

ARTHUR O. MOLLNER  
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.

ANITA L. DE FRANTZ

President  
Amateur Athletic Foundation  
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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.

ARTHUR O. MOLLNER

1936 OLYMPIC GAMES - BERLIN  
BASKETBALL  
Gold Medalist

Interviewed:

May, 1988  
Westlake Village, California  
by George A. Hodak

ARTHUR O. MOLLNER

Interviewer: George A. Hodak

Hodak: Today, I'm in Westlake Village, California, and have the good fortune to be visiting with Art Mollner, a member of the 1936 gold medal American basketball team. Before we talk of the Olympics, I'd like you to talk about your family background a bit, Mr. Mollner. First off, just give me your date and place of birth and then from there tell me a bit about your parents, your childhood, education and like matters.

Mollner: I was born December 12, 1912, in Saranac Lake, New York. That's in upper New York, about 30 miles from Lake Placid where the Winter Olympics have been held. We left Saranac Lake about three years later, in 1915 or 1916, to come to California.

Hodak: What prompted your family to move to California?

Mollner: Well, we were in Saranac Lake because Robert Louis Stevenson had given land there for a tubercular hospital. My dad had tuberculosis, and the doctors there advised him to come to California. My folks were in show business in New York. They were on the Orpheum circuit. They had an act; they sang and danced. My mother's name was Fougere.

Kodak: She was of French descent?

Mollner: She came from France. Anyway, their act was Fougere and Mollner. So when my dad got sick from tuberculosis, we came out here. My mother worked as a hairdresser, and my dad worked in a hotel for awhile until he got real sick. Then when I was about eight or nine years old he died. Later, my mother married a very good man, Carl

Johnson. What a tremendous guy he was! He was the most honest man I ever knew. If he found a dime anyplace outside, he wouldn't sleep until he found out who had dropped that dime. If it was outside a store, he'd take it inside and say somebody will be coming for this; not to impress anybody, but that's just the way he was. He was the most honest man I ever met in my life. He was terrific to my brother and I.

Hodak: You only had one brother?

Mollner: I had one brother. My brother died of cancer of the lung, something like the illness my dad had.

Hodak: So where did you attend school in Los Angeles?

Mollner: I went to Union Street grammar school and then I went to Sentous Junior High, which was on Pico Boulevard near Figueroa. Then I went to [L.A.] Poly High School, which was on Washington Boulevard near Grand Street. I graduated from high school in the summer of 1930.

Hodak: Where did you develop an interest in basketball? Who nurtured that interest?

Mollner: One of the best athletes I ever knew was a Mexican fellow named Willie Aguilar. He really helped me. He got me interested in baseball, track and basketball in junior high. And I really loved basketball, played it all the time, so when I went to high school I just kept playing basketball. And then I went to junior college after graduating from Poly High School. I went to junior college and played two years there.

Hodak: Was that Los Angeles Junior College?

Mollner: Yes, Los Angeles Junior College on Vermont Street near Santa Monica Boulevard, where UCLA had been before it moved to

Westwood. It's now called L.A. City College. Then after I was through with junior college, they were starting a team at Universal Pictures. In those days they had the AAU—the Amateur Athletic Union teams—but there were no pros. I played for the Shell Oil Company club and we played the Universal Pictures team in the championship game of a tournament. We lost the game, but they asked me if I'd come out the next year with Universal. Jack Pierce was a makeup man at Universal Pictures and he managed the basketball team. He was the creator of the outfit that Frankenstein wore. He made Boris Karloff up as Frankenstein.

Hodak: And he was a big promoter of basketball?

Mollner: Yes, he loved the game of basketball. He wanted to persuade the studio into promoting it. So we brought Charlie Hyatt out from Kansas. They brought him out and he coached our club for one year, in 1935. And, ironically, he left that year to go back to Kansas City to coach the Jones Stores team, and, without Charlie Hyatt, we won the right to go to the Olympics in 1936.

Hodak: Before we get onto that, I'm curious about some of the changes in the rules governing basketball. How did they change from what you started with in high school?

Mollner: Yes, starting with high school, they had to jump ball after every basket. You would go to the center and jump ball again. There was quite a bit of talk in the early '30s about doing away with that, which they finally did. They changed the rules to let you take it out—the way basketball is now played.

Hodak: And the 10-second rule across the center line was added.

Mollner: That's right. They didn't do that at first. At first, you could take as much time as you wanted to cross the line. I don't know whether you remember, but there was a lot of controversy over some of the UCLA-USC games later on (laughter) where they did nothing but

stall during the game. They only scored four or six points and then they stalled the rest of the time. They were using a zone defense and they wouldn't come out. So they held the ball.

Hodak: I think that was UCLA's ploy, they didn't have as strong a team.

Mollner: That's right, USC had the stronger basketball teams and UCLA thought that was a good way—and that wasn't a bad way—to hold the score down and try and win at the end of the ballgame. I remember that some of the scores were like 12-10 or 16-10. Those are a few of the changes they made, the big changes in basketball. The rest of it is more or less the way it has always been. Though today, most of the college teams play zone defense, but the good AAU clubs during the days we played with Fox and Universal Pictures would never play a zone. Because a good passing team can pass through a zone and get easy baskets. They all went for man-to-man defense.

Hodak: What was your forte on the Universal team? What was your strength?

Mollner: Defense! If the other team had a big scorer, why, I would do my best to deny the ball to him. And if I was able to do that, well, by the time he did get the ball he'd be so flustered he wasn't going to come even close to scoring. Years later, as a coach, I always stressed defense. I figured everyone that was serious about basketball was already offensive-minded—they had those skills from the playgrounds. But defense is very important. It's a matter of thinking and anticipating—knowing where the ball is and how they are moving their players around. And of course, blocking out is something we tended to do a lot of; today they talk about it, but I don't see so much of it. Now, the game has changed a lot and there are different philosophies used. Some teams just figure on outscoring their opponents. But we played good tough defense in

the AAU.

Hodak: Talk about how the team fit together.

Mollner: Well, our team at Universal Pictures, the one we won the Olympics with, had Frank Lubin at center. Frank was only 6-foot-6-and-a-half; and I say only 6-foot-6 and a half because during that time we played against some centers who were seven feet. Bob Kurland was seven feet tall. Joe Fortenberry was 6-11, and there was a Willard Schmidt who played with the McPherson Oilers who was 7-1. But Frank had the ability . . . his body was so big that once he got position in on the key, all you had to do was get him the ball and he made two points for you—I don't care who was behind him.

Hodak: And you didn't have the three-second rule?

Mollner: We didn't have a three-second rule at that time, no. You could use the center spot—and we did. But that's right, later on they came in with the three-second rule and then you had to play on the side of the key.

Hodak: What about some of the other members of the Universal Pictures team?

Mollner: Well, we had mostly UCLA players. Frank Lubin played at UCLA. Sam Baiter played at UCLA. And Carl Knowles and Carl Shy also played at UCLA. They were all from UCLA and they had played approximately three or four years ahead of me. I played at L.A. Junior College and then went out for the Universal team after they were out of college.

Hodak: Were there any coaches at L.A. Junior College that helped you?

Mollner: Yes, I had two coaches at L.A. Junior College. One was a football coach, Glenn Ackerman. And there was also Dave Farrell, who came from Fremont High School and coached at LAJC my second year.

He was a tremendous coach and a tremendous man. I really enjoyed him. We won the junior college championship two years while I was there.

Hodak: How wide was the network of competition?

Mollner: Well, we played Chaffey College both times for the championship. It was the Southern California championship, and there were seven junior colleges in the league. We had a good time there and a good time afterwards.

Hodak: Who were some of the teams Universal Pictures played against in the AAU? Who were some of your opponents?

Mollner: Well, the teams were all independent teams. There were teams from athletic clubs, like the Los Angeles Athletic Club or the Hollywood Athletic Club. They had teams—not good teams—though prior to us playing, the Los Angeles Club had some good ball players.

Hodak: Then they seem to have lost—

Mollner: Yes, they dropped out. Then companies started taking over. For example, Carroll's Paint Company. There were teams from all over. I'm trying to think of the cafeteria team . . . Clifton's Cafeteria. They had a good team. There was a shoe company. Athletic Shoe, that got a team together. During those years, they had the national tournament in Denver, and it was the goal of every team to get there. In order to go back there, you would have to win the AAU tournament in this section of the country. Later, playing for Fox, we made it back there quite often.

Hodak: So in 1936, prior to your winning the Olympic tryouts in New York, you had played the very same team, the McPherson Oilers, in the AAU tournament in Denver?

Mollner: That's right, they had a tremendous ballclub. They were led by Joe

Fortenberry and they had Tex Gibbons, [Jack] Ragland, and [William] Wheatley. Wheatley is living up in San Francisco and he comes here to some of the Olympic functions. Anyway, we had lost to them in Denver.

Hodak: Did they underestimate you in the Olympic finals?

Mollner: No, they didn't underestimate us, it was just a tough-fought ballgame. We won by one point. It was closely fought, believe me—a tough ballgame. But we played a good ballgame. In those days, the scores weren't like they are today, with the big scoring. I think the score of that game was 46-45.

Hodak: Before you were able to leave for Berlin, you were given an appointed coach. Maybe you want to talk about that. There also was a tour arranged to finance your trip back to New York.

Mollner: Well, that was the sad part as far as the ballplayers on our club were concerned, even today. That year, 1936, was the first year they put basketball into the Olympics. It was a new sport. We all paid our own way to the national tournament in Denver and we paid our own way to New York to go to the Olympic tournament. We paid our own hotel bills, we did everything. Now when we won, you would think that the Olympic Committee would pay our way from Los Angeles to New York to get on the boat, but they sent us a telegram that said: "You are our Olympic team and if you can get to New York, we will take you on the boat to the Olympics"—if you could get to New York. Now today, they wine and dine the Olympians like they're little tin gods, you know. Isn't it odd that in those days, they would take you after winning—if you could get there. Well, that's the way it goes. I mean, times are funny. Like I was telling you before, during the first 20 years after winning the Olympics, nothing big was ever made about us winning the first Olympics in basketball. But over the last 20 years the nostalgia has taken over, and we've been invited to more things. My wife laughs at it every time we get an invitation to go somewhere for the

Olympics. She says, "Isn't this odd that you're still reaping the benefits for the victory you had back in 1936—53 years ago."

Hodak: Maybe that comes from being part of the Southern California Olympians. It is a very active organization of Olympians. It's also attention you deserve.

Mollner: They're always asked to participate in whatever fund-raisers or things they're doing. And of course we get invited to everything and it's great. We really enjoy it, but it's so funny. . .

Hodak: Yes, especially given how you were supported in '36.

Mollner: They gave us . . . I don't remember what it was, a few dollars for laundry, and that's all they gave us.

Hodak: So you were able to get back to New York by playing in a number of games organized by Braven Dyer.

Mollner: That's right, Braven Dyer, Sr. came to our rescue. We played two of the games at the Olympic Auditorium. We played against USC and UCLA and then we played some other games that he sponsored, or the paper sponsored, and the money we made helped get us back to New York. Some of the people at Universal Pictures gave us money—Boris Karloff, John Boles, and there were some other guys too.

Hodak: Universal Pictures sort of backed off from supporting the team?

Mollner: Yes, because of the Jewish question. Yes, they did. Carl Laemmle was the president and owner of Universal Pictures with his son Carl Laemmle, Jr. And they were Jewish.

Hodak: They apparently had reservations.

Mollner: Oh yes, absolutely. They wanted nothing to do with it. In fact, Sam Baiter was asked by many people not to compete. He got a lot of telegrams from people who did not want him to compete. He was in an awful dilemma. We had another fellow on the team, Lloyd Goldstein. Did Frank tell you about him?

Hodak: Yes, a little bit. Frank said that he was disqualified for professionalism.

Mollner: He could have gone but the studio convinced him not to go. Well, he reaped the benefits of that. He became the head electrician and he's a millionaire today, living in Palms Springs.

Hodak: Now, the Universal Pictures team largely coached itself, would you say?

Mollner: We did before . . . well, Charlie Hyatt had coached us the year before. And we used the same plays and everything we had the next year, up until the time to go to the Olympics. Braven Dyer called our manager, Jack Pierce, and asked him if it would be alright if this friend of his would come out and coach us. He said, "This fellow is Jimmy Needles. He's from the University of San Francisco." So Jimmy Needles did come out. Well, Jimmy Needles did not know us at all. This was a very bad situation. Now Jack Pierce didn't know how bad it really was. We had the ballclub already. We were playing and winning. You know, don't fix it if it's not broke. Anyway, he didn't get along too well with the ballplayers. When we went to New York and won, well, we came back and played these games without Jimmy Needles to get money to go, and he thought we were trying to cut him out and he was a little mad.

Hodak: A little friction ensued?

Mollner: Oh, there was a lot of friction, yes. A lot of friction spilled over. But those things happen. It's a part of athletics, you know.

Hodak: Now, basketball was new in the Olympics.

Mollner: That's right, it was very new. Although it was the first year they had it in the the Olympics, they had a good turnout for teams. We had a lot of teams in the Olympic competition that year. You see, at one time during that Olympics, they had a meeting of the officials and they were going to put in two types of basketball in the Olympics: 6-foot-3 and under, and over 6-foot-3.

Hodak: Yes, I had read that.

Mollner: There was a lot of discussion about that. They came around to all the teams, and we certainly didn't think that was a good idea.

Hodak: I read that the American officials really put the kibosh on that idea.

Mollner: Yes, they didn't like it either. Some teams at that time, like Japan and China, didn't have any big men and they thought it would be better if they had the two classes. But we thought that that wouldn't gel.

Hodak: It would take away from the games, certainly.

Mollner: So they went right on with basketball every four years, but not under those conditions.

Hodak: I want you to talk further about the Olympic Games and the whole background to that. First tell me a bit about the travel on the ship.

Mollner: Oh, it was great! It was beautiful. We had the entire team, over 300 people, all going in second class. In those days, that's the way everybody traveled. You didn't travel first class unless you were a millionaire. Everything in first class was a lot more expensive. So the Olympic Committee had bought out the entire second-class section and it was beautiful. We had beautiful staterooms and the food was

just the best, as it is on all cruises. We'd work out a little on the top deck, when it wasn't windy. We'd pass the basketball—we threw a couple of them over the side, [laughter] But we had a lot of fun. The other Olympians, like the track-and-field men, would be up on deck working with weights or whatever it was. And it was a lot of fun. We had the run of the ship. We could go up on the A deck, which we used to do. We'd go up on A deck and they had dishes full of candy and expensive nuts, and we'd fill our pockets and go watch the show. But they thought it was great, they loved it.

And of course there was the incident with Eleanor Holm. And I can remember that day. We had went up there to see a picture in the afternoon, and she was shooting craps with the orchestra that had been playing the lunch music, the mid-day music, and they were taking a break. And I'm sure that some of the people on the A deck complained to the Olympic Committee about her, and they decided to disqualify her.

Hodak: And Carl Knowles had—

Mollner: Well, rooming with me aboard ship was Carl Knowles, a forward on our team. Carl Knowles had played for UCLA and graduated at UCLA, and while there he had roomed with Eleanor Holm's brother. So he said to me, "Art, let's each take a petition and circulate it amongst the athletes and see how many signatures we can get to get Eleanor Holm put back on the team." So we did; we got over 280 signatures on those two petitions to get her put back on, but the committee had already made up their minds. They were going to show the people that they were in charge of the Olympics, so you couldn't change their minds. But that was a shame because she really did nothing wrong. They were shooting craps for pennies or nickels, not a big deal. Today, it wouldn't even be thought of.

In 1980 the Resorts International Hotel in Atlantic City invited all the gold medal winners from all of the Olympics in the United States

to be their guests for three days in Atlantic City. And the culmination of it was, on the last night *Life* magazine was going to take a picture on top of the hotel of all the gold medal Olympians dressed in tuxedos and evening dresses for women, and they were going to put the picture in the middle of their Olympic edition of *Life* magazine. And then they boycotted the Olympics that year. The Olympic Committee voted to boycott it, so the pictures never showed up. But we had a wonderful time in Atlantic City, and while we were there I went up and talked to Eleanor and I said, "You don't know me, but I was on that team and we circulated a petition." I told her about Carl Knowles and she said, "Yes, Carl Knowles roomed with my brother. I knew he helped and somebody helped him, and I want to thank you for doing that. But it would have never helped me because they had already made up their minds." And I knew that when we went in to give them the petition, you could tell they had already made up their minds. And she said, "But they actually did me a favor with the publicity I gained there. I came back and I got into Billy Rose's Aquacade and I later married him." And she looked great when we saw her there. My wife remarked how great she looked; she did too, she looked terrific.

Hodak: Now, what things impressed you most about Berlin before the Games started?

Mollner: Well, before the Games started, on certain days, the people of Berlin in their own neighborhoods would march with broomsticks on their shoulders.

Hodak: In unison?

Mollner: In unison, yes. They'd march up and down just like a troop. When we rode into the Olympic Village on the bus, we noticed hooks on the ceiling of our Olympic Village rooms. Those hooks were camouflage hooks, so we knew they were going to use this Olympic Village as a barracks for soldiers. But they were also looking

forward to when they would go to war.

Hodak: It sounds like you saw a harbinger of things to come.

Mollner: Yes, you could tell they had figured out all the possibilities, you know, that Berlin would get bombed, and they would have camouflage on the ceilings of those buildings so that the soldiers wouldn't be in danger.

Hodak: The Olympic Village in Berlin is considered to one of the more extravagant—

Mollner: Yes, it was beautiful, it was gorgeous. Where you were housed were like barracks, but many of them had their own eating place. Like the Americans would have one place where American food was served, and in the same eating place they would have Japanese food and so on and so forth. So it was really done very well. They did it very well.

Hodak: Was it easy to travel into Berlin?

Mollner: Yes. They had buses going in to Berlin all the time, that would take you in. You could always get a bus. I think they ran every half-hour or whenever it was. And they were coordinated to the schedule of events. We'd go in and watch everything in the stadium. We watched all of the track and field except when we were working out or had a ballgame. We did not play in the stadium. We played on a court outside. It was a clay court. And of course, the last game was in the rain and you couldn't put the ball on the floor—it would stick—so you had to pass it.

Hodak: 19-8 was the final score of the last ballgame?

Mollner: Yes, it was bad, it was really bad. You knew that the people who set all this up didn't know much about basketball. They were all interested in it, but they didn't know that you would play it

indoors. They had seen pictures of outdoor courts here so they just made an outdoor court. (laughter)

Hodak: That made for some pretty rough dribbling.

Mollner: Yes, it did. They put a clay down like you see on tennis courts, and when they get wet, that's bad.

Hodak: Did any of the teams you competed against impress you?

Mollner: Well, we played Canada in the finals, and they had a good club because they had a lot of Americans on it.

Hodak: What about some of the other teams you might have played, like Mexico, the Philipines, any of those?

Mollner: Mexico always has a good team. They love to play the sport and they have good coaches down there, so they were good. Both Japan and China were into it pretty good; they just did not have any big men. And Germany played like a team that was new. Frank Lubin, our center, who is Lithuanian, was invited to Lithuania and coached their national team to a championship over there. There were a lot of teams in Europe that played basketball. Frank was impressed with some of them.

Hodak: Yes, Frank talked of that and a later, extended trip. Now, what are some of the more notable track events you might have witnessed?

Mollner: Well, we watched John Woodruff win the 800-meter race. We were on the field that day.

Hodak: It was easy for the American team to get in to the stadium?

Mollner: Yes, it was. You had to have your ID. Our outfits were blue serge suits with United States emblems on the pocket of the coat. And we had had straw hats with red, white and blue bands around

them. And the best thing was a little sleeveless sweater that fit underneath the coat; it had red, white, and blue around the collar, and red, white and blue around the bottom of this sweater. Everybody knew us as the Olympic team, so when we came to the thing, they'd let you in. We were on the inside of the field when John Woodruff won. We yelled at him, "Come on John, go get 'em!" He did and he went and got 'em. And then another interesting thing was that we watched Cornelius Johnson win the high jump, through television. The first time I ever saw television was in our Olympic Village in the office there; they had a television set and they told us to come in and watch it. And when a car would go by outside, the picture would wave, just like that. That's the way the first TV set that my wife and I had was. When a car would go by outside, it would wave the same way.

Hodak: You told me of an interesting incident, when you were able to see a whole entourage of German officials arrive at the stadium. Can you talk about that?

Mollner: Well, the first day we went there was for the opening of the Olympics. We were on the field and all of the countries marched their Olympic competitors in. I think most everyone has seen that done, like here in Los Angeles. And then they let pigeons go and everything, all pageantry—and it was great. We went to the stadium the second or third day. And there was a small street, I'd say it was 100 yards long. Alongside of that street was the entrance to the stadium, the private entrance for Hitler to his box up there. So we went there and waited. The SS troops came; these were the elite SS troops. I don't know how many there were, but they lined this street. They were all over 6-foot-2 or 6-foot-3, and they were about the same height. They were all standing at ease until he drove up in a black Dusenbergs, I guess you'd call it. Anyway, he got out of there and of course they all hopped to attention and gave him the Hitler salute, and he gave it back. And then he walked in with one of his generals. I guess it was Goering. I didn't know at that time who Goering was. Anyway, they went in.

So we hurried and got into the stadium, and when he went up to the front of his box the entire stadium stood up and gave him that Hitler salute, "Heil Hitler." And it was very, very impressive, and very memorable. After that I saw many pictures of him in newsreels, but it was not as impressive as being there at the time and seeing him go into the stadium, and seeing the people respond to him like that.

Hodak: Yeah, I can imagine. So what were some of the other competitions that you were able to see?

Mollner: Well, we saw a lot of the competitions because we only worked out like two hours a day; we'd work out maybe in the afternoon for an hour, and early in the morning for an hour. And then when we played our games, of course, we couldn't go. But we saw all of Jesse Owens' wins. In the 200 meters, it looked like they shot him out of a cannon. When they came to the straightaway, he was way in front. Jesse Owens was so great, so terrific.

Hodak: Did you get to meet and come to know some of the American athletes?

Mollner: Oh yes, we knew a lot of them. On the boat over there, there were eight days over, we had a lot of card playing. They played a lot of blackjack and poker and everything in the lounge. All the athletes would intermingle. And Lawson Robertson was the coach, and we didn't care too much for him. He was treating the athletes like they were schoolchildren. And some of them were in school, they were in college; but when you're in college I think you're an adult. Sure, college kids do some funny things, but he acted like these kids couldn't wipe their own noses. He didn't go over too big with them. They really didn't care for that too well.

Hodak: I think that there was more friction between coaches and athletes then, also administrators and athletes. Did that affect your

competition in basketball?

Mollner: No, because the American team was so much more superior to all of the other teams, you couldn't lose if you wanted to. They were just starting basketball. And here we were, the best team in the United States. So against these foreign countries . . . it was no contest. The only team that could have really given us a game was Canada. That's just the way it was. It was a shame that it was played there. And it was also a shame that we could not have traveled, because, as you alluded to a little while ago, there was a little friction with Jimmy Needles and the ballclub. We found out later, through telegrams that were on his desk that we read, that he had received many telegrams inviting the team to come at their expense and play in different countries. They were dying to see what the American basketball team was like because they were getting interested in basketball. But he wanted to get back home to make some money, so he never told us about those things. He should have told us and said, "Well, go on your own." But we did play the Oilers in the Hippodrome in New York. They paid us. A guy came out . . . he was going to compete with Ned Irish of Madison Square Garden and use the Hippodrome to put on ballgames. So he came aboard the ship when they brought out the tugboat to bring it in to port, and he got us into our room and said, "How would you guys all like to make some money?" So I think he paid us 100 dollars apiece. And of course, we played that game.

Hodak: So that was one of the extra benefits of your Olympic competition.

Mollner: That was the only side benefit. Because if the Olympic Committee would have known that, they would have probably suspended us.

Hodak: Well, you may still get a call. (laughter)

Mollner: Can't help that. It's a little late now. (laughter) But that was after the competition was over.

Hodak: Were you disappointed by the fact that the games were played on an outdoor court? How did the team view that?

Mollner: We were a little let down, but we thought if it didn't rain, it would be fine. You could play a game. We'd played many games outside. We played a game in Mexico once. Do you know who Dolores Del Rio was? Well, she was a movie star. Anyway, our Twentieth Century Fox team went down to Mexico and we played five games in Mexico City. On the way back—we were flying back to Chihuahua where we were going to play three games—we hit turbulence. The plane dropped 700 feet in one fell swoop. The pilot called back to us and said, "I'm going to have to land." And we landed in a little town where Dolores Del Rio was born. We landed in the afternoon and that night we played a ballgame there. So the outdoor courts didn't mean anything—but not being able to dribble . . . I mean, you could dribble, but the ball would stick on the mud. (laughter) It makes for a bad ballgame, naturally . . . a bad ballgame to watch. And playing the Olympic championship ballgame like that, well, that's not good. (laughter)

Hodak: Do you recall very much of the award ceremonies and how that was handled?

Mollner: No, we weren't on the awards stand. Jimmy Needles, because of the friction between us, kept us off and just put the other half of the team up. But, these are things that happen, so what are you going to do?

Hodak: Is there anything further that you want to say about the Olympics before you talk about the remainder of your AAU career?

Mollner: Well, I loved every minute of it there at the Olympics. It was tremendous . . . plus the fact that that was the start of the Hitler era. That had a profound impact on this country and all countries. It was very impressive to see the way Germany was being mobilized and brought into the European situation at the time. Very

impressive. The people were hoodwinked—very much so. Berlin had the second best subway system at the time; New York had the first and they had the second. One day Carl Shy and I left and we got on the subway, and on every subway car they had an outline of where each car went. It showed you, you're on this line and this is where it goes. So we drove to the end of it, out to the country. We got out and had our sweaters on so everybody would know who we were. Two young guys with a motorcycle, they had a side car, stopped. They couldn't speak English and we couldn't speak German. I took two years of German in college but I couldn't speak it—I could just speak a few words. But we did communicate fairly well, and they told us they wanted to take us to lunch at a place. I said, "Fine." So they left me and one of the other fellows there, and the other one took Carl Shy and drove him away. And they went way, way out there. And pretty soon he came driving back and they put me in and drove me to the nicest eating place, built over a river. It was like a stream and you could look through the rafters and see the water going through down there. So we communicated about Germany and we asked them what they thought about going to war. We said, "Does Hitler want to go to war?" And they said, "No, no, he wants to get back the land lost in the First World War. He wants to build Germany up. Look at what's happening in Germany, it's all being built up!" Well, they were as naive about it all as a lot of people were in this country and other countries, because he did go to war. He didn't want that; he wanted the world.

But the German people were great to us. We went one night to a beer garden. I just couldn't believe that they could have so much fun. They had two musicians on stage with instruments—I didn't know what they were—would play and everybody would sing and they would all have a stein of beer. They only served two kinds of beer; a dark beer and a lighter beer. But they just had a great time.

Hodak: Do you recall much of the Closing Ceremonies?

Mollner: Well, it really wasn't anything. I had seen others before that. I had seen the '32 closing. It was a lot like that. There's one thing I forgot to tell you. Every country, as it comes into the Olympics, has a flag bearer. Now, the flag bearer for our team was a water polo player.

Hodak: Yes, [James] Wally O'Connor.

Mollner: Well, most of the flag bearers would dip their colors when they passed the reviewing stand where the home country's flag was. They would dip the flag in respect. And Wally O'Connor, he grabbed ahold of that flag, and when we got there he hoisted it higher and walked by. (laughter)

One other incident that was interesting to me was the one about Jesse Owens being snubbed by Hitler. On that day, after he had won a race, he was invited up to the box where Hitler was, but there were other athletes up there, other winners, and he was standing in line. And my impression of that was that after he waited awhile—he was in the broad jump and he had to get down there as they were broad jumping that day—he turned around and he started to come out of there because he wanted to go practice a few jumps. And some of the American writers, correspondents, yelled over, "Jesse, wouldn't he see you?" And Jesse, not hearing exactly what they said, nodded yes. They took it up that Hitler would not see him, but I don't believe that was the case at all. I believe that has been really been blown out of proportion. And I believe that as it went on and on and was reported, it became "fact."

Hodak: I think that if anyone was snubbed it was Cornelius Johnson.

Mollner: That's probably right, yes. I really believe that the thing came about by accident and they just perpetuated it by telling it over and over and over again. And, as you say, I think Cornelius Johnson was probably snubbed. Of course, it's hard to get the truth because it all happened so fast and under varying circumstances, so it's hard to say just what was in everybody's mind at the time. But I don't think Jesse was snubbed. I really believe that the German people were amazed at Jesse Owens. If you could have seen—and you probably have. You've probably seen the tape of the 200-meter race that he won. He looks like he's rocking in a rocking chair, he's running so effortlessly. I believe that the German people could not believe he could win by that far, running that easy. He was just effortless in his race that day. And everything that he did, he did with such ease and grace. He amazed the German public and I'm sure Hitler would not have snubbed him, believe me.

The German people were fantastic, they were interested. Wherever we went, the people would flock around. They not only showed interest but they showed a feeling towards you that was fantastic. Even today, I have many letters from young Germans, and I know they send them to many other Olympians in the Southern California area. They send maybe ten cards and they want me to sign all of them. And I know Frank Lubin and Sam Baiter get many of those letters. I always try to fulfill them by sending them what they want. It's terrific that young people are that interested in sports and the beginning of sport.

Well, we left Germany and, as I said earlier, we were invited to play a game in the Hippodrome against the McPherson Oilers. And then on that same boat, as we were coming in, the Mayor of New York, Fiorello La Guardia, sent his secretary out to invite all the Olympians aboard the boat to spend one week at New York's expense. They put us up in a hotel. And of course, we were all homesick, terrifically homesick. We went to see the Yankees play baseball, and they took us to a nightclub, to Coney Island, well, they took us to a lot of places. And we ate all our meals at the

hotel. It was terrific, the food was terrific, the hotel was great. But we didn't spend the whole week because we wanted to go home.

And when we arrived in Los Angeles, we had a lot of people there to meet us. Anyway, there were other people who were interested in my returning. I worked for the post office at the time, and before I left to go to the Olympics everyone in the post office had collected a lot of money, because they were stamp collectors and wanted me to bring back the special first-edition stamps. So I took \$500 or \$600 over there to buy stamps in Germany. I took about two hours getting all these stamps. (laughter) It was really funny. But I brought them all back, and they were very happy to get them because Germany had a lot of different Olympic stamps. Anyway, I came back to Los Angeles to my wife and family. And Carl Laemmle at Universal Pictures was kind of disenchanted with the basketball because of Hitler and the situation at the time. Universal Pictures stopped funding or supporting the basketball team and we, the whole team, went over to Fox Studio.

Hodak: Did you continue to play basketball?

Mollner: Oh yes, oh yes. We played with Fox for nine years and we went to the national tournament several times. We won the title one year, we were second one year, and third one year in that national tournament.

Hodak: You mentioned before that you met Dr. James Naismith in New York. Tell me about that.

Mollner: Yes, in 1937 we went to New York to play in Madison Square Garden for Ned Irish. It was called the Naismith Tournament. They invited AAU teams from all over the country, and we won that tournament. Naismith was introduced there and I got to talk to him.

Hodak: And what did you talk of?

Mollner: What he said was, "I can't believe how improved the ballplayers are today than when we started." I said, "Dr. Naismith, what it is is that you were starting a new sport that nobody had ever played." "Yes, but they were all athletes playing it." He said, "The moves today are phenomenal." I would like to know what he would think of Michael Jordan or Magic Johnson. He'd be astonished at what they can do with the basketball.

Hodak: And around this time you had been approached by some college coaches?

Mollner: Oh, yes. Well, while I was going to junior college I tried desperately to get into USC, but I had no success. I also tried to get into Stanford with no success. One of the coaches at L.A. Junior College when I was going there was a fellow by the name of "Red" Hand who played football for Stanford. And a fellow by the name of [John] Bunn was coaching at Stanford at the time, and Red wrote to Bunn about me. So when they came down to play USC, I ate dinner with them at their training table, but I never got . . . . I gave them my grades but I never received any notice. Well, after I started playing with Fox and Universal Pictures, why, Sam Barry came up to me one time at a ballgame and asked me if was interested in going to USC. He said, "We'll give you a scholarship, we'll give you a job." And I told him, "Sam, I'm married now. Where were you when I tried to get into USC?" He said, "Well, I was coach there but I never knew you tried to get in." I don't know if that was all true or not. But anyway, I also received a letter from Coach Bunn up at Stanford and he wanted me to come there. But, as I said, I was married by this time and had to support a family, so I didn't go on to either school.

Hodak: One of the highlights of your years with Fox was in 1941, when you won the AAU tournament.

Mollner: Yes. We played in Kansas City, in December, in an afternoon ballgame against the Kansas City club. It was a real tight ballgame

but we won by three points. After the game, we went in and showered. And the two referees were in our dressing room and they showered, got dressed and left, and then they came running back in and said, "Do you know what?" Well, of course the date was December 7, the day of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. That, I will never forget. We were staying at the Kansas Citian Hotel where the Kansas City Athletic Club also was. And staying there with us—we saw him on the elevator and we talked to him—was Glenn Cunningham, a well-known miler. He had run a race and won the mile in the same place we played basketball.

Hodak: This was at the Municipal Auditorium?

Mollner: At the Municipal Auditorium, that's right, And he was quite a guy—and quite a miler too.

Hodak: This wasn't the opening of the Municipal Auditorium, was it?

Mollner: Not on December 7, no. We opened that auditorium, I can't remember the date, but we did open it. I remember the floor was made of blocks of wood, and during the game, the first half, some of the sap came up out of the blocks of wood and we had to have the floor washed down to take the sap up. It was a beautiful place though, very nice.

Hodak: In that same year, you won the AAU tournament?

Mollner: That was the year we won the AAU tournament in Colorado, yes. We played the final game against [Angelo] Hank Luisetti and the Olympic Club of San Francisco. Hank Luisetti was a great ballplayer, a terrifically good ballplayer. I played at Fox for nine years and played with Frank, Carl Knowles and Carl Shy; Sam Baiter did not come to Fox with us. We had many University of Southern California ballplayers that played on that team through the nine years. Some of them were Bobby Matthews, Jack Hupp, Jim Semenoff, Abe Androff . . . and one guy that went on to play and

coach in the NBA was Alex Hannum, he played with us. And one year Bill Sharman worked out with us. He never played with us; that same year he went back to pro and he finally wound up and played with the Celtics. But we had a lot of ballplayers from USC and UCLA with us at Fox during the nine years that I was there. Then of course pro came in back East. And it eventually got out here, though not at first.

Hodak: Were there any early efforts to organize a pro team out here?

Mollner: Yes, in '44 or '45 they had a team out here called the Red Devils, and I held a contract with that team for one year for \$2,800. And on that team was Art Stoeffen, the brother of the tennis player, Les Stoeffen. Art played at Stanford. And we also had Jackie Robinson on that team; he and I played as guards on that team. And I asked Jackie at the time . . . he was playing with the Dodgers and I couldn't believe that they would let him play basketball, because he could get a broken leg or a sprained ankle. And he said that nothing in his contract barred him from playing so he was going to play. (laughter) Our first game was to be with the Chicago Gears with George Mikan. About a week before that game came on—we had many write-ups in the *Times* and the *Herald*—Joe Reed, who was assistant chief of police, called me into his office and said, "Art, I see in the paper that you're playing with this professional team." I said yes. He said, "Well, we can't let you do that. You can't play pro athletics outside of the department." I said, "Well, chief, I'm in kind of a quandary because I have a \$2,800 contract with them, and if I don't show up for those games the contract reads that I have to pay them the same amount of money." He said, "Art, we have good lawyers, they'll never . . . ." So anyway, they never said a word about it.

Hodak: So then the Red Devils never really took off?

Mollner: Not as a pro team. I saw the game with George Mikan and the Chicago Gears. They played them and they played six or seven

other games, but it never really took off. The fellow that started that team was from Pasadena. He wanted to get a foothold on pro basketball out here. Well, it never worked out that way, as often happens, you know. Later, as it turned out, somebody put in with the NBA to get a franchise here. They were accepted and the Lakers came out here.

Hodak: What about George Mikan? How did he impress you as a player?

Mollner: He was great. He was big; height is one thing, but a big body is something else in the spot. If you watch pro today, the banging that goes on in the key is fantastic. You know, our ballclub had Frank Lubin. There were many centers taller than Frank but they couldn't move him off that spot. And once Frank got the ball on that spot, he knew what to do with it. And that's the way it was with Mikan. He was tremendously effective because he was such a big man. They couldn't move him out of that spot.

Hodak: Later you would have played against Bob Kurland. How did Kurland compare to someone like Mikan?

Mollner: Well, Kurland was much more active. He was quicker. Even though he was 7-1, he was quicker.

Hodak: A little thinner frame?

Mollner: Oh yes, he had a much thinner frame. But he could move and he had longer arms. He could block a lot of shots. In fact, during one national tournament, a New York team came here with a New York University star, "Dolly" King—and he was terrific. But he shot from his forehead, as they did in those days. They'd bring the ball up and shoot it on the line, and Kurland stayed under the bucket. They played Phillips and Kurland blocked every shot. King never made a point.

Hodak: Is this before goal-tending was called?

Mollner: Yeah, but the next year they put the goal-tending rule in, because Kurland knocked everything down. (laughter)

Hodak: And the Phillips Oilers were certainly, not to slight any of the teams you played on, but the Oilers were in a class—

Mollner: They were terrific. They were our arch-rivals. Every year, they'd have ten All-Americans on their team. Of course, we beat them a few times; and the times we beat them, I *really* remember. They always had a good ballclub. But we were the arch-rivals against them. They liked to beat us and of course we liked to beat them.

Hodak: Would a team like the Phillips Oilers have, in effect, a home court?

Mollner: Oh yes, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, that was their home court. We played there many times. And they had a funny thing. When Frank Phillips, the man who started Phillips Oil Company, would come into the building, they would stop the game and he would walk right across the floor to his little seats up there. I always thought that was kind of funny. But Frank Phillips ruled that company with an iron hand.

Hodak: And he might have ruled the city, (laughter)

Mollner: He did. Bartlesville was Phillips Oil. That's what that was.

Hodak: Now did you, while you were working for the LAPD, did you ever coach or compete on a team made up of members of the LAPD?

Mollner: Yep! Oh yes, I coached the LAPD team for three years. We went back to the national tournament and we played Phillips a tremendous game. They beat us at the end by three points but we really gave them a tough game. We only had six ballplayers, too. We got into kind of a chess game with them. I played my offense two-on-two. I had a fellow by the name of Danny Johnston that went to Oregon State. He was out here from Pasadena Junior College. He was a

tremendous athlete. Then I had one of the best basketball players I ever had the good fortune of playing with, a fellow by the name of Les O'Gara. Les O'Gara was about 6-foot-5 and Danny Johnston was about 6-foot-1, and I devised a little offense because we couldn't play Phillips head up. When we came down the court, my other three ballplayers would go over on the sidelines and we'd play two against two. At the end of the half we were leading by one point, and Les O'Gara at one stage of the game had more points than the entire Phillips team. We were playing a six o'clock game at Denver at the auditorium there and at the six o'clock game, that was dinnertime, there weren't many people in the audience. But after that first half, with the score, LAPD 25-Phillips 24, why, the entire stadium was filled up, there wasn't a seat available. And then Les O'Gara fouled out. Well, I was coaching the team but I was dressed because I was the seventh man, and I had to go in for him. We lost that game by three points.

Hodak: And Twentieth Century Fox no longer sponsored a team?

Mollner: No, they did. They still had a team but I chose to coach the LAPD team because I was working for them.

Hodak: And when did your basketball career, coaching or playing, come to an end?

Mollner: Well, I called it quits in 1952. I coached a team sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Jim Jordan, who had the radio show, "Fibber McGee and Molly." It was a very popular radio show in the early '50s. Well, they sponsored that team and I coached it. We went to the national tournament and got third. Nineteen fifty-two was an Olympic year so the first four teams got to go to Kansas City for the Olympic tryouts. We went with the Phillips Oilers, the Peoria Caterpillars, and the Air Force. Peoria and the Air Force went to another site—I can't remember where it was right now—then the two winners went to New York and played; and the winner of that played the best college team. We played in Kansas City against the Phillips Oilers.

The game ended in a tie. We played one overtime and we got the ball, held it for five minutes, took one shot and missed it—so we went to another overtime. We got the ball. Now, Kurland was playing with the Oilers and Danny Roberts was my center. He was only 6-9 but he could outjump him, because Kurland was at the end of his career. So he'd outjump him and get the tip. We'd hold the ball for five minutes. We went through two overtimes like that and the score was still tied. And in the third overtime we got ahead by one point. And I had two Loyola University stars on my team, Johnny Arndt and Billy Donovan. They were both small, but could they dribble. So Johnny Arndt had the foul shot, he said, "Let me make the first one, that will put us one point ahead, and let's take the other out." You could do that in those days. We had three minutes left and Billy and he dribbled for . . . they were trying to get us, they'd foul us, we'd take the ball out, and we continued to do this. Well, near the end, with about 30 seconds to go, Johnny Arndt was dribbling the ball and he got loose from his man and dribbled in to make a bucket, but a man was right behind him, and really fouled him—and they didn't call it. The ball went up, they got it and came down, there were about 11 seconds to go, and they took a shot from the center that went in, and we lost the game by one point.

Hodak: So then, the Phillips team went on to play against the top collegiate team?

Mollner: No, they went on to New York to play the Peoria Caterpillars, and Peoria beat Phillips and they went to the Olympics in 1952. Anyway, in the game we lost in Kansas City—I weighed just about what I weigh now, 160 pounds—I lost eight pounds in that game, just on the bench. I never played that ballgame; I was on the bench. But I was playing everybody's position out there. (laughter) I couldn't sleep for a good month after that game. We should have won that game. We outplayed them. Phillips hit around 60 percent of their shots in the first half, and they were ten points ahead of us. We came back in the second half and tied the

score with about three minutes to go and played them on even terms all the way through. The game ended even and then we went into the overtimes. But we should have won that game.

Hodak: How much longer did the AAU schedule or organize basketball of this caliber? I guess its decline coincides with the emergence of the NBA.

Mollner: Gradually, with the emergence of pro basketball, the companies stopped sponsoring teams. They couldn't get the publicity out of it that they could otherwise. When we played with Fox, Universal, we traveled around the country in leagues. Even with the LAPD we were in a league. I took the LAPD team to Bartlesville, Oklahoma, and played them one year. We got beat badly but we played them. But we were in a league with Peoria; Akron, Ohio; Denver; Phillips of Bartlesville, Oklahoma; San Francisco; Sacramento; and Santa Maria, they had a big club. They had USC players on it and they went in big. There were many millionaires in Santa Maria who had retired there, and they backed the club 100 percent. They had all the money they wanted to conduct basketball. And people really came out in droves to see it. But that league, with the emergence of pro, fell apart.

Denver had a number of terrific ballplayers. They had [Robert] "Ace" Gruenig, a great center, and also "Jumpin' Jack" McCracken. What a ballplayer! And they had a number of good players in Kansas City; players like Joe Reiff. And one of the greatest ballplayers of my time was a player by the name of [Forrest] "Red" DeBernardi. In the days of the Kansas City Tournament, they had running guard, standing guard, right forward, left forward and center. This Red DeBernardi was the only man to win All-American honors at every position. He made it at every position. He was about 6-3, but he could rebound, shoot, everything. He was great. Red DeBernardi. I met him once. Charlie Hyatt had played against him.

With the beginning of pro basketball the AAU was phased out. I actually coached the police team a few more years and we played all locally. When Chief [William] Parker became chief, about a week after he became chief, I called his secretary and asked for an appointment to see him. It was in the afternoon at two o'clock on a Tuesday or Wednesday. I came in and he says, "What's on your mind?" I said, "I don't know if you know it chief, but I coach the police basketball team." He said, "Oh yes." I said, "I want to know whether you are behind it or not." He says, "What does it mean if I'm behind it or not?" Well, we now belonged to a league and I told him that we traveled. He said, "Well, I can't okay that." And I said, "I tell you chief, the fellows are traveling on their own time. They are keeping their days off or their vacations for when we go to the tournament." He said, "I appreciate all that, but when they write it up in the sports page, they don't write up that they're taking their own time. And people that read that do not like their policemen being away playing basketball or doing other things. You're supposed to be here doing police work." I said, "I can understand that. Okay, we'll quit the big time and we'll play around Los Angeles." He said, "Fine, that's great. I back it as far as that goes." I said, "Thank you, chief," and that was it. So we did have a ballclub but we played it strictly in Los Angeles.

Hodak: How long did you stay with the LAPD?

Mollner: I went with the LAPD in 1943, October 18, and I was with the Los Angeles Police Department for 31 years. I retired in 1974. I never wore a uniform in my life and I think I'm the only policeman that can say that. Now you are required to work at least a year and six months, 18 months, in uniform.

Hodak: You worked undercover?

Mollner: I worked undercover. I came out of the academy. We went six weeks to the academy. I came out and my best friend was working in administrative vice and he got me there, which was plainclothes.

I went from there to the detective bureau; I worked auto theft for six or seven years. Then I went to burglary. Later I went to Devonshire station out in the Valley and then to the West Valley station, then I went back to the police building downtown and went to robbery/homicide where I worked my last five years. Of my 31 years, I enjoyed every minute of it. It was a tremendous job. The people were fantastic. The people you work with—you'd have to be a policeman to know what it is to work for the police department.

Of course, today I wouldn't recommend anybody going on the police department. The way it is today, they've tied your hands to do police work. You can't do police work the way they want you to do it now. The criminals get all the breaks. It just doesn't wash. And on top of that, it's too dangerous. Anybody you stop could be on cocaine and shoot you at the drop of a hat. Our city has really taken a turn for the worse. The streets are not safe. I used to go down on Central Avenue—that's south Los Angeles—and make an arrest with my partner, with no gun, no nothing. We'd get maybe 20 gamblers for shooting craps, you know, put them in the car, drive them all to the station, they'd pay their five dollar fine and they're out. You couldn't do that today. *Believe me*, you wouldn't! If you want to go make an arrest for shooting craps, better take a shotgun with you.

Hodak: Well, today you'd be happy if you only found people shooting craps.

Mollner: Well, they're doing everything else, you're right. That's the least of their worries, shooting craps. But that's the way it was. It was just great. You did a lot of police work . . . made a lot of arrests. And Parker made Los Angeles one of the best police departments in the world. No doubt about it. But things change and everything's changed.

Hodak: And certainly basketball has changed.

Mollner: Yes, basketball has. With the coming of pro basketball, they went

to bigger ballplayers; well, everybody is bigger now. I think all children are bigger than their parents. And I believe it's the better food, better exercise, vitamins, and whatnot. I think everything tends to make people better and bigger. Now everybody has got a seven-foot center. Before, they were a rare commodity, but not today. Everybody has got seven-foot centers, and they have 6-10 forwards and 6-11 forwards. I have many people who ask me today, "Gee, you played in the Olympics in '36. How would you do with these giants today?" Well, if anybody watched the Lakers play Utah in the playoffs and saw this John Stockton—he can't be over six feet. He's about 5-11 or 5-10, something like that. But he's the most effective ballplayer in the games they've played so far. He scores, he intercepts the ball, and he just broke or tied Magic's record for assists in one game.

Hodak: Well, there's still room for the small player.

Mollner: Oh, without a doubt, there's always been room for small players.

Hodak: And the teamwork is still going to be important, no matter how—

Mollner: That's it, that's it! Like years ago. I told you about Charlie Hyatt. Now, Charlie Hyatt, he loved anybody who played defense. He loved me because I played defense; I didn't score much on that team. Charlie wanted to score all the points because you got written up when you scored all the points. And Charlie was great, don't get me wrong. Charlie was a tremendous ballplayer. He was the best the world has ever known. But I really believe that the developer and the inventor of the game. Dr. Naismith . . . I think his idea of basketball is what it should be today. He wanted five men to play as one, and I really believe that that is the concept where basketball is at its best; not for one man, like Wilt Chamberlain or Michael Jordan. Jordan scores 10; well, he doesn't have the supporting cast that he should have. If they get more people, he can dish the ball off. He is a tremendous ballplayer. He can do more than any ballplayer in the game today. But they

just were eliminated because one man cannot win a ballgame.

The game of basketball has changed from when we played because of the time element, the 24-second clock. They've got to get the ball up and down. And of course they go fast. If they have a fast break, they take it. Everything is go as fast as you can. Now, when we played, there were many teams that fast broke, too. The McPherson Oilers, the team we played against in the finals of the Olympic playoffs, they went fast. Fortenberry would get the ball off the hoop and throw it down court to Johnson speeding on down, and they'd get two if they could. But most of the teams then, if they couldn't get a fast break, would set up slow, but they had all kinds of time. We didn't have the 24-second clocks, you know. You could work a play; if it didn't work, you could throw it out. What was more on a premium than were mistakes. The team that made the most mistakes lost. This was a rule of thumb. So it was at a premium not to make mistakes. Now, they weren't rushed. Today the pro teams are rushed. They have turnovers right and left. My God, when I played, if we had that many turnovers, they would have thrown us off the court. Because we weren't that pressured. We had plenty of time to do everything, so you made good passes. If you made bad passes, your teammates told you about them. (laughter) But today, naturally, the time element is all important.

The emphasis now is to play to the audience, and that's what they have done with basketball. They made it an offensive game. They make 100 points or more at every game. That's what the public wants to see. When I played, the Phillips Oilers, overall, had the best amateur or AAU team that was ever devised. And they would always try to score 66 points because it was Phillips 66. They'd score 66 points and that would win for them. Today, 66 points, they can do that in the half now. Of course, now they play 48 minutes and not 40. But all that was added to make the game more offensive, so you could score more points. A good hook shot, a long jump shot, a three-point basket, those are all intriguing to

sports fans, to basketball fans.

Hodak: Well, I appreciate these thoughts coming from a basketball player of an earlier era.

Mollner: Well, there are a lot of changes today and basketball will take more changes. I really believe, the way people are growing, that they will eventually raise the basket. I think that's a foregone conclusion. I think they'll put it up to where nobody is going to dunk the ball.

Hodak: I don't know about that. I think they'll keep it so the dunk is part of the entertainment.

Mollner: Well, they might just put it up a little higher, but eventually it'll get up there pretty good, I think.

Hodak: Again, I appreciate your thoughts on the changes you've seen in basketball. Now I'd like you to talk a little about your family.

Mollner: I married my wife in 1935. In fact, this year we had our 53rd anniversary. We had two children. We have a son, Dennis Duke—everybody calls him Duke—who lives in Las Vegas with his wife and his son, my grandson. We have a daughter who lives in Beverly Hills and works over there.

Hodak: Did your son develop into a basketball player?

Mollner: He played basketball in high school and college, but he didn't go on with it. He is built a lot like I am, thin, tall. He stands about 6-3. He follows the same line, he's taller than his dad. And my daughter is pretty tall too. She's about 5-9. They've been terrific. My wife has been very supportive of basketball, although she didn't know very much about basketball when we were first married. She kept going to the games and she got pretty knowledgeable. I'll tell you a story about my wife. I took her one time to see the Lakers

play, and they were playing a team that Oscar Robertson was on.

Hodak: Milwaukee, wasn't it?

Mollner: It was probably Milwaukee. And Abe Androff was up in the stands with me. Abe played at USC. So my wife Marge and I were sitting there. We watched the first half, Elgin Baylor was playing for the Lakers. Abe Androff came over and said, "Hey Art, how do you like that Baylor?" I said, "Let me ask my wife." I said, "Honey, tell Abe who you like out there." She said, "I like that 'O' out there." And I started laughing. She found out how that game should be played. Oscar Robertson played the game like it should be played. Oscar Robertson was some ballplayer. He could do it all. He was only 6-5, but he could rebound, pass, his assists were great, and he could score.

Hodak: So tell me what hobbies you have in addition to following basketball.

Mollner: Both my wife and I love golf. We play quite a bit of golf; we go on trips and we play together. She belongs over here at Westlake Golf Club, the women's club. She plays sometimes on Tuesdays, sometimes on Thursdays, and I have a regular foursome that plays every Monday. I play with a couple of basketball players; Carl Shy, who was in the Olympics with us, and Gene Rock who played at USC. We play every other Thursday over at Downey. So we play quite a bit of golf. We do a bit of traveling, and we do some dancing. In fact, we just went to a dance up in Oxnard. And we take in all the Olympic functions, which gives us a little traveling. And we go to see our son in Vegas. We go there about six times a year. We drive up and drive back and stay with them and we play cards. I play poker every Wednesday night and we play bridge with friends at different places. But we do like to travel. We haven't traveled as much as we'd like to, but we will travel.

Hodak: You mentioned the Olympic functions. What sense do you have of the Olympic Movement and how it's changed?

Mollner: Well, the one thing that strikes my wife and I as so odd is that I was in the 1936 Olympics, and for the next 10 or 15 years we never heard anything about the Olympics except when they'd come along. Then, all of a sudden, nostalgia caught up or something. Now we go to Olympic functions and we're invited to things. I just had an invitation here to the Arco-Jesse Owens Games. Do you know what that is?

Hodak: The Arco-Jesse Owens Games in Los Angeles?

Mollner: Yes. And I went to the last one, for kids, 9-14. They compete and we help them give out the medals and so on and so forth. They're real terrific. But the things we've been invited to are absolutely fantastic in the last 8 to 10 years; before that, it was nothing. Now there is much more interest in the Olympics and Olympic athletes. We think it's great.

Hodak: And what about the Olympic Movement itself?

Mollner: Well, I think that's great too. I think that in the Olympic Movement, they have looked ahead to all the needs, the athletes are treated great, they're really wined and dined, in a sense. Everything is taken care of. But when we were at the Olympics in Berlin, we got two dollars a week for laundry. When I look back on it, this to me doesn't make sense. And we were the richest country in the world. And of course the Olympic Committee at that time, with Avery Brundage, they were holier-than-thou. In other words, they weren't going to give you two cents extra because it would make you a pro. So why did they give us the two dollars?

Hodak: You are lucky that you weren't doing your own laundry.

Mollner: I can see that that's the way they were thinking. It just doesn't make sense to me that this much, two dollars, is alright, but anything over that will make you professional. That's not right. Here they continue to compete with countries like Russia where all

their athletes are professional athletes. They get all their money from the government.

Hodak: I think other countries outside of the Soviet Union also assist their athletes.

Mollner: Oh, they all do it. Why, absolutely, they pay them. They give them an apartment, you know, and they pay for their food, their clothing, everything. It's how you look at it.

Hodak: I think that's a dilemma that will always be with the Olympics, in terms of athletes competing on the same basis but within very different national contexts.

Mollner: They can't compete on the same level when they live in different countries and have different lifestyles. It just isn't the same. If they were all based at one place for four years and they all trained there the same way, you'd get the pure champion. Russia has proved that all you have to do is train with knowledgeable coaches, eat the right food, get the right amount of sleep, rest, the right training and so on, and you can become a champion. They have proven that. I'm for them, I think that's great. If you want to compete with that, then you have to do what they're doing there. You have to do the same thing. I think it takes four years of training for any athlete to win a gold medal in the Olympics—at least four years of training.

I talked to John Naber when we were down in San Diego, and I asked him about my son's little boy in Las Vegas. He's nine years old and he's very taken with swimming and he's very good. He won the best in his class as an eight-year-old in the state meets. He does 100 push-ups every day. So I asked John Naber, who won three gold medals in the '76 Olympics, "How long can you stay motivated as a competitor to get in the Olympics?" He said, "Well, gee, at nine years old, I don't know if he can stay motivated for that long." I said, "How long did you train for when you won the

Olympics?" He said, "I tried out for the '72 Olympics and I didn't make it. When I climbed out of the pool, one of the other competitors said, 'John, you've got a lot of potential, but if you want to be an Olympic athlete you start right now for the next four years.' I went home and thought about that and said, okay, I'll do it." And he said, "I became an Olympic athlete." He said "Four years, at the age I was at the time—that was tough. He says, "You're talking to me about a nine-year-old boy who will have two Olympics that he can get into. He can get in when he's 17, that'll be eight years from now. He's got a long way to go; whether he can stay motivated or not, it's hard to say. Everybody is an individual. He might do it." Well, we've got a very unusual grandson, believe me. He wants to be a swimmer. He made the all-star team in baseball in his little league, but he quit baseball so he could do his swimming. Now, you know he's motivated but not whether he can stay motivated. Well, that's about it.

Hodak: That's an interesting note to end on. I appreciate the chance to have met you and it certainly has been nice visiting with you and your wife. I really appreciate your hospitality Mr. Mollner.

Mollner: Well, I'm glad to do it. I've enjoyed meeting you and talking with you. You're very knowledgeable about basketball and all the sports in the Olympics. I know you have competed, you have played and competed against other good athletes and you know what it is to—

Hodak: Well, my back knows it. (laughter) The Amateur Athletic Foundation is also most appreciative of your cooperation and time.

Mollner: Terrific! Well, I'm glad to cooperate. I've enjoyed it.