

EDDIE TESTA  
1932 OLYMPIC GAMES  
CYCLING



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.

EDDIE TESTA

1932 OLYMPIC GAMES - LOS ANGELES  
4000-METER TEAM PURSUIT CYCLING

INTERVIEWED:

January, 1988  
Los Angeles, California

by George A. Hodak

EDDIE TESTA

Interviewer: George A. Hodak

Hodak: I'm in Los Angeles at the home of Mr. Eddie Testa, an Olympian who competed in the Tenth Olympiad in Los Angeles as a cyclist. Mr. Testa, before we begin to talk about your interest in cycling and your Olympic competition, please tell me when and where you were born.

Testa: I was born in Los Angeles on December 1, 1910.

Hodak: And you are of Italian descent?

Testa: Yes, that is correct. My father was from Italy and my mother was also from Italy. My mother was from Florence and my father was from Naples.

Hodak: And what did your father do in Los Angeles?

Testa: He was a tailor.

Hodak: And you come from what size family? A large family?

Testa: Well, there were four boys. I was the youngest. My oldest brother, Frank, was the one that started riding in bike races. And I followed it up and I just continued on.

Hodak: Where did you receive your education in Los Angeles?

Testa: I went to grammar school at Logan Street School and then to Belmont High School.

Hodak: You mentioned your brother Frank, who was interested in cycling. Where would he have picked this up? Did your father encourage an interest in cycling?

Testa: Yes, my father did. He rode some races in Italy as an amateur and I think he, more or less, got my oldest brother to get started riding. And I followed up and my other brother, Phil, did the same. They all rode bicycles.

Hodak: What sort of opportunities were there for competitive cyclists in Los Angeles in the late '20s and '30s. Was there much of a network of cycling?

Testa: Yes, there was. They had a bike track when I was a kid in downtown L.A. at Washington Boulevard and Hill Street. They put up a board track. I don't recall how many years it was there but that's where my brothers were racing all the time. I got interested but I was too young to ride on the track, so I would just ride in the road races held in Los Angeles and Long Beach.

Hodak: So there were long-distance road races held in the area?

Testa: Well, they held some long ones before the 1932 Olympics. They held 80-mile races in Los Angeles and up north in San Francisco, San Jose and places like that. They held some pre-Olympic races. So I competed in several of them.

Hodak: Had you heard much about the Olympics? Was this something that was part of your interest in cycling, to compete as an Olympic cyclist?

Testa: No, it wasn't. It really wasn't. It just seemed to come up all at once. Around 1931 they were talking about the Olympics, if you were good enough to make an Olympic team . . . which I didn't have any idea about.

Hodak: Is there any one person who contacted you or your brother Frank about competing in the tryouts? Do you remember being notified about the Olympics?

Testa: No, it seemed like we didn't have anyone—coaches or trainers or anything. I used to read about one of the boys from San Jose, Henry O'Brien, who was on the Olympic team in 1928. He was training to make the Olympic team in 1932 and I ran across him in different road races at that time and I just seemed to get a little better and better. I was winning some of them.

Hodak: Before we talk of the tryouts, let's talk a bit about cycling itself and the rudiments of cycling. What type of bicycles did you use and what type of equipment? All these things have certainly changed considerably over the years. You showed me a wooden rim. Describe a wooden rim. How was the tire affixed to the rim?

Testa: Well, these rims were all laminated and you had to put three or four coats of shellac in the bead of the rim where the tire sits because it really holds fast on these tires. When you're riding on a track and so forth, you're leaning over and pouring on whatever you got, and you don't want to have them fly out from under you. It worked out well as long as they were sealed good.

Hodak: And when did you first start to see metal rims?

Testa: Oh, I didn't see them until the latter part of my racing. Back in the 1930s was when they started coming out.

Hodak: Did you find them a good development?

Testa: Well, not for track. I'd rather have the wooden ones. There's more life in the wood.

Hodak: And you didn't have to worry about it warping? They tended to stay more true than the metal rim would.

Testa: Right, much better.

Hodak: And what sort of bicycles would you use? Were these custom-made European bicycles?

Testa: Well, it happened to be that my brother built the bike I was riding. He had all the Reynolds tubing, which is about the best tubing. That came from England. And the fittings were all from over there and we built to the size I wanted my bike. Mine was generally a 20 1/2-inch frame and he braised it and set it all together. I was riding the bikes that he built.

Hodak: And these were light, racing bikes?

Testa: Yes, they were light enough for on the track. After the Olympics, I had turned professional and rode on all tracks—10-laps, 8-laps, 6-laps and so forth. And it was a good strong, sturdy bike. It was made with Reynolds tubing, which is strong enough to take a hit or so, because we'd spill quite a lot and you didn't want to buckle your whole frame.

Hodak: You might buckle your collarbone too?

Testa: (Laughter) Yeah, you'd break them usually, when you fall the wrong way.

Hodak: And that was a big hazard in the track racing?

Testa: That's right. If you fall to your right you're alright but if you go down the other way, left, you're liable to hurt yourself.

Hodak: Now, would you use the same kind of bicycle for the long-distance road races?

Testa: Oh no, it's a different bike altogether.



Hodak: And there you'd want a heavier bike?

Testa: No, it wouldn't be heavier, we'd just use a tire that weighs a little more and could stand the road much better than the track. That was the difference there, mostly the tires . . . and the gearing. The gearing was different on the road.

Hodak: When cyclists talk about altering gear ratios, what, in effect are they talking about?

Testa: In my time we didn't have any ten-speeds—we had mostly a fixed-gear. And it was fixed. I mean, it wasn't a ratchet, coasting type. That's all we rode. The track racing is all the same way, it's a fixed gear all the time—you're pedaling all the time.

Hodak: So there wasn't any shifting?

Testa: No, ten-speeds came out much later, many years after my time. What we would do was just gear ourselves for . . . like in the Olympic trials here in 1932, I would ride an 84. That was what the gear ratio would be then. But with a fixed-gear, you're moving all the time, no coasting. You just kept pedaling. We did our gears according to the course. If it's a really windy day and the wind is against you, you'd just put it in a lower gear. Whereas on a ten-speed today you would just go ahead and move it automatically. We used to have to take the whole wheel and change the rear wheel right away.

Hodak: Now, are there things that you would do for conditioning, other than riding? Would you ride on a stationary bike, were there any exercises or other things you'd do?

Testa: Yes, I had a set of portable rollers I'd use all the time, wherever I'd go. It depends. When it's raining outside you'd use portable rollers inside. They were regular three rollers and you'd just balance yourself and ride along.

Hodak: And did you also have a routine of exercise that you followed?

Testa: Oh yes. Plenty of walking and exercise and jogging now and then. I've taken some good hikes up in the hills.

Hodak: We've talked briefly of the tryouts. Let's go into more detail on the tryouts. I noticed there was a series of preliminary tryouts held across the country in a number of cities—both large and small cities. I believe it was May of 1932 in Mesa, Arizona, you competed in the first round of preliminaries. Do you recall much of that?

Testa: Well, I rode in different events there and qualified for the next set of races for the Olympics. That's what they were doing, taking so many places in different heats to qualify for another race.

Hodak: Were you planning on competing in the road and the track races? Was your intention to compete in both?

Testa: No, it wasn't at the time. It was the road race that I was competing in.

Hodak: But ultimately you ended up competing in the 4,000-meter track race, the pursuit race. How did that all develop?

Testa: Well, it happened that I didn't qualify to make the team. The finals were to be held in Los Angeles, right over at the Olympic course. So two weeks before hand they changed it to San Francisco, which is much colder.

Hodak: And this was to accommodate, possibly, other racers?

Testa: Yes, the Eastern organization seemed to be in the control of the club back there. And I still believe today, as others did, that they changed it so they would have more of their Eastern top notch riders making the team. In the road race there was only four places and two alternates. The odds are against you on that—for me it

was. The weather was altogether different than in Los Angeles at the Olympic course, and that took me by surprise when they changed it. But we figured it out . . . that is, this friend of mine from Hawaii, Peter Shubert, who was the champion of the island, came over and was disappointed because they changed it to San Francisco. He figured on riding at the Olympic course where it was warm.

Hodak: (Laughter) And so you cramped up a bit?

Testa: Right. I went up there—I didn't care to go but I had to—and I cramped up right away. It seemed like I just wasn't properly set up. I mean, we used a certain kind of rubs for the cold weather. It was very cold and I just couldn't ride it at all.

Hodak: And so that's how you ended up competing in the track?

Testa: Right. I was kind of disappointed with the officials. The officials were all from the East and how they ran that race! And so they seemed to control it. Naturally the only thing I could do was to try out for the track team, which was held over at the Rose Bowl. They had the track set up there, a board track inside the Rose Bowl. It was a pursuit team. I went for it and made the four-man team.

Hodak: And how does a pursuit race work?

Testa: Well, the team, which consists of four, starts on one side of the track and on the other side is the other competing team. They start you off and what you're doing is chasing, trying to catch them or they try to catch you. Whoever is ahead after a certain length of time in the 4,000 will be the winners. One rider will take a half a lap and he'll go up and the other one will catch on right on his wheel until each one of you has taken a turn. It's a sort of relay. That's how that worked out. Our team didn't have much practice as a team at all because it was just the last week and a half or two

weeks before the Olympics. Hardly anyone had ridden a board track because we didn't have a board track here. The only tracks were back East and it made it kind of hard for a road rider to really make a track team. So I was fortunate enough to make it.

Hodak: And you faced some pretty stiff competition from some of the European teams?

Testa: Yes, like Canada. Our team kind of went to pot. It seemed one was better than the other fellow, or so. You have to stay right together. One takes a fast half-lap and swings up and the other one sits right on the wheel. And two of our fellows kind of dropped back, and it slows you down because you have to stay together.

Hodak: So teamwork is something that is rather important for this type of race?

Testa: Right, it's all teamwork.

Hodak: Where was the track for the 1932 Olympics, the actual competition?

Testa: It was in Pasadena, at the Rose Bowl.

Hodak: So it was at the same site as the tryouts. Do you recall the other competitions, such as the 100-kilometer road race? Did you get to see some of the other cycling events?

Testa: Well, yes. That 100-kilometer, I was left out. But I did see it.

Hodak: And do you recall where the road race went through, which parts of Los Angeles and the area?

Testa: Well, that started on Ventura Boulevard up at Conejo Grade. It's all changed since then. It wound down around the hills and it was sharp turns. You could get going about 60-65 miles an hour down those hills. It goes in near Moorpark and over to Oxnard. From

Oxnard it went down the coast to Santa Monica. At that time there was this movie star who had some kind of a big restaurant down there along the coast right before you get to Santa Monica and that's where it ended.

Hodak: A pretty grueling race it sounds like.

Testa: Well, it was a time race, a race against time. Each rider goes out in intervals of about two or three minutes, one at a time. One will go out and in two or three minutes the next one will go out. And when you catch up to one rider you can't sit on the wheel. You have to stay back or you have to pass them. You're on your own. You couldn't sit on anybody and let them carry you along in the draft.

Hodak: So that was technically a violation . . .

Testa: They'd come along and knock you out. You can't sit on anyone.

Hodak: And they would just disqualify you.

Testa: That's right. They could disqualify you or do what they want. The officials would come along and warn you. You either have to drop back or get enough speed to pass them. That's what they do. It was all timed.

Hodak: And the officials of the races in Los Angeles, were these American officials?

Testa: They were American, yes. Mostly all of them were from the East Coast.

Hodak: Did you get to see any of the other cycling events, some of the shorter distances?

Testa: Yes, on the track. The road race was just the one, that was it. The rest were all held on the track. There were some good ones

there, including the sprints and so forth.

Hodak: What do you recall of the Olympics in general? Did you stay at the Olympic Village?

Testa: No, I stayed home because I lived out here. I used to go up there in the evenings and see some of the boys that were from out of state.

Hodak: How was the American cycling team supported financially at the time?

Testa: (Laughter) You were on your own!

Hodak: Do you care to elaborate on that? Did you see differences in other cycling teams that were given a little more . . .

Testa: Oh yes, the foreigners had it made. I recall when the Italians came over they were getting \$8 a day allowance from their country for spending money; where us Americans didn't get a thing. Our bicycles and equipment were all on our own. We were not supported at all, whatsoever. All they'd give you was one jersey that had USA on it and that was it. That was all they ever gave us. All our equipment, our tights and our shoes, that was all financed by ourselves. We didn't have any uniform, they didn't give us a uniform. All they gave us was a shirt . . . I should say our jersey. And that was it. They gave us a jersey and a sleeveless sweater.

Hodak: So you would bring your own uniform and your own cleated shoes?

Testa: Oh yes, that's right.

Hodak: And this equipment is somewhat similar to that used today?

Testa: Well, the equipment on the track is similar to that used today; the road is different. Today they have sponsors that have high-tech

bicycles and they help out.

Hodak: Now, were you interested in other events of the Olympics? Do you recall much of the whole festivities of the Olympics, the ceremonies, the pageantry? Was this something you were involved in, or were you preoccupied with your own competition?

Testa: Well, I attended all the events of the Games at the Coliseum—the track and field and also the swimming events right across the way. I checked them all out. It was very good. We had one section in the Coliseum where all the athletes would be seated. It was very, very good watching all the different events.

Hodak: Do any particular events or athletes stand out?

Testa: At that time, in track there were all the runners from USC. I think they were more in the '36 Games, like Louis Zamperini. The women running in there . . . there was Evelyne Hall, who I knew, and she raced against [Mildred] Babe Didriksen. I thought in this one event that she should have been the winner. She got second to Didriksen.

Hodak: Definitely a disputed finish . . . .

Testa: Yes, it was a disputed finish.

Hodak: So, as for your main competition in cycling . . . traditionally the cycling powers were Italy, Canada, Great Britain, France, of course.

Testa: Yes, even Australia had a fellow named Grey who was a very good sprinter. He was one of the top ones. There were several foreigners riding, which I met later on when I turned professional. They raced professionally after the Olympics.

Hodak: Is there anything further you'd want to say about the Olympic

experience, before we talk about your professional career? Do you have any lasting memories or thoughts on the Olympics?

Testa: No, I wish we'd have had the same benefits as they have had in the past few Olympics. They seemed to be well taken care of, which we didn't have.

Hodak: Let's talk then about professional competitive cycling circuit, Did you turn professional immediately following the Olympics?

Testa: Yes, I did. There was an offer to make six dollars a day. They were opening a track in Hollywood and they were going to run a six-day race. I figured that was big money—six dollars a day. So I did turn professional. At first I had thought about the 1936 Olympics and then I was kind of disgusted because I thought there was kind of a raw deal played in 1932 when they changed the location of the final race to make the Olympic team to somewhere else, other than the place where the Olympics were to be held. So I got disappointed and just turned professional.

Hodak: And you knew clearly at that time that you wouldn't be eligible for the 1936 Olympics? It was pretty cut and dried.

Testa: That's right, I was through.

Hodak: Just to be accepting any sum of money, that ruled you out as an amateur.

Testa: That is right. I can remember running in a race in Long Beach, and the promoter gave me seven dollars. He was real secretive about it. Seems funny to think of today.

Hodak: Were you affiliated with a cycling club at this time?

Testa: No, they did have clubs but I wasn't affiliated. I was just out on my own and they started promoting bike races—six-day races in San



Francisco, and then down in Los Angeles they had sprint races on a board track where the six-day race is held. That was the old skating rink over on Melrose. They had sprint races every Sunday night and I just stayed right with it professionally. They had some races now and then at Montebello Park. They had an asphalt track and I was riding there every Sunday and at night I'd ride over in Hollywood. Then I went on to six-day races in San Francisco and in Vancouver, B.C. and I got accepted to compete in the six-day races in Madison Square Garden.

Hodak: And this is the old Madison Square Garden?

Testa: That's right. The old Madison Square Garden on Eighth Avenue and 48th and 49th Streets.

Hodak: And that, in a sense, was the big time as far as racing went?

Testa: That's right. If you could get to Madison Square Garden, that was tops.

Hodak: Let's talk about these six-day races. On the surface, that sounds pretty grueling. Certainly you weren't racing continuously for six days. Would you be paired up with a partner? Was this a combination of different types of events? What was involved in the six-day affair?

Testa: Well, you have a partner and it's generally sprints, a series of sprints. For instance, in Madison Square Garden they had the sprints at 12 noon, a series of ten sprints. There would be a lot of spectators putting up premiums now and then—prizes, advertisements. Clothing stores would put up first place on the next ten-lap sprint—a suit and so forth. Different distilleries would put up cases of different liquors and things like that. During the sprint now and then, a team will try to go out and steal a lap and then everybody is in there just pouring it on. You and your teammate just ride that one lap, change off, grab your teammate and

he goes on. And you're waiting for him up on the bank of the track until he gets around and picks you up.

Hodak: During this six-day period, when would you get a rest to replenish your energy?

Testa: It's usually in the morning hours. Sometimes we could stay there, it's called like a jam, trying to steal a lap. Most of our competitors were from Europe and they were the tops of Europe in the professional line. We would sometimes stay two or three hours just chasing the team that was trying to steal a lap and you'd do the same thing. And now and then, they would pull the last place team out when they'd get too far behind, to get them out of the way. They'd pull them completely out of the race. It would usually start with 15 teams at Madison Square Garden and it drops down to about eight or nine by the end of the week. We would continue on until about four o'clock in the morning. I mean, both members of the team would be on the track racing. At four o'clock in the morning the Garden would run everybody out of the place and the clean-up crews would come in and clean up. That's when we would get our rest. Either I or my teammate will take the first break for a couple of hours, two to three hours. Then after we slept maybe three hours I'd get on the track and my teammate would do the same thing. He'd take the three hours until we'd have to get rubdowns and get all cleaned up and ready for the 12 o'clock sprints.

Hodak: And where would you get your rest and your rubdowns, right there alongside the track?

Testa: Well, it's hard to get it at the track. They had the training rooms where the New York Rangers had their equipment and so forth. And we'd sleep whenever we could.

Hodak: You mentioned the Rangers. They would be playing hockey.

Testa: That's right. As soon as our bike race is over, near the finish, a

few hours before, they would start freezing the floor up. Our bike race would end on a Saturday night, usually midnight, and they would have that floor just freezing up, getting ready for the hockey game the next day. And we could feel it too—it would get cold.

Hodak: You mentioned some of the European teams. Were there some famous teams, such as the Germans?

Testa: Oh yes, Killian and Volpel. They were the outstanding German team.

Hodak: And how were they supported by the German government?

Testa: Hitler took care of them. They used to spend their vacations at Hitler's hideaway, some castle he had in Germany. They had photographs they used to show us. That was back in 1936-37.

Hodak: Hollywood celebrities and others, like Jack Dempsey, Al Jolson, Joe DiMaggio and Douglas Fairbanks followed cycling. Tell me how interested and involved they were in the cycling.

Testa: Well, they'd follow it at all times. Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. followed bike racing during the amateur days and the professional also. He followed it very closely. The same with George Raft. He was the same way. Of course, back in New York is where you'd see Al Jolson. He was there at all times. And Joe Penner, the guy with the duck, he was right there. They were always at the track. When they were through with their shows they would go over to the Garden. And in the early morning there is a two-thirty sprint. It's surprising, the crowd would come in right after the night clubs would close. They used to have a series of ten sprints at two-thirty in the morning.

Hodak: I think it is interesting to illustrate how popular racing was, as you've been describing. You showed me a picture from a film made during this period starring Joe E. Brown, *Six-Day Bike Racer*. You

had a part in that?

Testa: Yes, that was during the race part. Some of the stunts they had where the guy throws a banana peel out on the track and you'd fake a spill. I had to get used to it.

Hodak: But there were serious spills too. This was one of the big hazards of these races, right?

Testa: Yes, there were. At the opening night in New York there were always several spills. Everybody was accustomed to it. Out of 15 teams there could be 30 riders hitting the banks at one time, going 45-50 miles an hour. When you'd grab your teammate, you'd grab him on the side there and just swing them down and right into a bike and crash they go.

There was one guy, Torchy Peden. He was from Canada and became pretty known. He was a big guy, maybe six feet four, well over 200 pounds. He could really pour it on, but he was so big he had to have the whole track to himself. (laughter)

Hodak; That was part of the relay, to slingshot your partner?

Testa: Oh yes. You'd slingshot. You just don't go touch him. You'd have to give him a good shove and he'd do the same to you. When you change off you take a fast lap, as fast as you can, sit on some guys wheel, swing up and catch your teammate and swing them right down there. Now and then you will crash.

Hodak: So what about the tires going out? How would you deal with a tire that suddenly went flat on one of those races?

Testa: Well, you'll usually fall down if they go flat. Down you go! And they ring the bell and stop the race. The trainer comes out and if you're capable of going on they'd patch you up and you'd take out another bicycle. You'd usually have three bikes. They were all set

up. That's how they did that. Your other bike, the bike that's wrecked with busted wheels or whatever would be fixed up.

Hodak: Did you ever sustain any serious injuries?

Testa: Well, I was in the hospital a while from going through the rail and down below. I had a concussion. But mostly I had a lot of burns.

Hodak: How much pressure would you have in your tires?

Testa: We had about a 140-pound pressure on a little six- or eight-ounce tire. You had to have them just as hard as you could get them.

Hodak: It sounds as if you were able to make a decent, if not luxurious, living in this period as a professional cyclist.

Testa: It was kind of hard. We had so many races. The six-day races were winter sports actually, not in the summer. When it's snowing out there in New York, in the Garden we're racing. The same way in Chicago and in Montreal. The winter time is when the six-day races were held. They held two of them a year in New York, two in Chicago, two in Buffalo, New York, two of them in Cleveland, Ohio, two of them in Montreal and down in Argentina.

Hodak: You competed in Argentina?

Testa: Yes, in Buenos Aires. They had sprint races there. It was in Luna Park Stadium, which is the largest stadium down there. I rode in a six-day race there and sprint races; twice a week they had sprint races. They have the amateurs go on at about eight o'clock and then the professionals go on about ten o'clock. Down there it seemed like everything is late in the evening, and stayed on until midnight or so. Of course, that was their summer down there when it was winter here.

Hodak: There's one other thing I wanted to have for the record. In 1939, a

race was broadcast at the New York World's Fair and was one of the first instances of a sporting event being televised.

Testa: That is right. It wasn't very clear. They set up the track with all their lighting equipment and everything and they were going to try it out for television. It was new to us. They had the World's Fair in New York at that time and it was broadcast to the New York World's Fair and was something that was one of the first in sports. They also picked it up in New Jersey but it wasn't too clear. So one of the first sporting events in television was that bike race at Madison Square Garden.

Hodak: And how long did you continue to race professionally?

Testa: I'd say it was eight years professionally. Up until the time of . . . well, before the war. I had a contract to go to Paris from Argentina in 1939 and I was told that if I went there I would never get back home. So I headed for New York. Also, I had a contract for London's Wembley Stadium, and I had to turn that down.

Hodak: Things were getting a little hot.

Testa: Right. That's correct. So I never made it.

Hodak: Were you sponsored by a bicycle company?

Testa: I was sponsored by Pierce. They sent me bikes and things. I was actually riding my own bike but using their emblem. Pierce had a factory in Angola, New York, 15 miles outside of Buffalo. I later had an opportunity to ride for Schwinn.

I used a bike built by a guy in Davenport, Iowa, Worth L. Minton. The guy I mentioned, Henry O'Brien, had one of those bikes and they were as good as any. Minton also made racing tires. He would get up to Chicago Stadium and invited me to visit his factory but I never got down there.

Hodak: I know the Tour de France was established as early as 1903, sponsored by two newspapers in Paris. Now, the events in the competition and the circuit of competition which you described is vastly different than the Tour de France. Did you have ideas of competing in the Tour de France, or was this so very different that you wouldn't think of it?

Testa: Oh, it's very different. It wouldn't work. In the Garden, one of the boys—I can't think of his name—was the tops in the Tour de France and the road races over there. They sent for him because he was a big name, and he rode in a six-day race. He could go and keep going at a certain speed, but when it came to sprinting and the rest of it he just wasn't there. He didn't have it. He was powerful in everything else. That would be a road rider. But it's different than on the track. On the track you had to be able to jump away at the right time and really move it on. On the road they still sprint and do everything else, but it's a little different than on the track. If you're on the track and competing one track race after another, you have a better chance of beating a road rider because they are accustomed to that power to keep going and going.

Hodak: A trained endurance rather than a quick burst of speed.

Testa: That's right. It's similar to a runner, a sprinter. He can run a hundred yards but he can't go out and run the mile.

Hodak: If you had thought of competing in the Tour de France you would have had to train in France for some time?

Testa: Yes, you'd have to stay over there and train the way those foreigners do and build yourself up to that type of speed. That would be about the only way you could make it.

Hodak: You mentioned that World War II kind of cut into your European racing. It sounded as if you were ready to branch on to a new range of racing. Who were some of the promoters that would line

you up with contracts to travel abroad or to race in events here in the States?

Testa: The promoter on the East Coast was John Chapman. He promoted big races back there on the East Coast. There were races in New York, Chicago, Montreal and Buffalo. Over in Europe the contract that I couldn't take was from Mr. Solomon in London. He contracted me to ride with a Belgian rider in Wembley Stadium. But with the war, I'd be taking a chance in going there. I believe it was February of 1939. And they claimed that if I did go there I might not get back because there was going to be this war coming up. So I turned it down.

Hodak: And did you eventually serve in World War II? Were you drafted or did you enlist?

Testa: No, I wasn't drafted. I was working at Warner Brothers Studio at the time. I left there to volunteer in January of 1942. So I went into the Air Force. Of course, I ended up in Europe and Africa. In North Africa I had a chance to ride on a cement track in Casablanca. One of the fellows that I used to race was a businessman in Casablanca and I ran across him while I was there. He loaned me one of his bikes and I tried out their cement track over there. Also, in Egypt they had grass tracks. Just fooling around I rode in a couple of races with the English over there. It was more or less a fun race. Of course, I didn't like it, it was all flat.

Hodak: Were you a pilot in the Air Force?

Testa: No, I was on the ground crew. I was a crew chief over there.

Hodak: Were you married following the war or before the war?

Testa: That was before I was married. I stayed there about 47 months and then I went back to work at Warner Brothers Studio and then



Universal on construction.

Hodak So you have worked in the studios up until rather recently?

Testa: Well, I retired in 1975 from Universal Pictures.

Hodak Tell me about your family.

Testa: I have three girls and one boy. The oldest girl is married. Of the other two, one works at Channel 9, Annie, who you have met. The other girl works as a technician at one of the hospitals. She is going to school and working at the hospital at the same time.

Hodak Let's talk about the Olympics as they have evolved over the years and also the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. Have you seen the velodrome at Cal State, Dominguez Hills? Were you involved in any way in the cycling events in L.A.?

Testa: No, I just followed all the Jesse Owens-Arco Games, track and field events. I would go out there for all the different events they had for the kids. I followed that closely and helped out when I could. I was invited out to the velodrome to go and check out the track. They asked what I thought about it and I just told them it was great, which it is! It is something that I wish we had had in our day. I think everyone that is riding in any kind of race or event today are very fortunate to have a track like that where they can go and participate and train. They will get good by doing that competitive riding.

Hodak Cycling has become more popular in one sense, though the competitive cycling circuit is not what it once was. You don't see the headlines in the sports pages like you did in your day and the six-day races are no longer a part of the racing circuit. Do you see more American cyclists doing well internationally?

Testa: Yes, they are having different sponsorships, like the Coors Classic

in Colorado. I think in Sacramento they are holding road races. That is very good. We didn't have anything like that in my time. I hope that they'll have something here in Los Angeles, some kind of road races for boys and girls. The girls are showing up so strong. I know riding up in the park now and then I see some of them riding their bikes and they are training for the coming Olympics and they are powerful. They've improved so much from years back. Of course, the equipment is much better and they move right along.

Kodak: As for the Olympics in 1984, were you a part of the Spirit Team? Were you engaged in promoting or encouraging people to get involved with the Games?

Testa: Oh, yes. I'd get up in the park where a lot of them were training and keep encouraging them. I mean, they would listen now and then. I'd see different riders and maybe their seats were a little lower than they should be and give them a little advice. It makes me feel good when they show up and try to do their best.

Hodak: Did you have much of an interest in the overall 1984 Olympics? Outside of cycling, did you attend any of the events or follow it closely?

Testa: I followed it closely; the road races and so forth. Actually, the television showed you more than . . . like the road race, you'd be in one spot and you do not see it. TV is right there and I just stayed right with it. I even taped it. It was very interesting.

Sports medicine and all has changed so much. When I look back, I can remember starting a race at the Hollywood Athletic Club and going clear down to the coast, and I never had any fluids. I would race and train and never drink water; they said, it would hurt you. We never heard of vitamins or anything else like that.

Hodak: What are your thoughts on the Olympic Movement as you have seen it change over the years?

Testa: Good, very good. It's wonderful to see the U.S. getting the help that they should have had years back. I have seen it where you'd have to practically leave work to train and you're not compensated; you're just on your own. Today, you do get a little help from different sponsors and the Olympic Committee. And to me, that's great!

Hodak: Do you have any thoughts on the Olympic ideals, aside from the competition, the larger goals or the underlying spirit behind the Olympics? Is this something you see that has improved over the years?

Testa: To me it's getting better each time. Each Olympics has improved. Track and field is doing well. In fact, they keep getting compensated now and then and they get better and better.

Hodak: Is there any advice you'd like to offer to athletes today? In particular, to cyclists, what sort of things would you encourage people to look into or to develop?

Testa: Well, you have to just train and stay right with it. That's the only thing I can think of. They might not be right up at the top at first but if they stay with it they can get better as time goes by. They all have a shot at making the team and doing well. Just stick with it!

Hodak: Well, I appreciate your time today and your cooperation on the project. Thank you very much.

Testa: You're welcome, George, anytime! I appreciate you doing all this.