

WALKER SMITH
1920 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.

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AN OLYMPIAN'S ORAL HISTORY
METHODOLOGY

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

Family History

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

Education

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

Sport-Specific Biographical Data

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

General Biographical Data

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

General Observations

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

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

WALKER SMITH

1920 OLYMPIC GAMES - ANTWERP
110-METER HURDLES

INTERVIEWED:

April, 1987
Rancho Mirage, California
Newport Beach, California
by George A. Hodak

WALKER SMITH

Interviewer: George A. Hodak

Hodak: Today I'm in Rancho Mirage, California, visiting with Walker Smith. Mr. Smith competed in the 110-meter hurdles in the 1920 Olympic Games in Antwerp. Mr. Smith, before we talk of the Olympics, I'd like you to talk some of your family background.

Smith: I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, November 1, 1896. My mother's family came from Minneapolis. My grandfather, T.B. [Thomas Barlow] Walker, was in Minneapolis about the same time that Jim Hill, a railroader, was in St. Paul. I knew grandfather Walker pretty well. He came to Minneapolis and was first employed as a surveyor and ran some of the original section lines in northern Minnesota on the timber that was Indian country at that time. During the surveying he ran across some of the exceptionally good timber, which was then government land in Minnesota, and during the development of Minneapolis and Minnesota he went into the lumber and sawmill business. Of course, I had nothing to do with that. But when his company, the Red River Lumber Company, cut out in Minnesota he went to California and brought timber out here and ultimately established a large sawmill in Westwood, California.

During my early high school days I came out here to California and worked in the sawmill and out in the timber. My first trip to California was in 1915, at the time I was in high school.

Hodak: What can you tell me about your father's background?

Smith: My father came from Pekin, Illinois, and then moved to Minneapolis. My mother was the daughter of T.B. Walker, which is where I got my Walker name. I'm the eldest of the grandchildren of T.B.

Walker; he had six sons and two daughters, my mother being the next to oldest daughter. When the Red River Lumber Company came out to California and built their mill, which I ultimately worked in, several of my uncles came out here and settled in San Francisco and Piedmont, California, as well as the mill town of Westwood. Along around 1915 and 1916, which were the war years, there was a big demand for lumber, so Red River built a mill in the northern part of California, in Lassen County, and opened this tract of timber by running a Southern Pacific railroad in from near Reno up to the mill. It came through Susanville and up into the mountains there.

There's another interesting thing about the Minnesota Red River Timber Company. It turned out that a lot of the land T.B. Walker bought up in Minnesota sat over the Mesabi iron ore range. That land was sold to U.S. Steel.

Hodak And the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis . . . ?

Smith: Yes, that was established by T.B. Walker. He became an art collector. It is considered a very important part of Minneapolis.

Hodak It certainly is quite impressive, as is Minneapolis. Well, that's a rather interesting introduction. I'd like you to talk now about your early interests in sports. As a youngster growing up in Minneapolis, were you very athletically inclined?

Smith: Well, I took up skating and hockey, and I enjoyed running alone as well. I have memories of many evenings after dinner when I would go out for up to a mile run by myself, which is one reason I developed good strong legs.

Hodak Was your father an athlete?

Smith: No, he was not. My mother's brothers were athletes at the University of Minnesota, football players and so forth.

At a dinner in Minneapolis, the track coach of the University of Minnesota just happened to discuss with me why I got stomach cramps when I ran too soon after dinner. I kept in touch with him a little bit. And he told me something of a training schedule, which I added to what I had been carrying on by myself.

Hodak: So you in a sense had developed your own training schedule?

Smith: Yes, I ran at night after dinner. My brothers wouldn't run with me, so I just ran by myself. I had trouble as a boy with my sight. When I was about ten years old I had my right eye removed and, of course, had to wear an artificial eye, which at that time was glass. They would not allow me to play football or any sport because of the artificial eye, so I really was forced to run. However, I later did pretty well in hockey. I was captain of the Central High hockey team in 1914—that also helped me develop my leg strength.

Hodak: Who initially promoted an interest in hurdling?

Smith: The Minnesota track coach suggested that I take up hurdling, and through him I got in touch with the track coach at Central High in Minneapolis.

Hodak: At what point during your high school career did you sense that you had a promise as a hurdler?

Smith: Well, I was about the only one that was trying the hurdles for the Central High team. And I was one of the best around. (laughter) But there was a hurdler who came up to the Minnesota interscholastic meet in 1916, [Harry] Goelitz was his name. Well, he ran a few hurdles faster than I did. I was very much interested in the way Goelitz ran those hurdles. He was one of the first to start in on the quick recovery, to drop the leading leg down as quickly as you could. I had a little Englishman as coach at Phillips Exeter and he had the same idea.

Hodak: What influenced your decision to enroll at Phillips Exeter Academy?

Smith: Well, I had an uncle who went to Harvard, Arthur Smith, and one of his friends was a man named [William J.] Bingham. He was a track athlete at Harvard, I think he was a half-miler. Well, he came out to Minneapolis. And at that time I had taken a regular academic high school course, which in Minneapolis did not include Latin. I told him I was interested in going to Harvard. When he found out that I had never had any Latin he said, "Well, why don't you go to Phillips Exeter," where he had been, "and see if after you go there they'll take you at Harvard?"

However, at that time Exeter was not much interested in one-year students. I had some difficulty in them taking me into the school; however, Bingham helped me get in there. When it came time to make an application for Harvard from Exeter, they said, "I'm sorry, we require four years of Latin." I said, "I can't get four and I didn't take any Latin this last term at Exeter." So they said, "Well, you'll have to find a different college." At that time one of my uncles had matriculated at Cornell, so that was my second choice. I had done pretty well as a hurdler at Exeter, and I didn't have any trouble in working with Jack Moakley and getting into Cornell.

Hodak: Were you aware at the time you enrolled at Cornell of its reputation as a track school?

Smith: I knew they had won the ICAAAA [Intercollegiate Association of Amateur Athletes of America] and Moakley was probably the best track coach in the country at that time, or at least had the reputation of being the best coach.

Hodak: And the Ivy League was perhaps the most competitive track conference in the United States at that time?

Smith: It was very competitive, though I don't think it was any better than Southern California here. But they had an indoor winter track and

a place to train, so it was about the best athletic track school.

Hodak: So you entered Cornell in 1916.

Smith: The fall of 1916, which was during the First World War. The American Field Service had a man named Gillespie who came to Cornell soliciting ambulance drivers to go to France and enlist in the French army. After some difficulty, I got my parents' consent. You had to pay your own way and so forth.

Hodak: They were apprehensive about you going to France?

Smith: My mother was very much against it. But, I was interested in doing something different and was too young to enlist in the American army at that time. In fact, there was a Cornell unit formed in the American Field Service which was known as Unit #19. So I went over to France as a driver. I spent the first two months in Paris waiting for our ambulance to be built, and then went down to Le Havre and drove the chassis up through the center of France to Paris. The French army then built the ambulance body on the Ford chassis. We went to the front in the middle of July.

I did some running there in France. I built a couple of very rough hurdles and tried to keep practicing. I was told that the French army was going to hold some track and field games and would have a hurdle race. But, in the summer of 1917 there were a couple of large French battles—the Battle of the Meuse and so forth. So they called the games off. I never did compete. That was about the time, the middle of 1917 actually, when the United States came into the war. The American Field Service, which was part of the French army, was disbanded and turned over to the American army. At that time I had been classified as 4-F because of my artificial eye. When they found out that I was 4-F, they wouldn't take me into the American ambulance service. So I came back to the United States in the summer of 1917.

Hodak: So did you immediately return to Cornell or did you go back to Minneapolis?

Smith: I went back to Minneapolis and then to Cornell in the fall of 1917. I was elected freshman track captain at Cornell. And I continued in track at Cornell. We ran in the 1918 ICAAAA, and Cornell retired the big cup by winning the third year in a row.

Hodak: You also participated on the medley relay team. I noticed you ran the first leg.

Smith: I was carried along as a hurdler to the Philadelphia games and had to be the fourth man on the relay team. I could just barely run the quarter-mile at a stagger. I can remember Jack Moakley saying to me afterwards, "Walker, you barely made that one." (laughter)

Hodak: So distances weren't your strength?

Smith: No, if I could go the 220 that was just about all I could do.

Hodak: What do you recall of your coach, John Moakley, who later was the principal coach of the 1920 U.S. Olympic track and field team. What sort of things did he help you with?

Smith: Well, his specialty was in cross-country. He had a man named John Paul Jones who set the record in the mile for universities. He was a good coach in the hurdles, he also was a fine coach in the pole vault. So he had no difficulty in getting track people to come to Cornell.

Hodak: Who were some of your teammates at Cornell in the hurdling events?

Smith: Well, they had a very good hurdler in 1916, a man named Gubb, and also a high hurdler named Jack Watt who came from Hawaii. He had hoped to be the hurdler for Cornell, until I showed up. (laughter)

Hodak: (Laughter) Yes, I noticed he was consistently finishing behind you in most meets. You also competed for the Chicago Athletic Association. How did you get lined up with the Chicago Athletic Association?

Smith: I had several fraternity brothers at Cornell from Chicago, and one of them was a football player and a member of the Cherry Circle Chicago Athletic Association. And through him they gave me a membership in Cherry Circle. There were a couple of other Chicago AAU athletes. The Loomis brothers were there at that time. Frank Foss was from Chicago, he was the pole vault champion. He set a new record there in 1917, I believe.

Hodak: In 1918 you won the junior AAU championship in the 120-yard hurdles while running for the Chicago Athletic Association.

Smith: That's right. In between terms I went through Chicago before going to Minneapolis, and stopped off and trained with the Cherry Circle. They sent me to these various track meets.

Hodak: So you had to remain a very disciplined athlete all through your college years.

Smith: Well, I kept in training. I ran until the middle of summer and then I went out on the timber cruising, which was interesting and kept me in fairly good shape hiking through the mountains. I went out to Westwood and worked in the timber out there. It was a company town, a dry town. If you wanted to drink you had to go all the way to Susanville. (laughter) My grandfather was a Methodist who didn't drink, swear or dance.

Hodak: And your studies in forestry at Cornell then followed pretty well?

Smith: That worked into the Walker family timber business.

Hodak: Let's talk more of your college track days. In 1919, you won the

ICAAAA championship in two events, the 120- and 220-yard hurdles.

Smith: That's right. But Earl Thomson matriculated at Dartmouth. He had to sit out for a year, of course, when he changed universities.

Hodak: Where did he begin his schooling?

Smith: At Southern California. He ran for USC and was a champion out here. He was a Canadian. How he got to Dartmouth, I don't know, but he sat out in 1919. In 1920 he was a little bit faster than I was. And while I did alright in the indoor hurdles . . . well, he set the new record in 1920 in the ICAAAA at Philadelphia, with a time of 14.4 [for 120 yards]. H.E. Barron was the best indoor hurdler up to the time I ran against him in New York in 1919.

Hodak: Tell me about starters and what problems they might cause.

Smith: Well, I remember Moakley telling me he was a little suspicious of this starter, [John J.] McHugh, I think it was. He said, "Watch and see if he gives you a quick start. He's liable to." So when we came to the high hurdles, I got a little bit worried about a quick start and jumped the gun. And this fellow came up to me and he said, "I could disqualify you." I said, "Wait, that's only the first start, I have one more coming." He said, "Get back there and measure up your yard penalty."

Hodak: So that was the penalty if you started too quickly? You had to move back a yard?

Smith: That's what he told me, to move back a yard. And then I had to reverse my feet.

Hodak: Then you had to dig a new hole to start from. You didn't have starting blocks—

Smith: That's why I was five yards behind Thomson when he set the

record. But I did beat Erdman, who was the Princeton hurdler. I'd run against him several times.

Hodak: What about hurdling technique? What sort of things were new at the time you were hurdling?

Smith: There was practically no hurdling technique in the teens and '20s, you just jumped over them. The coach who was in charge of the hurdlers at Central High had no idea. He just knew that you stuck your leading foot over and pulled the other one back.

Hodak: When a hurdler was described as a floater, what would that mean? He didn't touch the ground quick enough?

Smith: That's right, he took off and in effect broad jumped across the hurdles. He floated as he went over, figuring that he was going faster in the air than he was running on the track. Of course, that was demonstrably not as fast. Like my coach at Phillips Exeter, Moakley taught me to cut off with your leading leg just as fast as you could over the hurdle, and dig from there.

Hodak: And the hurdles were different?

Smith: They were a good deal heavier in construction. So if you hit it, you almost went down. They were solidly based on the track. They had a board running parallel with the track that kept them upright—which made them almost stuck in the ground. (laughter)

Hodak: And the track surfaces, how much did they vary from stadium to stadium?

Smith: Most of the tracks were in good shape. At that time, we ran the ICAAAA at either Harvard or Penn, and that was a good track. And we had a good track at Cornell, although they were not anything like the tracks they have today.

Hodak: Moving on to the Olympics now. Had you heard much of the Olympics while in school? Were you consciously aiming to compete in the Olympics?

Smith: No, not that I can recall. I just went to Cornell and was a competitive hurdler and went through the usual trials.

Hodak: I guess you had no idea until late 1919 that there would even be an Olympics in 1920.

Smith: The war was over and the Olympic Committee raised enough money to go to Antwerp.

Hodak: Where were the final trials held?

Smith: They were at Governors Island in New York City. We went down there from Cornell. I won the high hurdles in the trials and of course had to compete with the Middle West and the Far West hurdlers. Moakley had been appointed as head coach, and I trained under him and did pretty well.

Hodak: Can you talk a little bit about the trip on board the *Princess Matoika* to Antwerp in the summer of 1920?

Smith: We left from New York aboard the *Princess Matoika*, which was a troop transport with very sparse accommodations. The hold was in the troop bunks down below where the gas pipe frames were. The food was regular army vittles. I understood that the Olympic Committee had much better food than we did. (laughter) They were above in the cabins. Some of the New York Athletic Club athletes were very critical of the accommodations.

Hodak: Are you talking about people like Matt McGrath and Pat McDonald?

Smith: Yes. They were weightlifters and shot putters and so forth who had been assigned a little lower deck than track men, and they were

very much ticked off at the treatment that the athletes received. The *Matoika* was a very slow boat; I think it took us almost a week to get to Antwerp. By that time the New York cops had organized a strike for better food and accommodations. There was a formal protest lodged and a petition given to the committee.

But there was nothing the committee could do about improving the accommodations or food in the middle of the Atlantic. I can't remember that they divided up the food with the troops down below deck. (laughter) After we landed in Antwerp, our accommodations were again very sparse. The track team went to a schoolhouse where cots were set up in the school rooms. The actual Olympic track was under construction in Antwerp at the time we were training. The facilities in Antwerp for living were almost as bad as the *Matoika*, we were just on cots without mattresses.

Hodak: What sort of training arrangements were made on board the ship? Were you able to do much training?

Smith: Very little. There wasn't enough deck distance to do much training. You could do a few starts. The sprinters could work out a little bit. The trouble was that when we came to Antwerp the track wasn't completed and they wouldn't allow us on it. We had to train at a park out behind it, which was very rough. There, on that practice track, I pulled a muscle on a rough, uneven stretch of track. When your hamstring is contracted and you don't hit bottom, why, that's when you pull it. There was a little low place on the practice field that we were all running on. Two other runners were in the same shape.

Hodak: Hardly the best conditions by which to prepare for Olympic competition.

Smith: It was a big handicap. Of course, the athletes all complained to the Olympic Committee. Pat Ryan got his breakfast—all we got was one roll and a cup of coffee—and he bellowed all over the place. So the

Olympic Committee ordered a better breakfast. And when we came down for the second day for breakfast, well, the improvement was one little sardine on the plate, in addition to the rolls. (laughter) We had to go out and buy our own breakfast, which we didn't think was worthwhile. They made no allowance for money to buy our breakfast before the Games.

Hodak: And you were somewhat surprised at the school house accommodations?

Smith: Oh, yes. It was hard to sleep, you had nothing but a cot with a rope. We were all just in schoolrooms, several big rooms.

Hodak: So it was like one big dormitory?

Smith: There might have been 10 or 15 cots in each room. So if somebody wanted to snore, he did. That's all there was to it. (laughter)

Hodak: Once you pulled your hamstring, you must have felt

Smith: I was really dejected. I knew I'd have a harder time then. We had the Cornell trainer with us. And he had a big elastic bandage that I put on over it.

Hodak: You managed to win in one of the six preliminary heats. The following day the finals were held. But you were pretty handicapped by this injury. Was this a big disappointment?

Smith: Oh, yes. I was down, I remember that. It hurt when I went over the hurdles a little bit. I finished fifth in the final. Thomson won the race. He ran a fairly good race—he ran a beautiful race considering how lumpy the track was. We had a lot of rain that week and the track didn't drain well; we were almost running on mud.

Hodak: It must have been awfully hard to get a good start under those

kinds of conditions.

Smith: It was hard to get over the hurdles under those conditions alright.

Hodak: Do you recall the Opening Ceremonies?

Smith: No, I think Moakley kept us out of them. He didn't want us standing in the rain. I can't be sure of that, though.

Hodak: Were you able to see any other events during the Antwerp Games, anything else stand out?

Smith: Frankly, I don't remember many of the other competitions. I did watch the pole vault; that's where Frank Foss won. Foss had been the captain of the Cornell track team.

Hodak: How did you get invited to attend the meet that followed the Olympics? Do you recall how that was arranged?

Smith: Well, the whole American Olympic team was invited to this London meet. It was a week after the Olympic Games. They had all the jumps and runs and so forth with a dual meet between the English team and the American team.

I remember one night Jack Watt and I went out in London. We were invited because we had our tuxedos. Europe is so different, more formal, you know. We had a nice time that evening.

Hodak: You managed to win the hurdles in this meet.

Smith: I can't be sure. I won all the hurdle races in the Scandinavian countries. I don't know what happened to Thomson.

Hodak: Well, he was from Canada.

Smith: That's right. That's why he wasn't there; and that's why I won I

guess. (laughter)

Hodak: You referred to another post-Olympic trip through Scandinavia. How did you get involved with the Scandinavian trip?

Smith: The only man I did beat in the final was a man named Hultin from Sweden, and it just happened that his uncle was the Olympic representative from Sweden. He promoted this trip.

Hodak: So they encouraged you to come on this trip in London?

Smith: No, during the Olympic Games. So Hultin arranged with his uncle to finance the trip. I suppose the gate was enough for these various track meets so that they got their money back.

Hodak: Were these very competitive meets?

Smith: It was more of an exhibition because it was the local track clubs in these various cities that ran against the six of us. There was no way to keep a count as to who won or anything. It was just individual events. Hultin, who ran in the Olympics, was the best one and I beat him easily. I believe he ran in several of these meets. He was a floater. (laughter)

As a matter of fact, in these various towns or cities that we had a meet in, we'd have the meet in the afternoon and they would have a dinner in the evening for both teams. The local teams brought their wives and so forth, and it became a drinking match.

Hodak: Oh, a drinking match.

Smith: Yeah. (laughter) They were very seriously ahead of us in that. They loved to have schnapps to start with. Then they'd put us on a train to go to the next meet. We'd get up in the morning not feeling too well, so by the time we had four meets we were not in too good a shape. (laughter)

But they were very considerate of us. I guess they made enough money, so they got us first-class passage back from Liverpool on the *Berengeria*. It was first-class treatment.

Hodak: Much better accommodations than the trip over?

Smith: I'll say! The *Berengeria*, at that time, was one of the best of the transatlantic ships.

Hodak: What did you do following the Olympics?

Smith: I went to New York City as I had an opportunity to get into the Stevenson Industrial Engineering Company. I had quite an adventure there. One of the companies that hired the Stevenson Company was a rubber company up the Delaware River. The senior engineer, a man named McLaughlin, went up there and decided to buy the rubber company, as they wanted to get out of the business. So, he and I purchased the rubber company and went into the manufacture of rubber balls and rubber tubing in a little town up on the Delaware River. In 1922, I had married my Cornell sweetheart. Marge Billheimer, and took her up to the rubber company. The only place I could find for her to stay was over the Lambertville Tavern. There she learned about applejack and beer. (laughter)

About the middle of that winter of 1922, the warehouse of the rubber company caught on fire. It just happened that the Delaware railroad ran along the canal there, and the head of the Delaware railroad yard in Lambertville saw fit to take the hoses away from the fire and let his two trains go by. So by the time they got the hoses connected again the whole plant burned up, which was the end of the rubber business as far as I was concerned.

Hodak: How did you get involved in the mortgage or real estate business in Southern California?

Smith: My father was interested in the mortgage business and had a partner

who was the Prudential correspondent in Minneapolis; and through him he found out that Prudential was interested in expanding into Southern California. In 1924, we formed a California corporation. Smith and Sons. My brother and I were given Pasadena and the eastern area of Los Angeles as far as San Bernardino and Riverside, as mortgage loan correspondents for the Prudential Insurance Company, which proved to be very lucrative. Then Prudential established a branch office of their home company in Los Angeles. They took over the area and began to loan direct, and, of course, there was no place where we could make a commission when a borrower could go right to Prudential.

Hodak: So you shifted focus, what direction did your business take then?

Smith: Well, due to the Red River Lumber Company, we had a method of providing material for contractors who wanted to build tract houses and so forth. So we kept on in the construction loan business after we had given up Prudential.

Hodak: Did you continue competing in track and field, as a senior?

Smith: No, I was more interested in golf. I had just gotten married and was beginning in business, and didn't keep up my track at all. I did join the Southern California Olympic Society and went to a few meetings, but then dropped out completely.

The timber business progressed very well in the '20s, so the Red River Timber Company had substantial dividends. Somebody had to take over the management of the Red River Lumber Company. I didn't know much about the lumber business, but they appointed me as executive vice-president. I would go up from Pasadena by train to Westwood one week and come back and attend to my mortgage business another week or so.

Hodak: So, you were juggling two separate jobs?

Smith: I was doing the best I could to run the plant. And at that time in the '40s, which was World War II, the big plant which had been built in Westwood in 1915 had begun to cut out the tributary timber around there and we were having to ship the logs to Westwood. It was a big discussion in the family as to whether we would build another town and mill at a new location and move the plant.

Hodak: What ultimately was the decision?

Smith: Well, we had estimates as to what it would cost to build a new town and railroad and mill, and it was somewhere around \$50 million. Most of the grandchildren decided they would rather have the money than to put the \$50 million into a new town. So we, as the board of directors, decided to liquidate the Westwood investment. I got in touch with the United Fruit Growers Exchange, who were the orange people here, and they were interested in buying the Westwood town and mill. At that time they were making orange crates out of the lumber. So one of the other cousins and I served as liquidating trustees and we finally sold all the timber and the mill.

Hodak: And what were you involved with after World War II?

Smith: I remained in the construction loan business with Smith and Sons.

Hodak: And you continued that until it was sold.

Smith: I continued until we sold the company out in the early '60s. I retired then.

Along in 1954, we began to live in the winter at Palm Springs. A friend of mine had built what was called the Smoke Tree Ranch in Palm Springs; he was interested in getting out of the ranch and I was interested in getting in. So I made a swap with him and built a house in the Smoke Tree area. We also have a ranch house in the Smoke Tree area that we developed over a period of time into a hotel. Smoke Tree has about 100 customers at a time and it's a very

nice place to live.

While I lived there I became interested in the Boys Club. A friend of mine had preceded me to Palm Springs, Ralph Smith. Ralph had become interested in the Boys Club and needed some . . . well, he wanted to get me into the Boys Club so he could get out of it. There were a group of ladies in the Thunderbird Country Club called the Pathfinders who were quite successful in their fund-raising. One of the ladies in the Pathfinders got the idea that it was an awfully hot place for the kids in the summer. So the Pathfinders were willing to help support a camp in the mountains. During the late '60s, I scouted around looking for a camp location for the Boys Club and it just happened that one of the bankers that I knew in Palm Springs, at Bank of America, had a ranch that Bank of America was interested in selling. They had taken it over from a fellow who went into the racetrack business and went into Las Vegas and lost his money. (laughter) So Ralph Smith and I took a trip with the Bank of America vice-president to see the ranch.

Hodak: Up in the San Jacinto Mountains?

Smith: It's up near San Jacinto in the Garner Valley. We found a horse ranch that this bank was taking over and made a deal with the owner of it to make a partly charitable contribution of it, and Ralph and I financed the rest of it and brought 30 acres in the Garner Valley. It started in a small way and now we take about 800 boys a summer from the surrounding hot valleys. They go up there and have horseback riding and all kinds of mountain sports. In addition to the Boys Club in the summer, the camp has developed into a winter facility for religious groups and schools and so forth.

Hodak: So it serves as a type of retreat.

Smith: It's a retreat deal. It has become very successful. We're supposed to have one of the finest Boys Club camps in the whole United States up there in those mountains. It's been something I've taken

you travel back to Ithaca?

Smith: I traveled back there for the initiation in 1978, I think it was. There were about 40 athletes comprising the original Cornell Hall of Fame.

Hodak: What about your interest in other Olympic Games? Did you attend any other Olympics?

Smith: The only Olympics I attended were in 1932. I went to see the high hurdles.

Hodak: Tell me about your family. How many children do you have?

Smith: I have a son and daughter, both of whom went to Stanford and are married. My son has three children; my daughter has one crop of three and another crop of two. I now have a total of eight great-grandchildren. We get a chance to entertain them here at the beach, and they all love to come down here.

Hodak: What thoughts do you have on the modern Olympics, or track and field in general?

Smith: Well, the specialization, there is so much more of that. And the whole basis for going into athletics is different, of course. You take the high hurdlers today. They go into track because it's their way to get ahead, to get a scholarship to a university. It's all very different.

Hodak: Any advice you'd offer to athletes or others?

Smith: Well, I went out to a high school field in Palm Springs and saw a couple of kids trying to hurdle, and I thought I would see if I couldn't help them. And I hadn't more than stopped to talk to these boys one minute, and the coach said, "You can't give any advice to a high school boy. We're not allowed to hire anybody or allow

anybody to help them."

Hodak: I guess that kind of nullified your ability to give advice to those athletes.

Smith: Oh, I don't know, maybe I didn't know anything about it anyway. (laughter)

Hodak: Do you look back fondly on the 1920 Olympics? What comes to mind when you think of that.

Smith: Well, I look back on the fact that I was interested in track and developed myself in track, by myself—for some reason or another. I don't see that in any of the new generation; the kids won't go out by themselves and run at night the way I did. I was just one grandson among a bunch and was going to make something of myself, and worked hard enough at track to do it.

Hodak: Well, its been a pleasure to have interviewed you. The Amateur Athletic Foundation also appreciates your cooperation and time. I'm glad to have had the chance to meet you, Mr. Smith.

Smith: Well, I'm glad to have met you and I hope it's been of some interest to you. I don't know who's going to be interested in my life. And you be careful who you give it to. (laughter)

Hodak: Okay, I'll do that. (laughter) Thank you again for your cooperation.