to Lithuania.

Hodak: They were eager to have you come back.

Lubin: Yes, they were excited about how their athletes performed. Finally, in 1938 my wife and I decided to go back. My dad said, "You should go back. It's my homeland and I'd like to see you go back and help them." So my wife and I went back to Lithuania and we coached various club organizations, teaching in the American style of offense and defense. And they were quick to respond. They were anxious to learn any sport. They were freed from Russian control only since 1918. So this is 18 years after their independence and they were anxious to learn anything at all; art, sports, music or anything. I could have taught anything and they would respond quickly to it because they were anxious to learn. And they did learn basketball—as I found out in years to come.

Hodak: So this eventually led to the 1939 European basketball championship?

Lubin: Right. And in coaching there I finally selected 14 players to represent Lithuania in the 1939 European tournament, which was held in Lithuania. They built a big pavilion that held 26,000 people. Maybe 12,000 were seated; the rest stood in aisles that were specially built.

In the tournament, it was actually settled in one of the first games. The former champions were Latvian, and Lithuania had to play the Latvians in this game. And as it turned out, it was a very fiercely played game. The Latvians played good basketball because they had sent three of their men to New York and to Philadelphia to learn the American style of basketball. They'd go to the YMCAs. They called it the 'Yimca.¹ (laughter) And they learned basketball there. They played the American style of basketball. Well, the score was

tied and they were ahead of us, 35-34, in the last 10 or 20 seconds of the game. I was hollering from the center position to one of my teammates: "Please give me the ball. Throw it to me, I'll score!" They finally got it to me and with one second left I scored a basket that beat the Latvians, the former champions, 36-35. I think they carried us around on the floor for ten minutes there. They couldn't get the second game going, they were so excited. It was played in Lithuania, as I said, with a Lithuanian crowd. And they just carried our athletes around. I kept trying to tell them: "Please put the athletes down. We have to play five more games. Please put us down!" (laughter)

Hodak: Latvia was the established European champ and also a main rival.

Lubin: That's right.

Hodak: Were you the only American-born member of the team?

Lubin: Let me give you some very vital information. Lithuanians are regarded as Lithuanians all over the world. When you come back to Lithuania, they regard you as a Lithuanian and they give you a passport as a Lithuanian athlete. No matter where Lithuanians are they want to help Lithuania get established. Several years back, Darius and Gerenas, two fliers, flew from the United States and tried to land in Lithuania. When they did not get there, there was a lot of feeling that they were shot down in Germany or somewhere. Well, they finally got to Lithuania and they were very instrumental in starting up the feeling of Lithuanian-Americans going to Lithuania. I think they brought some baseballs—I don't know whether they brought basketballs—but they started giving Lithuanians the idea of getting into sports and different activities like flying. When they held the all-Lithuanian Olympics in 1938, Lithuanians were well-versed in many things that Darius and Gerenas brought over.

A few years earlier, a group of Lithuanians went over, an operatic

group and a number of basketball players, and they helped train the Lithuanians in the American style of basketball. Then in 1936 when I came up there for three months, I found them with a lot of little fundamental things about basketball, and some of them were very peculiar. I understand that [Ed] "Moose" Krause from Notre Dame had been there. His name actually is Kraucunas in Lithuanian. He fooled around like the Globetrotters with the Lithuanian athletes. He was not intent on teaching them fundamentals; he was teaching them about laughter and fun in basketball. So when I got there in 1936, some of these athletes said that Kraucunas, Moose Krause, taught them to do this and that. I said, "Forget that, that is clowning. That is Globetrotters style. You want to learn the fundamentals of basketball." I will mention that many of the write-ups that I have seen these past years say that Krause and the early Lithuanian-Americans that came to Lithuania gave the Lithuanians the basics of basketball. But Lubin has given them the professionalism of basketball.

Hodak: And Moose Krause's brother played on your team in 1939?

Lubin: Yes. Staying over after 1938 was Moose Krause's brother, Felix Krause. He was on our team and there were two or three other Lithuanian-Americans who had come over to study. They were allowed to play for the Lithuanian team because they were allowed dual citizenship. They were considered Lithuanians in Lithuania. So I picked them up and we played with this team. We were fortunate to have them because the young Lithuanians were not too well-versed in basketball. But they became well-versed, as was indicated in the years after I left in 1939.

The Russian team became very powerful in later years. And it was found out that they had taken up a lot of the young athletes that I had coached. And they were very versed in the American style of basketball. As a matter of fact, on the Russian team of the last three or four years, three Lithuanian players are their stars. One is a big 7-foot-2-inch center named [Arvydas] Sabonis. I didn't

coach him naturally; I don't think he was born when I was in Lithuania. But he has been trained by individuals I trained and has been taught methods I introduced in Lithuania over 50 years ago. He is one of the outstanding players for the Russian team. He is always playing in Lithuania in Kaunas, once the capital of Lithuania. The Russian team always selects him for their team when they play in the Olympics. And other members of the Russian Olympic basketball team, those with names similar to Sabonis, similar endings, are also Lithuanian.

Hodak: So you left a bit of a legacy behind in Lithuania?

Lubin: That's what they lay on my shoulders. So I don't know whether I'm famous, or infamous, for having helped the Russian team by teaching the young Lithuanians how to play the American style of basketball. I don't know. I just take it as it is.

Hodak: Did Lithuanian officials encourage you to stay in Lithuania after 1939? Certainly the war will enter into the picture very soon.

Lubin: Absolutely, you're absolutely right. Our consul called all the Lithuanian-Americans in and told us, "If you have any business arrangements here in Lithuania, you better start cancelling them because things are not going to be good here in the next few months." July and August was when it was really bad. He told us we better get out of Lithuania. He knew at that time that war was impending. As a matter of fact, when the war started I was with a girls' team down in Italy. I was coaching a girls' team from Lithuania and we were invited to go and play in Italy. We went down there and when we tried to come back the war had already started. The Nazis had already gone into Czechoslovakia. We couldn't get across the border into Switzerland with my girls' team. So finally we contacted the sports organization that our girls had played against and Vittorio Mussolini, Benito's son, was managing this club. We contacted him and he was the one that got the Swiss border guards to allow us to go through Switzerland to get into

Germany. Through Germany we had no problem at all. They weren't bothered with Lithuanians going through Germany to get to Lithuania. We finally arrived after our hazardous trip, and then my wife and I got on a boat to America.

Returning to the United States after the European tournament in 1939, I came back to Hollywood. In attempting to get my job back at Universal Pictures I found out that it wasn't there because they had fired all the players for having gone to the Olympic Games against their request that we do not attend. So I searched around and was able to get another job, being a union member, at Twentieth Century Fox. Of course, being very interested in basketball, I and two others from our Olympic team joined their basketball team. Although they didn't work at Twentieth Century Fox, they played with our team. It wasn't required that you work at the studio to play on the team. So Carl Knowles and Art Mollner started playing basketball with us at Twentieth Century Fox. We'd win the local tournament and go to Denver where the national AAU tournament was held. Finally, in 1941, with these two players and others of good caliber, we won the AAU tournament and were considered the best in the United States at that time.

Hodak: Who were some of the players that you were competing against in this period?

Lubin: Well, then and afterward we played against [Angelo] Hank Luisetti, who was considered one of the top basketball players of the time. Joe Fortenberry of the Olympic team was playing with other teams. The big Phillips Oilers team would get all the All-Americans in the United States playing for them.

Hodak: When you mention the teams and the various arrangements, would the players for the Phillips Oilers necessarily have to be working for the Phillips Oil Company in some capacity?

Lubin: Well actually, like Twentieth Century Fox, you did not have to work

for the company to play for them. There were no strict rules in the AAU tournament that you had to work for the company that you played for. I don't know how the Phillips Oilers arranged it. But most of the players did get jobs, which was very nice. I know that one of their players later became a member of the board of directors for the Phillips Oil Company. Joe Fortenberry was a field manager of oil stations. And another player. Jack Ragland, who was in law, was in their legal department. So players did get jobs with the company, but they traveled around so much that I wonder whether any of them did any work. They traveled around the United States, played here in Southern California, played in Northern California We played them a number of times here in Southern California and I wondered when they worked. (laughter)

The war, which I had moved out of Europe in 1939 to avoid, hit us in 1941. I was drafted into the military. I went into the Air Force at March Field in 1942. As usual, they had all different sports at March Field to keep the soldiers entertained. They had thousands of soldiers there and they conducted regional basketball, football, and baseball games and track meets. I started running the basketball team at March Field. We had quite a number of big players there. Joe Fortenberry was drafted into service and he came to March Field at one time and was playing with our team. A number of athletes from USC and Loyola College came by there and we'd have them join our team. We did quite well. In the two and a half years I was there we had a record of 60 wins and two or three losses.

We also met Bob Kurland's team. He traveled here to Southern California. Bob Kurland, as people know, was an Olympian later on. He was a 7-foot-2-inch center. I played against him. I did quite well in my own mind. I outscored him in one or two of the games. He was easy to get around—but he could score against me.

So from then on, when the war ended, I was going to the AAU tournament until it ended. Then the pros started coming in 1950,

and by 1955 and you couldn't get amateur players to come and play in the AAU. They'd ask: "When do they pass out the money?" Well, I'd say, "I've never received a penny playing for Twentieth Century Fox in the 20 years that I've been here." And they'd say, "Well, goodbye." So they'd leave our team. It was hard to get an AAU team, so I sort of drifted out of the AAU ranks and just played for different organizations at the time.

Hodak: Did you ever run up against the Harlem Globetrotters in any of your basketball experiences?

Lubin: That's very interesting. While I was at March Field in 1941 or '42, the Globetrotters came out and we made arrangements to play them in a preliminary game for USC and UCLA on the stage at the Shrine Auditorium. We played them there and they beat us by seven points. So we challenged them to come out to March Field, where we played and beat them by about 13 points.

Hodak: These were seriously contested games?

Lubin: Right. But getting back before this, when we came back from the Olympics in 1936, we played the Harlem Globetrotters in Chicago and they beat us by two points. Again, years later in the '40s, we had a five-game series with them in Southern California and we beat them three straight times. They were getting so rough and playing so rough that our manager said, "We're not learning amateur basketball from you guys." He told Abe Saperstein that he wasn't going to play the last two games because they were playing too rough, playing the pro style of ball. They were holding our pants and giving us elbows and all that. So he called off the rest of the games. In playing against the Globetrotters, I think we beat them five times against their two times beating us.

Hodak: So, as you mentioned, the AAU gradually lost attraction for a number of players. I think it is worth mentioning that you competed for such a number of years. You played up into your 50s, correct?

Lubin: I was playing in my 50s against strong teams. I was in the YMCA ranks. They needed a center one time and I used to work out there and they said, "Come on and play with us." So I played with the Hollywood YMCA for a number of games. But it was a different style of game. The young athletes, 18 or 19 years old, would come up and shake my hand and say: "I'm so-and-so, Mr. Lubin. My dad said to come up and say hello to you. My dad remembers when he played against you 25 years ago." So that's when I thought it was time to give it up. (laughter)

Hodak: What do you attribute this longevity to?

Lubin: I didn't drink, I didn't smoke, I didn't go out with girls until I was 13. (laughter) That's my little joke. So I decided I better give up because I thought the youth should have their fling. I had thought that I would raise my son to be a good basketball player, which he started out to be. He went to Pater Noster High School in Glendale and he was doing quite well playing on the top squad, interchanging with a bigger, taller center. But he played the center very well, the way I used to like to see the center played. He graduated from there and went to Glendale Junior College. Then he met girls and I think that was his downfall. (laughter) He got married and made me a grandparent. He dropped out of school and he went into the service. So he stopped playing basketball.

Hodak: It is also interesting to note that your wife was also a basketball player who played with the Thurstons team out of Wichita, Kansas.

Lubin: Right. We had beaten their men's team in Los Angeles with the Pasadena Majors way back in 1931. They invited us to come back to Wichita to play them on their home court, so we traveled back there. We had beaten them out here by 31-30, just one point. We went back there and beat them on their own home court, 31-30. So we established ourselves as a top-notch team. That's why we went to the national AAU tournament in Kansas City. But we found out that the big boys were there too, and they knocked us out.

I met my wife in Denver. She was playing a preliminary game with the Wichita Thurstons against a team from Dallas, Texas, with [Mildred] "Babe" Didriksen on the squad. That was the highlight of my wife's basketball history; to play against this wonderful woman athlete. Although my wife didn't make All-American and all that, she played on a national team. We conducted a telephonic and a letter-writing courtship from 1931 to 1935. She came out to California to see the Olympic Games in 1932, but we never saw the Olympic Games. (laughter) Finally, in 1935 she came out and we got married. We took a honeymoon in 1936 to Berlin and to Lithuania. So that was a highlight of both of our lives and careers.

Hodak: And how many children do you have?

Lubin: We have one boy who has made us grandparents twice with a girl and a boy. And we have a daughter who is married. She's made us grandparents again, twice, with a girl and a boy. So we are grandparents four times but I think it's not finished. My son married a youthful woman and she wants more children. (laughter)

Hodak: So when did you retire from your work at Twentieth Century Fox?

Lubin: I've been retired since 1967 . . . so that's over 21 years. I was injured at work walking on some of the flimsy steps carrying a big wall with a fellow worker. I was carrying a wall on these steps and as I stepped on it it broke and I caught my right leg and landed on my hip. I put my spine out of shape and my right ankle out of shape. So I put in for retirement. From then on I was through with basketball, except in preparation for the 1984 Olympics when I was called upon by the Olympic organization to join what they called the Spirit Team. We indoctrinated ourselves to go and speak to grammar schools, high schools and club organizations about the interest in basketball for the '84 Olympics. We also went into the high schools and grammar schools to instruct the children to enter into healthful sports and to steer clear of things that would hurt their bodies. I did this for several years and am still doing it. As

a matter of fact, this last weekend we went to San Diego to raise money for the San Diego athletes going to the 1988 Olympics. Fifty of us athletes went down there to a big banquet where businessmen were called upon to talk to us and we to talk to them and give them insights into basketball and why they should contribute to the Olympic Games.

Hodak: What things do you try to bring out in your talks about the Olympics?

Lubin: I have two thoughts on that. One thought is steering clear of narcotics, drinking, carousing around and doing things that will harm their bodies. I steer that toward the children. Secondly, I am steering a lot of these children into the different sports because of what it will bring for them. If they are not good at being doctors, lawyers or merchants they can go into athletics for what it will bring them in the future . . . coaching, getting jobs in these different organizations that have sporting teams—and also, if they are good enough, to join a pro team. Three or four of the Olympic basketball players on the 1984 team are today getting a million dollars or more a year. How many doctors, lawyers or dentists are earning a million dollars in their first year in business? It's not only in the major sports, it's in any sport. The figures are phenomenal. Tennis, golf . . . there are millionaires all along the line. Baseball, football . . . millionaires made all along. I think more millionaires have been made in the last few years in sports than in any other industry. I think Magic Johnson made one of the most tremendous impacts in professionalism regarding money. He signed with the Los Angeles Lakers with a contract that paid him \$25 million for the next 25 years and I think that is phenomenal. As a matter of fact, I think they have increased it.

Hodak: Yes, they have renegotiated his contract.

Lubin: It was good at that time and it still is good. Imagine when he quits playing in the next two or three years and he's going to get a

million dollars each year for the next 20 years. Speaking of tops, I think if you want to go to the tops you have to go to boxing, of course, where these athletes are making \$20 million for one fight.

Hodak: Having been an amateur athlete competing in an altogether different era, is this something that you are happy to see athletes benefit from today?

Lubin: I am happy to see the athletes benefit. I'm sorry that I wasn't born a little later, for one thing. I'm happy for the athletes because if they didn't get this million dollars, and only got a half a million, where would the other half a million go? Back in the pockets of the owners. And they would be getting wealth on wealth. The athletes then can do a lot of beneficial things.

Talking about beneficial things, I think the big story in the papers has been about [Dave] Winfield, the baseball player who is supposedly getting a million and a half a year, and in his contract [George] Steinbrenner is supposed to donate so much to Winfield's charitable organization. He's failed there and so Winfield is upset that he isn't doing that. There is any number of these athletes that are making millions that have organizations that they sponsor.

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar is getting one of the biggest basketball salaries of all time. I think he is due to get a \$4 million contract for one year. And Larry Bird of the Celtics So, I think that for the athletes, besides the benefit that they will get by going to the Olympics and keeping their bodies in good health, it will help them live a long life . . . except when they go to dope and all that. I think the big story that came out in the last couple of years was about Len Bias. To celebrate, he and a couple of his cronies went out on a cocaine binge. He took too much and didn't know what he was doing maybe, I don't know whether he was onto it, but he died that night. How many people did he hurt? He hurt himself, he hurt the team, he hurt his whole family—which he could have helped—and any other children that he might have helped in the

long run. I've mentioned this many times in my talks to high school and grammar school kids.

Hodak: Are you looking forward to the '88 Olympics?

Lubin: Not to go, only in the fact that I am still working with the '84 Spirit Team. The '84 Spirit Team is made up of all athletes that participated in the Olympics at any time, foreign or native American, who obligate themselves to join into the Spirit Team group. We go out and make speeches or appear at functions where people will question us. We appear at money raising functions. The people that are there like to see and shake hands with athletes. We bring our gold medals sometimes. I do. Many people have said, "I've never met an Olympic athlete and I've never seen a gold medal." And I'm surprised. I don't think about that at all. When the older teachers of 40 and 50 say, "Oh, you're an athlete." I say, "Yeah, I'm human. I'm just like anybody else." But they'll say, "An Olympic athlete and a gold medal! I've never seen one. Can I hold it?" And they look at it and they ask, "How much is it worth?" And I say, "I don't measure it in terms of money. It is a cherished thing for me."

Hodak: Is there anything you'd like to add, perhaps on changes you have seen in basketball over the years?

Lubin: I don't think they bring the athletes into the question of changing rules and situations. I think their rules committee is so devoted to making the game agreeable to the public and to raise the money, that they are changing so many rules in a way that the athletes possibly won't like. But the athletes go in and play the game. Like when they changed the center jump, I don't think that teams with a big center liked it. Then the ten-second rule, . . . the rules committee didn't like the stalling. A team would get the ball and be ahead by two points in the first few minutes of the game and they'd stay in their half of the court. The other team would drop back on their defensive end and would just stand there. This would happen

for up to 15 minutes of a game. I've been in games where this had happened. So the rules committee said that the offensive team who is ahead must take the ball up within ten seconds past the middle court. Then the defensive team must make their pressure to make the other team score or get rid of the ball. They were stalling that way. And In the pro ranks they put in the 24-second rule. In the college ranks they decided they needed another rule . . . 45 seconds, you must score within 45 seconds. You can't stall the rest of the game by passing in the upper half of the court.

They have so many other rules. They have the three seconds limit, in the key slot position. I used to play there and score most of my points by playing very good under the basket. They moved us out a ways. Then they moved that out a little further to 15 or 18 feet. They're trying to even up the game so that the two teams will play to a 50-50 at the end of the game and maybe play an overtime. But it doesn't always happen that way. There's so many changes in basketball that I haven't kept up with all of them.

Hodak: You still follow the game?

Lubin: I follow the game avidly. As a matter of fact, Bobby Knight invited the remnants of the 1936 Olympic team down to one of their games in 1984. He brought us down into their dressing room before they went out on the court. And he told his players, who were practically all dressed, while we were all in civilian clothes, he said, "Fellows, I want you to meet somebody." And he pointed to us and said, "These fellows have a gold medal—which you don't have. They won it in 1936 in Berlin." And then he said, "Alright, let's get out on the court." They went out there and played one of their best games. They were going to get that gold medal and they did finally.

As I say, I'm still working with the Spirit Team. I'm not through and I don't want to sit in the rocking chair the rest of my life. As you know, I am 78 years old and going strong. We just came back

from San Diego where we helped raise some \$70,000 for their Olympic athletes to go to the 1988 Olympics. This was a five hundred dollar-a-plate dinner. And they auctioned off a lot of things there too. So it is very interesting to continue. And as I say, I don't like the feeling of having to get in the rocking chair the rest of my life.

Hodak: I don't think you need to fear that.

Lubin: I feel healthy.

Hodak: Well, I hope that you feel good about this interview. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to come out and visit and get to know you. The Amateur Athletic Foundation and SCO are very appreciative of your cooperation in the project and sharing your thoughts and memories with us. Thanks for your hospitality, Mr. Lubin.

Lubin: The Amateur Athletic Foundation has been very kind to me in various ways which I can't enumerate right here. I've had groups that I have brought over to the Foundation and they don't charge me and my group. They've invited my family to many of their functions of which I am very appreciative. They have been very kind to me.