

An Olympian's Oral History

MELVIN PATTON

1948 Olympic Games – London

- 200 Meters -

Gold Medal

- 4x100-meter Relay -

Gold Medal



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Today is Friday, March 8th, 1991. This is Dr. Margaret Costa interviewing Mr. Melvin Patton, Olympian in the 1948 Summer Olympic Games, which were held in London, England. Mr. Patton won the gold medal in the 200-meter dash in track and field, the 4x100-meter relay in track and field and also was fifth in the 100-meter in track and field.

Q. Let's hear about your childhood in Los Angeles.

A: Well, I am a native of Los Angeles. I was born in Los Angeles. I attended elementary schools in West Los Angeles, and went to Emerson Junior High School and University High School. Life was just very pleasant.

Q: Tell us what life was like at Emerson High School?

A: Emerson High School was just south of UCLA. It was between Wilshire Boulevard and Santa Monica, so we were really in the shadows of UCLA, and near University High School. Although I went to the University of Southern California, I grew up in the shadows of UCLA. I thought we should mention that the main reason I went to USC, after I came back out of service, was the coach there, Dean Cromwell. He was a very renowned coach and, although I was a native Californian with opportunities to go to many different colleges, I chose USC because of Dean.

Q. Before we get into your competitive career, tell me about your family and your childhood.

A: Well, now, you have to realize you are talking to someone who competed in the '48 Games, so we are going back as far as my parents, a long, long time ago. My mother was from Missouri, my father was from Idaho, and I don't think sports were a very big item in their particular lives. I do not know if they had any particular athletic skills. Dad and I used to play catch and baseball. He could throw a ball, and throw it pretty hard, but as far as quickness or ability to jump or play football, or basketball or tennis or anything, it was never demonstrated in our lifetime. I actually was picked out of a junior high school gym class, by Mr. Turley, as a person who had some potential as an athlete. So, he is the one who sort of set me in track and field, much to the disappointment of my father, who was an avid baseball fan. I liked baseball, and he thought I was fairly skilled in it.

Q: What was your elementary school like?

A: It was a normal elementary school for the '30s. We had a playground and the classrooms held 35 students.

Q: Was there any physical training or physical fitness?

A: Not really, there was a 30-minute exercise period for which the teacher was responsible. The only athletics occurred before school. We arrived at school early, checked out a ball and bat or something like that, so we could play over the line and games of that nature. There was nothing organized from a physical improvement point of view.

Q: Could you describe the game over the line for us?

A: It is just a game of baseball that you can play with three people. You pitch to your own teammates and you have to hit the ball up over the line, which is between second base and third base. If you hit over that line, it is considered a single. If you can make it to first without the ball being thrown back over the line, you would get a home run.

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: I had one sister, who is five years younger than myself, who went to UCLA.

Q: Was Emerson High School your first opportunity to participate in sport?

A: Yes it was.

Q. Tell us about it.

A: It was nothing that's organized like sport is today. I mean, we had competitions such as track and field once a year, which was interclass competition. We also played flag football, or we had relay races, or things of that type.

Q: For the races, did they mark the grass, or did they have strings going down between the lanes?

A: It was just a dirt playground, and we just had a finish tape. They started us off at one particular point, and we probably didn't even take a crouch start at that particular time.

Q: When did you learn that you could run fast?

A: Well, according to Mr. Turley, that was about in the eighth grade. He was the one who told me that I had potential. He didn't talk to me as much as he talked to Jim Pursell, my high school track coach at University High School. He'd call Jim and talk to him, and when I went into high school, I was regarded as a potential track athlete. When I arrived at high school, Mr. Pursell was very persuasive and persuaded me to select track over baseball.

Q: Was Mr. Turley also your teacher?

A: He was my physical education teacher in junior high school, and I guess he saw that I had a certain amount of inherent speed, whether we were playing football or flag football. Apparently, I exhibited some kind of quickness that might indicate the fact that I had potential in that sport.

Q. Describe the high school. Did it have its own track?

A: It was a major high school located in West Los Angeles. It had a complete sports program. We were part of what we called the Western League, which competed against schools like Hollywood, Fairfax, Hamilton, Venice, L.A.

Q: Beverly Hills?

A: No, that was in a separate school district. But, with that, you had formal competitions in track and field, baseball, basketball, gymnastics, and so we had a fairly organized sports program. I think the Western League, in Los Angeles, probably had some of the more competent coaches in Southern California who were interested in teaching in the Los Angeles school district. When I look back through my life, I realize how fortunate we were. There were some extremely fine men, and I can't speak enough for my high school coach, Jim Pursell, who had a tremendous impact on my life, both because of his competitiveness and the example he set within the community and for the students.

Q: When was track season?

A: We started basically in the second semester about February and went until June. We didn't devote an awful lot of time; maybe two practice meets with somebody else within the city. Then for those people who performed well enough in league finals, we also had a city championship. For some of the athletes, the season could be extended a couple of weeks by competing in league, and then if you were successful we competed in the all-city championships in Los Angeles. They were usually held in the Coliseum. It was a big thrill for a youngster to go to the Coliseum.

Q: When you arrived in high school, did you know any track and field techniques at all?

A: The only thing I knew was the way to the gym. We were classified according to components of weight, age and height. At that time, my first year as a 10th grader, I was 'B' component, and so in my first meet, or so, I competed as a 'B' classification, rather than 'A' or varsity. I did well in my competitions, so Coach Pursell moved me to varsity. The only limitation to being a 'B' component was being limited to only one 220-yard dash or race in a competition.

Q: That was the rule?

A: Yes, and I could either run the 220-flat or I could run a leg on the relay team. I could not run two 220-yard dashes, or runs, in an afternoon.

Q: Tell me about learning the techniques of running in high school.

A: Well, that is a slow and arduous process. When you start from absolutely zero knowledge on it, you have to depend on your coach, who was very, very patient and basically never flooded me with an awful lot of information. I think the first thing we worked on was a general conditioning type of program. Once he found out how much work I could tolerate, the training was adjusted. Early in the career, the thing that you learned first was techniques and starting, and at that time we were converting from holes to blocks.

Q: What were holes?

A: You just dig a hole in the ground for footing to block your feet so you don't slip, and it gives you something to push against

Q: What would you use as a tool for digging?

A: Oh, just a little old trowel, and anything else that was available.

Q: Would you go to the track meet with a trowel?

A: No, the point I am making is that it was a time of transition from holes to starting blocks. Some, who were a little senior to me, liked to run from holes, and they were coming into where they were basically using a starting block. Some of the sprinters who were seniors, such as Johnny Peetes, liked to start from holes. He was our idol when I was a freshman and he was a senior in high school, and we learned to accelerate out of the block as rapidly as possible. The coach works with you on such things as, how far forward you lean, where your hands are spread, where the pressure points are on your feet, and how high your hips are. The coach attempts to teach you to react to the firing of a gun. After that, it is just a matter of practice. You make sure that you are toeing straight ahead rather than toeing out, lifting your knees up forward and using your arms. When I was a senior, he actually taught me to relax through the middle part of the race, and the 200 yards, which we call the float. That relaxation starts at 10-15 yards, and then you learn to cultivate that until you can just about float or run in a relaxed state at maximum speed, or nearly maximum speed, for nearly a 100 yards. That means you've broken your race down to the start: the first 60 yards where you accelerate without any concern about use of energy; and then the next 100 yards you run in a relaxed mode; and the last 60 yards you give it all you can to get home in a reasonable style. Although it sounds simple to train the body to perform in a more or less patterned way, it does take quite a bit of practice. You have to be under the watchful eye of someone who knows how to teach you the correct methods, because if you are practicing something wrong, practice makes perfect, and if it's wrong, it's only going to be doubly wrong if you keep practicing. It is not going to enhance your performance. Jim was a good technician.

Q: He was a good fundamental coach?

A: In a broader sense than most coaches were. I have heard of very few high school sprinters who had a coach who would rake out or screen off a lane where you would run maybe a 180. Or, in fact, at one time even, 200 yards, and measure your stride to make sure that your left leg and your right leg are comparable in striding and that you are not over compensating or ending up with a gallop. He also looked at the position of the foot as it hits on the track to make sure that you are toeing straight ahead. I wasn't particularly, and through his insistence, I even walked from class to class making sure that I toed straight ahead.

Q: How were your toes pointing then?

A: They were pointing out. If you point and move your toe straight ahead with each step you've made, you've gained an inch. When you think of the number of steps you take in a 100 or 220 yards, coupled with the fact that you can gain a half inch or an inch each time by toeing straight ahead with the same leg speed and same length of stride, you realize that that's what increases your performance and makes you a better sprinter. It sounds very mundane, but it makes a lot more sense than trying to do something superhuman in physical development or physical build up.

Q. Give me a day in your life in high school.

A: I don't know how to even approach that type of a thing other than, you know, we lived about a mile and a half or two miles, maybe a little further than that, from University High School. We did not have a bus system, except for the kids who came from the Palisades. I walked from the Westwood area to University High School, which would probably take me 45 minutes. I had the basic, academic courses

that most of the students had. There was a track and field class, our last period in class, which I think was seventh period. It was devoted to physical education skills for your sport. We trained in that period for maybe an hour and a half and then we would shower and walk on home. Those of us who had aspirations for going on to college, would take those basically core classes that were necessary to be admitted to a college or university. You know you associate with a group of kids that were basically your class and it was a super environment. We had a mixed up group. We, being in West Los Angeles, had a large Japanese population, and a Spanish or Mexican population, and so we had a lot of diverse friends. We had a lot of fun.

Q: What would you go through when you trained in seventh period?

A: We went through a basic warm-up-type drill. There was a series of exercises for stretching and flexibility. It was nothing like the extent that is being used today. We ended up running wind sprints to make sure that we were loose enough to run whatever distance events that he wanted us to compete. The schedule was basically very simple. We had a special events as the week went along. We would do our heavier work, or longer work, in the first part of the week, like on a Monday or Tuesday, where you would run maybe two 220s back to back, or you would run a 300 or a 330. As the week progressed, the distance become shorter and shorter until it came out to basically a Wednesday, where you would take the short starts and as many of those as he thought you could tolerate, which might be only 15 or 20. You'd take starts that would run maybe 20, 30, 40 yards, depending on what he wanted you to do, and then we would have a day off. All of our track meets in the city were held on Friday. His philosophy was heavy work on Monday, and, if necessary, on Tuesday, the quicker work on Wednesday, or Tuesday and Wednesday, if desired, and he felt that your endurance could be maintained and your speed could be sharpened.

Q: You didn't go through hell week?

A: As a freshman, when you were issued with uniforms, the seniors received the new uniforms, the freshman got the old ones with the holes and things. I was fortunate, I ran my first couple of races as a 'B,' and I was moved to varsity when Johnny Peetes ended up getting hurt. I ended up winning a couple of races, and as a result of that, even though I was a 10th grader, the seniors kept off my back. I didn't have any problems as far as the freshman-senior stigma was concerned.

Q: Describe your uniforms.

A: They were just plain old gray sweats with University across the front. The running suit was silk type of material for a pant, and a knitted blue jersey with just a large 'U' with wings on the front of it. I'll be candid with you, as a young man of 10th grade, there was a great deal of pride when I was issued my first suit. I was a part of that team. When you did letter you were permitted to buy a letterman's sweater, and that's really worthy of recognition in sport. Sometimes, if you were going to a meet at some other school, you would put your sweatshirt on as you got on the bus, or something like that, but you really did not wear that uniform off-campus. We took it home every week and had it washed, because, at that time there were no laundries. Your mom did your washing, and the coach insisted that those suits were washed once a week.

Q: Were your parents proud of you?

A: I think that my father was extremely disappointed that I elected to go out for track and field. He

wanted me to play baseball. After my freshman year, when I started to have a little success, I think he realized that I had made a wise decision. Dad might have seen me run once in high school, but when I ran locally at the university, he attended all the meets and was very, very pleased.

Q: Was your mother more interested in your academic progress?

A: No, I think she is the one that couldn't understand why you'd get down in a line and then try to outrun somebody else. She thought that was a little bit of foolishness.

Q: I want to get back to the Japanese. Did they go to the internment camps while you were in high school?

A: I graduated in 1943. But a lot of those were people that we buddied around with. If they didn't go into the military, their parents ended up in Manzanar, where the internment camp was. There was so much uncertainty as to who was doing what to whom. Manzanar did not seem to be totally an internment type of a thing.

Q: I was interested in the Japanese memory because they seemed to participate in a lot of sports. There were quite a few in baseball and basketball. Did they have separate leagues in Los Angeles?

A: In Los Angeles? Absolutely not. They were just a member of the high school, like we were. Bobby Fujioka was a great shortstop on our baseball team. You certainly didn't find many of them as shot putters. You found a lot of the Japanese as sprinters. Some of them were in basketball as guards. You found a lot of the Mexican fellows, who might be considerably heavier than the Japanese, would be the linemen for football. There was nothing that was segregated in regards to nationalities. The only breakup that we had, and you would see that the Japanese had a heavier concentration in the 'B' and 'C' classification, because they were smaller than many of the other people. But if you had athletic ability, like in baseball, where it made very little difference if you were the shortstop, or third baseman, or an outfielder, or something like that, and you are small in height. You could play varsity ball, particularly after you were out of the 10th grade. But your 'B' and your 'C' football teams had a larger percentage of Oriental men in them than the varsity, basically because of their size.

Q: There were Hispanics in your high school as well?

A: Correct.

Q: Were there any Afro-Americans?

A: In my senior year there were a couple that came into school. West Los Angeles has a great concentration of nurseries and agricultural area, and that attracted a number of the Japanese. Mexican students just filtrated into that general area.

Q: Name your rivals in high school.

A: Oh, that was my own teammate, Tony Fetto. I think we ran one-two through the whole dual meet. Tony went off into the service and, as I did after school. For some reason, he did not compete in college.

Q: Were there state competition in high school?

A: None whatsoever. City was the highest level.

Q: Tell me about winning the relays.

A: Not the way we did it! In high school we ran an eight-man mile, where every man ran 220 yards. So, when you think of a high school, even though we had a fairly good-sized high school, you had to find eight people on that track team that would run 220 yards. There wasn't a great deal of skill or art in it. There was, you know, the coach who gave us a general understanding of how to pass the baton. We didn't do it like Dean had us do it against City, where you put your arm up on your hip. We ran the pass similar to the way they do it today.

Q: That is?

A: The hand is just straight down and to the back of you. The thing he stressed more than anything else was to make sure you had a mark placed so that when the oncoming athlete crossed that mark you started. The eight-man mile relay was run more on each individual performance than it was on the technique of passing the baton. You could certainly lose the race by faulty baton passing, but I don't think any schools in the Western Conference were well known for their baton pass. You can't learn track by just reading a book. It is something that you have to do and that you have to practice. Before I graduated from the university, I could use that float as an indication of my physical fitness. If I could take and run a 220 straight away, and run that first 220 under 21 seconds, turn around, and walk back up that straight away, and run another 220 back to back, and run that second one in under 21 seconds, I knew I was in real good physical condition. So, I used that, not only then in developing an extended float or relaxation phase, because I only sprinted 60 yards, and then carried that for the rest of that distance. If I could do that one in under 21 seconds, and then come back and run under 21 seconds, I knew I had my speed, and I knew I had my endurance. If I feel mentally confident, I'm fairly sharp. I did not let emotions detract from my warm-up. I did the same thing each time, even though I felt I might be warm or I might be ready, and if I hadn't completed my exercises, I did not let that interfere with me. I did the same thing and was able to take as many of the emotions out of my calculation as I possibly could.

Q: When did you get the idea that you may go on to college? Was that always a goal of yours?

A: I think a lot of the environment at University High School was probably academic. It was more of an academically involved high school than many schools might be. I think if you had any academic potential, they steered you to an academic curriculum. I think by the time that I really felt that I wanted to go to the university, or I had academic or athletic capability to go to the university, I was already involved in an academic course of study.

Q: Had your parents attended college?

A: I was the first one in our family to attend. My father was a lineman for the Bureau of Power and Light in West Los Angeles. I think my parents were extremely pleased that I went to college. I went to the university on the GI Bill. Jim Pursell took me over to SC, and 2 1/2 years later I walked into Mr. Cromwell's office, totally unannounced, after separating from service. He looked up from his paper

work and he said, “Mel, It’s nice to see you back.” I ended up going through school and getting my bachelor’s, my master’s degree on the GI Bill. I had missed graduation from high school because Jim Pursell decided I should compete in the national track and field championships back in Randalls Island, New York.

Q: Run by whom?

A: The AAU. At that particular time, it seemed that there were about four or five athletes in Los Angeles who had done the same thing: Al Lawrence out of Glendale, Roland Sink out of Pasadena, Zan Meyers who was a sprinter. I think he was out of Glendale. Jerry Shipke, who was a shot putter and a footballer, was out of Anaheim. That conflicted with graduation, the prom, the whole bit.

Q: How did you feel about that?

A: Well, you know you are torn. It is quite an honor to have all of the students in school chip in to send you back to compete in the nationals. I represented the West Los Angeles YMCA. If you didn’t want to go, you really couldn’t turn it down.

Q: How did this all come about? Did you run for the YMCA? You couldn’t represent your high school in the AAU?

A: You had to represent someone else. Why and how I represented the West Los Angeles YMCA, I don’t know. I was given a shirt and a pair of pants and was registered as West Los Angeles YMCA, and so we got on the train and off we went.

Q: Who came up with this idea of raising the money to send you to the nationals? How did you hear about it?

A: Basically, I was told by the coach that the school was raising money to send me back to compete in the nationals, if I so desired. You know it was by conscription. All of a sudden you’ve decided, you are on the train, and off you go.

Q: How did they raise the money?

A: They didn’t. In essence they passed the hat. They just collected it among all the students in the high school. They didn’t have fund raising. They did not sell cookies. I don’t remember or know how much money they really raised. They bought my ticket and paid for all my food and my lodgings. I came back and I had some of their money left. I know I gave it to the YMCA.

Q: Tell me about the train ride. Was it the first time you had been across country?

A: Oh, well, in something like a train, yes. We rode all the way through and changed trains in Chicago. The highlight of the whole thing was that we became fast friends with a number of these people for years. You know, Al Lawrence, Rollie Sink and I ended up on teams together at SC. Of course, I saw Jerry Shipke for a number of years after that.

Q: Did the coach go with you?

A: I guess the coach was from Glendale High School. I don't remember his name. He was very much of a gentleman. He was the coach of Van Nuys and very, very much of a gentleman. It was an unbelievable experience for a senior in high school who really had never been out of town. You walk by the locker room and see Davis, the most renowned sprinter at that time.

Q: Where was he from?

A: He ended up at the University of California, from the San Joaquin Valley. But when you saw him and Leonard Strand; and then Lesters, the high jumper; Dutch Warmerdam, the pole vaulter; you stood there in awe because you were at the same meet that they were.

Q: I want to hear about the track meet then. Were you excited?

A: Probably scared would be a better description of it. Oh, I think you are awed by the magnitude and the quality of the athletes, and I think if anytime you feel like a senior in high school, its then. You feel like a boy.

Q: Do you remember the actual race?

A: The only real part of it that I remember was in the 220. Buddy Young won the 100 that year, and we knew it basically was no contest. He ran the race by himself, so to speak. But I think George Weedham was out of Georgetown, and I could have the names mixed up, schools wrong, but I know in the 220 I felt I was leading it about 100 and I don't know, 30 or 40 yards. My god, this is something, and all of a sudden George Weedham came by me like more and more that I was sitting at a bus stop. I realized then that he was a different caliber of sprinter. It was a maturing type of a thing. To be very candid with you, it was unbelievably thrilling and awesome, and again, scary to be in the same room, the same locker room with these guys who were recognized world-caliber athletes. I was just a senior in high school, truly in over my head. I think most of us at one time appreciated that very completely before our competition. It was super, super, super.

Q: Did you do any sightseeing?

A: I am sure we did. I think we were more awe struck than anything else. You know, just being in New York, just riding across country on the train, just eating in restaurants, and things like that was probably sufficient. Later on we ended up doing a lot more extensive sightseeing downtown. At that time, we were in a very embryonic age and it was hard to know.

Q: When you came home, did you get a hero's welcome?

A: No, school was out.

Q: Did Dean Cromwell approach you at all about going to Europe?

A: In the conversation that we had when I met him, when Mr. Pursell took me over there, we discussed going to what was the V-12 program, which was a college ROTC-type program. I would come out as a naval line officer, and would have the opportunity to compete and go on to school. Now, a couple, or three, of the fellows went ahead and did that. Roland Sink did it, Al Lawrence did it, and also Jerry

Shipke did it. I elected not to do that.

Q: Why?

A: Well, I wasn't sure I wanted to be a line officer, and I wasn't sure I wanted, at that time, to be going to the university with the war going on. So I went and took the test and went into naval aviation.

Q: Tell me about your war experience.

A: Well, it was all stateside. I ended up being an enlisted man for six or eight months. The rest of my time I was in a flight-training program. I had finished primary and I had 100 and some odd hours, and I was waiting to go to Corpus or Pensacola, and then, basically, the war was over. They sent us home on leave until they decided what they were going to do with us. I was about three months from my commission. At that particular time, I called my folks and had them check to see what my status was at SC. They were going to move from a quarter system to a semester system. The Navy gave us three options. We could go ahead. We could have what they called separation from service, not that you are discharged, but you were separated, they could call you back at any time. We could complete our training. Or, take our training plus two years of active duty. SC was moving off that quarter system, so I was separated in September. Shirl and I got married in October and I started at the University of Southern California in November. So, the scheduling was just right.

Q: November. They started the semester in November?

A: Yes. That is because they were on a quarter system during the war, and then they were moving to a semester system.

Q: Where did you meet your wife?

A: I met her in junior high school. We have known one another a long time.

Q: Did you have any second thoughts about choosing SC?

A: The track program at SC so overshadowed other programs. If you think that you could somewhere fit in the realm of former athletes like Payton Jordan or Frankie Wykoff, or people like that. I had a lot of upset friends because we grew up in the shadow of UCLA. I didn't know how successful I'd be. I did not compete when I was in the service. I was out of it for two years, particularly in the cadet program. I know they had three flights and things like that in football. Track and field really wasn't one of those areas. I was in training for the better part of my service career. When I entered the university I was one of the earliest servicemen to be admitted. There really wasn't a freshman coach my first year, as everyone could compete varsity. My first track year was 1946. I did not compete particularly strong. I think I ran 9.7 of 121 runners, something like that, in the 220. Then I had a certain amount of leg trouble because of being inactive.

Q: Did you learn some new techniques in that year at least?

A: Some. Beamon, of course, was a fine fundamentalist. He had an educated eye, which is truly one of the secrets in coaching. He would stop an athlete, almost, and picture form, frame by frame by frame,

to be able to identify those flaws that an athlete has. So he could help me in my starts. But there wasn't anything real drastic, it was more or less getting back into the routine, getting yourself physical again from almost a period of less concentrated track and field activities. It had been a matter of adapting to an academic environment. When you entered the university there was never any doubt in your mind that you were going to graduate.

Q: Did the GI Bill pay for all your schooling?

A: Yes, and the reason for it is that you had a certain dollar amount and you had certain amounts of time. Master's, I attended nine months and I had 20 some odd months in service. My senior year I took some graduate work that was applicable to my master's. So, between my GI Bill and the State of California, they paid for my bachelor's and my master's degree, which was an unbelievable benefit. It is just a matter of dovetailing your semesters and making sure you to graduate before you ran out of GI Bill.

Q: What was your major?

A: Education. I wanted to go into coaching, and that is what I did for the first eight or 10 years out of school; and I went down and did it. I taught at Long Beach City College and I taught at the University of Wichita. I coached at the University of Wichita for a year, and we decided we didn't like the Midwest, so we came back to California.

Q: Let us hear about your first track meet at USC.

A: It was probably against Occidental. Payton Jordan was at Oxy, at the time, as track coach, and SC used to have a traditional early meet. I do not remember exactly. You had to lead a pretty balanced life, or you weren't going to survive. You weren't going to be successful in school. You weren't going to be financially stable with the family, or you weren't going to be successful in sports. The only concern I had then was to be in shape to represent the school well.

Q: When did you get to the point that you started to realize you were not just a good athlete, but an outstanding athlete?

A: About my sophomore year. In my sophomore year I ended up running a 9.4 for the 100 yards, which equaled the world record. I ran 9.7 and 21.1 as a freshman.

Q: Did Coach Cromwell give you an indication that you had more potential?

A: Oh, yes. He was really encouraging. I think he felt that I was a pretty competent sprinter. At the time, to be honest with you, we had records on Bovard Field. Dean had to time you. He wouldn't give it to you unless you earned it through dedication, performance and titles, and all the rest of the stuff. I probably ran 9.5 as a freshman.

Q: Who was your biggest rival at SC?

A: Jim O'Reilly, out of Beverly Hills High School, who was a well-known sprinter, had come back from being a marine pilot. George Beaman was a sprinter at SC during the war, and I ended up having better

performances than George had. There is an element of doubt until you run against someone like Jim O'Reilly. When you are starting to run world record times, you don't have too many people in the school who are really backing you up. If you knew Ronnie Frazier set a real explosive start, you worked with him on your starts. Norm Stocks or Cliff Bourland or Yubie Kearns, Wallace Delouche, you'd use for your 300s or whatever it might be. You have a cadre of people that you can adjust your program to, depending on what you are trying to achieve in your workout.

Q: You're a sophomore at SC and you are looking at the world's record. What did that do for your ego?

A: I don't try to down play it at all. I was thrilled to death. But by that time we had Susan. [daughter]. We are going through school. We had a part-time job. We had all of these other things. I guess if I lived today, there is no way I could conduct my life the way that I conducted it then. Basically, our life is in perspective, and there are certain things we had to achieve, and goals we had to do, and so it was very fundamental.

Q: What was your wife doing while you were setting world records?

A: We had known one another since the eighth grade. It was no problem. To be very candid with you, we were attempting to survive. We had a nice little apartment, of all places in, Beverly Hills, \$35 a month.

Q: What kind of part-time job?

A: Well, I was very fortunate. Of all things, I worked as a shoe cobbler over in West Los Angeles. The nice thing about that is Bob Showalter, the shoe shop owner, would leave shoes to be soled and heeled. I was paid piecework.

Q: How did you learn that?

A: That's right, I needed work and we needed some money, and he was an acquaintance of a friend of ours, and I told him what I was after. He taught me to sole shoes, and put on heels, and do this type of repairing. So I did, and I'd work on Saturdays, and if I wasn't competing, I could work in the evening. I could go there in the evening, open the shop and do my work, and then he would pay me so much for what I did. And so at that particular time, my life wasn't very glamorous. It was very, very fundamental. It was very routine: going to school, trying to pass the courses, trying to make enough money to supplement our GI Bill. We were trying to move on to the next phase of our lives to compete in sport.

Q: Tell us about the intercollegiate rivalries and the track meets that you must have competed in.

A: Well, I don't know about great stories, but being crosstown, you know, a number of the people that I competed with in school ended up going to UCLA. In fact, I think it was 1949, in the nationals, that we took three guys that graduated from University High School: Craig Dixon, Taylor Lewis and myself. You'd take our points that we won in the nationals. Craig was a high-low hurdler at UCLA. Taylor Lewis was a discuss thrower at UCLA. And, I was a sprinter at USC. And, if we'd taken our points, we would have won the national collegiate. We were all out of University High School. If I went to

UCLA, we would have won the nationals. But University High School, basically, in 1949, won the nationals. The highest we went in high school was the city championships. We did not leave the city limits of Los Angeles. We had a City Coast Conference track and field meet, which included as far north as Washington, and of course, Bob Mathias was at Stanford at the time.

Q: Let's skip back to your sophomore year in college. I want to hear about some of those track meets. The first big one, when you probably knew that you were going to break a world's record.

A: You know, we had people we were competing against, like Lloyd LaBeach of Panama and Herb McKenley, who ended up attending the University of Illinois. In 1947, we had a dual meet at the Coliseum with the University of Illinois, a major event. The big competition was between Herb McKenley and I in the 220 event. He pulled an American record the week before. It was a great match up dual. We drew 47,000 people to that track meet.

Q: At the Coliseum?

A: At the Coliseum, at \$2.50 a head. It ended up being a pretty outstanding dual meet, and, fortunately, I beat Herb in the 220 and I won the 100, too. I think the name of the man who I defeated in the sprint was Mathis. He also placed in the nationals. He was a recognized 100-yard dash man.

Q: Was Illinois known as a big track school?

A: Yes, at that time they had an outstanding miler and they had an outstanding football team, track team. They had good press.

Q: Did you continue to have dual meets with Illinois?

A: No, that was the only one. I wanted to beat Herb McKenley in the 200, and that, basically, was my job to do, and so you take it on as a task. One of the most enjoyable parts of the sport itself is the camaraderie that you have with your teammates. I was concerned about Herb because he either held the world record for the quarter or equaled the world record at the quarter mile at that particular time. I knew he was strong at the end. In the Coliseum, you run out of the tunnel into the straightaway, and when you break into daylight, you are about 60 yards out. I knew I wanted to be ahead of him at that particular point, and so, I was. I ended up coming home and in an unbelievable time. I ran 20.4 in the Coliseum, which was a slow track. That was really a thrill to be able to do that well. My performance was good, which made me feel good, but I think also Herb was tired from the week before, too. He could have performed a lot better than he did that particular day, but that didn't matter. I won and he was second, and consequently we ended up with the points and they didn't. Those types of things developed a lot of rivalry, and a lot of fun.

Q: Would you get dressed at USC or would you go straight to the Coliseum?

A: No, we went straight to the Coliseum.

Q: Would the coach give you a pep talk?

A: Not really, that is not Dean's style. He always called everybody champ. You know if you are a

champ or a chump, and if you were a chump, he wouldn't talk to you. To put it in perspective, when you talk about sophomore, junior or senior, our team really wasn't sophomore, junior or senior because it was made up of mostly of people who were out of the service. So, we had been around on our own for a couple years. If I spent more than an hour and fifteen minutes on workout, I felt I was wasting my time because I had other things to do. You conducted yourself more like your business.

Q: Was there a lot of recognition for you at USC in track and field?

A: Yes. Recognition not only at SC, but in the *L.A. Times*, *Examiner* and things of that type. I mean, Paul Zimmerman, who was the sports editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, and Braven Dyer, as well as the school paper, always had real fine coverage of our events and about the number of people that were at the dual meet. We had good participation at all of our dual meets. Basically, it was amazing the number of people that watched practice. Track and field, at that time, was a very integral part of school activities. The one thing we didn't lack truly was recognition for the sport at the time. We were there probably at the peak of that sport, and that was good because we didn't have to drum up a lot of interest or activity.

Q: Would people recognize you walking around campus?

A: Oh, I am sure they did. The only thing that was bad, most of us were wearing khaki trousers, a T-shirt, and there were so many of us all dressed basically the same way as we had when we got out of the service. I never felt any idolizing or hero-worship, or anything like that. We certainly didn't have any preferential treatment in classrooms. If we were off on a trip, traveling or something like that, we were given the opportunity to make up work.

Q: At which meet was it that you broke the world record?

A: Well, two world's records. I broke the world's record for the 100 in the Fresno Relays.

Q: Tell me about the Fresno Relays.

A: Well, 1948, I think. I got the 220 record in '49. That was a big meet with Lloyd LaBeach. I equaled the world record in '47 at 9.4.

Q Where was that?

A: I don't know. To be honest with you, I don't even remember where it was. I established the world's record, I know, at 9.3, Fresno, in the afternoon, against Lloyd LaBeach and that was one that had been blown up quite a bit through press and papers. Lloyd had equaled in the week or so, something before that, the 100-meter record, and so what they did, I think we had some conflict or we had some conflict in schedule running relays, and open meets, and events and things like that. So, we ran in the afternoon in Fresno. I called it a grudge race, but it was the highlight of the meet, a packed house. They sold tickets that evening again and packed the house for the rest of the track meet that afternoon. I only beat Lloyd by about six inches. It was a very difficult race because Lloyd had a technique of rolling.

Q: What do you mean by rolling?

A: Where you come up on your set, and you start and you stop, and then you move your body forward, just ever so slightly. If you do that, you've already got your body in motion. That gives you quite an advantage. The starter up there, at that time, was a fellow by the name of Tom Moore. He was a well-trained starter. Tom looked at Lloyd and put him against a stationary object, to make sure he wasn't moving. I think that we had something like three or four false starts where he was trying to, basically, beat the gun, and I think he probably committed all of them, but maybe one. In fact, I was so disgusted, that I was about ready to pick up and walk off. I'd had enough. I beat him by about six inches. That was really quite a thrill. I have to admit, by the time we got off on that race, I was upset. That is where he can get the advantage, if you are upset. We had a great deal of difficulty getting that race off, and I think had there been a starter other than Moore, it probably never would have been really a fair race. You would not have been about to hold Lloyd to a legitimate start. So that was, of course, quite a thrill, and then, all of a sudden there was two who could break a world's record. Everybody had you on the clock, and if there was an element of doubt, you were not given the world's record. Everything was measured. I wouldn't be surprised if there wasn't a humidity calculator.

Q: What was your time?

A: 9.3. The year before equaling the world record, then to have one all by myself is very much a thrill.

Q: How did you do in the 220?

A: I think we ended up breaking the world's record in the four-man half-relay. I'll tell you where I established or tied the world record. It was in Modesto. The Modesto Relays. I ran 9.4, equaling the world record. The next year at Fresno, I established the new world's record, and then the following year at UCLA, I established the world's record for the 220. Then we qualified for the Olympic Games.

Q: How did you do that?

A: Well, you qualify the first cut by winning the national collegiates, which were at the University of Minnesota.

Q: Did you win?

A: I won the 220, so I was eligible to run in the Olympic qualifying heats in Evanston, Illinois. I qualified in the 100 and 220. They take that and the winners of the AAU, and then you run in the Olympic qualifying meet, and I think that was in Evanston, Illinois.

Q: How many of you went back to Chicago?

A: You mean out of the university? I don't know, probably 10.

Q: Were you thrilled to be selected to be in contention for the Olympics Games?

A: Oh, sure! I mean that was one of the things that you were pointing to. Dean Cromwell was appointed track coach for the 1948 Games, so that culminated his career, because, after that, he was going to retire. When you are in school and participating, and there is such a thing as the Olympics, you really look forward to it. And at that time, it was common to only participate in one Olympiad.

After you graduate from the university, you know you are going to work, and so you are not going to continue on like a lot of the athletes do today. It was a one shot deal, so you would like to make it, and so consequently, it certainly was a big deal to both qualify in Evanston, and, of course, win the nationals in Minnesota.

Q: Did you run on cinder at all, by the way?

A: No, basically clay. All clay up here. But Barney Ewell, formerly out of Penn State, was probably the best runner in the world at that particular time, and he was 30-31 years of age. I watched Barney very, very closely to see the way he ran that turn because we just basically never ran a turn here. Barney, still to this day, resents this situation. We ended up with a conversation and he indicated to me that the way he ran a turn was different to the way we did it. Barney ended up moving his kick about 10 yards before the turn. I talked with him a little bit and he confirmed that. I then decided to move mine back another 10 yards. I got an extra 10 yards on him. When we were standing at the podium in the Olympics and I thanked him for teaching me to run the turn. His comments weren't really too nice! I picked that up by watching him run. They, or he, ran that turn differently to the way we ran it in California.

Q: Did you discuss this with the coach?

A: I don't remember if I did or not. I was 23-24 years of age at that time, and you don't lean on the coach the same way as you did when you were in high school.

Q: How did they select people for the relays?

A: All you do is take four sprinters, the top four sprinters. The four fastest. So we ended up with Eddie Cromwell, who held the world record in the 60. He qualified as the fourth, took the fourth place in the sprints, and the result of that he ended up being the fourth man. He did not run the relay in London with us because he had an asthmatic attack. They substituted Lorenzo Wright, a broad jumper or a long jumper, to take his spot. Barney, Harrison Dillard, myself and Eddie Cromwell were on the relay team.

Q: Did you go to London on the USS America?

A: Correct. It was just outstanding. It was the first time I'd done that. The accommodations were outstanding. The camaraderie was unbelievable. For a Californian, it was very, very difficult to train because we weren't accustomed to running on boards.

Q: Was it rocky?

A: Some, the crossing wasn't bad at all. But Eddie and some of us decided that the only way to control ourselves, because the type of food and the amount of food they served, was to watch what we ate. So, we watched our weight, trying to control our consumption of food through weight control. It was basically just about a week of nontraining. It wasn't in any way a disciplined training type of a program.

Q: Was there lots of socialization on the boat trip? Did you have dances?

A: Well, what they ended up trying to do was restrict the athletes by setting curfews. We thought that the AAU officials just wanted to party. We were older and independent, however. We didn't particularly abide by the curfew. We certainly did not imbibe in alcohol beverages or have any reason for them to send us home.

Q: Describe London.

A: Well, we were up in a small community called Uxbridge, where they really planned the defense of London. It was a military base and we were four to a room. Probably the biggest fallacy of all is, in that particular time, is they shipped American food over, including Helms Olympic bread. They hired British cooks, which is really not the best thing to do. That lasted a few days, and then they replaced the cooks with people that served more than just fish and chips. London was very severely rationed as far as butter, eggs, oils, meats. Soap was something that was invaluable. Candy as well. The first few days we went in to qualify, we rode the Underground.

Q: You paid your own way?

A: I still have it somewhere, but I have a pass, which is an Olympic pass, for the Underground. The only problem is that you are standing up all the way to the stadium and so the coaches finally decided that is not the best way for the athletes. They chartered some buses, and then they started a shuttle service from Uxbridge.

Q: So how long were you there before the Opening Ceremonies?

A: It had to be a week or so. It wasn't a long period of time. But I know that we were out of there in time so that we could come back. Some of us wanted to come back to the States, so we could finish working during that summer. The Games did not take the total summer for us. We had a couple weeks or so, not a long period of time, but enough to become quasi-acclimated. And yet, we weren't acclimated, because when we started the competitions they had a heat spell.

Q: Did you work out once or twice a day before the Opening Ceremonies?

A: Basically, once a day at Uxbridge.

Q: Did you participate in the Opening Ceremony?

A: No, and the reason for that was, anybody that was competing the first day was not permitted to participate in the Opening Ceremonies. We watched it on TV. They had a lot of coverage.

Q: Black and white?

A: Those of us that were competing sat in the lounge and watched it on black and white television. We ended up running the first two heats the following day for the 100 meters.

Q: Describe walking in with all those people from around the world in Wembley Stadium.

A: I guess one of the things is that you know some of the people, but you don't know all of the people.

It's an interesting experience, because even in college you pretty much know your competition, or in the AAU, you know your competition. You don't know these people and you really can't look and see anything and distinguish whether it is good, bad or indifferent. You know, in all Olympic Games, because they send so many participants, that for the first couple of days the heats are not particularly stimulating. They have an off-track which is outside the stadium. You warmed up in it, and then they brought you into the stadium, and you sat really in kind of a holding tank. Shortly before your event you're permitted to get on to the track.

Q: Describe the track.

A: It was a cinder type of thing. It had been a dog track. They had just a short, short period of time, prior, to refurbish it.

Q: How did you feel competing on cinders, if you had not competed on cinders before?

A: Well, we did to a certain degree. If you went to the Midwest there were fast tracks and slow tracks. Modesto was considered a fast track. Fresno was considered a fast track. Coliseum was considered a slow track. Bob Mathias was in the room right next to where I was, and there were four to a room.

Q: Do you remember the finals of the sprint?

A: Of the 100-meter? Well, I sure do, because I ran fifth.

Q: Tell me about that.

A: Well, that was a maturing day for me, I'll tell you.

Q: You had the world record going in there. There was great expectation.

A: Absolutely. I knew I was in a little bit of trouble to begin with because I was a little down in weight, which is an indicator.

Q: Why were you down in weight after coming off the boat? Was it the English cooking?

A: No, it was basically the heat and maybe a little bit of the English cooking. But I think it was the heat and the humidity, and the fact that you're in the Olympic Games. I probably, as a human being, did not adapt as well as I should of, or would have adapted a year or two later. There was something that was just a little bit out of sync. Barney Yule should have won it, but he looked over at me and saw that he had beaten me, and then threw up his hands prior to getting to the tape, and, as a result, Harrison sneaked in on the inside of him to win that particular race.

Q: Now, what do you think happened?

A: I don't know. I wasn't perky that's for sure. I don't think that I was psyched out to the fact that I knew that I wasn't going to do well. I don't think any athlete believes he's not going to do well when he's prepped for it as long as I was. As I reflect back, I came back and won the 200 a few days later, but the weather had cooled down and I had a lot more energy, and vim and vigor and vitality. I guess

the only thing that is halfway self-serving is the fact that I ran so poorly, I ran fifth. If I had just been nosed out, you know, that would have really been super, super disappointing to think that you didn't have either the ability, or the skill, or the desire to win or whatever it is to win. I was not in that particular race. I think I beat McCorquodale of Great Britain. I think he was the only person I beat in that heat, and six of us qualified.

Q: What did the coach say?

A: Not very much. When you don't do well, Dean doesn't say much. When you do well, he's pretty good. I don't think there ever was much to say. I think I was mature enough to know I had a problem. The guy I really felt bad for was old Barney, because I think Barney thought he had won it and maybe had he not looked at me, he might have won it. It was a super disappointment because 1948 would be the only Games I'd ever be in. You get one shot at it and that's really a tragedy to not perform at your best.

Q: But there must have been something in you to have enabled you to pull yourself together for the next race because you did. You were successful.

A: Well, we had one day's rest, but it started to rain right after the 100 the following day. The weather cooled down. You start feeling better. You start feeling energetic. You know you can't have lost all of your physical training in just a couple of weeks. You know you have to be fairly prime. You know you have the deep desire to win that doggone thing and you say, "I'm not going to get myself in the same box." The first three heats were not all that much, you know, all that great. It certainly would not have set any world's records. I think my time was 21.1, but that was in the mud. For me, that was a very, very slow track. It probably proves that I was in pretty good physical condition because that had to be a hard day's work compared to running on a dry track. I guess a lot of it is just saying, "Hey, you get one more shot at it. You either make it or you don't." The only thing I said to myself was that I went over and marked down on my turn where it was I was start to my kick so it would be 10 yards in front of Barney when he started his. If that sucker comes up, I'll tackle him before he gets over the line. I only beat him by six inches. So I just moved that up and I figured that when I came off the turn, I'd have about six inches on Barney and I just didn't give it back to him. It was nothing superhuman about it.

Q: Describe standing on the podium.

A: Well, I'm sure you'll hear it from everybody, the thrill of a lifetime. It was like the old saying that they put an olive wreath on your head. The moral of that story was that you were a champion for a day, and at the end of the day the olive wreath wilts and it's a new ball game. It's just like holding a world's record. If you're the only person that has that record, you feel pretty good about it. On that day, on that event, with the people that you competed with and through out the world, you're the best in that event for that particular day. It is a thrill. If you're nationalistic, or if you're in a foreign country, and you hear your flag go up, and if it doesn't bring tears to your eyes, you're not a human being.

Q: Do you remember them playing the national anthem?

A: I'm sure that I had a million thoughts go through my head. I guess I was a very dedicated person concentrating on one type of a thing. When you get involved in something like that, it is emotional. I would imagine that you would have a many, many thoughts go through your mind.

Q: Was there any doubt that you were going to run the relay, even though you hadn't done well in the 100?

A: No, and in fact, during our practices, we'd run it off in the order of Harrison Dillard running first and Lorenzo Wright running second, Barney running third and then myself.

Q: Tell me about the relay.

A: You're setting me up because you know what happened. We ran that particular relay, and again it was muddy, wet, and we decided that there way no way we could break the world or the Olympic record, so the only thing to do was run for a gold.

Q: Because it was so slow?

A: Yes, it had rained and it was muddy, and we felt that our biggest competition was the Brits, and that we could outrun each one of them individually, man for man, on the flat. We cut back our mark, which meant that the person that was coming in would overrun us and make sure that we did not disqualify on the baton pass. I guess it was between Harrison and Lorenzo Wright, if I remember right, where the judge disqualified it. He thought that they ran 22 yards and what had happened is that they had marked the penalty zone. It's 20 meters, and they had marked the penalty zone in segments of ten meters. Where they passed is actually 12 meters, and the official was looking at two lanes, judging two lanes, and when he saw that the pass was exchanged two meters over this line, they disqualified us. Had we not protested, or had not Dean Cromwell protested that day, we would have not been awarded the gold. We were told to go up to the victory stand, and we went there, and then they said, "No, you've been disqualified, the Brits had won it."

Q: How did you feel?

A: Oh, you talk about a low feeling, a sinking feeling. We just said, "Okay, you know, find out who did it." We came back to Dean and said, "You know, Coach, we had overrun every person. There's no way that we could have passed that baton in 22 meters. It had to be 12 meters." He was a little reluctant. We convinced him to make an official protest, which they did. They reviewed the film.

Q: How long did it take them to review the film?

A: It wasn't instantaneous. We never did make it to the victory stand. They ended up with the Brits being awarded the gold medal and their national anthem was played. We stood there with our hands in our pockets as spectators watching what was going on. I think it was the Italians that they took the medals from. They had awarded them the third place medal. Of course, they had to retrieve those, they gave us the gold and the Brits the silver.

Q; How did you get the medals?

A: They were mailed to us four or five months later. We didn't leave London with them.

Q: You did know you had won them and would get them sooner or later.

A: We were told that we had officially won them and that we would get the medals sooner or later. You know it was a very dramatic thing, and it was an emotional because we were caught up as a team. We were doggone better than the Brits, and we knew doggone well that we beat them, and we were upset about it. But it all worked out: we ended up with the medals, and the records were corrected. I am absolutely convinced that because of the maturity of that team, Harrison and Barney being the old men of the group at 30-31 years of age, and Lorenzo Wright saying, "Hey, you know, what really did happen?" That we were able to sit down and analyze it in a calm and more or less realistic mode. We were able to come to the conclusion that we were legal and were able to go back and convince Cromwell that it was time to make an official protest. Thank God for the inclement weather that forced us into that quote, unquote, strategy.

Q; You were absolutely positive?

A: Absolutely. I think if Dean had elected not to protest, he knew he would have been ridden out of town on a rail. I don't think he had a choice.

Q: Was there any segregation of the Afro-American athletes, like Dillard, on the way over there?

A: In what way?

Q: Did they all have the same quarters as you did?

A: I'm disappointed that the subject even comes up, because its just like going through high school with a bunch of Japanese and Mexican types. It's a way of life. I competed for six days. They had two days of qualifying for each one of the events.

Q: Do you remember having your rationing of chocolates?

A: You know, I'm a candy hound. Hershey donated a lot of chocolate, and so I decided to pay a call on some Olympic officials who were handing them out. So, we ended up with a box of Hersheys that we shared. The sports editor for the *The Examiner*, Vincent X. Flaherty, ended up getting his hand on candy. I'd come into my quarters, from time to time, and there would be three candy bars on my bunk. I would know Vincent X. had been around. Candy was very, very sparse, and so we thought we would assist the AAU in the distribution of chocolate a little bit.

Q: What did you drink? Water? Milk?

A: Water, basically. They had a lot of milk. The only thing that we did, we swiped a container of sugar from the mess hall. You know, one of these little glass things that you pour out the top. And they had Horlick's malted milk and some other malted milk type of a stand. So we gave this sugar container to that person and told him that when we came back and wanted some, to put a dash of sugar in it. When we were all through, he could keep the sugar. That's the way we sweetened our drink, by thievery.

Q: Did you eat lots of bread? Helms bread?

A: Even though you've been away from home for awhile you have a tendency to tie onto certain things.

It was absolutely delightful to have Helms bread there because that's something we'd had before. So that's something that gives you a bond back to the home. So that's probably for, at least for me, it was as much of an emotional lift as it was, you know, a tasty type of a thing.

Q: You were described by one source as being nervous, a nervous athlete. Is that true?

A: Well, yes and no. I think one of the things you have to do is keep composure. When I competed, and if I ran, let's say 200 meters or 220 yards, and I ran 20.7 points or better, for some reason I became ill. You talk about being psychological, that's all it was. I guess I wasn't 100 percent prepared to run as well as I did. I could run in somewhere, and I'd run 20.5 or something like that, and five minutes later I would be ill to my stomach. So I'd go up and be counted with the others, go behind some place and upchuck, and come back and do my thing. Now, in my senior, in my junior year, I guess it was the coach out of the University of Illinois, with whom I had a discussion. He said, "Patton, it is just emotions." For the rest of that year, I had no problems. Then, in my senior year, I forgot what he told me, and I went back to the same thing. I think the reason people thought I was nervous was that I had this finish everytime I ran, and I could run against the wind, uphill, 20.8 and I'd be fine. I could run downhill, with the wind, and I'd run 20.6 and I'd get sick. It was just a number fetish that I had, and I think a lot of people associated that with nervousness, when it was just a psychological quirk. I was thought to be standoffish before a race. I just did not want people to get to me. I did not want to get distracted. I had a tendency to work out or warm up with certain fellows, and then I would say hello to my competition, but I would not socialize very much. After the race, I would socialize.

Q: You obviously had some good training then.

A: Well, let's say it was disciplined. I don't know that it was good.

Q: Were you one of the people who went to Europe?

A: No, absolutely not. I've been very, very upset since that day with the AAU. We told them there were a number of us going through school on the GI Bill. I did not have the luxury to go compete in the Olympic Games and then take a European tour. I had to have enough money in the bank, so we were not running a negative cash flow. I had a job lined up, and so when I made the team, we were told that we had to compete in the British Empire meet, in White City, after the Olympic Games. We agreed. Then they tell us we have to go to Europe, as they could not get us transportation home. I had a job lined up in Los Angeles to work the rest of the summer to help defray our expenses. However, we had a long jumper on the team, or a broad jumper, who worked for Western Airlines, to whom we told our story. In the meantime, Sammy Lee swapped tickets with me. The men swimmers and divers had flown over by plane. We swapped tickets. He took my boat ticket. Cliff Bourland and Roy Cochran, who ran the 400-meter hurdles, and myself, and one other person, said nothing to the AAU. We left the next day.

Q: How did the AAU react?

A: I don't know. I didn't see them again after that meeting. I did not want to start the university with a negative cash flow my senior year. Some of us jumped the airplane, including Cochran and Cliff, who were on a gold medal relay team. I forget who the fourth guy was, but we had six gold medals between us.

Q: Were the British Empire Games a let down?

A: No, not at all. That was fun.

Q: Why tell us about them. Did you run the 100?

A: Oh, I'm sure I did. I really don't remember the events other than the fact that we ended up with quite a rivalry with the Brits. The thrill was that we had a shot-putter on that trip by the name of Jim Fuchs of Yale. We told the Brits we could beat their 400-meter team by running a shot-putter in the second leg. Even though Jim weighed 220 pounds and walked like a duck, he was still a very quick individual. He could run 100 yards in about 9.7 or something like that. We needled those Brits to death saying, "You guys are no competition at all." We'll run a shot-putter in the second leg and we'll still beat you. We did. Those types of things are fun.

Q: Did you have a hero's welcome when you came home?

A: When the entire team returned, the city of Los Angeles had something down on the city hall steps, which acknowledged the Olympic participants and the type of events. But again, you know, putting it in perspective, this is 1948, and so it was another day in the books, so to speak.

Q: Did you run in your senior year?

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me about your next world record.

A: Well, we ended up that year with two. We ended up with the 220 at UCLA, which had been a pretty day for me. I'd run the 100 in 9.1, which could have been a world record. They said the wind was too much. I guess 30 minutes later we ran the 220, in 20.2, and which they decided was within the limits of a world record. That was good because that would be probably be my last shot at that type of event because I never ran for records. Maybe people run for records now. At that time we didn't consider that. Probably the biggest thrill in that whole year is that we had a four-man half-mile relay, 800-meter relay, that was composed of Norm Stocks, George Pascual, another sprinter, and Ronnie Frazier, a low hurdler. When you put our best performances for the 220 yards down on paper, there was no way that we could get within a second of the world record. We broke that world's record by a full second, in 1.24 flat. It was slow by today's standards, but I think we broke it three times in eight days. To take this ragtag team that we had, and to end up with getting the record for the four-man half-mile, the four-man 800-meter relay was really a thrill. I don't think that Jesse Owens really believes that we did that. His pencil was sharp enough that he knew that the four of us couldn't run that well. But again, that's part of the camaraderie and that's part of college athletics, part of the wonderful experiences one has competing in college sports. It was a thrill.

Q: What were the three track meets at which you broke the world's record?

A: I think Fresno was one of them, and I wouldn't be surprised if Modesto was one, and the Coliseum Relays was one. They were sort of back-to-back types of things. I'll be candid with you, during my senior year I was kind of tired of meeting with the hoi polloi, and I sort of wanted the last year to be

kind of a relaxed type of thing. So I sort of stipulated that I would run only certain opens, primarily in the college environment. For example, I wouldn't run special 220s in the Coliseum. I'd rather run a four-man half-mile relay. They accommodated that, and the last year ended up being quite an enjoyable year of fellowship and camaraderie with certain successes.

Q: You had a lot of responsibility going through undergraduate school.

A: I don't think you assume it as responsibility, I mean you're married, you have a child, you're going through school, you're competing in sports. It was that type of a thing. It worked out extremely well for us. I think with that balance in life at that time, it helps you a great deal for later in life. I mean, at least you have your life in perspective, and you're not living in a false world. That's one thing that athletics does for you. I think it brings you into reality, there's winners, there's losers, there's people who strive, and there's people who are successful and there's people who fail.

Q: You're in your junior year, your senior year in college and you're taking graduate classes.

A: Right, my last semester I'm taking some graduate courses.

Q: Towards a master's degree in education?

A: Correct.

Q: Why did you think you needed a master's degree in education to be a coach?

A: Well, if you wanted to move out of coaching into administration, or something of that type, than you would need an administrative credential. I think you needed a graduate degree, and since I still had the State of California GI type thing, I figured I might as well get that when I could. I took part of my master's requirement and used those as electives towards my bachelor's degree.

Q: Are you a highly organized person?

A: I had more time than I had money. I dovetailed it when I got my general secondary credentials. I had 28 units. And when I got my master's degree, I had 28 units. I did not have one extra unit. I dovetailed all my electives to my general secondary and my master's. I think I utilized the resources I had pretty well.

Q: What about the running in Australia?

A: I was coaching at Long Beach City College. I took a few units when I was in my senior year. Then I accepted the position at Long Beach City College as their track coach. When I was working there, I went back to SC in the evening and picked up my master's, which took me, basically, two years. One day I got a call from this fellow who's an administrator with the Professional Track Association in Australia. He said that they had Lloyd LaBeach and Herb McKenley and Barney Yule. He wanted us to run an exhibition. He asked if I could run because I had not been training and I weighed 155 pounds: I used to run at 147. And I said, "Well, I could make it." And their distance, if I remember right, favored distance was 130 yards, over there, for professionals. He wanted to run some 100s, and he said he would pay me

a fee to come down there, and we'd run these exhibitions. The three of us, and three Aussies. He paid me a fee and all my expenses and transportation, and so I took a two week leave of absence from Long Beach City College, jumped on an airplane and went down there. I went to Geelong, as well as Sydney. In fact, I spent more time in Geelong than anyplace else. I ran a couple or three exhibitions down there, and ended up getting hurt because they run on grass, as you well know. Boy, the spikes they provided me with were beautiful shoes, but my goodness, those things are lethal. I think really what happened was that it was the last race, the grass being soft, gives, and I think I was so accustomed to running on clay, where you end up with a bounce, and I tore what they call a plantar's muscle, patches up Achilles tendon. And I think what was happening is that I was, as it was explained to me, I was sinking and yet I was trying to lift. As a result of that, I had an unusual tension on that muscle which tore that attachment or tendon. I had an ankle that blew up like mad. It was an unbelievable experience because they start differently. It's, "Okay, chappies. On the mark. Get set, and go." Then the guy fires the double-barreled shotgun as the starter's weapon, you know, which blows you out. The Aussies all roll, they don't know what a legitimate start is. But it was really a very, very pleasant experience. I was interested in returning to the University of Southern California. I had a couple conversations with Jess Hill and he had indicated that what he thought would be advisable was to move in to a university job rather than community college. I think he was instrumental in it. But all of a sudden I was interviewed for a University of Wichita job. We looked at that, they gave me a salary that I couldn't refuse, and I went back there on a beautiful day in Wichita on the interview. The nicest day in the whole time. We moved back there, and after about six months, we were not happy there, only because of the weather. The faculty, the facilities, and the cooperation of the staff were absolutely unreal. But Jess Martinson was at SC at the time, and I figured I had another 10 or 12 years to wait. I decided to leave and the president was absolutely shocked when I told him that I was going to leave Bryant. He was even more shocked when he said, "What are you going to do?" And I said, "I don't know. We're going back to California." I came back and decided to provide us with the standard of living we wanted. It was probably best to move outside of education.

Q: How did you get your job, your first job out of education? What values and thoughts came into mind when you were saying, "Well, what am I going to do now that I'm not going to be an educator?"

A: Well, I was, I was stressed out on that type of a thing. I had a next door neighbor, when we lived in Anaheim, who was working for Northrop Corporation. He suggested that I talk to their personnel people. He made an appointment with a fellow that was in the personnel department for assistant support division at Northrop. It was Norm Stocks, a member of our relay team. I told Norm what I wanted to do, and he said, "I'll tell you what, we've got a job here which is to be an assistant to Terry Johnson, the chief of material, and what we'll do is that we'll give you a six month training program. You go through and work all the chairs in material, and after that then you can be Terry's troubleshooter." I said, "Gee, that sounds good, at least I'd learn the business." So, I went through my six months of trials and I had lasted about six months as Terry's troubleshooter when I was asked to join the marketing department in the proposals quarter. I was involved in assigning the various tasks. Unfortunately, through material, I got interfaced with quality control, engineering and manufacturing. In the whole, I knew all the departments, and as a proposals coordinator, I coordinated all the costs proposals for the various departments, wrote the letter of transmittal, sat with the presidents when we'd shift the costs down, and then wrote the final transmittal letter and sent it out. I did that for a year, and they asked me to be a marketer. I then joined the marketing department, worked for that for awhile, and then followed my boss to Litton. I was sent back to Washington, D.C., to work their Washington office, and then I was invited

to the Amacon division as vice president of marketing. Fifteen years later I was offered an opportunity to go to Saudi Arabia to be involved in their national sports program. Whittaker, which is based in Westwood, is their corporate headquarters, had a large medical program where they were building and staffing a number of medical military hospitals in Saudi Arabia. They also have a sports program in which they taught or coached track and field, swimming and diving, and basketball. They had all the facilities. They built facilities. They had M.D.'s on the staff. They had physical therapists and complete audio and visual aids, the most elaborate program you can imagine. This program had been underway for about, I guess, about six months when they contacted me. Apparently, the fellow who was running it had a lot of problems. He was a good promoter, but I guess there was questions in regards to everything from ethics on, and with being so tarnished that it was going to affect their medical program, which was millions and millions and millions of dollars. They contacted me as a possible replacement because I had a couple gold medals and because I had some world's records. It was also that I had been in the industry for a number of years and had a vice president title. They finally just upped the ante to the degree where I couldn't refuse. I went over there and ran that program. I would not, or I did not, sign a contract. I worked on a day to day basis.

Q: Did you take your wife?

A: No, well, she came over and visited. There were two reasons: we moved to Tarzana and had moved my father in with us, who was not in good health, a few months before that, and secondly, that program was in such bad shape that I was hesitant to do that. Part of my marketing responsibility at Amacon was national, as well as international. I traveled the Middle East extensively and spent a lot of time in Saudi and Kuwait and Iran and Israel and those places. At that time you had to have an exit visa before you could leave the kingdom. If you're the senior executive over there, you stand the responsibility of the program and your people. I had an agreement with the company, that when my wife wanted to come and visit, she could. I had a nice, beautiful villa, and I had a cook and I had a maid, all the creature comforts. So, she did come a couple times when I had people in Europe, and we would meet, in London, and we'd meet in Sweden, in Copenhagen, and places like that.

Q: Tell me about Saudi Arabia and the customs.

A: Oh, if you've been into the Muslim world you know what the customs are, like the women do not drive. The big problem with athletics is that, you know, one of the things to be a successful athlete is that you have to be dedicated and you have to be willing to work. You hear all the good work and sacrifice, and this and that. But, if you're a quasi-athlete and you have, let's say, Ramadan is coming, your religious holiday, where for thirty days that you know that you're supposed to fast during the day and all the rest of it. That means that if you don't want to work out, you're going to observe the religious holiday, as I understand the custom. If for some reason you had a big meet or something like that, you could postpone Ramadan, with a legitimate reason, and then still observe that custom at some other time of the year. But if you're not a real dedicated person, you're going to take what's easy for you. That's one of the big problems of Saudi, or I think most Arab athletes, is that they have to really believe in what they want. They have to set their priorities, and in no way short their religious customs. The program consisted of track and field, swimming and diving, and basketball, three sports.

Q: What was the purpose?

A: To train their athletes for international competition. Whittaker had convinced them that they could go

over there and train their athletes, and then they'd have them in the Olympics. The only thing that they failed to tell them, is that you can get them in the Olympics, because all you have to do is enter them. I think the accomplishments that we made in the two years over there were absolutely unbelievable. By my knowing the right generals and a few things like that, those athlete's wound up performing, with a certain amount of will and vigor. We had equipment there that you can't imagine, that were spent and bought, which were just absolutely superb. There wasn't a piece of equipment; there wasn't a talent they wouldn't pay for. The audio-visual cameras were purchased, physical therapy, X-ray machines. I had M.D.'s on my staff. The program needed to be set and then it took me awhile to gain credibility with his highness.

Q: Was it King Faad who was in charge?

A: King Faad and his eldest son. I thought, based on my experience in the Middle East, that I could go in there and in three to four months develop a competence with him that would show that I was a legitimate guy. It took eight or nine months before he thought I was legitimate. Consequently, a program will suffer there because of the internal politics with the Egyptians that are part of the agency and all the rest of it. You have a lot of infighting and undereroding, but the athletes ended up doing well. We had the Arab Games in Riyadh. The athletes did extremely well against the Arab world. So, the performance was really outstanding.

Q: Who would be your toughest competition? Was there anyone in the Arab world who really had excellent athletes?

A: Oh, the Kuwaiti's were doing pretty well.

Q: What year is this?

A: I went in there in '76 and came out in '78. It's a different experience from going over there and marketing in those countries, even though we had some programs in the airport there in Jidda, and running a program in Saudi Arabia. Even though it's an American firm, and you're dealing with Faisal, who is the eldest son of Faad, who was mad at you when you came in. It ends up being a very, very challenging experience.

Q: Were there any athletics for women at all?

A: Absolutely not. In fact, you know we had one of the fellows who ended up dating and eventually marrying a gal who was brought over there to head up the nursing program there in Riyadh. She wasn't even met at the airport. She had a devil of a time even talking to doctors because the class distinction at that time was unbelievable.

Q: Were you in an American compound?

A: No, I had something like 18 or 20 villas and I had places with four homes or eight homes. We were all self-contained. We provided the housing. We provided the medical care. We provided the transportation. They had to feed themselves, and I had families, as well as some bachelors over there. What we ended up doing was that Harry Derbyshire, the chief financial officer of Whittaker, and Joe Alibrand, the president, were agreeable to hold financial and program reviews back at Westwood rather

than in London. I came home at least every three months and sometimes there were interim problems that you had come to corporate for. But I was here for a program financial review at least every three months. I'd just take and bring my bean counter back with me here and we'd spend a week.

Q: Did you attend their Olympic Games?

A: '76. Part of my reason for going to Montreal was that it was just before the Whittaker program. I went up there to see some of the Saudi athletes they brought over to assess the staff that they, Whittaker, had assembled there. I also had to make a determination if I was interested at all in that particular program. So, I went there kind of under cloudy skies. I didn't go there recognized as a person to be part of that particular program. I had pretty good access, at that time, to see if I wanted to knock around and those kinds of things.

Q: Was there never a hint that the Mideast countries would join the African boycott?

A: I don't think so. I only can speak basically for the '76-'78 period. At that particular time, Faisal thought that good representation from Arab countries then I can feel was success. I think that ended up being his primary objective and that was accomplished in track and field, swimming and diving. They owed Whittaker a number of millions of dollars that they held payment on, and part of my agreement was that I would not be assessed for their failures at that time. And I was not interested in having my profit and loss figures look bad by adding 10 percent to carry monies that had not been paid by the government of Saudi Arabia. So, when I made my agreement with them, we brought out a new balance sheet. Before I left, we finally got all the money back, but we did not get the interest that was lost for those monies for better than a year, which is a very significant amount of money.

Q: Did you visit any of them when they came to visit in '84, any of the athletes or any of the officials?

A: No, I ended up being totally segregated from them in '78, and I really did not have any ties, nor did I try to keep any ties. I was over there, as I say, and I did not sign any longtime contract.

Q: You did your job.

A: I went over with set financial objective, and when I reached them, Whittaker was unbelievably generous with me. When I reached that objective, before I got hit in the crosswalk, I left.

Q: What would you have to say now to young athletes who maybe reading parts of this interview and hearing about your story?

A: The things that concern me more than anything else, particularly the large amounts of dollars that you see the athletes are making. I think that you can lose perspective very quickly if you believe too much in those particular numbers. Generally, the part of life that sports is a part of is relatively a small part. I mean, I had a lot of fun in high school. I competed four years in college. You asked me things today that I have not thought about for 30 years. So, that really, the meaningful thing, is that it's fun to participate and it's great, but keep things in perspective. I think sport is a part of it. It can be a lot of fun. It certainly is an educational process, but it just scares me to see all these young kids that have potential to not end up with a fairly balanced life.

Q: What would you say to the importance of your education to the rest of your life, even though you didn't stay in coaching, per se?

A: Well, you know, one of the interesting things that one of the groups that I headed up with was Amacon, the marketing group, and then the advanced programs group. The advanced programs group are the creative engineering thinkers that think of the new concepts and the new proposals and things of that type. I have a bachelor's and a master's degree in education, but you know, no one has ever asked me if I am an engineering graduate. Now, either it's so apparent that I'm not an engineer, or it's the fact that I've got a bachelor's and a master's degree, and that suffices as long as I have the business acuity to handle my responsibilities and product line. So, I guess I could say that without the bachelor's and the master's degree, I'd probably would have had a very, very slim chance to have done the things that I have done. To have traveled around the world as many times as I have, to be involved in the programs in which I've been involved in, and to be involved with the people I've been in. Communication skills are invaluable.

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.