

An Olympian's Oral History

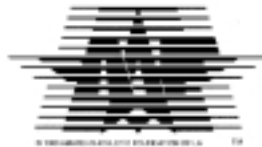
CLIFFORD BOURLAND

*1948 Olympic Games – London
- 4x400-meter Relay -
Gold Medal*



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Today is Tuesday, March 26, 1991. This is Dr. Margaret Costa at the Los Angeles Country Club, interviewing Mr. Clifford Bourland, gold medalist in the 1948 Summer Olympic Games in the 4x400-meter relay.

Q: Tell me about your childhood.

A: Well, I was born in Los Angeles (January 1, 1921), actually down in the southwest part of town and I grew up in the neighborhood of 52nd and Broadway and 51st and Hoover, where I attended the local grammar schools. My folks moved to Venice where I attended Macha Grammar School, which is adjacent to Venice High School.

Q: Tell me about your parents.

A: My mother was born in Berlin and came to the East Coast at the age of 14, just before World War I started. The German schools had outstanding physical education-type programs.

Q: Did she ever speak to you about the Turner system, or the gymnastics system, which was strong in Germany?

A: They did a lot of calisthenics. She was small, but athletic. Then during the war she met my father, who was in the Navy, and they were married and I happened along.

Q: Did your father have an athletic background?

A: No, my father was born in Long Beach, which I guess makes me a second generation Californian. He was the youngest of 14 children. He was not really athletic although he used to play softball with us.

Q: As a very young child, what kind of games do you remember playing?

A: When I left the southwest part of Los Angeles and moved to the Mar Vista, Venice area, the first thing I remember playing was baseball. At the elementary school which I attended, in addition to baseball and soccer, we had this running track, as well as high jump and broad jump. The Venice High School sent seniors over to teach us.

Q: Do you remember the first time you realized you had athletic talent?

A: I think it was when I was in the fifth grade, and I ran the 50-yard dash in the city record time of 6.9 seconds. I participated in all the other sports. I was a good athlete but I wasn't outstanding.

Q: Did you have siblings with whom you played?

A: I grew up in the neighborhood, close to Venice High School and the grammar school. I'll never forget this. We had 52 children in two blocks and we all did everything together. We played football, baseball,

we shot marbles, then we'd even go out and run on the streets. The streets in those days were not paved so it was sort of gravelly down there right off of Venice Boulevard and Meier Street. We also played baseball against the other elementary schools.

Q: How was that organized? Was there a specific time?

A: We played about five grammar schools in the area. We'd play each one and there would be a winner. I was the best pitcher the grammar school had. That was my job, throwing the ball. I guess I had watched my father. Venice/Mar Vista area in those days had a lot of Japanese farms with a lot of Mexican people working for them. It was probably about 15-20% Japanese and maybe another 10% Mexican population. I think the soccer influence came from Mexico.

Q: Tell us about this first track meet. Where was it held?

A: It was held at Venice High School. Venice was its own city and the inner-city schools competed against each other. There were probably about five other grammar schools involved in the track meets. I ran the 50-yard dash. In those days, they wouldn't let little kids run too much. I was the fastest kid in the school when I was in the fifth grade. I could beat the sixth graders.

Q: What was the start? Was it crouch start or a standing start?

A: It was a crouch start. The high school kids were there to help us.

Q: What year was that?

A: It was about 1931-32, right at the Depression time.

Q: Did you dig foot holes in the grounds?

A: Well, that's the way we started all the way through high school. In those days, you didn't have any starting blocks. Actually, starting blocks were illegal. They wouldn't let you use starting blocks in those days. I think a fellow by the name of Simpson was the first one to ever use starting blocks.

Q: What kind of shoes did you wear?

A: Just tennis shoes in those days. I started playing tennis in the seventh, eighth, ninth and 10th grade. I was a pretty good tennis player. Venice High School had tennis courts and you could use these any time you wanted. When I went into high school I played pretty well and so I stayed with tennis. I had a Spalding racket. Some of the rackets were open throat and some of them were solid. Of course, they were all wood with catgut. I spent most of my time with tennis although I do remember winning the 75-yard dash in the eighth grade during a short period of time in which I attended L.A. High School. Soon I moved back down to Venice because I could play tennis on the varsity team in the ninth grade. So, there I'm in the ninth grade back at Venice, even though I lived in L.A., and I'm playing tennis and getting my varsity letter. A big deal for kids in the ninth grade.

Q: Did you continue with track at Venice High School as well?

A: Because most of Venice High School had been destroyed in the earthquake of 1933, we had many classes, including geography, in the gym. Mr. Schultz who was our geography teacher was quite a character. We'd sort of chitchat back and forth, and then one day, I said something that caused him to needle me. He requested that I meet him after school. My punishment was to walk backwards from here to my car. He was a real kidder, a fun guy. I'm walking backwards and I see guys running around the track. He asks, "Can you run? Do you think you are a runner or something?" I said, "Sure, I can beat any of those guys." He says, "No, you can't." I said, "Sure, I can." We're kidding back and forth, and I accept his challenge. He called the coach and said, "Bourland thinks he can beat these guys." They were C class athletes. The next day he kidded me about it again. I said, "Okay, I'll go out." I went out and beat these kids in the C class. Because it was the end of the season I could only run in the relay. All of the other spots on the team had been taken through some kind of qualifying meet. Because I was strong, I was also allowed to put the shot. I came in second.

Q: You put the shot without training?

A: Yes. After watching the other guys and some quick directions from the coach, I just picked it up and threw it. As a result, I lettered in C class in track and varsity tennis.

Q: How did you fit studying in?

A: I would just do enough to pass. I always had a job after school and the weekends.

Q: What kind of jobs did you have?

A: I repaired bicycles for 10 cents an hour, drove a truck illegally, delivered groceries that were sold to all of the wealthy people in the area. I also worked as an usher in the Metro and had many other jobs. My folks were not wealthy people. The Depression hit and my father became ill with tuberculosis and was sent to Arizona. I basically supported myself from the age of 12 years.

Q: Do you remember any significant happenings in high school?

A: In the 10th grade, I switched from academic courses to machine shop and drafting because I thought that I'd go to work for Douglas after I graduated. I became lazy and thought I didn't have to study. I was working a lot. I did not even go out for track and tennis in the 10th grade. In the 11th grade my attitude changed and I went back out for track because I knew I could do pretty good, but I was through with tennis. I won some races, lost some races, and got into the Western League meet with a relay team. Hollywood, Venice, Hamilton and University High made up the league. In the 12th grade I was beating everyone in the 100 and the 200 and I was just getting stronger. One day I decided to try the quarter mile. I knew I would have a tough time beating the runners from Jefferson High School as they had the twins, Sal and Sam Lankford. Coach Bell timed me and I ran 51 seconds. At the next meet, against L.A. High School, the coach put me in the quarter mile and I broke the high school record. I ran 50.5 and everybody was shocked. I was the first good track athlete they had at Venice in quite awhile. We won the Western League and I broke the record by running 49.1 seconds. My record is still intact at Venice High. There was also a fellow by the name of Tom Bradley who went to Poly High and ran 49.8. A few days later, Charles Green, the assistant coach, came up to me and asked me where I wanted to go to school? I had always wanted to go to USC. He said he would help me work it out. I had a chance to go to Alabama, but I was local and I loved SC. I mean, I was an SC gung-ho guy for football.

Q: Did you know anything about the SC track athletes?

A: By the time I got to be a senior I had heard of several people at SC. I did not go to the meets as I was always working and I did not have the money.

Q: Who was the USC coach?

A: The coach was Dean Cromwell and he came and watched me at the Scottish Highland Games. He saw me run the 100-yard dash. I was getting stronger so I could run the 100, the 200, and the 400. In 1938, he came over and talked to me and then he introduced me to the assistant coach, Eddie Lahey, who also coached at Poly High.

Q: Did you change the subjects which you were taking in high school?

A: I had to go back and spend another semester in which all I took was English. I graduated and then I went back for another semester and took other academic courses. I started at USC in February of 1939. I ran 100, 200 and 400 in freshman track in '39. I ran wherever they needed points. The relays were separate events.

Q: When did you begin to use starting blocks?

A: In my freshman year. In high school we always dug holes. With the blocks you can get a faster takeoff because you are on top of the ground. With the holes you would dig, the ground would not hold. Blocks were so much more solid. So I experimented around and found a position where my knee was a certain distance from the block.

Q: When did you start using track shoes with spikes?

A: In the 11th grade in high school. I borrowed a pair when I was in the ninth grade.

Q: Tell me about the techniques that you learned.

A: Well, the coaches didn't seem to coach as much as they do today. I remember Cromwell saying, "The way you're going to increase your speed is to get out and run a lot of starts, in other words, run 30 yards." We would go out once a week and do a lot of starts.

Q: Give me a day in the life of Clifford Bourland.

A: When I was at SC, I would walk out onto the track and I would take a lap, a slow lap just to warm up. Some of the guys took exercises. I didn't do any stretches. We would do what we call wind sprints. We would start on the straight away and run very slowly and then you'd build up as fast as you could. By the time you got to the curve, you'd walk the curve, and then you get around to another straight away and you'd do the same thing. When I went to the national collegiates other coaches would ask me how I trained. When I told them that I did not run further than 440 they would not believe me.

Q: What triggered this idea of training as a sprinter?

A: I was probably lazy and didn't want to run any farther. I won almost everything I entered. Coach Cromwell always believed in teaching speed rather than endurance. Speed is what wins races even if you are a miler.

Q: Did your scholarship pay enough so you would not have to work?

A: It paid for everything as far as the university was concerned. It paid for my tuition and I was smart enough to hang around the football players because football players got more than we did. I went out for freshman football because I got some free meals and free books. I earned 40 cents an hour. I went to class in the daytime until noon and then had lunch and went out for track about three o'clock. I would work for two hours and get paid for four during track season. In the off-season I worked four hours a day and got 40 cents an hour. In the beginning I raked leaves around the campus. Later I became good friends with a fellow by the name of Pop Foster who was sort of a legend at SC. He was in charge of operations and maintenance for the university. He gave me a job sweeping classrooms in an old beat up building. I goofed off, then I realized I was wrong and I apologized to Pop. That was an unusual thing to do, so he made me an assistant. I drove around in a little red truck with a former football player Beans Russell. Later I became the chauffeur for university president Rufus Von KleinSmid.

Q: Did you know what your major was going to be?

A: At registration I am walking around trying to decide what to major in and I saw some physical education courses offered. I was deciding to get into physical education when another athlete came by and told me he was majoring in business administration. I decided to join him. I ended up with a B.S., bachelor of science in business administration.

Q: What were the highlights of your track season in the first year?

A: I had never broken the 10 flat in the 100. When I was a freshman, I was talking with the coach and asked him how I could break 10 flat. He told me to drink a Coke half an hour ahead of time. So, I had a Coke and I ran 9.9. That was a big deal for me because I wasn't really the best 100-yard dash man. During my freshman and sophomore years, I discovered that I did not have enough units to go on. I was not yet 18, and the coach said I was too young. He told me to take a year off, work out with the L.A. Athletic Club and make up the units. I went to night school and took French from Dean Crawford. I came back to SC as a sophomore. It was an excellent year. We won the Pacific Coast Conference, the national collegiates, everything. We went to Fresno and I ran all three relays and won the 100-yard dash in 9.6. I won the AAU meet two years in a row and the national collegiates in my junior and senior years. The AAU meet was held at Randall's Island and in Philadelphia.

Q: Who were your rivals?

A: Grover Klemmer from Cal and Hubert Kerns all hit the tape together in my sophomore year. Grover was probably about three or four inches in front of Hubert and I, but they gave us all the same time although he beat us. We set a world record of 46 flat. It was 1942.

Q: Was it part of the Penn Relays?

A: No, just the AAU National Championship, which allowed people who had graduated from college to

compete. The AAU gave us financial support and we traveled by train. We would get one sleeping berth and take turns sleeping over a three-day journey. From then on I won every race I entered.

Q: Did you ever run on a cinder track?

A: In Lincoln, Nebraska, we ran on a cinder track.

Q: What difference did you find?

A: The Coliseum was a muddy track. The mud would cling to your shoes and it was slow. Cinder tracks were good because your spikes would go in and they wouldn't take any dirt. There was a little more spring to them. The stuff we ran on in my days cannot be compared with what they have today. We weren't really trying for records. We didn't think about records because the tracks were so different. Some were fast and some were slow. Today they're all basically the same, except for the weather conditions. The Coliseum was one of the slowest tracks around in my day. In contrast, Fresno was fast. It was sort of clayish, a red clay. The weather was always warm in Fresno.

Q: Were you fairly well known on campus by the time you were a junior?

A: Yes

Q: What did that mean to you?

A: Since I'm an only child and did not have a home life, because my mother had to work and my father was ill in Arizona, I learned to make a lot of friends.

Q: You must have been pleased. You were getting B's and C's academically, and you won all of your 440-yard races. What records did you set?

A: Oh, I think I set a Coliseum record of 46.9 in my junior year. When we went to other meets across the country we would come straight home because we did not have any money. Now, during part of that time, I was also working in the studios as an extra. The thrill of my life was when I bumped into Ronald Coleman, one of the greatest actors that ever lived. I also worked on a film where Gary Cooper played Lou Gehrig. There were a lot of Red Skelton and Jennifer Jones movies as well. I had my picture taken with Jennifer and her husband at that time, Robert Walker. One time I fell asleep in a little bungalow and when I woke up Fred MacMurray was standing there. I apologized and he told me not to worry, relax.

Q: Was there ever any pressure on you to go into the service while you were in college?

A: I joined the Navy in '40, or what they called it the D7 Program, which is Navy. Now the D7 Program allows you to continue your time in college and when you graduated you went into the Mitchum Program. That was an advantage for the government because they didn't have to pay your way through college.

Q: What was the advantage to you?

A: I was able to continue in school and instead of going into boot camp and being an enlisted man, I would go into the Navy as an officer which was very important. It was also an incentive to have to keep your grades up.

Q: Tell me about your senior year in college.

A: The publicity people were trying to generate some interest for track and field. We'd go to the Coliseum and there would be 50,000 people at the UCLA, Stanford, Cal meets. At a demonstration we were giving at Dorsey High School, I injured a muscle by sitting on a hurdle. I missed some meets. The NCAA nationals were held at Dyke Stadium at Northwestern. Two weeks before, I ran this race and barely beat a high school kid because I was still recovering from the injury. I ran it in about 49 seconds. I took Curry, a broad jumper, Jack Trout who ran 100 and 200 meters, and Doug Miller who was a javelin thrower. So they were sophomores and I was a senior, I was in charge. The coach gave me some money and put us on the train. We arrived three or four days early, so we went and had massages and we started feeling good. I called the coach the night before the finals and told him that we were going to win. The next day the wind was blowing, and I know how to run in the wind. The way to run in the wind is to get out ahead, when the boys start to go by you, you just run a little bit faster. The wind hits them and slows them down. I won the 400 meters for 10 points, but Cal still has Hal Davis who was the best. We knew he was going to win the 100 and the 200, that was twenty points. Cal also had a miler and a javelin thrower, and they were the team to beat. It's time for the 200 meters and we know Hal Davis is going to win, but if I'm in shape, I can beat everyone, including Jack Trout. Jack and I are in there together with about 100 yards to go. I'm in one lane and there was a little guy and then Eddie Conwell from NYU. I'll never forget Eddie Conwell, who was a fast 100-yard guy. Conwell was out ahead of us about a yard and a half and I'm running as fast as I can and Trout's over the other side. I said to Jack, "Let's start running." Conwell heard that, looked over and just stopped. He was running hard and then he quit. Hal Davis from Cal won, Jack was second and received eight points and I was third and received six points. At this point I have 14 points. Well, Doug Miller gets second in the javelin and then Edsel Curry gets third in the broad jump and we win the meet. It was the first time that four men have ever won a national collegiate track meet. It was very exciting.

When I graduated I went to midshipman's school at Northwestern University. It takes you 90 days to become a 90-day wonder. So, I went through that and got my commission. They sent us to Solomon Island, Maryland. They were going to start doing a lot of landings out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean someplace, so they needed some officers and men to learn how to run these larger landing craft. They put me in charge of a LCT, which means Landing Craft Tank. Its about a 120-foot boat or ship, with a crew of 12.

Q: You were in charge of the whole ship?

A: They taught me what to do and then shipped us down to New Orleans. We boarded an LST, which is a Landing Ship Tank about 300 feet long, and went through the Panama Canal. In San Diego, we stayed for a couple of days, and then went to Honolulu. The LCT, Landing Craft Tank, that I had was a new one. However, it was actually in three pieces: the bow, the midships, and the stern.

Q: Why was it in three pieces?

A: It was an easier way to haul these things. When you get your destination, you put them in the water,

you float them, and put them together. We were stationed in Pearl Harbor for about a month and then moved to Kauai for the same time. So, during this time, we became so-called experts at running this LCT up on the beach and coming off the beach, and we trained other crews. I loved the duty. Drinks were 25 cents in the officers' club and I never spent any money, I just saved. We were sent to Leyte in the Philippines. Then we received orders to head off in a westerly direction heading for Okinawa. We arrived six days before the invasion, anchoring off Kerama-Rettō, which is about 20 miles off the shore of Okinawa itself. It was an ammunition depot, where the capitol ships, the cruisers, battleships and aircraft carriers would come over there to load up with ammunition. Our job was to take the ammunition from the ammunition ships, put it aboard our LCT, on the deck, and then go over alongside of a capitol ship, and then they would take 16-inch shells, 12-inch shells or bombs and load them. They never wanted a capitol ship to tie on the side of an ammunition ship because if it was ever hit it would be a double bang. We were lucky, because the Japanese would fly over. I actually saw a kamikaze on the morning that we landed, we went in to invade these little islands six days before the big invasion. It was a scary thing to see that airplane keep coming, diving, diving, diving and then crash. I'll never forget the morning we woke up at five or six and saw this plane diving at one of our destroyers, which were escorts. Two or three weeks later, after the invasion, one of these kamikaze pilots ditched his airplane close to where we were. My crew went out and captured him. This guy was very young, wearing a pure white uniform. He had an injured leg and he was scared to death. He did not know that we weren't going to hurt him. I had the crew take him over to the hospital ship which was hit and sank about nine hours later. The stories we heard about how they give these kamikaze pilots everything they wanted, big parties, girls, booze and make colonels out of them. They would get all charged up before they died. They were dying for their country.

I was in the service about 18 months altogether, most of it being in Hawaii. It took about four or five months to be discharged, and I was what they called a troop trained commander, which is about the lousiest job you can imagine. The troop train commander was in charge of all these guys going back home. I was supposed to keep them from getting drunk and disorderly. Luckily, I was an officer and I had some shore patrol guys who helped. They did not fight or something. So, I did that. I had decided that the best place to go to be rehabilitated was back to USC. First of all, the government would pay for it, even though I had graduated. So I thought, well, I'd get a master's degree. I went back to USC and you know, it was great. I spent all of '46 at SC.

Q: Did you pick up a degree?

A: No, I didn't. I had to write a thesis or something, and I didn't do it. I was just lazy. I went to work for a doctor who owned a bunch of orthopedic shoe stores.

Q: Did you get back into track right away?

A: I came back in '46 and ran a couple of races.

Q: AAU races?

A: Yes. I only worked out one day a week. I'd run the weekends. I'd work out on Wednesday afternoons and then I'd run some of the meets. I pulled another muscle near the end of '46. It's '47, and I think '48, you know, your objective in life, if you're a track guy, is to run the Olympics, and I would have been in the '40 and the '44s if there had not been a war. I thought, well, this would be the last

chance. In '47 I went out and I trained a little harder. I was third in the AAU meet. There were a lot of strangers around. Herb McKenley from Jamaica and some really big runners. I just didn't have the time to get in really good shape, but I got in good enough shape where I did fairly well. It's '48 and I'm still working. I take half a day Wednesday to go work out. I began running around the block at nighttime. I tried to run as many races as I could. I'd run everything. I'd run 100s, 200s, but I wasn't in really good shape. The way you qualified for the Olympic Games in '48 was to place 1-2-3. I ran in the AAU meet and somehow I qualified for the 400 and the 200. It came down to the final qualification.

Q: The trials?

A: I thought I should forget about the 400 and just go with the 200. I knew I could beat most of the guys in the 200, with the exception of Mel Patton. I had beaten Barney Ewell a couple of times, but I went in and I qualified in the 200 meters. The coach was Cromwell, who knew me, and that helped. I wasn't going to go to the Olympics because I had a job. Larry Houston, the head of the AAU, called my boss and told him that I was not going to the Olympic Games because of my job. My boss sent me a message to get on the boat and go. When we arrived in London we had a couple of weeks before we had to compete. I was getting in good shape.

Q: How did they pick the relay team?

A: They picked the first four guys in the 100 meters. The coach could run whoever he wants to, however. He asked me to run both the 400-meter relay and the 100-meter relay. However, I told him that I would be taking someone's place and that would make both he and me very unpopular. He then gave me a choice and I chose the 4x100-meter relay.

Q: Tell me about London.

A: I had never been to London before, and '48 wasn't too long after the war. They still had rationing for everything including meals. You could only have one meal in a restaurant. I remember that distinctly because I was hungry and I had to go to a second restaurant to get enough to eat. A restaurant could only serve you one meal.

Q: Would you eat in restaurants when you were at Uxbridge?

A: When we went into town we would. The food we had in the beginning wasn't too good because we had sort of English-style food, which was quite greasy. The best thing that they had was the Helms bread.

Q: Do you remember who you roomed with at Uxbridge?

A: I roomed with Mel Patton on the boat and all the way over. Mel and I are really good friends.

Q: Did you participate in Opening Ceremonies?

A: Well, the Opening Ceremonies were nice. We were sort of in awe of everything. I wasn't that excited at that moment. Now, maybe after the ceremonies I was excited, but it wasn't an exciting thing that I can really remember.

Q: Did any of you take that kid Bob Mathias under your wing?

A: I did. I was the old guy. I became friendly with Bob aboard ship, and then when he arrived over there we decided to watch out for him. No matter what Bob did, he did well. For example, he hadn't really played table tennis or Ping-Pong, and he started playing and pretty soon he beat everyone, including guys who had been playing for years. The little town of Uxbridge was beautiful. It had bowling on the green. Bob, Mel and I went over there and were invited to play. Bob beat everyone. He just had natural ability. I spent a lot of time with him because I liked him. He was a nice kid, I was a little older, and I could guide him. He questioned me about where he should go to school. I told him that where you go to school depends a lot on where you wish to live when you graduate, "If you're going to live in Southern California, go to SC, or if you're going to live in Northern California, go to Stanford."

Q: Was there a reason for you to be pushing a private school?

A: The Stanfordites and the Trojanites stick together. The network helps you get jobs.

Q: Were you nervous the night before your event?

A: In the 200 meters I was running so well that I won all of my heats easily. We did not have starting blocks, however. They were there in Wembley Stadium or something. We didn't have them. So I went over there and I said, "What is this? We don't have any starting blocks." I mentioned it to the manager. He did not have money for starting blocks. I mentioned it to Herb McKenley and Lloyd LaBeach and they told me that the starting blocks were made in Inglewood. They also said that they would pay for them if we had them flown over. The blocks were adjustable aluminum. I telephoned the coach who made them and he sent them over. He shipped them over with the Helms Bakery bread. I'm using them to run two or three races each day. I arrive at the finals, and LaBeach has one set of blocks, McKenley has the other. We are all in the same race. This other kid from Jamaica got in the sixth spot, and he had the other ones. I was supposed to have them, but what am I going to do? Here you have two minutes before your start, and I do not want to get into a big argument. I'm getting panicky, so I had to dig holes in the track. I did not have a chance. This is a true story. That was the first of the Spartan Olympics. I came in fifth.

Q: What was your next event?

A: The 1600-meter relay. Now Jamaica was far and above the best team on paper. They had Arthur Wint, Herb McKenley, Rhoden and Laing. The night before we were sitting around, planning the race. Our slowest guy was Glenn Hardin. We decided that he should go first. He ran against their slowest guy Rhoden. I decided to run against Laing. He was a little, short, stocky guy who was very strong. However, I knew he didn't have too much experience running quarter miles. I knew I could run faster than he could if I took off fast and then relaxed a little bit, while he started to catch up, and then relax a little bit, and maybe when he started to catch me I would turn it on. That was my strategy. Roy Cochran was going to run against Herb McKenley. Herbie would start off fast and we would try the same technique. We then matched Mel and Wint. Hardin, our first guy, and Jamaica's first guy were neck and neck, and I got the baton right with Laing. We took off, but by the time we got to the backside I had beat him by 10 yards. I ran right past Roy Cochran, and in the turn, he nails McKenley. Whitfield has about eight- or nine-yard lead, or something like that, and he ran it beautifully. He sort of takes it easy and then he gets up on the other side and lets Arthur catch him on the back stretch, and then he takes

about four or five big strides and just goes bang, bang, bang, and Arthur is running as hard as he can. Then Arthur Wint just pulled off the track. Our strategy worked.

Q: You were the coach?

A: I was the old guy.

Q: Do you remember standing on the victory podium?

A: That was exciting. I can still remember it. I can still see myself, the guys and the flag. After our events were over we would go and watch the swimmers and the boxers.

Q: Did you go on any of the European tours?

A: I was supposed to, but I didn't. I was thinking about getting married at that time. I did go to Glasgow. I met Prince Phillip. That was the British Empire Games. I came home and went to work and have been working ever since. I stayed in the shoe business for 27 years. I went to Chicago and sold properties and started an insurance company, a workman's compensation company. I was the first president of that company which we started. I made some money and then decided to take a couple of years off to enjoy life and play golf.

Q: How did you get started with golf?

A: In 1943, if you were in the service and were signed up, you could play golf at any golf course, L.A. Country Club, Wilshire and so forth. This other friend of mine and I were both in the D7 program. He was a good golfer, but I was just learning. We used to come over here to the L.A. Country Club and play. We'd go to Wilshire or to Bel Air. We'd go wherever we wanted and they wouldn't charge us a nickel. We'd just carry our own bags and play golf at the best country clubs in the city.

Q: Did this friend teach you how to play golf?

A: He was a good golfer and he taught me how to play. That was a little period during the war when I'd say that we had a good time.

Q: When you went into business did you continue with golf?

A: I always liked to play golf. Thirty plus years ago, in 1959-60, I played well enough that I qualified and played in the L.A. Open as an amateur.

Q: Was it held at Riviera Country Club?

A: I qualified at Riviera and we played at Rancho.

Q: Did you join L.A. Country Club, and at that time, did you have to be sponsored?

A: It took about three years to get in, because I had joined Riviera, but decided I wanted to play golf the rest of my life. I had some friends over here who suggested that I become a member because

they had two courses.

Q: How much was it to join then?

A: 500 bucks.

Q: You're a good investment person, that's for sure. Was that considered a high price at that time?

A: The price began increasing dramatically after that, however. I just hit it at the right time, you know. You could buy a house then pretty cheap, too, you know. We also used to play a lot of tennis. We used to play every Sunday and sometimes on Saturday. Coach Cromwell forbade us to ski. He threatened to take away our scholarships if we were caught skiing.

Q: So did you stay with the insurance business?

A: I took a couple of years off and foolishly invested in the stock market instead of real estate. The market went down and was running out of money, so I had to go back to work. I let people know that I wanted a job or had to get back to work. I had this friend who suggested that I run for city council. I did not know anything about politics. They told me that the incumbent had died, and John Ferraro was running for the position. John and I were really good friends at USC and I had given him his first job. They suggested that he may not win. When I asked how much it would cost, they told me that they had some people who raise the money for the campaign. I decided that it was not a bad idea because I would get my name in the news and on billboards. When you run for office, a lot of people contact you, because if you win, well, they want favors. We ran. I spent \$5,000 and Ferraro spent \$60,000 for a \$15,000-a-year job. I had a picture of the family; two sons, a good-looking daughter, my wife and me. Through that piece of promotion, my name became known. Consequently, Robert Sutro, who owned Ralph C. Sutro Company mortgage bankers, called me up and came to see me and suggested that if I did not win, to come and see him. I went over to see him when I lost, and he suggested that I become a mortgage banker. When I suggested that I did not know what a mortgage banker was, he told me that I would learn. He offered me a job at a very small salary, and I've been a mortgage banker ever since.

Q: And you still work with them?

A: I go in a half a day. A group of us are partners in a mortgage banking firm called Norris, Biggs and Simpson out of San Francisco. We own half the company, and Norris, Biggs owns the other half. My group were all together at previous mortgage companies. I go in the morning and play golf in the afternoon.

Q: Through that business, have you been able to make some good investments in real estate?

A: The only money I have ever made in my life was made in real estate. We've been very lucky, you know.

Q: What do you think of the Olympics today?

A: I attended the Los Angeles Olympic Games everyday. I thought it was probably the best event I've ever been to in my life. I mean it couldn't have been better.

Q: What do you think about the new professionalism in the Olympic Games?

A: It is a different ball game, isn't it? It is a way to make a living. I am sure some guys were paid in my day. I am sure Charlie Paddock made some money. Because it is a living for these athletes, they can spend 365 days a year at it.

Q: What would you have to say, to some young aspiring athletes?

A: Well, I will put it this way, when I was in the sixth grade I wrote down 10 things I wanted to do in my life. One of them was to hold a world record, be in the Olympic Games, be in the U.S. Navy and to make a million dollars.

Q: Did you do all of them?

A: Yes. I've been lucky. You have to have goals. I'm a great guy who believes in the subconscious. I mean, you put things in your subconscious mind and it works. You don't believe it, but it does work. If you try too hard to do anything consciously, it's harder to do than if you let your subconscious come through. You have to have goals and you have to be smart enough to know that some goals won't happen, but if you have enough of them, some of them are going to happen. If you don't have any goals, probably nothing will happen in your life. You have to start someplace. Things will happen in the direction of that goal.

Q: I had one more thing to ask you. When you look back on your life and your athletic career, do you remember one particular time when you were at peak performance?

A: When I was a junior in college, I figured there wasn't anybody in the world that could beat me. I believed it at that time. If you believe it and you feel it, other people feel it. It's what an old coach told me when I was a sophomore. He says, "You're going to run the 100-yard dash." I'm looking at a list, and I can still see Carlton Carey, Fred Randall and other guys from Texas. They all ran 9.2, 9.3, and I had never run faster than 9.6. I'm looking at all these guys and I say to the coach, "You know these guys, they're all running, ah, 9.3, 9.4. How can I possibly get first, second or third in this group?" Coach said, "Look, you'll beat 90%." He gave me confidence. In addition, I've always related running races for men just like horse races. At the track there is a thing called class. In other words, you will get a horse that runs, for example, six furloughs in 109.2. You'll get another horse, such as Citation, that ran 110. Now the first horse runs faster than Citation. You put Citation on the track with the first horse. Citation beats it by three or four lengths every time. That's class. I think the same thing happens with runners.

Q: Thank you very much.

A: My pleasure.

METHODOLOGY

Dr. Margaret Costa, of California State University, Long Beach, conducted this interview. The interview was recorded on audiocassette and then transcribed. The interview addresses 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.

The opinions and recollections expressed in this oral history are exclusively those of the Olympian interviewed. They do not necessarily reflect the positions, interpretations or policies of the Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles.