

SIMONE SCHALLER KIRIN  
1932 & 1936 OLYMPIC GAMES  
TRACK & FIELD



AN OLYMPIAN'S ORAL HISTORY  
INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

AN OLYMPIAN'S ORAL HISTORY  
METHODOLOGY

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

Family History

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

Education

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

Sport-Specific Biographical Data

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

General Biographical Data

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

General Observations

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

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

SIMONE SCHALLER KIRIN

1932 OLYMPIC GAMES - LOS ANGELES  
80-METER HURDLES

1936 OLYMPIC GAMES - BERLIN  
80-METER HURDLES

INTERVIEWED:

August, 1988  
Arcadia, California  
by George A. Hodak

SIMONE SCHALLER KIRIN

Interviewer: George A. Hodak

Hodak Today, I'm in Arcadia, California, visiting with Simone Schaller Kirin. Mrs. Kirin competed in the 1932 and 1936 Olympics in the hurdling competition. First off, Mrs. Kirin, would you tell me where and when you were born and a bit about your family background?

Kirin: I was born in Manchester, Connecticut, clear across the country, on August 22, 1912. My father was from Switzerland and my mother was from Italy. They met here in this country, in Connecticut.

Hodak How long did you live in Connecticut?

Kirin: We left Connecticut when I was about seven. My father had asthma very bad and we had to move to California.

Hodak Do you have brothers and sisters?

Kirin: I had a brother and a sister born back there and I had another sister born out here in California.

Hodak And what line of work was your father in?

Kirin: Well, when he was in Connecticut, he worked in a silk factory and when he came out here he had to be outdoors so he went into ranching. He managed a large orange grove in Monrovia. We had a five-acre orange grove and so we were kind of raised on that. I went to school there and graduated from Monrovia High School.

Hodak At what point did you take up an interest in athletics?

Kirin: I was always very athletic and when I went to high school, I went out for everything. And I excelled in almost everything there. I did everything but play tennis really in high school—volleyball, basketball, baseball.

Hodak: There were organized leagues for all these sports?

Kirin: Oh no, not in those days. It was just interscholastic or intramural, whatever. We weren't allowed to compete against other schools or anything like they can now.

Hodak: Had you tried to compete in any kind of organized league outside of high school? Would that have been frowned on?

Kirin: Yes. I couldn't at that time. I did that after I graduated from school. I was working in an office and we formed a night league, playing basketball and softball, and went on from there.

Hodak: Were any of your brothers or sisters interested in athletics?

Kirin: My youngest sister was athletic but none of them cared that much. My younger sister now is a very good golfer. I never golfed but I play tennis now and enjoy that.

Hodak: So after you graduated from Monrovia High, you were working in an office. Then how do you eventually meet Aileen Allen?

Kirin: Well, I met Aileen Allen through the Pasadena Athletic Club. I contacted them to see if they had a track team and they didn't have one so Paul Bailleaux, who was athletic director there, called Mrs. Allen at Los Angeles Athletic Club. She had formerly been at the Pasadena Athletic Club. So she had me come out and try out the following Sunday, which was Easter Sunday in 1932. And then I got with that club every Sunday at Paddock Field in Pasadena until the Olympic Trials. I was just lucky to make the team.

Hodak: How had you been introduced to the hurdles?

Kirin: I had done some of that in high school. And I just did it.

Hodak: Just a natural at it. So you had been competing, but not extensively up until this Easter. So Aileen Allen and her husband considered you a worthy member of the L.A. Athletic Club?

Kirin: I worked out with them until it was time to go to the trials in Evanston, Illinois, and then I just lucked out and made the team.

Hodak: What kind of coaching was there for you in those days?

Kirin: There wasn't any to speak of because Mr. Bailleaux was strictly a masseur and an athletic director. So the coaching I got was from Aileen Allen and her husband; and I would practice on my own.

Hodak: Did you have any idea of form or finesse?

Kirin: Not too much, there wasn't much time.

Hodak: Did you compete in any track events other than the 80-meter hurdles?

Kirin: No, that was it. I did some high jumping, but not competitively.

Hodak: So why don't you talk a bit of the Olympic tryouts? What's memorable about the tryouts, other than you making the team?

Kirin: It was very exciting for me because I'd never been to anything like this before and to me it just looked huge. There was an awful lot of people there and we had our heats and semifinals. I made everything and got up to the finals. I just did the best that I could and lucked out.

Hodak: How many other girls from the Southern California area went to the

tryouts from the L.A. Athletic Club?

Kirin: There was four of us. There was Anne Vrana O'Brien, Lillian Copeland and me. And Evelyn Furtsch had gone, but she met us there. Just the three of us went together on the train. Evelyn Furtsch drove out because she didn't like the train.

Hodak: Were you a bit surprised to make the team?

Kirin: Yes I was. I was just elated. I felt very, very fortunate.

Hodak: So you finished behind [Mildred] "Babe" Didriksen and Evelyne Hall.

Kirin: Babe had won, then Evelyne came in second, and Marjorie Clark from South Africa came in third. I was fourth.

Hodak: And how did Babe Didriksen strike you as a person?

Kirin: Well, I really didn't know Babe at the trials. I didn't really know her until after we got back to L.A. I had met her, but I didn't really get to know her. She was alright.

Hodak: Confident?

Kirin: Oh yes, very confident. She just knew she was going to win everything. (laughter)

Hodak: But she did quite a job at the tryouts in Chicago.

Kirin: Yes, she did. I believe she won everything she went out for.

Hodak: That's what's on the record. So in getting to Los Angeles, this must have been rather interesting. You stayed in the women's quarters?

Kirin: We stayed at the Chapman Park Hotel.



Hodak: What would you say about the time period before the Olympics began? What was that like? You were kind of busy preparing for your own event.

Kirin: We were taken out every morning for practice and we had the afternoons to ourselves. We could go downtown or do whatever we wanted. We went in little groups.

Hodak: What did the women tend to want to do on their own?

Kirin: We'd go shopping downtown. You know how women are. (laughter)

Hodak: Were there a lot of extracurricular sidelights set up by the Olympic Committee?

Kirin: Not really before, because everybody was training for something. But afterwards we did take some side trips. And we had a barbecue at the beach. Somebody donated a bus and took us down, the bunch of us, the track team. It was nice.

Hodak: Do you recall rather vividly the Opening Ceremonies? Is that something you'd like to talk about?

Kirin: That was fabulous. I think that was one of the highlights of the whole thing—seeing all the teams come in. Of course, we were one of the last ones in. Actually, most of teams were already in when we marched in. They go in alphabetically. That was really something to have all those teams there, all those countries.

Hodak: Did you visit or meet with many foreign athletes during the process of the Games?

Kirin: Yes, because we were all in the same quarters.

Hodak: Let's talk of your event. I noticed in the pictures that you had a bandaged knee. I guess you were raked over a hurdle.

Kirin: Yes, I guess I did that in the preliminary heat. We had the heat, then the semifinals, then the finals. I finally wound up fourth.

Hodak: But in one of the first trial heats, it seems you finished rather close to Babe Didriksen.

Kirin: Yes, I supposedly finished second but in the picture it showed that it was a tie. But she's supposed to have won easily.

Hodak: You finished ahead of Marjorie Clark in the first heat and in the finals you finished fourth.

Kirin: In the finals I finished fourth; that race was very close too.

Hodak: When you say very close, was it close enough to warrant a photo finish, or a review, maybe?

Kirin: I think so. You see, I have never seen a replay of that, because they only showed the photo finish of the two winners, which were Babe and Evelyne Hall. But actually, Marjorie and I were even as third and fourth. We were even, and when you take two people, side-by-side in that position . . . I don't know how she could have beat me. My left foot was this way and her left foot was going backwards. I did have someone tell me later that they thought I had gotten third. They were supposed to have announced it the next day. I don't know, she said they announced it at the stadium, but I never heard it.

Hodak: It was an interesting race because the first place is a very disputed finish. What do you think when you look at the pictures of the two first place finishers—Evelyne and Babe?

Kirin: I would have said it was a tie.

Hodak: It's certainly a disputed finish. I wasn't aware that third place was as close.

Kirin: Well, like I say, we had about that far to go, and she and I, in this one picture, were identical. And I never noticed that until 1984 when we were, I believe, at the Los Angeles Library where they had an exhibition and a big reception. And I saw that one picture and I thought, "My gosh, how did she beat me when our legs were in that position?" It never occurred to me until 1984 and that was the first time it really caught my eye. I had never seen that picture before.

Hodak: Were you bothered at the time? Did you think the call was missed? Is it something you think of today?

Kirin: Well, how are you going to be bothered after 50 years? (laughter) But at the time I just thought I had finished fourth, that's what was judged. I wasn't too disappointed though. I was just glad to get in the finals. I was happy with fourth because I figured I was very lucky. That has never really bothered me. You see, I really hadn't prepared that long and I just really felt lucky to get into the Games. And then I just felt I was really lucky to place fourth.

Hodak: What did your family, friends and others think of your athletic competition? Was this something that was considered un-ladylike or was that really an issue?

Kirin: No, they were all happy that I was able to compete and that I did as well as I did.

Hodak: Any other things that stand out about the '32 Olympics, outside of the competition maybe?

Kirin: No, I just loved every bit of it. I don't think I was there for the closing event, because I went up to San Francisco; I think that was the day that they had the British Empire Games.

Hodak: Oh, you competed in the British Empire Games? How did that go for you?

Kirin: That went fine. I won my race and set a new record with the wind. Naturally, that didn't count. (laughter)

Hodak: Now this was at Kezar Stadium in San Francisco?

Kirin: Yes, it was very cold up there. I didn't know that it could get so cold up there. It was very drafty and windy. But that was quite an experience too. It was something different.

Hodak: Now, after the '32 Games concluded, were you thinking much of the '36 Games, continuing to run the hurdles?

Kirin: Well, I competed again in 1933 in the nationals.

Hodak: In Chicago?

Kirin: Yes, in Chicago. And I won that, and then I got into playing basketball and baseball. Then in 1936, I tried again.

Hodak: But you had that in mind from '32 on, that you would go back out there, keep in shape and stay amateur?

Kirin: Well, you had to keep in shape doing something, and to stay amateur.

Hodak: Let's talk first of your track competition between '32 and '36. You remained affiliated with the Los Angeles Athletic Club?

Kirin: Yes, then I was with them. I competed in 1933 under the Los Angeles Athletic Club and that was the last time I competed until 1936.

Hodak: Why, because the athletic club ceased to sponsor you?

Kirin: No, there weren't any meets out here and they weren't sponsoring us to go across the country. Then it started up again in '36.

Hodak: Had you continued to hurdle on your own?

Kirin: No, I just kept in shape playing basketball and baseball.

Hodak: Tell me about your basketball experience. Who were you playing for?

Kirin: Well, we played for the city of El Monte at that time. We played at the Ambassador Sportatorium in Los Angeles. We had a regular league there, they came from Long Beach and everywhere. That was quite a big league. We did real well there too, first or second. We were up at the top all the time.

Hodak: And you mentioned that this particular league was not sanctioned by the AAU?

Kirin: No, it sure wasn't. So I was taking a chance.

Hodak: You were taking a chance and you were eventually called in by the AAU representative?

Kirin: Yeah, I was eventually called in and at that time I had a sprained ankle. So when I went in I told them I had just put my name on the roster so I could get in free. And they kind of bought it. (laughter)

Hodak: And he had seen your name and picture?

Kirin: Yeah, he had seen my name on the roster. Of course, the only reason I wasn't playing was because I had a sprained ankle.

Hodak: What of the game itself in those days? How has basketball changed from the time you originally started playing?

Kirin: At that time, we were playing two-court. They had the court divided in half, and I was always a jumping center. I wasn't that

tall, but I always could jump. I didn't always get the ball but I could hustle. So then I was on the guard side, the jumping center played with the guard. I don't even remember how that went.

Hodak: You had to stay within that particular half? Was there an infraction if you went outside of the square or crossed the line?

Kirin: You had to go outside the square if the other team got the ball. Isn't that silly? It didn't seem silly then because we didn't know any better. Before that, when I was in high school, I played three-court. So it's changed a lot. Now they play regular regulation basketball—just one court, just like the men do.

Hodak: I guess this was how you kept in shape, playing basketball, and you also played softball.

Kirin: Yes, I kept in pretty good shape that way.

Hodak: Did you ever have any injuries from your track and field?

Kirin: Oh yeah, I bumped my knees several times on the hurdles. That can smart! But nothing serious; no bad injuries, though it was very painful at the time. I did that in Berlin too, hit a hurdle.

Hodak: So, leading up to the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, you mentioned that the L.A. Athletic Club didn't continue to sponsor or at least wouldn't provide the travel expenses for the national meets.

Kirin: Well, they did in 1936.

Hodak: So did you go to a national meet in '36?

Kirin: Yes, we went to Providence, Rhode Island. I had started training a lot sooner—the first of the year. I was in pretty good shape then, a lot better shape than I was in '32. I knew a little more about it and I had a little more experience. In 1932 I didn't have the

experience that I had since then. Then I got third there and there was a controversy about the lack of money in sending athletes over. They just let us know there was a shortage of money and maybe they would just take the first two. So the city of Monrovia took up a collection and they sent donations in. And George Vreeland, from Florida, had taken a collection there and they sent enough to put me over.

Hodak: So for a time there you weren't sure if you were even going on the ship?

Kirin: That's right. In fact, there were a lot of us that didn't know. I don't know if they left anybody off. But it wasn't just me; there were quite a few in that same category in different sports.

Hodak: What would you say about the trip over?

Kirin: Well, the trip over was fantastic. I'd never been on a ship before. It was fabulous.

Hodak: What kind of training were you doing on the ship?

Kirin: Well, we more or less just stretched. There really wasn't too much we could do aboard ship. We did a lot of stretching and walking around the deck and stuff like that.

Hodak: A lot of the men have talked of gaining a bit of weight on the ship.

Kirin: I didn't gain any weight. In fact, from the time I left until I started competing, I lost four pounds.

Hodak: What else would you say of the travel? Was it interesting to meet other athletes?

Kirin: Yes, we were all together. It was fun. It was a lot of fun to visit all the others and talk. They had a lot of entertainment like they

would on any cruise ship, I guess. And they had dances in the evening. The food was great; it usually is on a ship.

Hodak: Were you much aware of the political dimension? Do you remember hearing much about that?

Kirin: There was controversy in 1936 as to whether they would even send a team over because there was so much talk of war in Germany and overseas. We really didn't know for a long time if they were going to send a team over. Because you never know. And it was quite controversial at the time, but they did decide to send us over. After we got over there, we could see that a lot of the churches had been closed. They had one Catholic church there that we did attend and the *Gestapo* were in the background. They couldn't preach anything that they didn't want you to hear. But it didn't bother us. I don't think it bothered anybody really because we just figured that's the way they were.

Hodak: And what did you think of Germany in general? It must have been a bit different for you?

Kirin: I thought it was beautiful and they just kept it so clean. Nobody dropped a piece of paper without picking it up. Everyone looked out for everybody else to keep their city clean. I thought that was very interesting too.

Hodak: Did you have much time before the Olympics began while you were in Berlin?

Kirin: No, we didn't have too much time to see Berlin before, but afterwards we did. We competed the first week. Track and field, I believe, was the first week. Then we had the second week to go around. Three girls and I took a trip to Switzerland to visit my grandfather, who at that time was over 80 . . . I forget how old he was. Anyway, I'd never seen him before. So we went to Bern and visited and we stayed two nights. We did all that on our own.



That was kind of funny too. We didn't get the proper visas to go, so when we got to Zurich they took us off the train and held us up. They had to call and get special permission from the Olympic Committee and all that stuff. They finally let us through and gave us two days before we had to check back. It was kind of hairy for awhile. Then we went back and from there the team flew to Wuppertal, Germany, and from there we took a bus to LeHavre and sailed home.

Hodak: Were there any post-Olympic exhibitions?

Kirin: Not for the women. The men had some but the women didn't. We just came on home.

Hodak: What about your accommodations? I know the men were in a rather elaborately laid out Olympic Village outside of Berlin, whereas the women were in the center of the city?

Kirin: We were right next to the stadium in a new, very new complex that was going to be used for German offices. And it was excellent. It was just like a new hotel. Everything was real nice; two beds to a room, and they had a dining room and everything. It was very nice and it was within walking distance to the stadium. We had an underground passage to the stadium, which was right nearby.

Hodak: Each athlete or each room was assigned a type of escort?

Kirin: Yes, we had a young girl that was an escort. She was about 16. And they were dressed in white, all dressed alike so you couldn't miss them—immaculately dressed. Everyplace we went, they took us. If you wanted to go to downtown Berlin shopping or any place, they went with us. And we treated them to lunch or whatever. That was nice too. They were very accommodating. My escort and her family had been in the United States for a number of years and had gone back to Berlin for some reason. I don't know why, for a visit, I think. Then the Germans would not let them back, so she

was rather unhappy about that. She was very interesting. I enjoyed her.

Hodak What about the food and dining?

Kirin: (Laughter) Well, the dining was kind of funny. We had this long table for the track athletes. They'd pass the food down on big platters or bowls and the first ones helped themselves to whatever they'd want, and those at the end of the line wouldn't get too much. And they wouldn't bring back seconds. If you didn't get enough, that was it. I think that's where I lost all my weight. I didn't lose it on the ship; on the ship we had very good food.

Hodak And they would prepare a special meal the night before your competition?

Kirin: If you were competing the following day, then you got a steak; a special dinner that was served to you on a platter and given to you personally. That wasn't passed around. (laughter) But that really wasn't adequate because you had to keep up your strength. I mean, you can't just lose all your strength and then eat one big meal the day before the competition. You know, that wasn't very good.

Hodak So what were your thoughts about competing in the 80-meter hurdles again? Did you have any ideas of medaling?

Kirin: I had hopes. I thought I would because I had done well in the preliminary heat, and in the semifinals I was given third, which would have put me in the finals. That was at about three o'clock in the afternoon and about six or seven that night, I was notified that the Italians had put up a fuss and decided that their girl should have gotten third place. And I don't know where our manager was. He wasn't around, so they went ahead and changed it and notified me that I had been given fourth.

Hodak: So the Italians had questioned your place. It was a very close race?

Kirin: I had no idea. I never saw the pictures and didn't know anything about it. I didn't even know they were questioning it.

Hodak: You didn't have any idea after finishing that there was a dispute? Have you seen pictures since?

Kirin: I never saw a picture of it.

Hodak: And this was a semifinal race. Had you finished third you would have advanced to the finals. And it's interesting in the first trial heat, in the Olympic report, you're listed as finishing ahead of another Italian hurdler, Trebisonda Valla, who eventually won the 80-meter hurdles. And if you look at your times, they're pretty close. It would seem you were definitely in a good position for a medal.

Kirin: I don't even know which Italian girl it was. They didn't tell me a thing. They just said the Italian questioned it; you're out and she's in.

Hodak: That must have been a bit of disappointment.

Kirin: Boy, you have no idea what a disappointment that was.

Hodak: So who notified you that this had gone on?

Kirin: Our coach. Dee Boeckman. She was the one who notified me that I had been taken from third to fourth. I was really disappointed. Had I placed fourth, that's one thing, but when you get it and then have it taken away from you, it just isn't that easy. I was sure I was going to go into the finals. I thought, "Good, I've got another chance." I was the only one left that was going to go into the finals from the team. And to have that bomb dropped on me, that was painful.

Hodak: Did you watch the finals? Do you remember the finish? The records show that there were four finishes at 11.7.

Kirin: We got to watch the finals, but I didn't know of them personally. And I don't even know if that Italian girl that took my place got in or not, because I didn't even know who it was. Nobody told me which girl it was.

Hodak: Who were some of your closer friends on the team?

Kirin: Annette Rogers and I were very close. She was in the 100-meters and the relay. It seems to me that she did the high jump too. But they won the relay in 1932, and they won it again in 1936.

Hodak: Do you remember any other events in the women's track and field that were really impressive?

Kirin: Actually, the track was really most impressive to me because that was closer to my heart. I enjoyed every bit of it, but as far as . . . I don't think the women won anything else in the field events, did we?

Hodak: I think the European women did better in that particular Olympics.

Kirin: And of course, Stella Walsh won all the races. She was so fast.

Hodak: What about the men's track and field? Did you take any interest in watching much of that?

Kirin: Oh yes, we enjoyed that. And Jesse Owens was fantastic. We watched Hitler and his reaction; he didn't like that very much. He didn't like Jesse at all because he felt that their race, the Germans, were going to be superior in everything and he was disappointed because they didn't win as much as he thought.

Hodak: What else would you say about Berlin itself? It was particularly

clean, as everyone has mentioned, and orderly.

Kirin: It was a beautiful city. I thought it was beautiful. The grounds and everything was green. It was really gorgeous. And we went shopping downtown in the big department stores.

Hodak: What about the facilities in Berlin?

Kirin: Oh, it was beautiful. Everything was first class. They really had everything.

Hodak: Any of the men athletes that left a big impression on you, other than Jesse Owens?

Kirin: There were quite a few. But you know, I really didn't know any of them personally so it was kind of . . . they were our team. You know how that is, you're just rooting for your team. I thought we did very well. I don't know, I was kind of interested in the pole vault and I still don't know how they do that. I was watching pole vault the other day and I don't know how they come down without landing on those poles. That's really fantastic.

It's just like everything else. Everything is going faster now. They have different kinds of tracks; we had cinder tracks or dirt tracks. And nowadays, it's just like running on carpets, rubber mats or whatever. There's no comparison. You can't really compare what they have nowadays with what we had in our day—in'32 and '36. In fact, I don't think you can hardly compare '84 or '88 with '64 even. You know, there have been such changes all the way around.

Hodak: What about when you see athletes today that receive a little bit more support?

Kirin: That's right. We didn't have any support in our day. We had to work and then practice afterwards, on weekends and different

things. And they have good programs, which I think is great, because they sure need it.

Hodak: And did you have any sort of reception in New York upon your return from the 1936 Games?

Kirin: When we returned to New York, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia had a reception for us. That was exciting too. We received a key to the city and all that sort of stuff. And then we came on home. Everybody went their own way from there.

Hodak: And there was no organized sort of return for you in Monrovia?

Kirin: Yes, I had a reception when I got home, several receptions in fact. That was always exciting.

Hodak: What sort of direction did you take after the Olympics? Were you still competing?

Kirin: I was married in 1937, and working. I didn't compete anymore. I played baseball. I continued playing softball, but I didn't compete in track anymore after that.

Hodak: And you had no thoughts of the 1940 Olympics, had they been held?

Kirin: No, no, not after I got married.

Hodak: And you were married in 1937? Tell me a bit about your family, your husband.

Kirin: Well, my husband, at one time, had been a semi-pro baseball player. He played in the Three-Eye League [Illinois-Indiana-Iowa League].

Hodak: Oh, I see, Illinois, Indiana and Iowa.

Kirin: Yes, they called it the Three-Eye League. He played there for a

long time. And he was an auto mechanic. I have three children; two boys and a girl. They are all doing very well and all have their own businesses—well, the two boys do. My daughter lives in Arizona. She's married and has three children.

Hodak: How many grandchildren do you have?

Kirin: I have seven grandchildren. I have two aged five and seven, almost eight, and then the rest are all out of college. No, I take that back. One is working for her master's degree, another is a sophomore, and one's a senior. The other's out of college. So there's kind of a little distance there. I spend a lot of time with the two little ones, with their soccer and little league. One's going to go into regular little league next year; he'll be old enough. The little one is just starting soccer and the other one is starting his second year of soccer. Soccer is a great game, I like that.

Hodak: It's becoming more and more popular in this country.

Kirin: Yes, it's getting quite popular. Some of the kids play quite well. They have some real good games.

Hodak: I've noticed that soccer is rather popular in Southern California.

Kirin: It is quite popular out here. Sort of a fascinating game to me because I never played it and never knew too much about it. But the more I get into it, the more I like it.

Hodak: What things do you do on your own as far as athletics today?

Kirin: I play tennis. I play a lot of tennis, and I still work. I'm a manager of food service at Temple City High School. I'm starting my 25th year there.

Hodak: What are your thoughts on the more recent Olympics? When you watch athletes perform today, you certainly must marvel at some of

the accomplishments.

Kirin: Oh, definitely. They're really so much better, so outstanding. And their training is so different. They have marvelous training nowadays, compared to what we had. And I think that's great, because it's about time.

Hodak: What about the '84 Olympics in Los Angeles? Were you involved in the Spirit Team?

Kirin: No, I wasn't on the Spirit Team, but I did go to a lot of the events that they had. In fact, I didn't know about the Spirit Team. Of course, I didn't have too much time for that anyhow. I was busy working. You can't work all day and do a lot of this other stuff.

Hodak: Are the Olympics something that you have followed pretty closely over the years?

Kirin: Yes, I have. I'm really quite interested in what's happening this year. The competition is terrific. I've been watching the gymnasts too and some of these kids that they thought were really outstanding a year ago, are now not quite as good. The competition is just so terrific. So I think it's going to be very interesting.

Hodak: What are your thoughts on the emergence of a different attitude toward amateurism and more acceptance of the professional athletes?

Kirin: Well, I think that by getting too many professionals, it eliminates the chances of younger high school and college athletes that really have great potential. I think that's too bad. I think there's an awful lot of college athletes who are really good, and they don't have to go into professional basketball, tennis and all that. I don't think they should take the professionals in the Olympics—people that earn a living from their sport.

Hodak: What about other facets of the Olympics today? Anything else strike



you as a sharp contrast to when you competed?

Kirin: Oh yes, you can't compare it at all. It's so different. And where we had to take a ship and take a week to get over there, now they can go in a few hours by plane. Also, nowadays they have all these preliminary meets before the Olympics just to build them all up. Like in Europe they just had the World Games. We didn't have anything like that. They have great advantage today and it's good. It really gets the best out of everybody and it gives them a better chance, I think, because it keeps their interest up. Just practicing and working out and everything can be very boring if you don't have those preliminary meets to work up to it.

Hodak: They're also a good way to measure your progress and development.

Kirin: Yes, that's right.

Hodak: Do many of your friends or acquaintances know you as an Olympian?

Kirin: No, not really. Most of my friends are a lot younger than I am and so we just don't talk about that.

Hodak: Did your children take up athletics in any kind of serious way?

Kirin: No, not seriously. They played baseball and my daughter took ballet. And she does a lot of horseback riding with my granddaughter. They do work out at the gym and stuff like that. But as far as other athletics . . . my one granddaughter started out with gymnastics, but she grew so tall that she was too tall for gymnastics. She's five-foot-nine and got her height very young, so that kind of spoiled it for her. In gymnastics, you usually can do better if you're shorter.

Hodak: Well, I certainly appreciate your time today. And I haven't had a chance to say happy birthday to you yet, so we'll get that on tape.

Kirin: I appreciate it. It was a real pleasure for me. It was really a rather easy interview. (laughter)

Hodak: Well, we were not going to put you through the mill. The Amateur Athletic Foundation is also appreciative. We thank you for your time today.