

DORIS O'MARA MURPHY  
1924 & 1928 OLYMPIC GAMES  
SWIMMING



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 11. 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.

DORIS O'MARA MURPHY

1924 OLYMPIC GAMES - PARIS  
100-METER BACKSTROKE  
400-METER RELAY

1928 OLYMPIC GAMES - AMSTERDAM  
ASSISTANT MANAGER - WOMEN'S SWIMMING TEAM

INTERVIEWED:

July, 1987  
Laguna Hills, California  
by George A. Hodak

DORIS O'MARA MURPHY

Interviewer: George A. Hodak

Hodak: I'm in Leisure World in Laguna Hills, California, visiting with Doris O'Mara Murphy. Mrs. Murphy competed on the 1924 women's swimming team and served as manager for the women's swimming team in 1928. First of all, would you give your birthdate? Then I'd like you to talk a bit about your family background.

Murphy: I was born December 22, 1908, in Yonkers, New York. My father was an alderman in the first ward where we lived. We had a summer cottage in Milford, Connecticut, on Long Island Sound. It was right on the Sound. When it got high tide, it came right under our cottage. It was very small—two stories—but large enough for us. And we spent most of our time on the beach and in the water, and also sailing. We sailed a canoe and sometimes, with friends, a regular sailboat. When it was low tide, we used to dig clams and go around the neighborhood and sell them. In Milford, Connecticut, there was an island in the Sound—Charles Island—and when it was low tide, you could walk right out to the island. We'd go out there for picnics but we had to be sure we got back before the tide got too high.

Then my interest in swimming began to develop. Of course, they had volunteer lifeguards on every beach. The main beach was a couple of miles down and that was Walnut Beach. They used to have swimming meets for anyone who wanted to compete from the beaches. The lifeguards ran the meets. I had an older brother who was three years older, a younger sister, and a younger brother. My older brother said, "You know, you ought to enter the meet." And I said, "Oh, sure."

And so he entered me in it. It was a Fourth of July meet. They only had these swimming meets on the Fourth of July and Labor Day. I did very well in the events that I was in. Then they had a meet that they said I should enter that was going to be in Bridgeport, Connecticut. This, of course, was away from Milford, but not too far. It was an open meet and people from other places would come to that. It was an AAU meet. My family came with me, and I guess it was a handicap race so I got a few seconds start.

Hodak: Because you were so young?

Murphy: Yes. And it was really the first open meet that I was in. This was in open water, not a pool. But I was used to open water swimming. Anyway, I think I placed second. And this man who was announcing, and was with the Women's Swimming Association of New York team, said, "What's your name again?" So I told him my name and he said, "Where are you from?" And I said, "From Yonkers, New York." And he said, "Is your father here?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Because I think I know him." So I got my father and he came up and talked to him. And it turned out that they were old friends. But he had moved away and was living in Brooklyn or New York or someplace. And he said to my father, "You ought to bring your daughter to the Women's Swimming Association of New York and have her join. She appears to be a very good swimmer."

Hodak: About what age were you at this time?

Murphy: I guess I was about 12, going on 13.

Hodak: So did you then join up with the Women's Swimming Association?

Murphy: Well, when we got back, in the fall, school started up. He took us, including my sister . . . who wasn't too keen about it in the beginning. So he took me down there and introduced me and had me swim. I met Lou Handley, the coach, and he said, "Oh, yes.

You should come down Friday nights." So my family would take me every Friday night. If my father couldn't drive me down at the time, we would take the train down there for practice. I met all the others including some top swimmers like Gertrude Ederle; Aileen Riggan, who was a swimmer and a diver; Helen Wainwright, who was also a swimmer and a diver; Agnes Geraghty, who was a breastroker; Martha Norelius; and Ethel McGeary.

So anyway, I kept going there and then I was asked to come on Wednesday nights to the club and practice because that was a 20-yard pool. Ours was, as I recall, eight and half lanes for 100 yards. So it was small.

Hodak: And where was the Women's Swimming Association pool?

Murphy: The Women's Swimming Association then was on 55th Street in New York City. It had an indoor pool down in the basement of this apartment. And I was kind of frightened when I went there and saw the little pool *and* a whole big building on top of us.

So I began competing. They entered me in different meets along with the whole team. Of course, the New York Athletic Club used to have meets and invited us, even though they didn't have women members. And that's how I developed as a swimmer.

Hodak: And what particular events were you focusing on at this time?

Murphy: Well, it was really just the freestyle and the backstroke. Of course, my freestyle was changed. I used to do what was the original Australian crawl. You did the breathing when you wanted to and you had a scissor kick.

Hodak: And you were encouraged to change your stroke?

Murphy: Yes, to change to the American crawl.

Hodak: And this is something that Lou Handley was involved in promoting—the American crawl?

Murphy: I think he is the one who developed it.

Hodak: And how was that different than the Australian method?

Murphy: We had a six-beat kick and, of course, you kicked from the hips down over your last leg. You took the side that you preferred to breathe on. Now today, they will breathe on both sides in order to see their competition. But in those days, if you were in the race, the fastest time got the preferred middle lane. And today, I guess they must work it differently. Usually, it was the way you qualified that determined the position you got. And today, as you know, they will breathe every third stroke on a different side. But we stuck to the same side. No one ever told us you could do it the other way.

Hodak: And what about the backstroke?

Murphy: And the backstroke is different now than when I swam. When we swam backstroke, we'd bend the elbows and then throw the arm back. But today, it's more or less a straight arm.

Hodak: Presumably that is a better method.

Murphy: Oh, yes. Actually, doing this you're wasting time.

Hodak: What if you had decided to swim differently? Would you simply be coached not to do that?

Murphy: That would be alright but we were coached and stuck to the same stroke as Mr. Handley had us learn.

Hodak: What do you recall of Mr. Handley? I know he was born in Rome.



Murphy: He was a real gentleman of the first order. He'd come to the pool, the hot pool, and always had on a suit, shirt and tie. Of course, he would take his jacket off, but he always had a tie on. He was a real gentleman and a wonderful person. He was very fair—the same with each swimmer. He didn't show any preferences.

Hodak: At this time that you're competing for the Women's Swimming Association, was Charlotte Epstein also a coach?

Murphy: Yes, Charlotte Epstein was the manager. She used to do some teaching too because it was a club to teach swimming. But it also became a competitive club. And Charlotte Epstein arranged these meets for us in different places like Miami, Florida.

Hodak: Were these meets or exhibitions?

Murphy: It was an exhibition, but we would have races amongst ourselves.

Hodak: So you traveled throughout the United States?

Murphy: Yes. And then we also went to Bermuda for a Grantland Rice special.

Hodak: The underwater show?

Murphy: That was only one part of it. They had diving and, of course, they had the different swimming strokes and all. And they showed two of us diving down and coming up and meeting each other. The interesting thing about that was the way they photographed it. As I can recall, they had the camera in a box that had a window. They would lock it up securely and it had a crank that was above water; they used that to turn the movies. And this was in Bermuda, in the clear, blue water.

Hodak: So it sounds like your affiliation with the Women's Swimming Association led to a lot of things.

Murphy: It really did. We traveled so much and visited interesting places. I always had fun and really enjoyed it.

Hodak: And what of Charlotte Epstein? What things stand out when you think of her?

Murphy: She was brilliant. She always picked the best places. I can't remember where it was—and I think even if I could I probably shouldn't mention the name—but we weren't being taken care of after we swam, as far as sitting down for dinner. Everyone else was being taken care of—the people who had come to see it and everyone else. And Charlotte said, "That's enough!" She took all of us and said, "We're leaving." So we left and went to another restaurant. As far as she was concerned, they weren't treating us right. Of course, we didn't notice it or complain. But that was it. She always got the best for us and took us all over.

We gave an exhibition at the Vanderbilt Estate in North Carolina. We swam in their pool. They had friends there too. And when we came in to the mansion there were lackeys standing outside with their hands out. We had our bathing suits and caps and a towel wrapped around us and as each one of us came by we just dropped our towels. We thought that's what they were there for. Evidently it was alright because no one complained. Anyway, we put on an exhibition there for the Vanderbilt family and their friends. That was one of the highlights of traveling around.

As I said, everywhere we went we would always demonstrate the American crawl, the stroke, and then do the backstroke. But we had someone just push off and do the kick and then do the arm stroke and then do the breathing. Charlotte Epstein or someone else would describe what we were doing and the fact that you could breathe on either side. Of course, as I've said, today they breathe on both sides and the strokes have changed quite a bit.

Hodak: So these were actually real teaching exhibitions. It sounds as if the

New York Women's Swimming Association was instrumental in spreading an interest in swimming.

Murphy: And of course, the divers always did the diving. Today, they do things that we never saw in that day and age—with all the twists and somersaults. It's just amazing how far they have developed. You just wonder where it will end.

Hodak: It doesn't seem that you had much competition from other clubs.

Murphy: No, at that early point we didn't. The team in Chicago had some good swimmers like Ethel Lackie and Sybil Bauer. They were really outstanding. And there was Mariechen Wehselau from Hawaii. And there were a few others around from the East, but I can't recall their names.

Hodak: Before we talk about the tryouts leading up to the 1924 Olympics, what sort of things could you say about Gertrude Ederle?

Murphy: Well, Gertrude Ederle was a very quiet person. She didn't hear very well and didn't like to be interviewed because of that. She always sat aside. She wasn't keen about interviews at all. She was from New York. In fact, her father had quite a prominent butcher shop on Amsterdam Avenue right in the middle of New York City. We used to swim in the 60th Street pool. She used to go there and practice too. She was a very pleasant person but very quiet and unassuming.

Hodak: She must not have liked all the attention that came her way after she swam the English Channel.

Murphy: No, she wasn't too keen about the attention. I remember we all went to a parade held in her honor after swimming the English Channel. We were given a medallion which commemorated the occasion.

Hodak: What about some of your other teammates? I ask that because the heart of the 1924 Olympic women's swimming team comes from the New York Women's Swimming Association.

Murphy: That's right. Now, Aileen Riffin was very outgoing and friendly. She had traveled a lot because her father was a sea captain. She went to different countries and all. I guess she was the youngest competitor on the 1920 Olympic team in Antwerp. She had just turned 14. She did very well even though she was younger than the others.

Of course, Helen Meany was a diver. She came from a large family and lived in Greenwich, Connecticut. Her father and mother were very interested in swimming, and she had a couple of sisters that swam and did some diving too. But they didn't stay with it the way she did. I hear from both Aileen and Helen at Christmastime. Aileen's husband isn't living; Helen Meany's husband isn't living either. Aileen Riffin lives in Hawaii. Two years ago, when we went down there to visit, we were with her and she's doing fine. She competes in master's events. And Aileen has one daughter who lives in France. She married a French boy and they live over there. I don't know about Helen. I'm not sure if she had any children. I don't know whether Gertrude Ederle is still living. I think she must be. I haven't read in the paper anything to the contrary. But she was living in Long Island and working in some office or factory. She had sisters and all, but she was the only one in her family that was really interested in swimming.

My two brothers weren't interested in swimming but my sister did some swimming. In fact, we were both in Florida at a swimming meet when my mother died, we had to come home. She wasn't sick when we left but . . . . My sister was pretty good but she didn't stay with it. She wasn't as interested as I was.

Hodak: Getting back to the Olympics, had you heard much about the Olympics before 1924? Was this something that your teammates

talked about?

Murphy: Yes. The WSA really trained and prepared us for the Olympics. As I recall, the Olympic tryouts were at Briarcliff. We had swimming meets up there, so we knew the course. It wasn't something new for us. But we really trained for it.

Hodak: Which events did you qualify for at the tryouts?

Murphy: I qualified for the backstroke and also for the 400-meter relay. And then they took more than they needed for the 100-meter freestyle. They took extra substitutes. So they had tryouts, and I wasn't as fast as others that tried out once we got to Paris.

Hodak: What about the travel on board the ship? Were you able to train on the *SS America*?

Murphy: Well, on board the ship they had built a canvas pool. There was a log at each corner and it was tied with rope. It was on a platform so you could stand in it if you had to. In fact, we had a picture taken of all of us in it. Only two at a time could swim. You put on the belt and a cord was attached to the belt and you were tied to the side. Our coach, Mr. Handley, would start us. He said, "Alright, I want you to swim 400 meters and I will time you and tell you when to stop." That's the only way we would know. And so he would time us and before the 400 meters was up he would say, "Alright, you have 50 meters to go. I want you to pep up your stroke." And we would do that. But it kept us swimming and used to the water.

The divers had a low springboard but they had cushions, plenty of cushions, and they also wore belts. They'd have a man on each side hold the ropes because they would only practice somersaults—forwards and backwards. That's all they could do. Of course, they practiced just the spring of the board by jumping up and jumping in feet first.

We would walk around the deck a lot. Everywhere you looked on the deck was some form of sport going on. There was boxing and wrestling and of course the diving and the swimming. And the track people were on the main deck running.

Hodak: Did you find the accommodations to your liking?

Murphy: Oh, yes. The women had the staterooms on the upper deck so we weren't down below the water line, we were up above. I think you wouldn't get as much roll as you would down below. Also, you didn't have all the stairs to come up to the main dining room.

Hodak: Do you remember who you shared a compartment with?

Murphy: Yes, I was with Aileen Riffin. I think there were just two of us in a room, but maybe there were four in those upper rooms. We had a time schedule to get up and go to bed, and our meals were served at certain times. Of course, before we landed you had the captain's dinner and also, I guess it was a Saturday night, they had a dance. And they had races on the deck and I can always remember—of course I haven't seen it in years—what they called a potato race. They had potatoes and you'd have to go down and get the potato and put it up in this circle. Then you'd have to run back and get the next potato and put it up in the circle. And the one that got all the potatoes up there and ran back to the finish line was the winner. That was fun. We also would get together and sing. We always seemed to have something to do. If we didn't we could always go read. The ship had a fairly good library.

We landed in Cherbourg and we took a train to the Care Saint Lazare. Then, in a bus, they drove us up to Rocquencourt. That was way up the hill from the Seine. We lived in the two carriage houses, which were very comfortable. We had all the conveniences. The men lived up on the estate in huts.

Hodak: More temporary barracks. Were the men envious of your

accommodations?

Murphy: Oh, yes. They didn't have half the conveniences that we had. Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. and Mary Pickford visited the whole team. They happened to be in Paris at the time. Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. was with them too.

We'd go to practice in taxis some of the time. It was on the other side of the Seine. They had just built a pool there, in a stadium-like effect, which was built specifically for the Olympics.

Hodak: Do you recall much of the Opening Ceremonies?

Murphy: Yes. All the teams marched around the Olympic track and field stadium. All the women and men and all the countries were lined up and marched around the stadium. Then we came up to different aisles and they played each country's national anthem. That was thrilling.

Hodak: Would you talk a bit further about the practice sessions and then the preliminary qualifying rounds?

Murphy: When we got to the pool where they were going to hold the Olympics, we were really amazed because it was a large pool in a stadium with all these seats up on every side, which was unusual. We were so used to pools with just a few bleachers on each side. But this was quite a large pool. We'd each get a chance to work out and do so many lengths. Then Mr. Handley would have us line up in the event we were going to swim and we'd all swim together and do some sprints. If you were in another event, like I was in the backstroke besides the relay, you'd wait until that came up and you'd do the backstroke then. He would correct you if you were doing something wrong, especially with our turns—which are different today than they used to be. We never did anything like the somersault turn of today. We'd have a good workout and then we'd go to lunch and come back to Rocquencourt.

Hodak: Was the travel to and from the stadium rather difficult?

Murphy: No, it wasn't. We had fun. We were amazed at the traffic in Paris. They say it's still the same. There were quite a few times when we would stay and Charlotte Epstein would take us to different places. We'd go on tours within Paris. We were able to see all sights and the famous places like l'Arc de Triomphe and Notre Dame and many other places. We really had a wonderful trip. Then during the actual Olympics, after our swimming events were finished, Charlotte Epstein took us to the stadium for the track and field events.

Hodak: Let's talk of the two events that you qualified for. Will you talk first about the 100-meter backstroke?

Murphy: I qualified for the 100-meter backstroke, practiced for it, and expected to swim in the event. But then, without advance notice, this girl with her family had come over to Paris and they gave her a chance to try out against me. She touched me out by a thin margin in the backstroke, and that was disappointing. But then I look back on it . . . and she didn't have any of the fun and experience going over with the whole team on the ship as I did. Also, as I recall, she didn't do any better than I would have done in her time. I was 15 at the time and it just didn't seem fair.

Hodak: Yes, I can see how you would feel that way. Do you recall the final of the 100-meter backstroke? Do you remember watching that?

Murphy: Oh, yes. Sybil Bauer was really outstanding, as far as winning the backstroke. She had no trouble at all. She was really way ahead. Phyllis Harding, from Great Britain, was second, and I think Aileen Riggins was third.

Hodak: So you didn't swim in the final?

Murphy: No.



Hodak: And what about the 400-meter relay?

Murphy: Well, the ones that were chosen had done faster times. Three of them were in the 100 meters and they had their times from that so they figured that would be the best team to win. These were Gertrude Ederle, Mariechen Wehseleau, Euphrasia Donnelly, and Ethel Lackie.

Hodak: And Ethel Lackie won the 100-meter freestyle. What of some of the other swimming events? Were you able to take in other events?

Murphy: Oh, yes. We went to see all the swimming events. Then when the swimming events were finished we went to the track and field championships. We enjoyed that because we knew all the American runners and tried to cheer them on.

Hodak: Were the events well attended?

Murphy: Oh, yes, very well attended. Then, we also went to London and had a swimming meet. And we toured and did an exhibition in Brussels. Charlotte Epstein always had something planned for us. We went on tours and saw most everything.

Hodak: After the dual meets in London, did you return on board the SS *America*? Did you return with the rest of the team?

Murphy: Yes. We all returned on the ship and then we were greeted in New York City. We paraded up Fifth Avenue and we each were greeted by the mayor and presented with a medal. It was quite a parade and reception. Every time I see a parade in New York City I think of that.

Hodak: Anything in summary that you would comment on about your experience in the 1924 Paris Games?

Murphy: It really was just an outstanding experience—going over on an ocean

liner, which I had never done, and visiting these different countries that I never would have had the chance to visit. It was just outstanding.

Hodak: And were you pretty determined to compete in the following Olympics in 1928?

Murphy: Yes, well, I didn't compete. My mother died . . . and I just didn't do that much swimming after she died. I coached swimming at a summer camp where I was head counselor—Camp Fort Ticonderoga on Lake George. And when I came back there was some discussion as to whether I was a pro by virtue of the counseling position I had. But I was head counselor and did everything, besides just teach swimming. They ruled against it, and said that I could compete; but I didn't do that much competing after that.

Hodak: Before we resume discussion of the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam, I'd like to have you talk a bit more about your amateur competition in the United States. In particular, I'm intrigued by the pentathlon as an event for women swimmers. What did that consist of?

Murphy: Well, that was unusual because there were five events. There was the breaststroke, the backstroke, the crawl, a few dives from low board, and the fifth event was plunging. We used to have plunging at the end of different competitive swimming meets and that was diving into the pool, a rather shallow dive, but getting out as far as you could, and then just gliding as far as you could. The one who went the farthest in the shortest length of time would be the winner. But, as I mentioned, I was entered in it a few times but usually the heavy-set gals would come out first with it. But they didn't continue that very long. They got into other events.

Hodak: Yes, I don't think the pentathlon was around much longer.

Murphy: To me, in thinking about it now, it couldn't have been that exciting, (laughter) When we had meets in different cities they always had

relays. They weren't dual meets but they were national meets. I usually swam on the freestyle relay. Then we had medley relays too. We also used to have a 50-yard race, but they cut that out years ago. Of course, most of the pools indoors at that time were 60 feet, or 20 yards. Finally, they got the pools to be 25 yards so you wouldn't have to swim a half a length for 100 yards. It was quite a bit different than today. Now they have all these timers, mechanized timing. At that time, you had to depend upon the officials who were timing to do it right. Of course, they had three or four watches, especially on first place, to insure the correct time.

Today you have the butterfly, which we didn't have then. We just had the breaststroke. And we didn't have any somersault turns. In the backstroke you had to be sure—and the officials always watched—that you touched when you were on your back. You had to be on your back when you touched. In the breaststroke you had to have two even, parallel hands for the turn.

Hodak: So it was much more restrictive.

Murphy: Oh, yes, it was. Of course, I don't know if they have many handicap races today or not. But we used to have quite a few handicap races. I don't recall, in recent years, that they have had handicap races. In a handicap race, in a particular heat the girl who was the slowest would start on one side. Of course, the "scratch girl," as they called it, would get the preference of which side of the pool she wanted. Then, eventually, I think they put them in the middle. And the handicapper would count out loud and you'd know the number you were to go off on and you'd start on that particular number until you got to the "scratch gal" and they'd count and give her the gun.

Hodak: You mentioned off tape about what was required of you in terms of modesty when photographers were around.

Murphy: Well, this was probably only in our club—I'm not sure. But when we had photographers, reporters or newspapermen there and we had won a race or a relay race, we had to go get our capes on or get another suit to put over our silk suits. They weren't that revealing, but in that day and age the chaperones thought they were. So that's what we had to do. For our team it would always be a black suit. But we enjoyed all the meets. They weren't that serious but we liked the experience of racing for national championships and eventually the Olympics.

Hodak: And at what point did you stop competing as an amateur?

Murphy: I think I mentioned before that my mother died when I was 16. That was after the Olympics. Then I didn't go to New York City and practice or train as much. My sister was on the team too. We continued for a while and were asked to go to Florida. We were in Florida at the time my mother died, so we weren't home. But then the interest kind of fell off. I had other things to do. Of course, I started college in 1928 and we didn't have a swimming pool at the college. Before that, I was asked by the Olympic Committee if I would be interested in serving as assistant manager.

I entered college that fall at New Rochelle College. When I came back from Amsterdam I noticed a few friends there besides my aunt and my brother. My father had died. So I was on a swimming trip in Florida when my mother died and at the Olympic Games in Amsterdam when my father died. So I didn't do much swimming after that.

Then I signed up for the summer to go to a camp. Camp Fort Ticonderoga, in New York. I met my husband there. He had been a lifeguard with Gertrude Ederle. Gertrude told him about me and that I was going to that same camp. You see, there was a girls' camp and a boys' camp under the same owner. So that's where I met my husband and we were married in 1932.

Hodak: Let's talk now about the trip to Amsterdam in 1928 and your responsibilities as assistant manager.

Murphy: Well, we had to be sure that they all had the correct meals and that they signed up for their turn to practice with the coach. Bob Kiphuth. I would take down different times that they did at practice and make out the schedule. As I mentioned before, only two at a time could swim in place in the pool on board the ship. And then in Amsterdam the SS *Roosevelt* was docked in the canal, so we had to schedule a launch that went back and forth regularly every day. Of course, we couldn't take everyone at once anyway.

After we arrived there, the coaches and managers all took a tour around to find a pool because the stadium pool wasn't quite ready or completed. So after spending a whole week in just a small canvas pool and just swimming in place, we really needed to get a pool for practice.

Hodak: And the Dutch Olympic officials weren't too helpful?

Murphy: They suggested different places and showed us around, but we didn't like the idea of swimming in the canal. That was one of their suggestions. But the canal was so dirty we couldn't think of going into it. (laughter) So we did get a 25-yard pool in Haarlem for practice.

Hodak: Fortunately the trip to Paris had been planned in advance so that the swimmers were able to get some practice time in the pool in Paris.

Murphy: Yes, once in Paris they were able to practice in the Les Terelles pool used in the 1924 Olympics.

Hodak: And were there any other responsibilities you had as assistant manager?

Murphy: Well, I was to check on the gals to see if they were alright and to be there when they were practicing and training, because I had been a swimmer and I knew what to expect.

Hodak: Were there any swimmers in particular that you helped on board the ship or once you landed in Amsterdam? Did you provide any type of coaching or helpful tips?

Murphy: I used to help some of them or make suggestions about their strokes. Bob Kiphuth had been the Yale coach and he had coached men, but he was very good.

Hodak: What were the chaperones, Alice Lord Landon and Ada Taylor Sackett, responsible for?

Murphy: They would check on the girls. Alice Lord Landon was on the 1920 team as a diver. She married Dick Landon, a high jumper in the 1920 Games. Alice was from the New York Women's Swimming Association. She knew all the girls. And we knew a few of those women who made the team because of prior competitions—they'd had the national championships in Florida.

Hodak: What about the actual swimming competition in Amsterdam? Were there any particular swimmers or events that you found surprising?

Murphy: Not really . . . well, Albina Osipowich was a surprise because she hadn't qualified that well. But it was a good Olympics. The girls all behaved well. Quite a few times it was not easy getting them on the launch and going to the pool. That took time. We had to arrange for that. But we enjoyed it and hoped we helped.

Hodak: What do you remember of Martha Norelius?

Murphy: Martha Norelius was a very good competitor. She worked out very well. Her father was a coach and she got started with him. She was from Sweden and moved to New York to join the team. She was

a great swimmer to have on the Women's Swimming Association team. We always did well in national competition.

Hodak: I noticed that one year later, in 1929, Martha Norelius lost her amateur status because she happened to be in a swimming pool at the same time an exhibition was being conducted with professionals. Does that bring back any thoughts to you?

Murphy: Yes, that brings to mind that at any swimming meet in which they were going to have a professional diver or divers, they always made the announcement: "This is the end of the amateur program of swimming competition. And now we will have the professional divers." It was usually diving. And the amateurs couldn't be in the pool. We could stay around and watch but that was the end of our program. They always made that announcement. But Martha wasn't a pro . . . she was just in the pool at the wrong time.

Hodak: A pretty stringent application of the amateur rule. Another swimmer that comes to mind is Eleanor Holm. Nineteen twenty-eight was, I think, her first competition in the Olympics. What do you recall of Eleanor Holm? She was also a New Yorker.

Murphy: Yes, she belonged to our club too. She was quite young, but early in her competition you knew she was going to be an excellent competitor. She had the will and she swam beautifully, especially in the backstroke—although she did all the other strokes too. Following the 1932 Olympics, she met Art Jarrett, a singer and orchestra leader, and they were married. They lived out in Hollywood. She had no problem making the 1936 team. She came from California to try out and had no trouble at all. She should have been on the team but she didn't obey the rules and they put her off the team—which was too bad.

Hodak: You mentioned the 1936 team. You were an official at the 1936 Olympic tryouts?

Murphy: Yes, at the tryouts. My husband was an official too. And Alice Lord Landon was an official. Alice Lord Landon and I warned Eleanor Holm that she had to obey the rules and do what she was told. But living in Hollywood and the nightlife . . . I guess that's what happened.

Hodak: Getting back to the 1928 Olympics, in the official report put out by the American Olympic Committee, each assistant manager provided a report. In your report you suggest that perhaps the regimen or the routine could be eased up a bit on the women swimmers. What was your thinking there? Obviously you were speaking from the standpoint of an athlete.

Murphy: Well, I was thinking that they could visit interesting places or go on tours, which we did in 1924. I don't know, there just didn't seem to be that many places that we did go to. We did go to Paris and swim, but they really didn't want anyone to go too far away before the competition. That was the whole thing.

Hodak: Did you find that living on board the ship presented problems for the athletes, other than the scheduling of practice?

Murphy: The only thing was that you just couldn't go out to a store or anything like that. And you were in the same surroundings as you were crossing the ocean. Of course, with the launch, you had to be sure to be at the dock at the right time to take the launch back to the ship. Another interesting thing was that General MacArthur was on the ship in 1928 and he was president of the American Olympic Committee at that point. He had his own motorboat and they'd lower that so he could go ashore anytime he wanted to. He didn't have to wait for the launch to bring him in.

Hodak: How much contact did General MacArthur have with the athletes?

Murphy: He would get together with them, especially the men, and watch the workouts. Of course, the track stars had one deck that they



used—the top deck, the largest deck. And then the whole ship was just like a floating gymnasium with all the equipment around for divers and boxers and wrestlers. Even the jumpers had equipment out, like mattresses used to soften the jump.

Hodak: Are there any general comparisons you would make between the 1924 Games and the 1928 Games?

Murphy: I think we did better at the 1924 Games, overall, than in the 1928 Games. I think, as far as that goes, several of the girls who were on both teams said that Paris was more interesting. There were places you could go and see and not have to take a launch to get on land. I can always remember the Paris pool, Les Terelles. It was an excellent pool and everyone enjoyed competing in that. Of course, the Amsterdam pool was good too. But girls who were on both teams and had been in competition in both pools preferred the Les Terelles pool in Paris.

Hodak: I'd like to have you talk a bit about your days in college in New York. You began college in the fall of 1928. Was there any support of women's athletics or women's swimming through the college at that time?

Murphy: First of all, they didn't have a swimming pool. I became interested in basketball—it was girls' basketball; not boys' rules. We had side-center and three zones, and if you were in the center zone you couldn't go around to any other. They had just two girls in the side-center area and two forwards down at one end and two forwards at the other end.

Hodak: So you were not expected to run the entire court?

Murphy: It was very different than the way it is today. I played center. We had another gal who started college and she was taller than I was, so she was made center and I was made side-center. But those were the rules then. Of course, watching the men or the boys of

that day play, we couldn't understand it. They were all running after the ball at once, and here we had to stay in our assigned position.

I also took exercise class three times a week at the college. They had competition in that and I won it and received an award. Then, I also played tennis in college and did alright in that competition. They had the same thing between the classes. I just really swam in the pool at home or at the YWCA. I didn't compete then. But I went to swimming meets quite often and was an official at the swimming meets. Then I got married in 1932.

Hodak: Did your husband have much of a background in sports?

Murphy: Yes, he played football and basketball in college. He took courses in law and all kinds of educational courses. When we were in Long Island he was a principal and he also helped coach football. Then he became superintendent of schools in his hometown of Torrington, Connecticut. That's when I started teaching swimming at the YMCA.

Hodak: This would have been in the 1940s, This is when you resumed teaching swimming?

Murphy: Yes, I started teaching and coaching. Our two daughters swam, too. I taught swimming to Joan Rosazza and coached her. We had a Y swimming team that was the best team in Connecticut. We really weren't that good nationally, except for Joan Rosazza. She was outstanding. In fact, she won a scholarship to Purdue because of her swimming. And she swam and competed in swimming meets for Purdue. She made the Olympic team in 1956 and won a silver medal. Our younger daughter tried out in 1960 and just missed making the team. At that time Carin Cone was a backstroke champion. Then Lynn Burke, whom she competed against quite often, came out to California for coaching. I forgot which team she was with out here. But we knew her quite well.

Before that, when we still lived in Long Island, Eleanor Holm was going to be in the Aquacade so she asked me to try out. I went in to New York City and Billy Rose looked us all over—we were all lined up in bathing suits—and picked each one out that he wanted. I made that, but then I decided that it really wasn't for me because we had two young children. I thought I couldn't be going there and working out and practicing, so I didn't take him up on the offer.

Hodak: How many children did you have?

Murphy: We had four children—two boys and two girls. Now we have five grandsons and five granddaughters.

Hodak: And your two sons, were they involved in sports?

Murphy: The older boy played football at Dartmouth and our youngest swam for Lehigh for a while. That's what they enjoyed. Our older daughter went to New Rochelle College but she didn't do anything athletically. They didn't have a competitive team or anything, she just swam. But our younger daughter was quite competitive. She first started at the University of Houston and then transferred to Michigan. She swam for them and swam nationally too. She just missed making the Olympic team in 1960. Her coach, Buck Dawson, later became head of the International Swimming Hall of Fame in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. We went down there when Eleanor Holm was inducted into the Hall of Fame. By the way, it's interesting to note that Esther Williams would have made the 1940 Olympic team, but because of the impending war and the situation, they didn't have Olympic Games in 1940.

And speaking of the war, I gave all my trophies to the war effort. They needed some particular metal and so I gave my trophies, all except one. It doesn't look like anything now, it's so old and beat up. But I thought I could do something for the war effort and that's what I did.

Hodak: You've talked about your children's involvement in athletics, I'm curious as to what careers they took up.

Murphy: Our older daughter is a teacher and our younger daughter is a teacher. They both teach in Palos Verdes. The younger one didn't teach regularly when her children were younger. She is now teaching kindergarten in the same school as her sister, who teaches first grade. It's unusual to have relatives in the same school teaching. And they get along fine and really enjoy it.

Our older son graduated from Dartmouth and was in the Marine Corps. He came out and then he was in the Peace Corps. After that, he went to law school and became an attorney. Our younger son also took up law. They are both attorneys. Both of their wives had taught school and our younger daughter's husband is a teacher. Our older daughter's husband was also a teacher, but he went into law and is a judge in Long Beach. So we are all connected with teaching and the legal profession.

Hodak: Certainly your children give you much to be proud of. Something else to be proud of, I noticed you were inducted into the Yonkers Hall of Fame.

Murphy: Yes, in Yonkers, New York. It was quite an honor. I was the first woman to be inducted. Vincent Richard, a tennis player from years ago, was inducted too. And Joe Lapchick, the basketball player, was also inducted. That was quite a time. I enjoyed that.

Hodak: Now, you moved to the West Coast and have lived here for some time. Beyond your teaching swimming, what other things have you developed an interest in?

Murphy: Well, it's connected with the water. I assist in water exercises for the handicapped twice a week. That is under Saddleback College, but they come here for it. The head instructor is from Saddleback College. That is very interesting. I also help in the regular water

exercise for Saddleback College on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Then I take an exercise class three days a week. I have a woman instructor from Saddleback College. You have to sign up for it. On Tuesdays and Thursdays I have a young man whose class is really aerobic. We keep going for forty minutes. We have mats we put on the floor and we do all sorts of different exercises.

Besides that, I belong to a group called the Aquadettes. We put on a show every August. It starts on Thursday night and finishes Sunday night. We have bleachers put up at the main pool and we're always sold out. We donate the money to different groups. Besides that, it costs money to put it on. We have hats and a different colored suit for each number. The suits are dressed up with sequins and we put on, they say, one of the best shows here. This year it starts August 27, Thursday night. They tell us it's quite a good show and people look forward to it. In fact, we just started selling tickets yesterday. We each take turns out there selling tickets. We have booths out in front of the pool entrance.

Hodak: For concluding thoughts, I'd like to have you talk a bit about things you observe in current Olympics and how they differ from the time in which you competed.

Murphy: One thing that is very different: I don't think the different athletes get to know other athletes. Like the track and field athletes don't know any of the swimmers that well, because they go over on separate planes for one thing. I thought that was the best part—meeting all these different people, not only swimmers but people from different sports.

And in thinking about the different sports, there's so much professionalism. It was so different in our day. No one was thinking of being a professional until they were ready to quit their sport. Now, some that were considered professional have come back running in amateur races. There also seems to be a lot of politics in this.

Hodak: Any other general remarks or observations you have about different circumstances under which athletes compete today? Anything else strike you as being vastly different than in your day?

Murphy: I think I mentioned before that, especially in swimming, they really train much more than we did. The women setting up exercises and lifting weights and everything; we never thought of doing that.

Hodak: You can see that in virtually every sport. I assume the coaching is presumably better today, do you think?

Murphy: I think the coaching is very good. I think they meet with their coaches every day—which we never had the chance to do. They keep training and swimming every day. As I said, it was so different with us when we were competing.

Hodak: Do you think the rewards are the same for an athlete today as they were in your day? Do you think athletes derive the same satisfactions as you did, or other athletes of your time?

Murphy: I suppose they do, but I don't think the athletes in the 1920s had as much to gain from being a champion or an outstanding athlete as they do today. Today they have endorsements, and even positions.

Hodak: Is there anything else that you want to say in summary?

Murphy: Well, I was glad that I was on the team and traveled to all those different countries. It was wonderful. I am still competitive, I guess.

Hodak: I appreciate your cooperation with the project and thank you for allowing me to come down and interview you. The Amateur Athletic Foundation also appreciates your cooperation. Thank you, Mrs. Murphy.

Murphy: Well, you're welcome.